

OPUNTIA 444



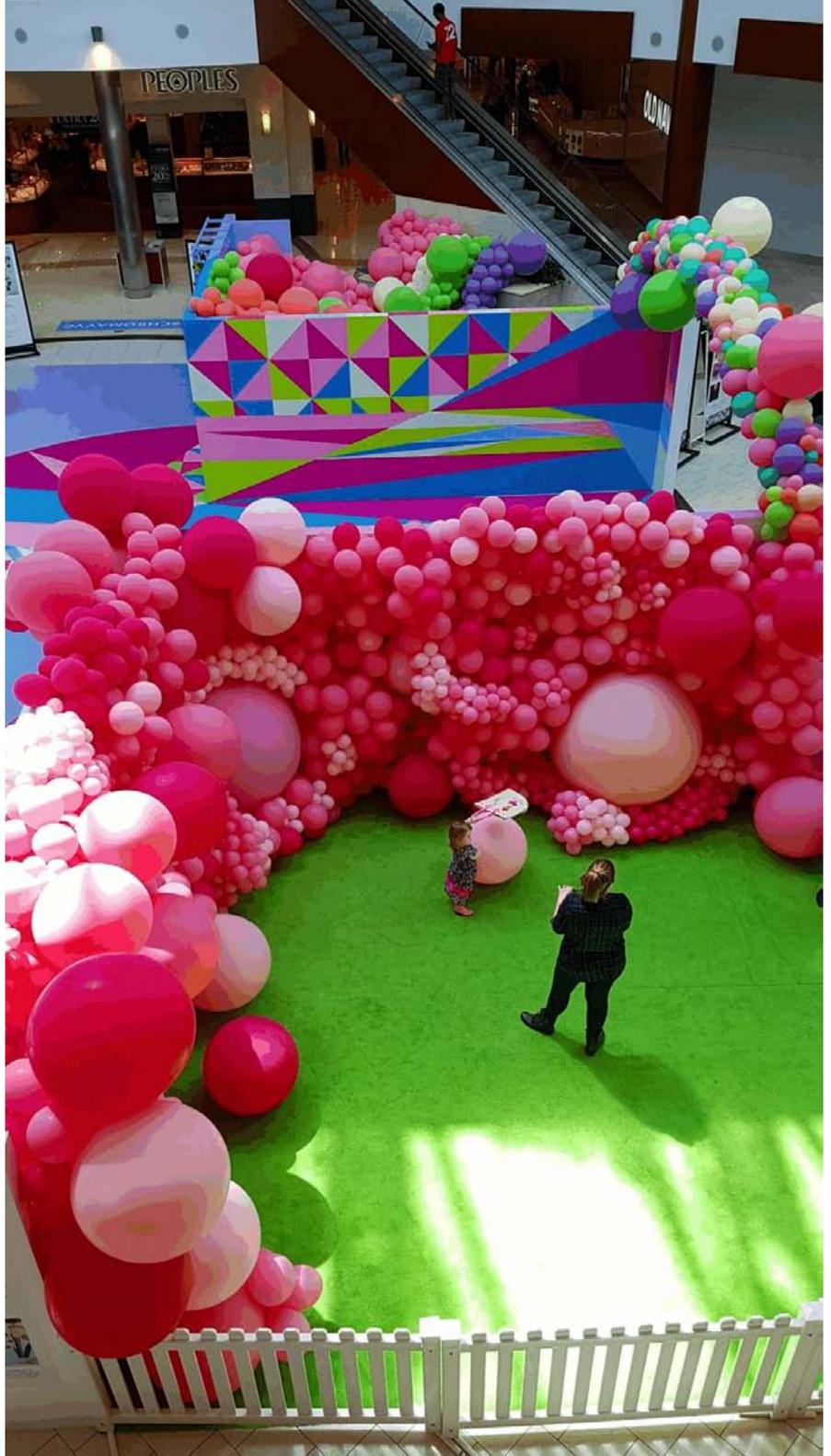
Early June 2019

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

LUFTBALLOONS, BUT I DIDN'T COUNT IF THERE WERE 99
photos by Dale Speirs

As much as possible I like to have something colourful or scenic for the covers, so herewith is an art installation at the Southcentre Mall in Calgary that was staged in May.





JOURNEY TO RED DEER

photos by Dale Speirs

I traveled north on May 25 to Red Deer, a 90-minute drive. The city, population 100,000, is almost exactly halfway between Calgary and the capital city of Edmonton. The reason was for a philatelic conference called Alberta-Wide Stamp Gathering, which brought together stamp clubs from across the province for workshops and seminars.

The details would not be of interest to outsiders. After the conference was over, I did some side road driving on my way back to Calgary. A few photos herewith.

During the lunch hour break of the conference, I strolled down the street and saw this amusing juxtaposition in a shopping plaza. One way or another, you can get spirits at either end of this building.

Returning home, I took the old highway through the village of Penhold, which is about ten minutes south of Red Deer. During World War Two there was a military air base here. The RCAF abandoned the base after the Cold War ended and turned it over to the City of Red Deer, which now uses it as the municipal airport.

Souvenirs of the wars, hot and cold, were on display, seen on the next page.



Below is a view of the airport terminal, with a yellow Harvard trainer aircraft on display. They were ubiquitous over the Canadian prairies during the last war, as numerous air bases on the flatlands trained pilots from across the British Commonwealth.

At right is a relic from the Cold War. Penhold was part of the early warning system. The radar antenna was actually positioned elsewhere on a nearby hill and brought to this park after the radar station was decommissioned.



AROUND COWTOWN

photos by Dale Speirs

On May 9, the City installed a new sculpture on the banks of the Bow River at the southwest corner of the 12 Street SE bridge. The subject was General James Wolfe, who died winning the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759.

That battle ended New France and changed the course of North American history. Calgarians were baffled as to why he should be honoured in a city that wasn't founded until 1875 and is thousands of kilometres from the Plains of Abraham. Wolfe never knew the prairies existed, much less the Bow River.

The statue shows Wolfe's head and shoulders morphing into a flock of sparrows. The plaque on the plinth cited some artistic gibberish about how it was transformative. Our tax dollars in action.





On May 29, I was at the University of Calgary campus. They have an occasional feature called Soapbox Science, whereby researchers do exactly that, get up in the quad and harangue passersby about their projects. This woman was discussing her graduate project on Northern Leopard Frogs. Certainly better than listening to Tories or Dippers.



Calgary is a great city for street and ethnic festivals all summer long, except when the Stampede rodeo is underway, which is the biggest of all festivals. The season begins each year on the first Sunday of June with the Lilac Festival, so-called because they flower in early June. As I walked out my house on June 2 to take the bus downtown, I photographed some of my lilacs in bloom next to the Opuntiamobile.





The Lilac Festival began in 1989 as a street festival in the Mission district taking up a couple of blocks. It has since expanded into the city's largest and longest street fair, with 120,000 attending throughout the day. It now stretches along 4 Street SW from 13 Avenue to the Elbow River, a distance of 13 blocks.

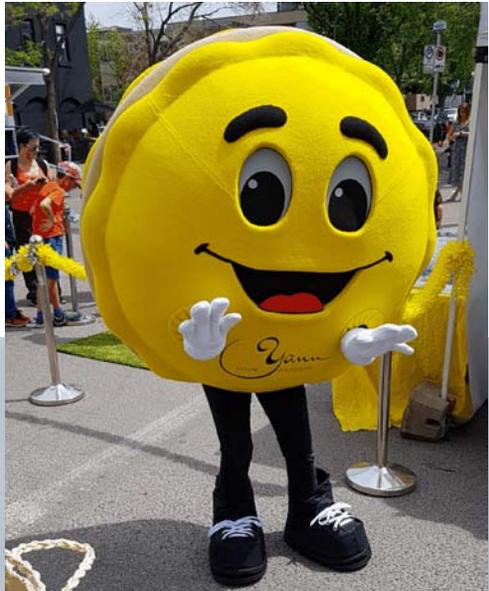
Each side street is blocked off for a half-block and is used by bands and dance troupes. There are hundreds of exhibitors and food trucks. All the restaurants set up patios on the sidewalks, jammed with people paying \$10 for a beer with insects.

