

OPUNTIA

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HUMAN EVOLUTION: PART 2.

WE MIGRATED AND MIGRATED AND MIGRATED.

by Dale Speirs

A principle of pest ecology is that a pest species is constrained at its point of origin by diseases that co-evolved with it, but in new habitats can run wild for lack of control agents. When hominids migrated out of Africa, they left behind many diseases that had restricted their population growth [19]. Their new habitats were relatively disease-free to them compared to the old ones, and hominids could thus expand without as many controls. The original hominids had light skin with dark hair, but as humans became more hairless they evolved dark skin in tropical areas for protection against ultraviolet radiation [65 and 66]. Melanin pigments block ultraviolet. Although skin colour is correlated with latitude, it is not correlated with evolutionary lineage, so it cannot be used to classify which population developed from what population. Humans migrated back and forth many times, and gained or lost melanin pigmentation depending on what habitat they settled in. There are populations in India and Pakistan that developed from Caucasians but have dark skin, and African or Arabic populations who have nothing more than what appears to be a good tan. Melanin protects against ultraviolet but the disadvantage is that it reduces synthesis of vitamin D3 in the skin. It is therefore dispensed with in extreme latitudes where ultraviolet is only a brief seasonal problem in the summer.

The fossil record is demonstrating more and more that our apemen ancestors didn't just climb down from the tree one day, stand up, and go for a walkabout out of Africa. The earliest hominids did not stay in one place but migrated back and forth between eastern and southern Africa [10], in four to seven different dispersals. Hominids reached southern Germany about 17 megayears ago [34]. By 1.7 to 2 megayears ago, proto-humans had migrated out of Africa into the Levantine corridor, which would have provided a route into Eurasia [29]. Oldowan tools of about 1.7 to 2 megayears old have been found in Israel. A layer of proto-human artefacts has been found in northern China (about 40°N latitude), dated at 1.36 megayears old [30].

Proto-humans reached Suffolk, England, by 700,000 years ago, based on flint artefacts [73]. The earliest trace of proto-human activity north of the Pyrenees and Alps is about 500,000 years old [35]. There is debate whether humans had a multi-regional evolution in Europe, Africa, and Asia in the period between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago, or whether they came out of Africa in essentially modern form 200,000 to 100,000 years ago. The Ice Ages of the Pleistocene were not a single event where the glaciers and ice sheets spread out and then faded back a few thousand years ago. Rather, there were multiple expansions and contractions of the ice. During each of the interglacials, life quickly followed behind the retreating ice, including hominids. Then the glaciers would spread out again, and drive everything

back into the sea. This is why there are multiple fossil sites of hominids of various ages throughout Europe, because they did not spread evenly in time or space but danced back and forth in a waltz with the ice.

Analysis of aboriginal genes shows human population expanded 640,000 to 49,000 years ago in Africa before the Neolithic and before the splitting of African and non-African populations [5]. It is evident that the easiest route out of eastern Africa was down the Nile River drainage system and across the Sinai peninsula [53]. The present-day deserts were not arid then, and had periods of wetter climates that would allow travel. The Sahara desert had humid periods during which rivers flowed from the south across the fertile plains into the Mediterranean just as the Nile does today. The last humid era was about 130,000 to 117,000 years ago, during which time hominids followed the watercourses across the Sahara to the sea [72, 85]. Their camps and artefacts have been found along dried-up rivers that haven't held water in millennia. From there, they could spread out along the coasts. This climatic change also occurred for the Sinai-Negev area during the same time, when humans spreading out from eastern Africa found not the deserts of today but well-watered plains [83].

Although humans evolved in Africa, the delay in them finally dispersing is also attributed to the evolution of their social and economic behaviour [69]. They would first be busy outcompeting

other hominids in Africa and then looking for new worlds to conquer, or, more likely, be forced to spread out due to local overpopulation. Humans expanded north and then were driven back or wiped out by the Ice Ages of the Pleistocene, so there was no single migration slowly spreading across the planet [74]. There were many false starts and cul-de-sacs in the dispersal of the hominids that eventually became modern humans. The migrations were sporadic and independent of each other. It was not that one tribe walked out of Africa on one occasion and then split into many tribes as population grew [19].

