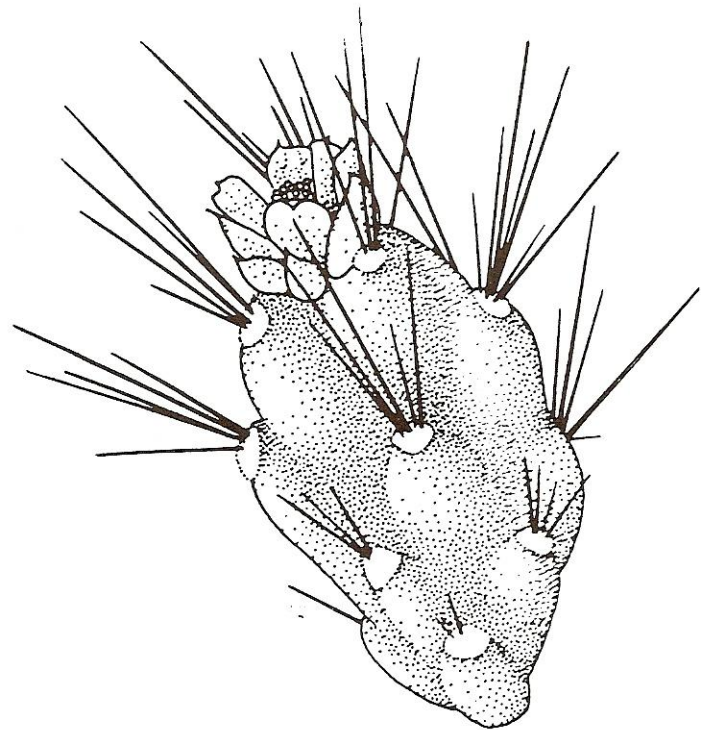


OPUNTIA

45



OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage.

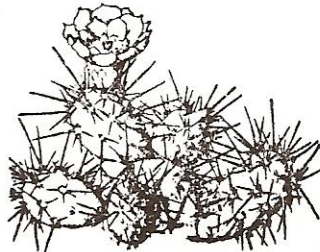
Whole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

COVER ART CREDIT: *Consolea falcata* is a new opuntoid species recently separated from *Opuntia* by A.E. Areces-Mallea, who also did the drawing. From the January/February 2000 issue of CACTUS AND SUCCULENT JOURNAL (U.S.), pages 41-46

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Andrew York, Harry Andruschak, Chester Cuthbert, Ned Brooks, Rodney Leighton

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's
remarks in
square brackets]



FROM: Lee Gold
3965 Alla Road
Los Angeles, California 90066

1999-08-10

Re: the 1940s folksong "to the obvious tune". I found a song entitled "Map Of the World" or "Let The Rest Of The World Go By", author not given, which seems to scan to the same rhythm as "We'll build a tempo-ship/And we'll take a little trip/And watch a million years go by."

"With someone like you, a pal good and true
I'd like to leave it all behind, and go and find
A place that's known to God alone
Just a spot to call our own."

"We'll find a perfect peace, where joys never cease
Out there beneath the kindly sky.
We'll build a sweet little nest, somewhere out in the West
And let the rest of the world go by."

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

1999-08-13

might say a convention is run.

Ned Brooks is right; many years ago filking was freeform, for the love of music. Today, filkers have their own recording companies. There are various forms like Bardic Circles which are regulated, a Hall of Fame, and a network of conventions. Some filkers pine for the simpler days.

[Bridget Wilkinson's history of national SF associations] makes me wonder about the Canadian SF and Fantasy Association, which administers the Canventions. I guess that the CSFFA meets at every Convention business meeting. I wish we had a national club. Don't anyone tell me to go do it; I did it in Toronto some years ago and got burned for it. A national club would connect fandom across the country, especially in cities that once had thriving literary SF clubs, like Toronto, Edmonton, and Victoria.