At right is Harry the Horse, the mascot of the Calgary Stampede.



Below: I always buy a Bavarian smokie at any street festival I go to, the only time I eat them, and always from The Dogfather.

At right: Even the haute patisseries have mascots.



Dance, dance, dance!



Top: Carifest will be in mid-August, so they were advertising at Lilac Festival.

Bottom: Upside-down milkshakes?



FAR SPEAKING STORIES: PART 8

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 7 appeared in OPUNTIA's #313, 327, 337, 361, 372, 389, and 410.]

Messages.

I am old enough to have had an answering machine for my landline telephone that used tape cassettes. For some brands of machines, one carried a special beeper that was held to the mouthpiece of another telephone and would trigger playback after you dialed your home phone.

In the 1990s, voice mail was introduced whereby one could just dial a number, enter a code, and get messages over the telephone. This was a boon to those away from home who wanted to check their messages.

Then came cellphones with voice mail. Few Millennials have seen the tape machines, and those born since 2000 probably never heard tell of such devices. Ironically, since smartphones came in, I seldom make or receive calls. In an average month, I might have five minutes of calls or voice mails, and two or three times a year I have no voice calls in a month. The majority of my contacts are now by email and texting.

The advent of cellphones has dated many television shows and movies. The SEINFELD television series ran from 1989 to 1998, and went off the air just as smartphones appeared. I have the series on DVD, and it is noticeable how many plot points would not work today when a telephone was involved. By contrast, a more modern series such as THE BIG BANG THEORY had no landlines except in occasional office situations. All the characters used smartphones to advance the plots.

“The Phone Message” (1991) was a Season 2 episode of SEINFELD, written by Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld. The latter played himself in a highly fictionalized version of his life in Manhattan. His sidekick George Costanza was a short insecure man. He had an explosive temper that frequently got him into trouble when a more reasonable person could have avoided it with a bit of diplomacy.

Costanza’s current girlfriend Donna (he usually had a new one every week in the early part of the series) had invited him up to her apartment, but he panicked and

blew the opportunity. Realizing his blunder the next day, he telephoned her but had to leave a message on her voicemail.

She didn’t return his call, which fed his insecurity and caused his thoughts to run away on him. Each day for the next four days, he called back and left an increasingly angrier message. The last one was volcanic, in his words as he told Seinfeld about it.

Donna finally called Costanza at his office, telling him that she had been traveling and couldn’t get her messages because she didn’t have the remote control beeper. Costanza was beside himself, so he hatched an elaborate plan with Seinfeld to switch the tape on her machine before she had a chance to play it back.

They met her outside her apartment as she returned from her trip. While Costanza took her into another room and distracted her, Seinfeld switched her machine tape for a blank one. They succeeded, but there was a twist. Donna mentioned she had her neighbour come over and play back the messages. They both thought Costanza was joking, and the messages were hilarious. All that worry for nothing.

Have I Reached The Party To Whom I Am Speaking?

“The Statement Of Randolph Carter” (1919) by H.P. Lovecraft is a story I overlooked before as an example of early telephone fiction. The narrator told how he and Harley Warren went into a cypress swamp somewhere down south to find an ancient cemetery and then explore one particular crypt.

They had what was for that era some cutting-edge communications, two portable telephones connected by very long cables. The telephones were in briefcase-sized boxes, with enough cable for any length of tunnel likely to be encountered. Warren went down inside the crypt while Carter remained in telephonic communication at the surface.

Warren ran into difficulties, serious ones. He met some of those eldritch horrors that lurk about in Lovecraft stories. It was the last thing he did. As his screams died away, one of those horrors picked up the telephone. In a voice not of this world, it told Carter, who was shouting down the line trying to re-establish contact: “*You fool, Warren is dead!*”

Landlines were used by burglars to verify if someone was at home. If the telephone was answered, nothing more happened. If no one answered, the house was usually empty, and indicated the thieves could enter. Nowadays they use people's Facebook pages to find if they are home or not, because too many idiots update their status to say they are away from home or gone on vacation.

“Telephone Mystery” was a 1955 episode of FIBBER MCGEE AND MOLLY, written by Phil Leslie and Ralph Goodman. This old-time radio comedy series was about Fibber and Molly McGee, suburbanites in the town of Wistful Vista. (This and other OTR shows are available as free mp3s from www.otrrlibrary.org.)

In this episode, Molly had gone out shopping, while Fibber declared his intention to work with his chemistry set and create a form of dynamite that could be wadded into balls, then thrown at tree stumps to blast them out. He couldn't get any work done because every fifteen minutes someone called him, then hung up as soon as he identified himself. He worried it might be someone casing the place.

His friend Doc Gamble stopped by, so the next time the telephone rang, Fibber asked him to answer. He did so, and won \$10 from a radio station quiz contest. The telephone calls kept coming but if Fibber answered, the caller continued to hang up.

Finally the mystery was resolved when another character, known only as the Old Timer, stopped by. Fibber had him answer. This time it was Molly, who explained she was the one calling so frequently. She had been worried that Fibber might blow himself up with his chemistry set, so she wanted to be certain he was okay. She must have spent quite a few nickels at payphones. Today that plot wouldn't work. If the caller ID didn't work, Fibber could simply block that number on his cellphone.

Really Long Distance Calls.

Telephone calls to or from the future have been the basis of many stories, which see previous installments of this column. Another addition I came across on www.gutenberg.org was “Your Time Is Up” by Walt Sheldon (1955 June, *WORLDS OF IF*). The narrator was a Pentagon officer who had been having trouble, as did everyone else there, with a new telephone switchboard system.

He dialed a number and was connected to someone in the far future. Both sides disbelieved each other, but eventually they got it straight. The problem was that at just the critical moment in each conversation, an automatic voice message would cut off the call.

It took a while to work it out, but eventually the officer learned that his career would eventually make him the world dictator and the man who started the Final War. There was a twist ending with the automatic operator.

“Long Distance Call” was a 1961 episode of the television series *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*. It was written by Charles Beaumont and William Idelson. A grandmother gave a toy telephone to her young grandson for his birthday, then died of natural causes within the hour.

He was able to talk to her on the toy telephone after she was dead. She loved him so much that she tried to pull him into death with her. The boy's father then argued on the phone and finally convinced her to leave the living to their lives. It was a very soppy and sentimental episode, giving the actors a chance to go over the top in their emoting.

Another episode of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* was “Night Call”, a 1964 episode written by Richard Matheson. An elderly woman named Elva Keene had been in a wheelchair since a car accident three decades before which killed her fiancée Brian Douglas. She had been driving and the accident was her fault. Since then she had lived with the guilt and remorse about his death.

It was a dark and stormy night as the episode began. After the storm subsided, Keene began receiving telephone calls from a man. She couldn't get the telephone company to trace the calls, although they thought it may have been a line that broke next to a cemetery. It would take a few days to restore proper service.

The calls kept coming and Keene screamed at the caller to go away. A thought occurred to her and she had her housekeeper drive her out to the cemetery. The broken telephone line had fallen onto Douglas' grave and embedded itself into the ground. Returning to her house, she tried to contact Douglas but got nothing. She had, after all, told him to go away.

Factual.