An analysis of human mitochondrial DNA shows there were several range expansions out of Africa and that interbreeding was ubiquitous [38]. DNA analysis suggests that humans expanded from a small population of a few thousand in the late Pleistocene [4]. This may have been coincident with a catastrophic volcanic eruption in the heel of Italy about 37,000 years ago [42]. The explosion makes the boundary between the Middle and Upper Paleolithic periods, and the transition between Neanderthal and modern human. The early false starts out of Africa died out and were eventually displaced by late-comers who came out of eastern Africa about 150,000 years ago, with the final push of modern humans about 48,000 years ago [58, 62].

In the far north, the ice sheets did not finally fade away until about 8,000 years ago. Although hominid and human remains have

been found far older than the ice sheets in those areas, the present-day humans cannot claim any connection with them. For example, the Finns are descended from a small group of agriculturists who arrived about 4,000 years ago, and have no linkage with kiloyears-old fossil sites [79]. The same holds true for much of the Arctic; the present-day native tribes are latecomers, not ancient peoples. In the tropical areas of the world, where humans had no idea about the great ice sheets covering the northern hemisphere, the change in ice affected them nonetheless. Ocean levels had fallen as the Ice Age commenced, but as the ice sheets melted, sea levels rose steadily. Many flood legends such as Noah's Ark are distant memories of how ancient humans were driven out of now-submersed lands by rising sea levels. The Arabian Gulf was a relatively flat plain which flooded quickly enough to traumatize the ancient humans living there. It was not the case that the water rose so slowly over the generations that people did not notice it. Indications are that the Gulf was flooded within a few years, possibly a few months. Giant glaciers in the European mountains caused giant annual spring floods, while today the meltwater from the small remaining glaciers is but a trickle. The stories of those giant floods were passed down from generation to generation, embroidered by story tellers, and became the legends of the holy books.

[to be continued]

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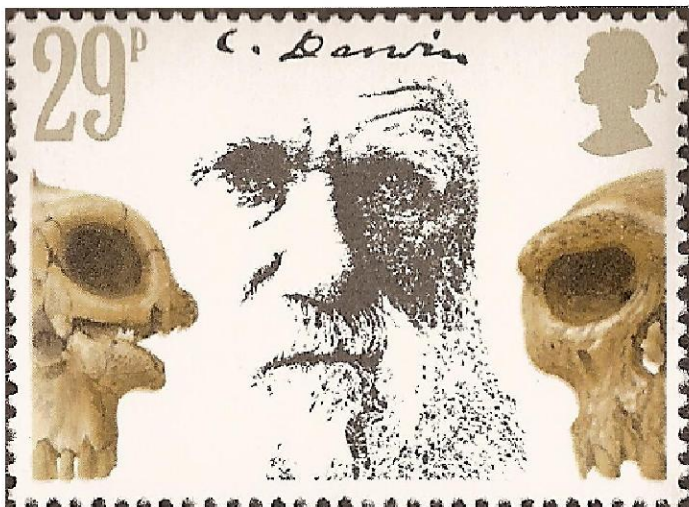
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TRANSIT FANNING IN CALGARY:

PART 3. ARTICULATA

by Dale Speirs

There are two bus routes in my neighbourhood that go directly downtown, and I have used them frequently over the years. They have the standard-size big buses. One morning I was surprised when my bus arrived and it was a double-length articulated bus. This type of bus is normally only used on cross-town and circle routes with high ridership, not suburban routes such as mine. Because of its length, it bends in the middle at an accordion fold.

When I got on the bus, I asked the driver why she was using an articulated bus. She told me that the bus ahead of her had broken down and her's was an emergency replacement. When we got downtown, there indeed was the failed bus, with the engine cover up and a mechanic tinkering with it.