I do have my doubts about the worth of a general con handbook. The Ad Astra Bible was handy in its day, but when Mike Wallis rewrote it for Baycon, I'm certain he found that some things that applied to cons in Toronto did not apply to cons in the Bay area, and vice versa. Aspects of different cultures, business practices, fannish traditions, and levels of business savvy, not to mention the exact focus of the convention, will determine how one group

I ran the dealers' room at Ad Astra for 11 years. When it finally fell onto me to become the chairman, I wrote up for the person slated to take over a quick handbook, hard copy and floppy lists of dealers, FAQ file, dealers' information sheet for the room, and some prudent general policies. My successor largely ignored them, his successor barely knew they were there and ignored what he knew of them, and 11 years of work and experience were shot to hell in only three.

The Toronto in 2003 WorldCon bid has for its use the WORLDCON BIDDER'S GUIDE, produced by the late Ross Pavlac of Chicago. It has been an invaluable document to find out what to do and what is expected of you during the bidding process.

FROM: Tom Feller
Box 68203
Nashville, Tennessee 37206

1999-12-02

Bridget Wilkinson's description of national fan organizations reminds when I was editing the SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION BULLETIN, and someone wrote me to enquire how much

it would cost to list their club. I replied that it would cost the price of a postage stamp, or nothing at all if they used e-mail to inform me about their club. Our purpose is to foster communication among fans and act as an information clearinghouse in the southern part of the USA, not to be an umbrella organization.

Her account of the purpose behind the Scottish organization reminds me of another time when one particular group of fans in my area accused another group of fans of trying to take control of fandom in our region and tried to organize a boycott of the latter group's cons and parties. What had happened is that the latter group consisted of fans who often volunteered at conventions outside their own city. Consequently, they developed a lot of experience and knowledge about convention organizing, and other cons invited them to join their committees. The first group consisted of fans who never volunteered without some sort of quid pro quo. They perceived the other group's activities as a conspiracy and ascribed ulterior motives to their actions.

I found the late Ross Pavlac's guide to con-running useful when planning DeepSouthCon 35. It is oriented toward WorldCons but there is much that is applicable to smaller conventions. For instance, Ross emphasizes the importance of wearing a coat and tie when meeting with the hotel people.

One major difference between an SF convention and a professional one is that many fans pride themselves on never attending programming. The whole point of attending a professional convention is the programming, especially if you can earn continuing education credits.

When a group of us in Jackson, Mississippi, decided to hold a convention, we were very concerned about money. We did yard and bake sales to raise seed money and budgeted conservatively. The result was that our first convention had a large financial surplus, which we used for conventions and other projects in later years.

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

1999-08-12

Fandom isn't quite as rebellious against order as Terry Hornsby thinks. While fans do as they please a lot of the time, they also conform to self-imposed authority in various ways. They don't break up conventions by rebelling against the con committee. They obey the rules of apas and they get involved in do-good project like sending a beloved fan to the other side of the ocean or raising money to help some fan or pro who is in great need.

FROM: Sue Jones 2000-01-02
32/33 Castle Street, Flat 5
Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England

One of the things I quickly found out as an attendee is that irrespective of who is on the con committee and what they plan to do, the actual convention tends to be licked into shape by the people who turn up to help, in particular those who have their own special bit that they always do, year after year. The vast majority of them have a wide fund of experience to draw on, and a knack of solving problems with an ample application of time, effort, gaffer tape, and string. They are happy to leave the con-running laurels to others and to get their kicks from making things run smoothly. They are always worth consulting. They might find a totally-problem free convention too boring to have much fun, but at least they could give would-be conrunners an idea of the major practical pitfalls to avoid.

FROM: Steve Jeffery 1999-11-03
44 White Way
Kidlington Oxon OX5 2XA, England

I agree with Bridget Wilkinson that an English Science Fiction Association makes little sense. The 'British' part of the label has always been fairly nominal as far as the interests and remit of the BSFA go. Its main effect is that the BSFA is a legally registered

company in the United Kingdom and that its elected Council and committee must be residents. Membership, though, can be and is worldwide. The interests and magazines cover probably as much American and European SF as specifically British SF and authors.