THE PHONE BOOK (2010) by Ammon Shea begins with an often-repeated and now forgotten story about Central American bandits being stymied by armoured trains whose walls were padded with old Manhattan telephone directories. The name of the country and the railway company varied with each telling, but the basic story was the same. Bandits used high-powered rifles to shoot through the steel walls of the carriages. Someone thought of lining the walls with old directories, which stopped the bullets. No documentation was ever found proving that this happened, but as an urban legend it was one of the better ones.

Google killed the story inadvertently and the teenagers of today have probably never seen or heard tell of telephone directories. Those of us of the Boomer and earlier generations remember each year the thick directories being plopped on our doorsteps, and the appeals to turn in the old directories for recycling.



This book began with a discussion of the history of the telephone and who might have invented it.

Alexander Graham Bell managed to get the credit, but he was one of several inventors working on the idea.

After meandering about, Shea got down to the subject at hand. He identified a printed list issued on February 21, 1878, by the District Telephone Company of New Haven, Connecticut, as the first directory. It was just a list of subscriber's names, since telephone numbers did not come into use until 1889. Before that, callers went through an operator in the central exchange. Numbers were irrelevant when big cities only had fifty telephones.

The DTC later that year built the world's first telephone booth, and the following year introduced the first coin-operated telephone. The telephone directories of the 1880s contained detailed instructions on how to operate the gadget. Not that easy, for the earliest telephones had to be hand-cranked in specific patterns, and incoming calls were coded by the number of rings.

Before the telephone, there were city directories, which listed the inhabitants in order of street address, by surname, and by occupation. City directories and telephone directories co-existed for decades.

As the number of subscribers grew, it became necessary to introduce numbers. Operators could no longer know all the subscribers by name. As the quantity of numbers grew, they had to be sorted by district. Numbers became such as "BUtterfield 8", with the first two letters capitalized as part of the number. Then 7-digit numbers came in, causing protests that people wouldn't be able to remember them.

Area codes then had to be added, and today most if not all of North America requires 10-digit numbers (including Alberta). Overlapping area codes were introduced, which caused protests in some cities. In Calgary, nobody cares if your area code is 403, 587, or 825, but Shea tells of snobs in Manhattan who wanted the area code 212 and objected to the seemingly less prestigious 646.

Delivery of telephone directories and recovery of old ones was always a headache for the companies. Some hired contractors, some hired Boy Scouts, and others did it with their own staff. The weight of all that pulp was astonishing.

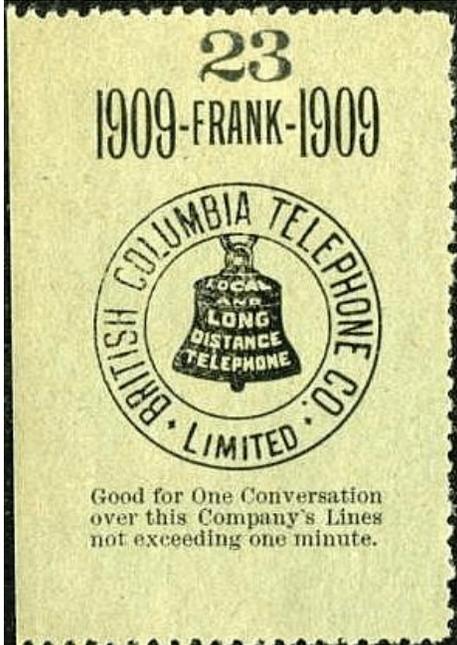
The content was a problem. Accuracy in spelling names and numbers kept many executives from a peaceful night's sleep. Hackers, as they were then not known, tried to get numbers one digit away from a competitor, so as to hijack customers who mis-dialed.

I had personal experience of this during my days with the Calgary Parks Dept. During the 1980s, I was District Foreman of a depot whose telephone number was one digit away from the Sears department store number. We were all trained to answer the telephone "Parks Dept. Maintenance Depot" but had numerous callers who simply didn't listen to us say that, and asked for one of the sales counters. "Isn't this Sears?", many would ask, to which I would reply rather snappishly that if it was Sears, then why did I say Parks Dept.?

A popular stunt was to add extra 'a' or 'z' letters to a company name to be the first in the book or the last, such as AAAA Aaron Plumbing or Zyzzy Ztamp Ztudioz. The greatest difficulty in publishing directories was that they were obsolete even before they came off the printing press, as subscribers were added or dropped, or changed their addresses.

There were odd consequences of telephone directories. One man who knew better than any living person was the American presidential candidate Thomas Dewey. In the 1948 election, polls based on interviews with people randomly selected from telephone directories predicted he would defeat Harry Truman. After the shock of Truman's victory, the analysts went to work.

Although the Great Depression was long over, the telephone was still a luxury in many homes. The supposedly random samples were skewed in favour of middle and upper class homes that could afford telephones and were more likely to vote Republican. The poorer folk without telephones generally voted Democrat, hence Truman's unexpected victory.

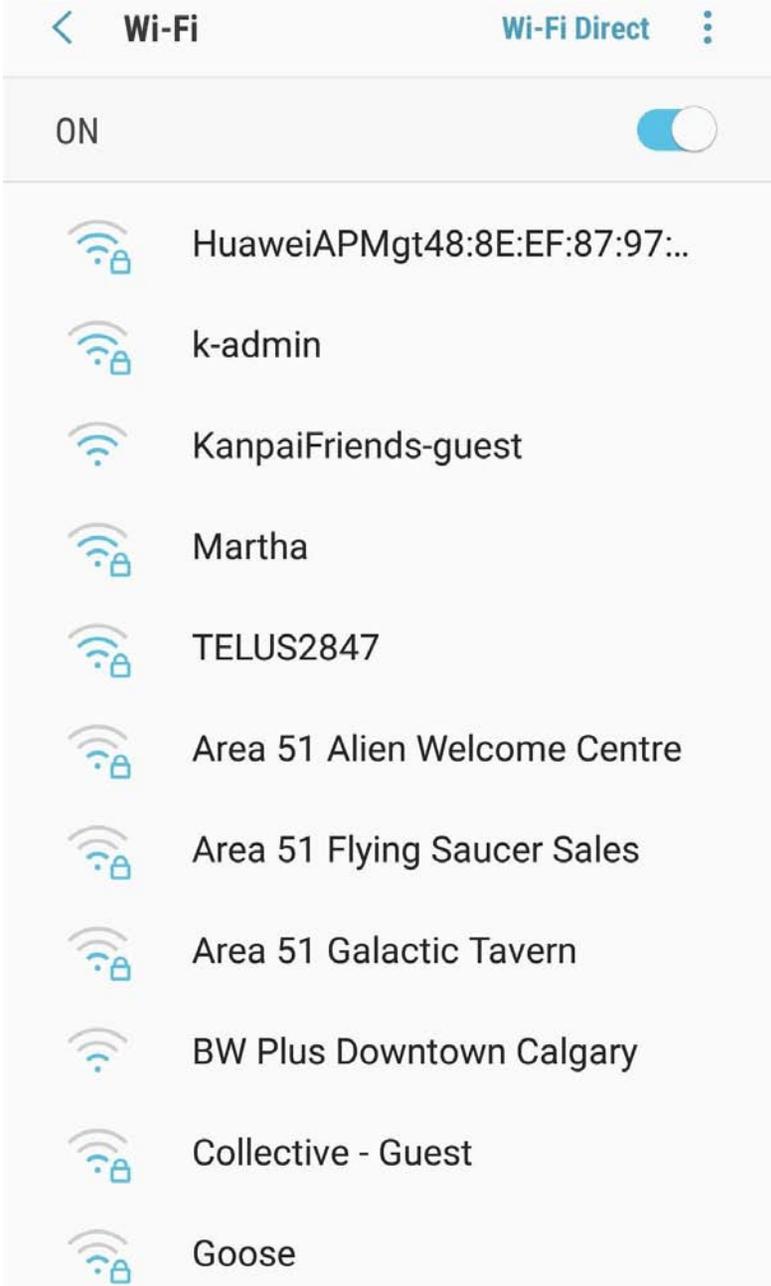


Shea went on to discuss those who collect telephone directories. Most do so for practical reasons, such as historians, genealogists, libraries, and private investigators. Some are just plain book collectors. Some memorized the directory or ripped them in half with bare hands as feats of legerdemain.