The photo on the next page is not the articulated bus I was riding on but one of its mates. Like LRT trains, it is difficult to photograph these long vehicles from close up. I caught this one from the far corner of an intersection in the downtown core. A friend of mine who drives for Calgary Transit told me that while the articulated buses require some extra room to make a right-angle turn, they are generally not difficult to drive.



NON-FICTION BOOK REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

Max Ferguson was a radio host with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He is known mainly for being one of the pioneers of folk and ethnic music programming. In his younger days, in the late 1940s and 1950s, he was the host of a cowboy music programme out of Halifax called "Rawhide". Being a city slicker, he despised cowboy songs and tried to reduce the number he had to play by populating his show with fictional characters in a variety of voices, writing skits to take up time that otherwise would be used for cowboy songs. That led to his initial rise to fame, especially after an M.P. denounced him and his show in the House of Commons, giving him priceless national publicity.

In 1967, Ferguson published a humorous autobiography of his career to that time, titled *AND NOW ... HERE'S MAX*. It opens with the beginning of Ferguson's radio career in 1946, as a rookie working for the private station CFPL in London, Ontario. He didn't have much work besides filing records back into the library and doing spot announcements. This left plenty of time for practical jokes, both the giving and receiving, ranging from pushing all the elevator buttons after someone got on (which came to a sudden end when that someone turned out to be the station owner) to the time-honoured practice of trying to break up an announcer while he was on the air (such as barging into a live

drama and ad-libbing a new character completely unrelated to the plot, while the actors tried to stick with the script).

Somehow Ferguson wasn't fired, and managed to get on with the CBC at its Halifax station. Like every rookie announcer at every radio station, he started on the graveyard shift at CBC. It happened that the booth he worked in also held the main transmitter, in those days a cabinet of vacuum tubes glowing with heat. Ferguson discovered this was a perfect place to warm up his meals by laying a tray of fish and chips on top of the tubes. For a while he was eating tinned Irish stew, but this came to an end when he was delayed getting back to it because of announcer duties. The can exploded from the heat, drenching the studio in gravy, potatoes, and beef. It took him hours to clean up the room, especially the teletype, which kept pounding out the news on the soggy paper.

The head of CBC Halifax was an ex-Navy man named Briggs, who loved to do outside broadcasts, and Ferguson soon became involved in these. He recounts of attending a tuna fishing contest and interviewing the fishermen as they hauled in their strikes. One of them, an Englishman who hadn't yet realized the British Empire was gone, lectured Ferguson live on the air for mis-pronouncing the fish's name as "tyoo-na" instead of "tunny", pointing out that it was derived from the Latin name "tunnis" and going into the etymology

of the word in detail while Ferguson tried hard not to seem the crass colonial.

Eventually Ferguson was assigned to an early Saturday morning show of cowboy records. He despised most of the music, not the legitimate western songs but the Nashville fakery of "*some guitar-twanging drugstore cowboy singing 'I Rapped On The Hearse Window, Granny, But You Did Not Look Out'.*" He didn't want his friends to know he was doing that kind of show, so he disguised his voice and called himself Rawhide. He built up a repertoire of characters in different voices, and started writing little skits and parodies of movies. He was still required to play some cowboy songs, which he usually introduced in the most insulting terms possible, occasionally running afoul of some Wilf Carter or Hank Snow fan. He built up a fan base, mostly dear old ladies who would knit socks or bake packages of cookies for him, under the impression that Rawhide was an old man about their age and possibly an eligible bachelor. On his tiny salary as a young announcer, none of these gifts were to be sneered at.

The Rawhide show grew in fame to the point that CBC mandarins invited him to move it to Toronto, minus the cowboy music, for national broadcast. They introduced it without warning, which in retrospect was unwise, as the national audience was not entirely ready for it. It was denounced in the Commons but managed to gain an audience from the majority of listeners who were tired of

listening to military marches and the farm report.