National rivalries being what they are, and especially what they are at the moment, I can't see there being much interest in incorporating it into a wider European Science Fiction Association. After all, some of the pub meetings used to be in the Wellington, and in Waterloo, and I can't really see the French going for that in a big way.

FROM: Murray Moore 1999-12-05
1065 Henley Road
Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8

I have a copy of the 165+ page WORLDCON RUNNERS' GUIDE, 6th edition, published in 1997. It is interesting reading just for the education of how complicated an animal is a WorldCon. Being part of a bid for a WorldCon [Toronto in '03] is interesting and sometimes entertaining. It is also a long-term commitment. A bid starts three or four years before the vote. After the vote, the committee has three more years to get ready for the circus to come to town
for five days.

FROM: Brant Kresovich
Box 404
Getzville, New York 14068-0404

2000-01-02

[Re: ConVersion 16 report] It's a great idea to report on panels so that those of us who didn't attend can enjoy the 'marketplace of ideas' aspect of SF conventions. About five years ago, when I started getting zines from fandom, I wasn't familiar with the usual content of con reports: who they met, who they partied and danced with, the restaurants they ate in, the lousy service of the hotel, the gawking of the rubes (sorry, mundanes). I had assumed that writers of con reports would typically write about something a reader who didn't know them might be remotely interested in, like panels.

It's this opportunity to learn that attracts me most about a small serious SF con. This attraction balances the drinking, partying, and socializing elements, which, frankly, put me off. At work I get people, interacting and communicating all the time, so at play I just want to keep my mouth shut. Fanzines (i.e., interaction at a safe distance) are certainly in my comfort zone.

Garth Spencer's piece on conrunning was excellent. I was especially interested in the tension between the conrunners who wanted to plan versus the airy-fairy types who think somebody's previous experience and advice get in the way of doing their own

thing. In other contexts, I've noted that people who don't want to be held to rules are either mindlessly optimistic or don't want others to follow suggestions or advice other than their own. They are the 'my way or the highway' types whose credibility is blown after a short time.

-6-

FROM: Carolyn Clowes
547 Dover Road
Louisville, Kentucky 40206

2000-01-11

Congrats to Garth Spencer for being chosen CUFF delegate, and thanks to him for the insight into con running. Now I know why the folks with the staff badges have that darting, harried look in their eyes. Even as they meet and greet, they're on red alert for impending disasters. Of course the Legion for Moral Decency types are horrified to find themselves on the same elevator with scantily-attired Xenas, and the body paint and bedsheet-toga crowd. But having scheduled both groups on the same weekend, why is hotel management perennially surprised? And why is this the fault of the SF fans, not the uptight mundanes?

[Because if something gets broken, who are you going to blame, a geek in a bedsheet toga who doesn't have two nickels to rub together, or a junior accountant in a \$500 suit who tips 15% on his

platinum credit card? I suspect most hotel managers assume that SF conventions are no different than others. They may be willing to overlook problems for big spenders and tippers, which is why Shriners and wedding parties are okay, but when they find out how chintzy SF fans are, they get angry. Hotels do not make money renting rooms; they make it selling booze and catering.]

The professional cons I know about were two-day events leading up to a talk by one of the Trek actors. When Leonard Nimoy appeared in New York City, they charged extra to hear him. The fees were huge. No consuite, no amenities of any kind. The attendees didn't know to expect better. They allowed themselves to be herded like sheep into a huge ballroom, where they sat on chairs all day playing endless trivia games and watching repeated showings of that cheesy old blooper reel. I'd love to believe such rip-offs lose money, but apart from cooking the books, I don't see how they could.