Although some cities still have companies that produce yellow-page directories, by and large they have gone the way of telegrams and slide rules.

Wifi.

Like every other smartphone user, I try to use public wifi as much as possible to save on my data allowance. When searching for a suitable wifi hotspot, some of the lists have a few oddball sites. Needless to say, I don't connect to them. The one below was from 8 Street SW in the Beltline, but I couldn't spot any store supplying aliens.



Various other places around Calgary.

Wi-Fi Wi-Fi Direct

ON

AVAILABLE NETWORKS

- CMA2
- Crazybirdlady
- guest.NR.WiFi
- NR.WiFi
- PrettyFly4aWiFi-2.4GHZ
- SHAW-5ECEBA
- TELUS0065-2.4G
- TELUS0411
- TELUS0579-2.4G
- TELUS3263

Wi-Fi Wi-Fi Direct

ON

- Table Tracker Wifi
- IntelliPath
- NTGR_VMB_1534280517
- Punishment Farm
- SHAW-6E1AC0
- 2AFE1D
- Sarina war room
- Sarina_Corporate
- SHAW-DFBDF0
- UCMAS Westbrook
- + Add network

Wi-Fi Wi-Fi Direct

ON

- TELUS5627
- JFEC
- KeepingWealth
- KeepingWealth-Guest
- Sunalta Community Hall
- TELUS3907
- Vector Calgary
- Calgary First Aid
- FUCK OFF
- Research
- + Add network

FINANCIAL FICTION: PART 1

by Dale Speirs

Tontines.

A tontine is a last-person-standing life insurance policy, more like a lottery. Everyone chips in a sum of money, say for example \$10,000 each in a group of fifty members, and the last survivor gets the capital. The interest or other investment income on the tontine may be distributed annually or as the members decide.

Tontines were generally started by people in their 20s or 30s. Many agreed to re-invest the annual payments for the first decade or two to grow the tontine, and not take payments until later in life when they needed it.

When a member died, the annuity payments stopped and the capital invested by that member remained in the tontine. Therefore, as time passed, the capital stayed the same and the annuity payments per member increased, since the same amount of income from the capital was being divided among fewer people. The last survivor would get a fortune.

That is why tontines are illegal in most countries. As the tontine membership dwindled, there was a temptation among some to get the money while they were still young enough to enjoy it instead of when they were doddering old fools. A few murders here and there, staged to look like natural or accidental deaths, could shorten the payback time of the tontine, or at least boost the annuity payments.

Canada does not allow them, not by passing a law against them, but by over-regulating them as financial investments to the point that they wouldn't pay. Tontines are considered life insurance policies, so they would have to meet all the regulations to the point where bureaucratic costs ate up the money.

The other consideration is that when a Canadian dies, their estate is taxed as if it were ordinary income, what is known as "deemed disposed of", even if the property is still passed on to heirs and it wasn't really disposed. This death duty would cut the tontine member's share substantially and reduce the payout.

The USA passed a law against them, period, as a result of which tontines went underground. There probably aren't many today, if any, because the modern

investor doesn't think in such long periods of capitalization. Everyone wants to get rich quick. In old days, when banks and insurance companies were not as trustworthy as they are now (pause for laughter from the audience), a tontine was considered an acceptable workaround to bypass them.

DEATH POINTS A FINGER (1933) by Will Levinrew is a murder mystery novel available as a free download from www.gutenberg.org in a variety of formats. It was about the surviving members of a tontine, almost all of them Confederates but a few Union veterans. Someone was pruning out the few remaining survivors, who were boy soldiers in the Civil War but now elderly men in 1933.

The tontine survivors had a guilty secret from the war, and apparently one of them was using it as justification to kill off the survivors. He was making the deaths look like accidents or suicides, but so many were happening within a few months that suspicion and fear was aroused among the remaining members. They huddled together in a Canadian lake resort but the murderer was still getting to them.

They asked for help from Professor Herman Brierly, a scientific detector, who analyzed the clues from the deaths and proved they were murders. That brought in the newspaper press, personified by star reporter Jimmy Hale, and the police, who were always one step behind. Brierly and Hale did most of the work, while the police trailed behind trying to look useful.

As the deaths continued, it seemed the murderer was acting with impunity, outwitting everyone at every moment. Brierly was implacable though, and frightened the murderer with all the scientific evidence slowly building up. The murderer tried to force Brierly away from the lake by kidnapping a local boy who had nothing to do with the matter, but it only led to his downfall. The killer was in fact a member of the tontine who didn't want to wait for the prize.

The main interest of this novel was in Brierly's methodology. Like Sherlock Holmes, he observed what others missed. He also did a lot of scientific testing with portable equipment, and deduced clues from the facts, not opinions. His step by step investigation gradually drew the noose around the murderer's neck. Well worth reading by mystery fans.

THE WRONG BOX was a 1966 comedy movie written by Larry Gelbart and Burt Shevelove, based on the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd

Osborne. Set in Victorian England, it was about the two final survivors of a tontine, two brothers who had been feuding for years, and their offspring, assorted cousins to each other. The romantic love interest was provided by Michael Caine and Nanette Newman, playing cousins, with Peter Cook and Dudley Moore as two other cousins who were sharp practice men.

One of the octogenarian brothers was presumed dead in after a train collision, but the sharp practice cousins wanted to keep his death a secret until the other brother died, he not being well. Unfortunately there was a mixup with the bodies of the train wreck victims, and the brothers may or may not be dead. The boxes were coffins and heavy freight, constantly being delivered to the wrong address or stolen under misapprehension.

The final sum of the tontine was delivered, £100,000, an incredible sum back in the late 1800s. The climax was a carriage chase which ended up in a cemetery, a fitting end in more ways than one.

The movie played as a farce, the kind the British do so well. Ultimately the tontine wound up with a satisfactory conclusion and the love affair reached the altar. An enjoyable comedy. I had to hunt down the DVD online after a bit of a search but it was worth the trouble.

MRS JEFFRIES AND THE FEAST OF ST STEPHEN (2007) by Emily Brightwell (pseudonym of Cheryl Arguile) is a novel in a lengthy cozy series set in Victorian England. Mrs Jeffries was a housekeeper working for Inspector Gerald Witherspoon of the London Metropolitan Police Force. Not only the dusting and cleaning but some very unofficial sleuthing on the side, which she and her fellow servants concealed from him.

It was just before Christmas. Millionaire and all-round boor Stephen Whitfield had just hosted his last dinner, dying before the second course. He gasped his last after drinking a balloon of port and plopped his face into the soup. It was poison, no doubt.

Inspector Witherspoon was called out, an annoyance to his household staff, who were busy with his and their plans for the holidays. All the staff were Miss Marples, of whom Jeffries was the leadhand. They entered into the case enthusiastically, tailing suspects and sniffing about for evidence. All the while they kept their operations secret from the Inspector. Lots of clues about the dead man's household but no resolution, basically an upstairs-downstairs drama.

The twist was that Stephen Whitfield was a member of a tontine. At suitably lengthy intervals, to avoid suspicion from a cluster of deaths, he sent a bottle of port laced with foxglove digitalis to one of the tontine members. Digitalis kills with symptoms resembling a heart attack. The victims were all middle-aged men with middle-aged spread, just the kind to have a heart attack, so the local doctor would have no reason to suspect anything.