Ferguson chronicles the eccentric radio announcers and hosts of that time, back when a show host could do as he thought best, not as a computer printout from headquarters directed him. One colleague, Allan McFee, was carrying on a feud with a CBC producer who worked in a basement studio. McFee decided to get even by backing his car against the basement window air intake and leaving the engine running all day, in the hopes of gassing his enemy. He never succeeded and had to give up when he realized he couldn't afford the tank of gasoline per day it was costing him.

Although the his show did well, Ferguson had problems with middle management, and eventually set a record for the employee most written up for reprimands. The result was that the executives asked him to become a freelancer, which would eliminate the authority of the managers over him. By this time, in 1954, television was starting to expand in Canada, and Ferguson also became a talk show host. Everything was live-to-air with no chance for retakes, and Ferguson soon learned what dangerous living was.

He once interviewed some sailors who had a pet monkey with them. The monkey got loose but settled on Ferguson's shoulder and began grooming his hair. This was bad enough, but worse yet Ferguson could see on the monitor that the monkey looked like it

was finding things in his hair and eating them. He soon grew to have a distaste for animal acts. He also detested having to interview Hollywood actors, especially brainless young actresses who got the same amount of time as people who had done more important things and had something useful to talk about.

Eventually Ferguson went back to a morning radio show in Halifax, and years later finished up his career hosting a folk music programme. That was after his book, so it is not chronicled.

INSULTINGLY STUPID MOVIE PHYSICS (2007, trade paperback) by Tom Rogers has a title that sums up a common complaint of SF fans. Hollywood gratuitously violates many laws of physics in its movies for no apparent reason. Rogers agrees that some apparent violations are permissible for artistic reasons. Faster-than-light starships are needed because to do otherwise would crimp the plot. You can't have an interstellar war if it takes spaceships millennia to travel between stars. Gene Roddenberry invented the transporter beam for Star Trek because he needed a method to move actors to a planetary surface quickly and get on with the next scene.

Rogers starts off with a look at automatic weapons, such as the action hero who sprays the bad guys with 2,000 rounds from a submachine gun with a 30-bullet clip. The hero would need a sidekick pushing a wheelbarrow full of ammunition clips,

assuming that the gun didn't seize up after thirty seconds from overheating. This cliché was long noted in cowboy movies, where Roy Rogers or Lone Ranger fans began counting how many shots the hero was firing from a six-chamber revolver. Clint Eastwood finally laid this one to rest in a humorous sequence in DIRTY HARRY, where he successfully bluffed a bank robber who wasn't sure if Harry had fired five shots or six. "Are you feeling lucky today?" While many movies still offend, most of them nowadays usually show the hero re-loading during an extended gun fight or dealing with a jammed gun from firing too fast.

The next chapter looks at the conservation of mass and energy, or rather the lack of it in movies. The Hulk is a good example, as a mild-mannered scientist transforms into a green monster twice as tall and three times as heavy. Where did that extra mass come from? And where does it go when he reverts?

In discussing Newton's law of inertia, Rogers looks at space battles. On Earth, if a kamikaze plane was hit by naval gunnery at a decent range, the pieces would be slowed by air resistance and splash into the sea, or at least bounce harmlessly off the ship's hull. Space battles are a different matter. Blow up an incoming starfighter and its pieces will still hit, and with the same energy, since they won't slow in a vacuum.

Gunfights are regularly staged where everyone hides behind crates or ducks behind a wooden wall. In actual fact, the bullets would punch through the drywall or crate and kill or wound. Bullets carry an awful lot of inertia, and a thin plank or sheet of gyprock won't absorb the impact. Other movies have heroes lugging heavy machine guns and firing away without being knocked off their feet by the recoil. On fighter planes, wing-mounted guns shake the plane as it fires, scattering the shells about. However, movies invariably show two parallel straight lines of impacts on the ground, with the hero surviving by staying in the centre between the two neat rows of bullets. In the real world, the hero would be wounded by random impacts.