FROM: Milt Stevens
6325 Keystone Street
Simi Valley, California 93063

1999-09-15

Bridget Wilkinson doesn't mention the National Fantasy Fan Federation in her article. It was always an organization that never got beyond a state of perpetual infancy. Most of the people who

were most active in it tended to be from small towns which didn't have a large enough population to support a local club.

The lack of success of the NFFF may reflect that most people in the USA don't feel any particular need for a national SF association. There are a large number of organizations, and collectively they do everything that a national association might do. I realize things are different in other places, and there may be a perceived need for such an organization.

2000-01-27

Garth Spencer does a good summary of information available to those people who are ill advised enough to try running a convention themselves. Probably one of the greatest shocks in con running is the realization that you have gone into business even if that wasn't your intention. Cons are run like anything else. Budgets, deadlines, and personnel recruitment are essential things. Profit may not attract you, but you discover loss can be really repugnant stuff.

When I was first going to conventions, fans generally tried the backdoor approach to dealing with hotels. We tried to sneak things in, including fans, and get away with whatever we could. For the most part we don't do that anymore.
if we have to deal with unions, we deal

with unions. If there is a corkage fee, we pay it. We can represent ourselves as legitimate and profitable business. We don't and shouldn't have to put up with a condescending attitude from hotels.

YOUR MILEAGE MAY VARY: A SHORT AND INCOMPLETE SURVEY OF CONRUNNING MATERIALS (PART 2)

by Garth Spencer

(Garth may be contacted at Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1)

Conrunner (1984-1995).

CONRUNNER, edited by Ian Sorenson in Scotland, appeared from November 1984 through November 1995. Published about twice a year, often in conjunction with major British conventions such as Eastercon, Sorenson's fanzine featured articles on a wide range of conrunning subjects by a wide variety of British fans.

Until recently my only glimpse of CONRUNNER was its mention in other fanzines, and one copy (#20) kindly supplied by

Sorenson. In August 1987, at Conspiracy, he presented THE BEST OF CONRUNNER, a hardcopy anthology which reprinted a selection of previous articles. A comprehensive selection of CONRUNNER articles can be viewed at www.smof.com/conrunner/index2.htm

How To Run V-Con In 15,436 Easy Steps.

Donna McMahon, one of the Vancouver fans who have worked on the local VCon, started drafting a manual for the reference of VCon committees in 1987. When the binder turned up again in the early 1990s, a revision was begun, and completed in 1996. The current VCon manual is in the archives of the West Coast SF Association.

Protection By Virtue Of A Registered Society.

One of the articles that appeared in MAPLE LEAF RAG in the mid-1980s covered a little information about registered non-profit societies in Canada and the USA. They offer several benefits to convention committees, such as limiting their personal financial liability if the con takes a bath. Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Edmonton conventions all appeared to have such non-profit society protection. As far as I knew at the time, non-profit registration in the USA was possible through a provision of

the Internal Revenue Act. In Canada, both the federal and provincial governments offered registration through a Society Act.

Matters appear to be quite different in the United Kingdom. Andy Croft wrote to me in January 8, 2000: *"You are quite correct in thinking there is no recognition in the UK for a society in the form that you have over on the other side of the Pond. Most conventions are run with liability being jointly held by the committee members of of whose pockets any shortfall comes. We do of course take out insurance (or those with sense do anyway!) which will cover most things of consequence but yes, it can still hit your pocket directly. A major convention like a WorldCon is inevitably set up as a private company, the exact details of which will depend upon [the] country of the United Kingdom it's set up in. It is also possible for cons to achieve charitable status that gives tax breaks but it's more in theory than in practice due to constraints of the law."*

"In the event of a legal problem, the committee will inevitably have to take it directly; there is no dodging most of the possible prosecutions or legal cases. It is one of the reasons that in my book I try and encourage convention committees to take a lot of the law seriously. Some people seem to think that if you ignore it, it will never bite! On the other hand, much of the law has phrases like 'reasonable' or 'practical' or an equivalent embedded within it. This means that if you do have a quick look at the potential

problem area and record that you've looked at it and perhaps tried to do something about it, you'll only get a slapped wrist rather than a visit to the dock ... much less painful. This is particularly true of health & safety law which is why you'll see the biggish sections [on these topics] in the manuals I've sent you under separate cover."