The victims lived in widely scattered geographic locations, so no suspicious clusters would show up in local statistics. Few people outside the group, if any, knew about the tontine, and there was nothing to connect them. Whitfield was discrete, spreading out the attacks in both space and time. His motive was that each death increased his annual dividend from the tontine.

His plans unraveled when he sent a poisoned bottle of port to a fellow tontine member Basil Farringdon. Basil's wife Maria didn't like Whitfield and thought him a pretentious snob. Not knowing it was poisoned, Maria pasted the label of a better-quality wine over the existing one and gave it to Whitfield as a Christmas gift. Since he really didn't know wines like he claimed, he drank down a hearty draft and unknowingly died by his own hand.

A neat twist ending. No charges to be brought by the Inspector, since no one knew the bottle was poisoned but Whitfield. Him being a mass murderer, it would have been difficult to prove any case against him, so justice was served.

THE SIGNIFICANT SEVEN (2010) by John McEvoy was about seven friends who got together at the race track one day in 2002. They went in together on the Pick Six and won over a million dollars. They agreed to use some of their winnings to buy race horses, one of which did well enough to earn a fortune in stud fees. Arnie Rison, the leader of the group, convinced them to form a tontine funded by the income from the horses.

Just why tontines were suppressed was demonstrated in 2009 when members of the group began dying before their time. The deaths appeared accidental, but since the murderer's actions were described, there was no suspense about that part.

Rison might be considered a suspect because the Panic of 2008 ruined his business, but he had terminal cancer. His daughter Renee hired private investigator Jack Doyle to look into the matter.

The case broke open when the hitman got himself stomped by a horse just as Renee called him on his cellphone, and Doyle spotted the caller ID. She was thinning out the tontine in a rush using hired hitmen, in the hopes that her father would live long enough to be the last man standing.

There were, however, some other twists. Basically everybody died except Doyle. A cautionary tale about tontines.

Fiat Currency.

The world today runs on fiat currency, which has no intrinsic value but is accepted by people as long as their government will take it as payment for taxes and fees. It used to be that central banks had to print physical currency, but now the overwhelming percentage is electronic, created by tapping some extra zeros on a computer keyboard to boost balance sheets.

Central banks accept worn-out or damaged currency notes for replacement and then destroy the old ones by shredding or burning. This brings us to a 1949 episode of SHERLOCK HOLMES titled “The Blood-Soaked Wagon”, written by Howard Merrill. (This and other OTR shows are available as free mp3s from www.otrrlibrary.org.)

The story, narrated by Watson, took place in 1899 on a meadow outside London, where the Bank of England was burning old notes in bonfires. Armed guards were everywhere as men shoveled the notes onto the fires, but just to be safe, the Bank hired Holmes to attend, and of course Watson came along.

Even before the plot got going, a considerable suspension of disbelief was required. Banks burn old notes in furnaces in their basements. They don’t haul them out to the countryside, facing the risk of hijacking along the way, and burn them out in the open, facing the risk of a bandit raid.

That was exactly what happened, with gunfire and blood. One bandit leaped into a carriage with the stolen currency, and took off. Holmes and Watson commandeered another wagon and told the driver to chase the bandit. Away they went out into the rural areas. The bandit had a considerable lead, and using the old bank notes, was able to bribe people en route to delay Holmes and Watson. Matters were not helped near the end of the chase when a thick-skulled rural constable refused to believe Holmes and Watson were who they said they were.

Having chased through the night, only at the end did Holmes take a close look at his driver and realize he was Professor Moriarty in disguise. Moriarty escaped, although he had to abandon the bank notes. He was going to take them overseas and circulate them there. Since they were genuine, no one would question them. The Bank of England would only circulate the serial numbers in Britain, not realizing they were outbound to the colonies.

A rather improbable episode, although students of car chase movies might like to reflect on the origin of that trope back in the horse-and-buggy days.

The value of fiat currency constantly declines over time because too much of it is created by the banks. This causes inflation, which the general public blames on landlords, retailers, and unions, without understanding who the real villains are.

If inflation is kept low, in the 1% to 3% range, the general public will not notice the steady drizzle of slowly increasing prices. Inflation is cumulative, and even 1% per year compounds. That is why a hamburger today costs about \$5, when in 1970 it was under \$1, and in the 1950s under 50 cents.

Which brings me to PEOPLE ARE FUNNY, an old-time radio series that ran from 1942 to 1960. After the first year, it was hosted by Art Linkletter, born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. It was a game show, with audience members picked to perform amusing stunts. The first stunt was always an outside one. The participant was asked to do a silly thing out on location. While they were away doing it, with a studio man trailing them to bail them out of trouble if necessary, the intervening time would be filled with a couple of short stunts in the studio.

“Could You Buy A Hamburger With A \$1,000 Bill?” was aired on October 26, 1954 (the upcoming Halloween was mentioned in passing a couple of times). The first contestant, selected from the audience, was Joseph Schaffer, visiting from Toronto. Linkletter had him change into a street bum costume, then sent him out to try to do any transaction in any store under 50 cents but pay for it with a genuine \$1,000 bill. A studio man followed at a distance, and as Linkletter joked, the main reason being to ensure the \$1,000 bill was safely returned.

\$1,000 in 1954 would be about \$10,000 in today’s currency. Few people had seen one for the obvious reason that there were no ordinary retail transactions where such a bill could reasonably be used. They were used by banks to settle

accounts between themselves at overnight clearing houses, when all cheques and drafts issued the previous day had to be paid in cash. Nonetheless the bills could theoretically be used for a retail transaction, provided the shopkeeper agreed to accept it.

Schaffer came back at the end of the episode to report failure, to no one's surprise. His first stop was a hotdog stand. He made sure to take a bite of the hotdog before proffering the \$1,000 bill so that the transaction was committed. He told the counter man that he had no spare change, just the bill.

Before he could react, the counter man grabbed the bill, put it in his cash register, and told Schaffer he could get it back when he brought in the proper change. Since he was otherwise penniless in his street bum outfit, the studio man had to come forward and pay for the hotdog.

At Schaffer's next stop, he bought a pack of cigarettes and was quick to open it and put a cigarette into his mouth before tendering the \$1,000 bill. The shopgirl was stupefied and called in the manager. He looked at the bill closely, and told Schaffer he didn't have enough change. Schaffer insisted on change because he wanted to buy other things. The manager gave him back the bill and told him the cigarettes were on the house.

His third and final visit was to a supermarket where he picked out 20 cents worth of cheese, a full meal in those days. He ate half of it while standing in line at the cashiers, then asked the shoppers ahead of him if he could jump the queue since he only had one item. They let him, and he offered the bill to the cashier. This tied up the queue while she called the manager. They argued a bit, and then he grabbed back the remaining half of the cheese and told Schaffer to get out. From there back to the studio.

A hamburger in Calgary, thanks to the carbon tax and the \$15 minimum wage, is \$6. I don't smoke, but I eat a lot of cheese. A 3-cm wedge is about \$7. Inflation is cumulative, and this episode illustrates how it works over a person's lifetime.

FOOD COZIES: PART 8

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 7 appeared in OPUNTIA's #432, 433, 434, 436, 438, 441, and 442.]

Cozy mysteries are Miss Marple style novels, very popular. Most are worth reading once if you like mysteries, although it is doubtful any of them will stand the test of time. Like zines and Websites, there numerous specialized cozies.

Recipes are generally included, if not at the back of the book, then in between chapters or sometimes integrated into the text. Don't read these books if you have an appetite. I have learned from experience to read these novels on a full stomach.

Coffee And Tea.