Explosions are always popular with moviemakers who don't want to waste money on good scripts. Heroes can outrun fireballs without being crispy-fried by the radiant heat or riddled by shrapnel. In reality, any fireball within 10 metres will put you in the burn ward. Movies get around this by using telephoto lenses to compress the view and make the actor look closer than he actually is. Also, fireballs are extremely rare outside oil refinery explosions. Artillery and high explosives generate shock waves and throw out debris and shrapnel.

Rogers notes that knife fights are seldom any more accurate than gun fights in movies. Firstly, why throw a knife? A good street fighter isn't going to throw away his weapon. Knives seldom

instantly kill or incapacitate unless they hit an artery, which why real-life murderers have to stab their victims multiple times.

Rogers concludes with a list of all-time bad-physics movies. THE CORE ranks #1 (reviewed in OPUNTIA #69.1C). Other mentions are the Matrix movies (a supercomputer using humans for battery power, impossible martial arts, battle suits with no front armour), INDEPENDENCE DAY, and many others.

THE PAST WAS PROLOGUE

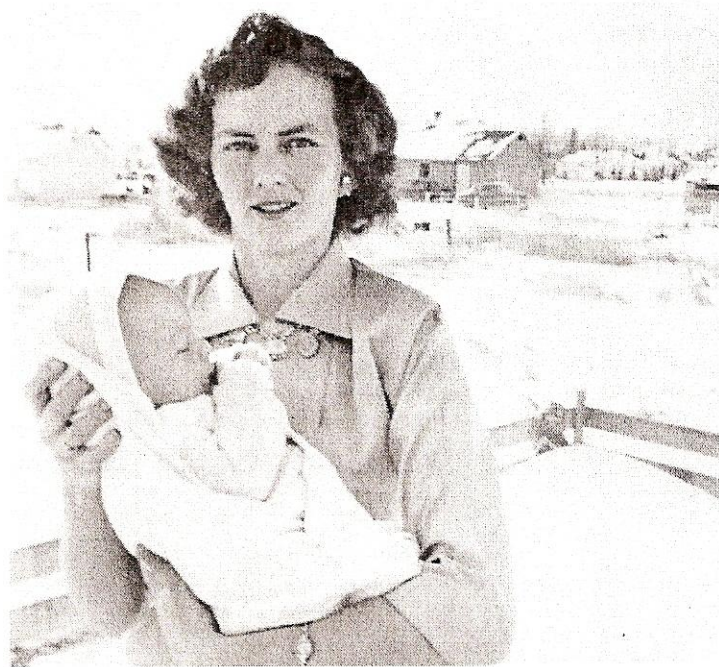
by Dale Speirs

While doing some research among microfilmed newspapers for my postal history of Alberta, I took the time for a side trip to the November 1955 issues of the RED DEER ADVOCATE newspaper. I was born in the rural village of Eckville, in west-central Alberta, on 1955-11-03, a Thursday. Red Deer was the nearest town of any size, about 50 km east of Eckville, and its newspaper was published weekly on Wednesdays. When I was eight, my father bought a farm just north of Red Deer, and thus I have more memories of Red Deer than Eckville. The closest issue of the ADVOCATE to my birth was November 2, and it was probably the last one my parents paid any attention to for the next few weeks while they were dealing with their firstborn.

On November 2, there were two major news items above the fold on the front page. Princess Margaret had acknowledged that she could not marry Group-Captain Peter Townsend. He was a divorced man with two children by a previous marriage. The Anglican Church would never condone such a thing. It must have stuck in her craw decades later when she watched other royals marrying and divorcing without sanction. The other story was a 30-cm dump of snow the previous day, which probably made my father frazzled more than most. He was a livestock veterinarian and had to drive out to farm calls in that weather. With my mother due to deliver any day now, as indeed she did, he must have used every farmer's telephone en route to keep up on her status. It has always snowed in central Alberta at least once before my birthday throughout my life.