Millennium.

One of the first pieces of fanhistory published in MAPLE LEAF RAG concerned a one-shot Toronto convention, held about 1986. Lloyd Penney's story about this debacle says something about the attitude a hotel manager, an alleged business professional, can have about conventions, and the trouble he or she can make for a convention, short of turfing them out.

Considering the recent demise of a Seattle WorldCon bid, due apparently to another business 'professional's uninformed prejudice, this seems not to be an isolated problem. It appears to be worthwhile to document a warning for other concons.

Con-TRACT

CON-TRACT, a bimonthly listing of upcoming Canadian conventions, was launched in Edmonton between 1986 and 1988. Since about

1988, it has been edited by the peripatetic John Mansfield. He was then a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, and has since settled in Winnipeg. It also features conreports, John's ruminations, and articles on conrunning.

One of the first articles John reprinted was the "Party Kit" article from Mary Mason of San Francisco (1989 Oct/Nov). Later articles included James Steel on "Why Run Conventions?" (1990 Aug/Sep), "95 Ways To Save Money On Your Next Meeting" (1990 Oct/Nov), "Meeting Planner's Cost Cutting Commandments" (1991 May/Jun), "Murphy's Laws of Con-Running" (1995 Sep/Oct), and "Hotel Contract 101" (1996 Jan/Feb).

Computer Programs For Conventions.

One of the interesting features of CON-TRACT was that occasionally it listed some computer programs that had been worked up for convention planning, either for particular departments or for a whole convention in general.

General Project Planning: ITT Sheraton offered until 1992 both a 64-page guide to running conferences and conventions, and the "Automated Guide For Meeting Planning", a DOS-based shareware for organizing your planning on computer. This shareware came in zipped format on either 5.5" or 3.5" disks, and

required at least 640K of RAM.

The most important part of this program resembled Gantt or PERT charts (People, Equipment, Resources, Time). I had to look up these terms, but then no-one else on any concom I joined ever used these terms either.

Some commercial programs have since been developed for general event management or task tracking, such as Microsoft Project (the 1998 version was about C\$700). It may be cheaper, easier, and more accessible for concoms to obtain shareware such as Global Star's Project Planner program. Global Star is a Toronto manufacturer of low-cost software.

Some proprietary programs have also been developed by fans, usually for specific convention departments. A program called ConTrak (formerly RegCon) is a general planning program, last heard of from Richard Lawrence in 1994: *"ConTrak is a Convention Tracking application developed in Paradox. The DOS version exists only for the Registration Department, although the Programming Division branch was developed by Tom Becker enough to be used for ConFrancisco."*

"(RegCon was renamed to ConTrak in early '93 when plans for additional branches were added to it. It was originally created for Baycon [San Jose] in about 1989. It was fine tuned, and then greatly enhanced in '92 to be used for pre-reg of ConFrancisco.)"

"I am currently [1994] rewriting ConTrak in Paradox for Windows. ... The concept is to share common data between the departments. The branches of the application can be used separately, linked with occasional data sharing through the passing of diskettes ("Sneaker Net"), or by an active LAN ... "

Artshows: Walt Daniels, of Indianapolis, produced at Chicon some shareware for artists exhibiting at conventions. Steve Hanchar of Milwaukee offered shareware for organizing artshows. *"This shareware is formatted for IBM XT's on up, and may interface with registration databases. (It isn't networkable, though.)"*

Con Games.