Cleo Coyle is the pseudonym of Alice Alfonsi and her husband Marc Cerasini. They have written a lengthy food cozy series about Clare Cosi, manager of the Village Blend coffee house in Manhattan, New York City. Her boyfriend was NYPD Detective Mike Quinn. She had an advantage over village Miss Marples in that the spike of murders around her would not be noticeable in the city's crime statistics. The police did, however, wonder how she managed to be around so many murders.

THROUGH THE GRINDER (2004) began with some of her regular customers meeting deaths around the city that might or might not be accidental. One woman fell in front of a subway train but no one could say for certain if she jumped or was pushed. She was holding a cup of Village Blend coffee at the time. The lazy CSI squad didn't bother picking it up from the tracks, so when the news media photographed the crime scene afterward, that brought some notoriety to the shop.

The narrative then jumped to Cosi to allow some infodumps about how espresso machines worked. Each chapter began with an interior monologue from the serial killer, who was spotting and tracking the victims by watching the Village Blend customers.

The women weren't just buying coffee. Cosi operated a speed-dating room upstairs. She didn't care about that too much until her co-ed daughter decided to try out the service. Several suspects fit the profile of the serial killer, and not

just men, as one of them was a vengeful ex-wife. Many very serious alarms followed in and out of the coffee shop. The death toll climbed.

In the denouement, push came to shove on the rooftop edge of the Village Blend, and not figuratively. The survivor was Cosi since there were more books to come in this series. From there to the recipes, with various types of coffees and Coffee Marinated Steak. Why would anyone ruin a perfectly good piece of beef by soaking it in coffee?

DECAFFEINATED CORPSE (2007) dealt with Clare Cosi's idea that decaffeinated coffee was a good item for her high-end coffee shop. Drinking decaf coffee is like drinking non-alcoholic beer, a pointless exercise that misses the point entirely. Be that as it may, some customers did buy the decaf, so onto the menu it went. The customer is always right.

Cosi's ex-husband Matt Allegro had a friend Federico Gostwick who had a source of naturally decaffeinated coffee beans, not beans with caffeine artificially extracted. Gostwick was beaten up in an alley beside the shop. Cosi found him unconscious and revived him. The mugger took only his hotel keycard.

Gostwick was untrustworthy and uncooperative. He didn't have a clear conscience on the matter of who owned the rights to the natural decaf beans. Much to-ing and fro-ing. The excursions were real excursions, high-speed car chases through Manhattan, or at least what passed for high speed in that traffic. Lots of lane jumping, running red lights, and illegal turns, anyway. Much like a normal rush hour in Calgary, come to think of it.

Allegro publicly uttered threats against a man who a few moments later was thrown from the 26th floor of Gostwick's hotel. That suite was the official launch party of the Gostwick Estate Reserve Decaf, but it wasn't just the beans that were launched.

Even before the ambulance arrived to scrape the dead man off the sidewalk, a second murder took place at the party. Cosi outdid herself that night. And that didn't include the subsequent gunfight before the party broke up. The casualties mounted faster than a Clint Eastwood movie.

It took a while for Cosi, the survivors, and the police to sort out who did what to whom and why. All for the love of coffee. Finally the reader will reach the

recipes section where no one died but the baked goods might clog your arteries and get you later. Also a recipe for Coffee Syrup, which was exactly what the name suggested.

Having been banned by that hotel, Clare Cosi continued on as a murder magnet in FRENCH PRESSED (2008). She was fretting about her daughter Joy Allegro's romance with an older married man, chef Tommy Keitel. Cosi despised him, but to keep a motherly eye on her 20-something daughter, she accepted a contract to supply Keitel's restaurant with micro-roast and French pressed exclusive coffee blends for him.

There was trouble down at the kitchen and Joy was in the middle of it. Her previous boyfriend Vinny Buccelli became the first victim, apparently because he saw something in the kitchen that the murderer preferred not be known to others. Keitel did not long outlast him, being murdered in the kitchen in the same way. Joy was arrested, so her mother went into full Miss Marple mode.

The bloodshed continued, almost including Cosi. The motives and some newly introduced characters need careful tracking by the reader but all came down to blackmail and protecting reputations. The restaurant was a cut-throat operation in more ways than one.

No coffee recipes in the appendix. There was borscht and Coq au Vin, not traditionally associated with coffee shops.

BILLIONAIRE BLEND (2013) began with a bang, a real one. Internet billionaire Eric Thorner was sipping on a coffee and chatting with Clare Cosi when a bomb blew up his car. It had been parked in front of the shop, and the unfortunate chauffeur was sitting in it at the time. The explosion blew in the front of the shop.

A glass shard embedded itself into Thorner's neck. Cosi provided first aid and helped save his life. In gratitude, he asked her to take on a project for him, to create the world's most expensive coffee blend. She moved into what was not high society but stratospheric society.

Jetting around the world with him, she had to wonder about the manner in which some of Thorner's acquaintances departed life. The attack on him might have been in revenge for some of his crimes or his womanizing.

Notwithstanding Cosi's sudden elevation, life continued on at the coffee shop. They faced a three-week shutdown to repair the damage from the explosion. The staff were worried because they didn't make that much to begin with. An extended layoff would devastate their finances. Thorner did buy a new top-line espresso machine for the shop.

In between worrying about coffee blends and cooking the coffee shop baked goods, Cosi did a bit of sleuthing. Ultimately it boiled down to some members of the Thorner family wanting to take over the company in the worst way possible. That got sorted out in time for the recipes appendix, with lots of baked items to fatten you up.

ONCE UPON A GRIND (2014) opened with New York City celebrating Fairy Tale Week. One presumes a city that big uses up quite a few festivals over and above the regular statutory holidays, so fairy tales were a fill-in. The mayor thought it up.

A musical featuring Red Riding Hood was a hit on Broadway. Clare Cosi had her coffeemobile at a Central Park festival called Storybook Kingdom. Her theme was Jack and the Beanstalk. Her ex-husband was peddling Ethiopian coffee beans which supposedly had magical powers. They had some sort of mild hallucinogen in them, so they really were magic, as Cosi found out the hard way when she drank coffee made from them and went tripping.

It wasn't just tripping on coffee. Cosi went wandering in the woods but instead of meeting the Big Bad Wolf, she found Sleeping Beauty. The police said she was in a coma from a drug overdose. Cosi knew better, since as a Miss Marple she could outshine the resources of the NYPD, and since if she didn't investigate, there wouldn't be a novel.

Another woman got a drug overdose, this time fatal. The plot itself drifted around like a stoner who had one puff too many, or perhaps one magic bean too many. An inordinate number of Russian immigrants came and went, mixed up in various fraud schemes. It all ended in tears and gunfire.

After the police recovered the last shell casing, Cosi was offered a chance to manage a Washington, D.C., coffee shop, setting up a future story line. Before that, a stop at the recipes appendix for lessons from Madame Tesla in fortune telling with coffee grinds.

Sit-Down Restaurants.

GRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT (2002) by Tamar Myles was a novel in a lengthy food cozy series about Magdalena Yoder of Hernia, Pennsylvania, in the heart of Mennonite and Amish country. She operated the PennDutch Inn. Insert your own jokes here about naming a village after a ruptured abdomen, and yes it was, being the affliction of the founding father.

Hernia was a small village and the Deppity Dawg was not a cook, so Yoder had the contract to supply meals for prisoners. The shrimp and grits turned out to be the last meal for Clarence Webber, run in for credit card fraud. Someone flavoured the grits with arsenic. The recipe was included in the text, between chapters, but minus the arsenic. Presumably the publisher's legal counsel proofread the manuscript.

Four women claimed to be the unlamented Webber's widow. Yoder had her own distraction, a teenager who claimed to be her daughter, although Yoder had never given birth. The Deppity Dawg was feuding with the mayor, as both were running for a vacant seat in the legislature.