The photo at right of my mother cradling me in her arms was taken by my father shortly after I was born. They were out on the patio deck, and you can see the thick layer of snow.

Deeper in the newspaper was a puff piece about the new Kresge department store scheduled to open Thursday in downtown Red Deer. Over the years as a boy I was in and out of that store many times, but never knew that it was exactly the same age as I was. I often ate at the lunch counter, and remember the toy section with its model kits. Model kits cost 50 cents for the cheap ones and as high as \$1.99 for the top-end kits.



There was also an announcement that a pharmacist named Bishop was opening a drug store in central Red Deer on Saturday. It was about two blocks from where I attended high school, and I walked past it many times.

Red Deer had two movie theatres at the time, and years later I attended their shows. These theatres were in the palatial style, not the narrow squash court multiplexes of today. The Capitol Theatre was offering James Stewart in "The Man From Laramie", running from November 3 to 5. In small towns like Red Deer there were no long runs for movies. The theatre was closed on Sunday, but for Monday and Tuesday offered "Simba", *"A bloodthirsty depredation of the Mau Mau organization which terrorized Kenya Province in East Africa."* It starred Dick Bogarde and Donald Sinden. Following on for Wednesday and Thursday was "Special Delivery", starring Joseph Cotten (with an e) and Eva Bartok. The Crescent Theatre specialized in double features. On the day I was born, they began a two-day run of "Angela", *"She was a she-devil in the guise of a saint"*, and "Sun Valley Serenade", starring Sonja Heine and John Payne, with Glen Miller and His Orchestra.

Red Deer didn't have a television station at the time, but did have CKRD radio, which by the time I was old enough to notice had added a television station in later years. Old-time radio was in terminal decline when I was born. The half-hour and one-hour shows were giving way to disk jockeys spinning vinyl, and the few remaining shows were just waiting to be put out of their misery. The only prime-time show left on CKRD on the day of my birth was "Fibber McGee And Molly", reduced to a fifteen-minute show with no live audience from their half-hour show in

a packed theatre during their glory days. For my birth date, the CKRD schedule included "Let's Have Another Cup Of Coffee" at 10h00, followed by "Morning Meditations" at 10h15 (local preachers worked for free), "Homemaker" at 10h30, and "Hits For The Mrs." until noon. From there, it got duller. When I was a teenager I never listened to CKRD, only the Edmonton and Calgary stations that played the Top 40 songs. Usually the best reception was from Edmonton at CHED, and that was the one I almost always listened to unless the atmospherics were bad.

Red Deer is exactly halfway between Calgary and Edmonton so we had the advantage of receiving multiple radio and television stations, as well as same-day delivery of their newspapers. I never saw my father read a book, but he took six newspapers a day, two each from Edmonton and Calgary, and one each from Red Deer and Eckville. That was in the days when newspapers ran their own copy and only used wire services for international news. A strong childhood memory I have is that the living room, the kitchen, and the den were constantly drifted in with newspapers. They were everywhere, scattered on the floor, the couches, and the tables. When we sat down anywhere in the house, we instinctively swiped newspapers off the chair with one hand and threw them onto the nearest pile someplace else. Every few days my mother would gather them in bundles and Dad would take them to the barn or his veterinary clinic for use as animal bedding.

WHAT IS FAPA?

I circulate OPUNTIA through a science fiction apa called Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA). For those of you receiving this issue who do not know what an apa is, please read on.

Modern zine publishing as we know it today began in the middle 1800s as cheap, home-use printing presses became available to the general public. Zinesters developed a distro method called the amateur press association (apa) where members sent x number of copies of their zine to a central mailer (also known as the official editor). The zines are collated into bundles, and each member gets back one bundle of everyone's zines. There is an annual fee to cover postage, but this works out cheaper than mailing individual copies. Apas have a minimum level of activity required, such as publishing 8 pages a year. It must be emphasized that apas are not for passive subscribers; you must commit to the minimum activity level or you will be booted out.