By about 1987, Bruce Farr in Phoenix, Arizona, was publishing a digest called CON GAMES, since re-titled CON-NOTATIONS, a publication of the Central Arizona SF Society. Under his editorship in the mid-1980s, CON GAMES featured a number of invaluable articles on conrunning, some directed at WorldCons, some at media cons, and some useful for any conventions.

For instance, in the May 1987 issue (#3) he published such articles as "Care and feeding of television crews and other exotic beasts: A flack's guide." by Richard Brandt, a "Convention Organizer's Checklist" by the editor, and Farr's editorial on convention bid

finances. In the November issue (#4), he featured the results of his questionnaire examining fannish attitudes about conventions, a specialized checklist "Steps in starting a media convention", Jennifer Roberson (a fantasy author) on "Pros and consoms, or never the twain shall meet", John T. Sapienza Jr's "Confederation Pocket Program", a "Checklist for Hall Contracts" from the National Association of Exposition Managers, and "Questions to ask a bid committee". I referred to the last article to outline the bid progress report for Vancouver's Westercon 44 bid.

At the Spokane Westercon in July 1999, copies of CON-NOTATIONS were displayed at the CASFS club table. I asked representatives there whether CON-NOTATIONS ever featured articles on conrunning topics. They thought that was a novel idea.

The Mad 3 Party.

By about this point in the 1980s, THE MAD 3 PARTY, the Noreascon 3 internal newsletter, was appearing regularly from MCFI. Joe Mayhew contributed "What goes wrong with the WorldCon art show over and over" (#16, February 1987), Dennis Virzi and Pat Mueller contributed "Programming the program" to #17 (March 1987), about applying dBase II to program information, forming a participant list and an event list, and cross-indexing the second list in several ways. Ed Beauregard wrote a related letter in #20.

The Party Times.

Yvonne Penney of Toronto published THE PARTY TIMES in 1988 or 1989. Lloyd Penney kindly forwarded copies to me. THE PARTY TIMES appeared to be a bare-bones fanzine format discussion of party promotion planning, specifically for Canadian cons promoting at USA cons.

The Northwest Convention League (1988 - Present).

The Northwest Convention League was set up about now, avowedly to compare notes between different concons in the American Pacific Northwest. In late 1988 or early 1989, Gerold Boyko (who was then BCSFA Archivist) brought me some notes from the League's founding meeting at Dreamcon 3, in Washington state in autumn 1988. It developed that the League was conceived as a series of face-to-face gatherings, just to compare notes on conrunning, at a series of Washington and Oregon conventions held each year.

Although I made attempts to contact the League in the next few years, correspondence was sporadic. I am still unsure of whether the League extended its contacts beyond Washington to anywhere else in the Pacific Northwest, even to Idaho, Montana, and any Alaskan conventions. Dale Speirs has written me that 'Pacific

Northwest' should only be extended to include British Columbia and Alaska. I was, and remain, unclear on this point.

John Mansfield, in Calgary in 1988/89, saw the League's constitution and considered it "excellent". I was not so positive because, granting there are reasons for regional umbrella organizations, the reasons weren't spelled out for this organization.

I became increasingly frustrated with the league because I expected to see the League print some conrunning materials. I circulated an article to Richard Wright and others summarizing what I knew of the league at the time, subtitled "Acting without thinking?", concluding the League didn't advertise effectively. In hindsight, it seems clear that the League members wanted specifically to meet face-to-face. They just didn't need to say so in their procedural bumph. I, on the other hand, had spent my first decade in fandom relating to people through paper, almost exclusively.

Eventually I got the word. Richard Wright, from the Northwest SF Society and Norwescon committees, sought me out at V-Con 21 and handed me a copy of THE CONVENTIONEER, a small newsletter then published semi-quarterly. This is where topics and opinions did get documented. Issue 1:4, for instance (March

7, 1996), carries minutes of a meeting called "Security Summit II" in Seattle, discussing why security problems happen at conventions. The newsletter has also been posted onto a Website. It will be interesting to see more issues of THE CONVENTIONEER, but the most recent are dated 1996. Larry Baker wrote to me in February 1999 that: " ... the league is still meeting. Becky Citrak is running the show. She can probably be reached through her husband, Michael Citrak (citrak@aol.com) . She has an email address but I don't know what it is. I don't think THE CONVENTIONEER has been published in a while."