After a pause for a recipe on how to make coarse grits (boil them), Yoder carried on Marpleing. Many suspects were dredged up, along with several different ways to flavour grits, plus one souffle recipe (how did that get in there?). The murderer was run to ground, not only figuratively but in a basement. She was an ex-wife of Webber, who had done her wrong. One final grits recipe and that's all she wrote.

CUSTARD'S LAST STAND (2003) carried on the bloodbath. Kentucky colonel George Custard was a real-estate developer who wanted to build a huge and hugely inappropriate resort hotel in Hernia. It wasn't poison that did him in, but a gunshot in the PennDutch Inn.

The opening sentence of this novel was: "*I much prefer Hernia to Intercourse.*" (There really is a town called Intercourse, Pennsylvania.) After a quick interruption for a Pear And Ginger Custard recipe, the plot began moving.

Alas, the Colonel didn't make it as far as the Cinnamon Caramel Custard recipe. The action and the recipes came fast and furious with lots of past histories exposed that the citizens of Hernia preferred to stay hidden.

The murderer was a woman who opposed the hotel because the land had once been hers. She had buried her husband there much against his will and without mentioning it to authorities. She didn't want a murder rap when, not if, a backhoe dug up his remains.

There was more excitement when Magdalena Yoder tangled with a full-grown rock python. Once the dead and the snakes were sorted, on to the final recipe of Creme Brulee. If the reader made it this far without abrogating a healthy diet plan, then congratulations.

THOU SHALT NOT GRILL (2004) took place as Hernia was celebrating its bicentennial. Magdalena Yoder's inn was fully booked and there was big excitement in the village. The guests were delineated with care and then, after a quick recipe for Grilled Grouper, one of them was murdered. Rather unsporting, but there he was.

Buzzy Porter, the victim, was a practical joker of the worst kind, so there was no point in checking for motives. Yoder, investigated as any good Miss Marple would do, pausing only for the Grilled Chicken Breasts With Eggplant, Creole Style. Always popular, I'm sure, in Amish/Mennonite country.

There were many bicentennial events, including a bake-off, tractor pull, and time capsule. The last was from 1904 but went missing amidst rumours that it contained a key to a vast fortune. It was therefore the MacGuffin of the plot.

Yoder was a busy woman, what with her guests and her sleuthing. The Grilled Breaded Veal Chops came and went, and the denouement arrived just after the Beer Butt Chicken (I'm a teetotaler so I'll skip that one).

The treasure hunt was the climax. It might have been bloodier but Yoder was able to escape with a single bound over a cliff. An actual bound, relying on her long Mennonite skirts to break her fall by snagging on branches.

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS (2006) had the Mennonites of Hernia in an uproar over a proposed winery, they being teetotalers. What had Magdalena Yoder upset was that the developers were also intending a hotel, thus destroying her monopoly as an innkeeper. The developers were a young widow Felicia Bacchustelli and her brother-in-law Vinnie Bacchustelli (always with the cutesy names in cozies).

The farm being redeveloped as Grape Expectations had been in the Gingerich family for generations, but Ed, the last of the line, sold out for \$13 million. What he didn't count on was the anger of everyone else for dealing with the devil, or in this case, the Bacchustellis. He had last-minute remorse and tried to back out of the deal but too late.

Felicia didn't make it to the Stuffed Cornish Game Hens recipe, as her body was found in a drainage ditch. Yoder went into snooping mood. Skipping past the Grape Glazed Carrots (yuck) and beyond the Concord Grape Trifles, Yoder was hampered by her own family troubles. There was some violence around the Grape Parfait Pie, but not until the Concord Grape Cake did everything fall apart.

Yoder, who never learned, got into the murderer's bad graces, and barely survived. Gingerich had tried to convince Felicia to cancel the deal but did not succeed, so he canceled Felicia instead.

BATTER OFF DEAD (2009) took place considerably later, by which time Magdalena Yoder was married and about to give birth to her first child. At her Mennonite church's annual pancake breakfast, Minerva Jay slumped over dead from one pancake too many. It was poisoning. (We never have this sort of trouble at the Calgary Stampede.)

The Deppity Dawg's second stop, after the crime scene, was Yoder's house. As he said: "*Your presence at the breakfast was a sure sign of foul play.*" Since this novel was the 17th in the series, and let's say about 25 murders in total, he could not be faulted for his attitude. After Chapter 4 came a recipe for Banana Sour Cream Pancakes. Hopefully they will be safer for the reader than for poor Minerva.

Any investigation about the death was subsumed by endless theological arguments over how the baby should be raised. One hardly had time to enjoy the popovers called Dutch Baby With Cardamom Honey Apples. Not a chapter went by without biblical verses as the investigation proceeded, both police and Marple.

It was actually criminal negligence. The cook who prepared the pancake batter accidentally dropped his medication into it. If Minerva Jay hadn't been such a glutton, she wouldn't have overdosed on someone else's pills. As Bismarck observed, if you like laws or sausages, do not watch either one being made.

BUTTER SAFE THAN SORRY (2010) began with a bank robbery. Magdalena Yoder was making a deposit at the time, with her infant son Jacob in tow. Three gunmen, dressed as Amish but obviously not, were there at the same time making an unauthorized withdrawal.

All those alarums and murders of the previous seventeen novels, plus being an eyewitness to an armed robbery, finally got to Yoder. She had a nervous breakdown and was consigned to the Sisters of Perpetual Apathy convent, located conveniently directly across the road from the PennDutch Inn.

That wasn't enough to keep her long away from Marpleing. Off she went, even before the first recipe, Sea Turtles, which turned out to be chocolate nut clusters, not the actual animal. The inn was afflicted with nutcase guests, in keeping with the recipe. All the subsequent recipes contained at least one stick of butter, often two, from the ill-advised Rosemary Blue Cheese Cookies to the tastier Lemon Grass Snowballs.

During her sleuthing, Yoder encountered a woman V'h'Neek'qQ'WA'a Smith. No, not a Klingon; her mother was from Benin and wanted an unusual name to go with the bland surname. Just before the Lavender Sugar Cookie recipe (two sticks of butter), the plot took an improbable turn when Yoder suddenly realized all the guests at the inn were named after Russian lakes and rivers. They were, in fact, a gang of thieves and bank robbers.

There was the traditional taking-Miss-Marple-hostage routine. It ended with an hilarious scene inside the Yoder chicken coop, followed by a car chase. And so to the Sour Cream Pound Cake (one cup softened butter).

TEA WITH JAM AND DREAD (2016) welcomed the Earl and Countess Grimsley-Snodgrass and their family to the PennDutch Inn. They were a bunch of snobby eccentrics, veddy English. The first recipe was short since how to make tea is not something that requires a journeyman chef. The novel meandered about, setting up for what was to come, not long after the Banana Nut Bread recipe.

The corpse, and there was one, was a visitor stuck to the elevator car roof at the inn. The plot became complicated fast. In many of the chapters a close reading of the text was required to keep track of all the characters and why they were hanging around Hernia.

The Brits were not as they seemed. One of them was an impersonator who was into serial killing on the side, and worse yet, a relative on Yoder's side. The novel ended in a tangled mess, somewhat sour in taste from over-plotting. The reader will not be surprised at the final recipe, Grapefruit Marmalade.

FROM HERRING TO ETERNITY (2013) by Delia Rosen was a novel in a food cozy series about Gwen Katz of Nashville, Tennessee. Not a village, which is surprising for cozies. She inherited her uncle's delicatessen, Murray's Pastrami Swami, and with it much else, such as a college professor who had exercised the right of eminent domain to dig up her basement for Civil War burial grounds.