The oldest apa is the National A.P.A., founded 1876. FAPA was founded in 1937. Details from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 994611-1948. In addition to articles, there will be mailing comments on other apazines in the last FAPA bundle. I quote the remark I am commenting on or otherwise make the context clear, so hopefully an outsider can still read the comments with interest.

COMMENTS ON FAPA #302

FAPA bundle #302 received in Calgary on 2013-03-04. The Clearcut Award for the most zine pages went to Earl Terry Kemp with 40 pages.

In the last bundle, I included one of my OPUNTIAs with a report on the Calgary readercon When Words Collide (no L in the middle word). However, almost everyone in FAPA commenting on it misquoted the convention as When Worlds Collide. The title is a pun on the mixture of SF, fantasy, mystery, and romance literary genres that the convention covers. More details can be had at www.whenwordscollide.org

A Different Drummer Your anecdotes of Shirley Jackson and ERB being totally unknown to the people who lived in the same town were hilarious. A Canadian version is about Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, who led the Tories to the largest majority in Canadian history in 1957. An avid fisherman, he decided to celebrate by going angling the next day by himself. (In those days, politicians didn't need bodyguards.) While on the lake, the game warden stopped him and demanded to see his identification and fishing licence. Dief's picture had been on the front pages and television screens for months, but the warden refused to accept his word for it. As Diefenbaker later remarked, had he forgotten his licence at home, his term of

office would have gotten off to a rocky start by being arrested for poaching.

Voice Of The Habu *"I used to believe it was illegal to refuse legal tender but apparently I was wrong. For example, many airlines now will only accept credit card payment, and not cash - legal tender -for lunch orders and such. I have heard the same is true in Canada."* Legal tender refers to the currency, not the form it is expressed in. Credit cards and electronic transfers are billed in legal tender and paid as such. Legal tender means you have to keep your accounts in the official currency of your country. You cannot create your own currency, although tokens, coupons, or trade dollars denominated in legal tender are okay.

There was a recent court case in the USA where a man who was minting "Liberty dollars" in silver was sent to prison. It is permissible to mint private coins made of silver or gold (known as rounds) which do not have a denomination but are simply one Troy ounce of bullion. You can voluntarily accept such rounds as payment, but you cannot insist that everyone must pay you with rounds and nothing else. What is interesting is that several central banks around the world have issued position papers on the threat that Bitcoins, a peer-to-peer virtual currency, poses to them. Since all legal tender currencies in the world today are unbacked fiat currencies that are also virtual, the central banks don't like the idea of competition. So far no action has been taken against

Bitcoins because the volume of them is so small, but if they catch on, something will be done. Probably the Bitcoin users will be labeled as hackers and terrorists and then prosecuted through the usual high-handed legal tactics. -14-

Outlier #2 Re: your analysis of errors in SF book catalogues and how dealers take advantage by adding reprinted dust jackets. This is why I don't collect editions. But book dealers are rank amateurs compared to stamp dealers, especially the amateurs who sell on eBay. Fuzzy scans are popular, especially when the seller claims it is the rare variety. Or they forget to describe defects such as tears, paper thins, or missing perforations. Almost all overprinted stamps on eBay are fakes.

You ask if I get the \$3 sample copy fee for OPUNTIA from new readers. Yes, but I send several back issues at a time so it is fair value. The main reason I ask a fee is to screen out the freeloaders who want a sample without paying. If they got one, they never responded with a letter of comment or zine trade. Nowadays any freeloader requests go into the file without response.

'Where's the money in flash fiction?' My observation of the panelists who said they sell it is that they are lower-income people for whom even a \$10 contest is worth their time and investment. Others do it to try and build up name recognition so they can direct new readers to their Lulu.com ebooks. This I accept as a

valid reason, given that the cacophony on the Internet is so loud that anyone hoping to become an established name has to work very hard at every possible outlet to make sales. A lot of people who think that all they have to do is put the ebook out and sit back as the royalties come pouring in are shocked to find that it doesn't happen that way. At Calgary's readercon When Words Collide, all but a couple tables in the dealer bourse are taken by small-press publishers, not secondhand book dealers. It is a sea change.