XenoFile

XENO-FILE was a late-1980s newsletter sponsored by the Con-Version SF Society in Calgary. It seemed to take over the Canadian newszine function in 1989 from Michael Skeet's MLR, after a lapse of three or four months. This coverage amounted to a page or two each issue of news rounded up from various places around the country. Unfortunately XENO-FILE ran only briefly.

Just incidently, they carried some materials which bear on conrunning. For example, Robert Runte pointed out in XENO-FILE 1:6 (early 1990), after the celebrated financial losses of both PineKones in Ottawa: "(1) Never start or work on a convention without the protection of incorporation in 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's conclusions about financial control and communications might seem fundamental, but they seem to escape, say, the chair of PineKone II.

The Miller Articles On Hotel Liaison.

Your mileage may vary but from here it appears that most convention-related writing has appeared in the last decade. Am I missing something? Partly my impression is formed by the articles that appeared in CON NEWS, a tabloid produced in the Denver area by Linda Nelson and distributed in the early 1990s at various North American conventions. Some of the most useful were six articles prepared by Bruce Miller, another Denver-area fan, on examining hotel sites, negotiating with sales staff, and getting on with the rest of the staff while actually preparing and running the convention.

Richard Brandt published “50 simple ways to destroy your next convention” in THE TEXAS SF INQUIRER #34 in 1991. That’s exactly what it is, a list of 50 stunning things fans can do to ensure that bills are unpaid, members don’t arrive, artists, dealers, and guests aren’t well served, and the convention earns the odium of fandom for generations to come. I guess this was Brandt’s way of commenting on something he witnessed without being liable to a lawsuit. The timing was ironic. It was the same year that an ill-starred Westercon was held in Vancouver.

Who Do You Think You Are?

I chose to announce in autumn 1991, again, that I was going to try to compile a reference book on running cons. My reasoning was that I couldn’t help clean up the financial mess my gang faced after Westercon 44, but I could compile a document, gathering notes and interviews from members of the club. I could contribute to my community that way. And anybody else in Vancouver, I assumed, knew far more than I about cons.

My plan depended on a lot of participation. BCSFans were fans, therefore, I thought, they would write me far more material than I wanted or could even handle. However, I ran into the psychology again that “if you’re pretending to be an expert,

everyone is going to ignore you”. This, when I was asking people for information, not pretending to know anything. Or maybe, simply, no one was interested. After about 1990, after all, R. Graeme Cameron and I seemed to be the only fanzine fans in Vancouver.

The next year, 1992, my roommates convinced me I should ask specific questions of specific people, one by one by one, interviewing them with a handheld tape recorder. This project approached feasibility if I had both the time and energy for the transcription. Transcribing takes approximately three times as long as interviewing does. So I acquired interviews with fellow fans like Jackie Wilson (now Jackie Barclay), and an unpublished description of the registration guidelines, as practiced by Frances Higginson at a number of V-Cons, and then I ran out of energy. What I had here was a Daugherty Project. There was a need, I could perceive it, but the project was inherently beyond my available time and energy.

Baycon Bible.

Michael Wallis, who had participated and even worked on a series of Ad Astras in Toronto, moved to Los Angeles and became active in southern California conventions. He produced the “Baycon Bible” after 1992: *“As we start putting together the 10th Baycon, it seemed odd to me that there was no generally*

available guide on convention operations. This guide is based on one I used in Toronto, with an attempt to update and upgrade the document to reflect the Bay Area structure. This is by no means a "fixed" or "final" report. Please read your Department's section, and those that you interact with, and advise your Area Manager of any additions and/or changes that better define the duties and policies you see involved." (Introduction from Baycon '92 Chairman)

Elsewhere, Wallis wrote the document was based on Howard Scrimgeour's material for Ad Astra, which in turn was based on material prepared in 1981 by Chris Meredith.