Something (Something), And More #1 You wondered why all the early zines have not been scanned and put on line yet. The problem is who is going to do the work. There are tens of thousands of old issues for scanning, but unless Google or some selfless multimillionaire coughs up the money, the only scanning that will be done is intermittently by fans. I've been scanning back issues of Calgary philatelic periodicals but only average about one issue per week, given that I have many other things to do, not to mention my social life. All the back issues of OPUNTIA are scanned, but I'm not going to put them online just yet as I am not comfortable with the passive nature of online readers or the ease with which they can steal and re-use other people's works without attribution. It will be a slow process to scan everything and many zines will never be scanned because no one is interested in them. More importantly, I have my doubts about how often anyone will make use of scanned zines. Few are indexed; some just have author and title indexes which are nearly useless. I have

a cumulative subject index for OPUNTIA for my own use. I also created a subject index for all Canadian zines that I owned, but gave up on it, not because it was too much work but because I realized that no one was interested in getting and using a copy. Modern zinesters have little interest in the past. Instead of writing historical articles citing title, issue number, and pages, most fans just go by "I seem to remember".

Motley You wondered why I call my zine OPUNTIA. As it has been a while since I explained it, I'll repeat it for a newer audience. The genus *Opuntia* is the largest in the Cactaceae. There are two species native to Alberta, *O. polyacantha*, and *O. fragilis*. Back in the late 1970s I studied them in the field and published a few papers on them, as well as Alberta's third cactus species, the unrelated pincushion cactus *Coryphantha vivipara*. (My university degree is in horticulture.) When I started the zine in March 1991, I wanted a short snappy title so I went with that. My car licence plate is also OPUNTIA.

It was interesting to read your note about California taxes. Alberta's provincial income tax rate is a flat 10%, and we have never had a provincial sales tax. I pay an additional 14% in federal income tax and there is the federal 5% Goods and Services Tax, which is a VAT under a different name, although most Canadians think it is a sales tax. Alberta has had a Tory government since 1971,

and the Social Credit party was in power from 1935 to 1971. Both are business-friendly parties, although the Socreds haven't had a seat in the legislature in decades. The opposition Wildrose party is also right of centre. The closest analogue to California in Canada would be Ontario, with massive debt, a stagnant manufacturing economy, and left-leaning government and opposition parties. We have a saying in Alberta that Ontario is a bug in search of a windshield.

Lofgeornost I enjoyed your review of sports pulp fiction magazines from the late 1930s. It is understandable that there are sports news magazines, but that BASKETBALL STORIES or KNOCKOUT MAGAZINE (boxing) could exist as pulp fiction is amazing. You mention travel was more difficult and sports teams fewer back then, but radio would have definitely brought millions closer to their pro sports teams. Until the advent of radio, the major sport in Canada was actually cricket, but in 1931 HOCKEY NIGHT IN CANADA began broadcasting and changed the shape of Canadian sports forever.

A number of years ago I created a single issue of a zine called THRILLING TYPEWRITER TALES for the apa Point Of Divergence. I had been researching the history of rubber stamps and hectographs (published in previous issues of OPUNTIA). In going through old office management magazines in the University of Calgary Library, I came across a couple of short stories about

daring typewriter salesmen getting that big contract or a woman courting her dream man with typewritten messages.

It was a good thing I photocopied those stories because the U of C Library, which had open stacks at the time, is now a closed stack library with no public access; staff and students only, which cuts me out. What used to be the Mackimmie Library is now the Taylor Digital Library, which has enabled the university to lay off most of its library staff. Instead of open stack browsing, there are hundreds of computer terminals now, which are password controlled to only allow staff and students to use them. Few students or staff use the closed stacks because you have to reserve a specific item and come back the next day to get it, and you can't browse to discover what you didn't know was there.