Critical Feedback (1993).

Two former active Vancouver fans, Doug and Lisa Girling, wrote an article to BCSFA, "Why we don't attend V-Con", which was not published but was saved in the club archives. They listed a number of problems, not only with V-Con as a convention but with Vancouver as a place to hold one. They wrote: " ... whenever we discuss going to a convention again, V-Con is always at the bottom of the list ... attempts at restructuring the convention, or moving it to a different time or venue have been consistently met with opposition ... Fear of success, perhaps?". Vancouver was expensive, they thought, for Americans, subject

to antiquated liquor laws, isolated for the purposes of dealers trying to pass Customs, and scheduled opposite Baycon.

V-Con's timing against Baycon is a matter of indifference, at least to a fan like me. Let's get real. How many Vancouver fans are going to travel as far as southern California, even once a year? Or as far as Winnipeg, as I have argued with John Mansfield.

The Girlings' points carried little weight with V-Con fans, or just maybe no WCSFA committee members ever saw what they wrote. After this lapse of time, it is interesting to read their proposals, dated June 10, 1993.

"1) Move the convention to a different weekend, where it isn't competing directly with a major convention nearby (i.e., not closer than San Francisco).

2) Relocate the convention from UBC to a hotel ...

3) Eliminate the art show completely or if that is too heretical, make it strictly local artists. (Perhaps we could canvass the art schools?) If big-name fannish artists continue to use V-Con as a dumping ground for photoprints, sell them in the dealers' room.

4) Scale down the convention so that one doesn't need huge function space ...

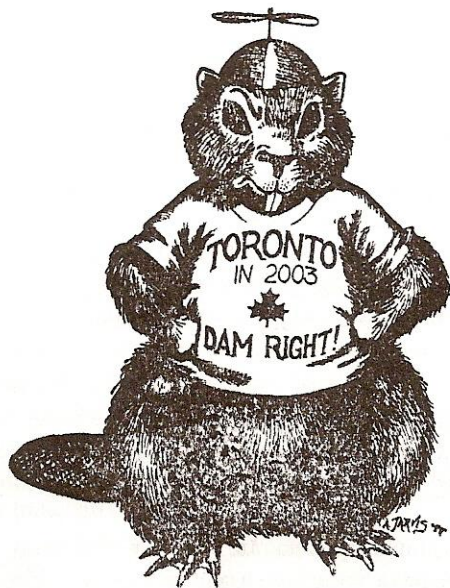
5) *Expand the format of the panels to encompass a broader range of pertinent topics. After all, life seems to be imitating science fiction of late.*

6) *Consider aiming the convention at 'niche' markets (e.g., a literary convention), rather than trying to maintain the same generic convention in a vain attempt to keep all the people happy all the time.*

7) *Why call it a 'CONvention' at all? While it is a case of "old wine in new bottles", Madison Avenue has proven people are susceptible to that. For example, against a sea of the Vancouver Folk Festival, DuMaurier Jazz Festival, The Vancouver Children's Festival, etc., appears Music West or the always-successful Bumbershoot. Perhaps changing the name and breaking with tradition, we can inject some life into the old girl?"*

Some of the recommended changes did occur within about five years to V-Con. After the 44th Westercon held in Vancouver in 1991, Lisa Smedman and other BCSFans held one-day, rather than full weekend events, focused on specific topics such as forensic science in mysteries. V-Con has now been held for some years in a hotel. One of the subsequent V-Con chairs, Palle Hoffstein, was himself a volunteer at the folk and jazz festivals.

[to be continued in OPUNTIA #46]



To support Toronto's bid to host the 2003 World Science Fiction Convention, send C\$20.03 or US\$15 to: Toronto in '03, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1A2.