Going from bad to worse, a customer died after eating the herring platter spiced with mercury. The investigating detective was Katz's ex-boyfriend, who should have recused himself from the case. The subplots multiplied. There was a professional treasure hunter who operated deep within the grey area of salvage laws. He looted sites with a shovel in one hand and replevin appeal documents in the other.

It being Nashville, there was a record producer with a guilty conscience. Katz got mixed up with a Wiccan coven fighting lawyers with statements of claim rather than magic spells.

A second customer died from a cruller, sister of the first victim. Don't eat at Murray's seemed to be wise advice. The finale was a murderous convocation of Wiccans, Cherokees, SJWs, and basically anyone who ever set foot in the deli. The motive was just barely plausible for a madman but highly doubtful for a varied collection of people working at cross-purposes. Disclaimer: I have never eaten herring and never will.

From a different food cozy series was THE MISSING DOUGH (2013) by Chris Cavender (pseudonym of Tim Myers). Eleanor Swift of Timber Ridge, North Carolina, operated the Slice Of Delight pizzeria with her sister Maddy, whose private life got this novel going.

Maddy's ex-husband Grant Whitmore arrived in town to try and win her back, notwithstanding that she was affianced to Bob Lemon. The two men later got into a public fight at the Founders' Day Festival, next to the barbecue stands. A short while later someone eliminated Whitmore from the gene pool with a barbecue skewer through the heart.

Lemon was the obvious but not the only suspect. Whitmore made a lot of enemies, including several women and a shifty business partner. Also transpiring was a complicated twist that would give Maddy a large inheritance because of Whitmore's death.

There was lots of high drama in the pizzeria as various characters came and went. Interrogations by Miss Marple, pardon me, Eleanor, were much easier over a slice. As per standard practice, she used break-and-enters to collect evidence, not that any of it could be used in court.

The root cause of all the evil was the love of money. Whitmore had been involved in financials shenanigans that cost one of his ex-girlfriends dearly. She settled up the accounts by using a skewer on him, then set about to muddy the trail and shower others with the blame.

After the usual fight-to-the-death scene, the novel wrapped up with recipes for cheese sticks and mini-calzones, which only took up a page and a quarter. No exotic pizza recipes, alas.

THE WEDDING SOUP MURDER (2014) by Rosie Genova (pseudonym of Rosemary Di Battista) was a novel in a food cozy series about Victoria Rienzi. She was a waitress in her family's restaurant in Oceanside Park, New Jersey. It was a peaceful seaside village until she lost her job in the big city and moved back home to work in the Casa Lido restaurant. Now it would become a blood-soaked village where even Mafioso fear to tread.

Casa Lido was the caterer for a wedding at the Belmont Beach Country Club. Their specialty was Italian meatball soup. Rienzi had her hands full at the reception, dealing with a bridezilla, feuding staff and servers, not one but two chefs with giant egos, and an antagonistic country club president Elizabeth Merriman. That last one was a battleaxe who fought with everyone, so it was no surprise that her body was found on the beach the morning after the reception.

There were plenty of suspects. Merriman had threatened another club member with legal action over him embezzling funds. She had previously owned a company that lost a liability lawsuit about asbestos killing its workers. A gigolo was courting her for her wealth. Her darkest secret, unearthed late in the novel, was that as a young woman she had given birth to an illegitimate child and given it up for adoption.

Miss Marple, pardon me, Rienzi, was busy sleuthing whenever she could get out of the restaurant kitchen. She was apprenticing in the business, and had to do a lot of the scutwork. Being a chef involved a lot of monotonous work, especially when serving large groups.

One of the other cooks had a father who died from asbestos exposure and was herself dying from the delayed effects of secondary contamination. No gunfights or hostage takings, as the murderer committed suicide rather than die in a hospital bed gasping for breath.

A sad note upon which to turn to the recipes. They began, naturally, with Italian Meatball Soup, the Beef Ragu (with lots of tomato sauce and garlic), and to cleanse the palate, Ricotta Cookies.

HUMMUS AND HOMICIDE (2018) by Tina Kashian (pseudonym of Tina Sickler) was the first novel in a food cozy series about Lucy Berberian. She was a waitress in her family's restaurant in Ocean Crest, New Jersey. It was a peaceful seaside village until she lost her job in Philadelphia and moved back home to work in the Kebab Kitchen restaurant. Now it will become a blood-soaked village where even Mafioso fear to tread.

This series is different from all the other food cozies where a woman comes back home to work in the family restaurant. This one had Armenian food, not Italian, so there. It is astonishing how closely many cozy series track each other without lawsuits over plagiarism or intellectual property.

To be fair, science fiction is not immune either. I bought the DVD of the first season of THE ORVILLE under the impression it was a new Star Trek series. All that is for another essay some other time.

Heather Banks, an old high school classmate and enemy, just got on as food inspector and was using her position to harass Berberian with trivial citations. When Banks dropped dead in the street from poison, source unknown, the police didn't look too far for a suspect.

Nor did they wonder about motives, as Banks was not popular with any restaurateur, had romantic problems, and gambling debts. Notwithstanding that, the detective in charge took the easy way and went after Berberian. She had to go Marpleing in self-defence.

Berberian seemed to spend more time in other restaurants than her own, particularly a certain pizzeria. I wasn't surprised and I'll say out loud what other people are thinking but don't want to admit, that pizza beats hummus any time.

Finally though there was the usual confrontation, and the culprit was arrested for the murder. The Berberian family breathed a sigh of relief that the Kebab Kitchen wouldn't have to close. Banks was poisoned but not by them. Now it was time for a hearty helping of hummus, salad, and almond cookies, recipes for which were in the appendix. I'll still take the pizza.

STABBED IN THE BAKLAVA (2018) was the sequel. The Kebab Kitchen catered a high-society wedding. No, no poisoned food, but the best man Henry Simms got a skewer in the back. The head chef at Kebab Kitchen was the main suspect, having gotten into a public argument with Simms over a business deal gone wrong. Detective Clemmons, who had considered Berberian the prime suspect in the previous novel, was once more on the job.

The wedding reception rolled on, unaware that in the parking lot Simms's body had been dumped into the Kebab Kitchen van. Clemmons and Lucy Berberian raced each other to find the killer. He followed his usual procedure of picking a suspect, in this case the chef, and then gathering evidence to fit him.

Lots of back stories about romantic entanglements with and between the families of the deceased and the bride. It was one of those which broke the case. Clemmons won the race, what with the police being better equipped for that sort of thing, contrary to the belief of Miss Marples everywhere.

A sort of peace treaty was made. Clemmons arrived at the Kebab Kitchen with the advance news of the arrest. As a peace offering, Berberian offered him a baklava, which he accepted.

From there to the recipes. The baklava and shish kebab were obvious. I suggest you use balsa wood skewers, in case one of your guests decides to use a metal skewer to settle an argument at the dinner table. The Stuffed Grape Leaves With Meat And Rice seemed a fairly safe recipe.

Not directly a food cozy, but certainly near the subject, was KILLER GOURMET (2015) by G.A. McKevevett (pseudonym of Sonja Massie). This was a novel in a series about Savannah Reid of San Carmelita, California. She was, to put it politely, plus-sized, and never walked past a restaurant without going

inside to check the menu. She operated the Moonlight Magnolia Detective Agency and managed to marry a local police detective.

The plot opened with some friends opening a new restaurant, the kitchen under the direction of chef Baldwin Norwood. As he readily admitted and didn't hesitate to tell people whether they asked him or not, he was a great sous chef. At least one person disagreed, however, and stabbed him fatally, then used a meat cleaver just to make certain.

Norwood had many enemies, personal and business, so motives were not lacking. Reid went sleuthing, munching nibbles continuously along the way, and bribing morgue attendants with chocolate chip cookies. Eventually uncovering the greasy details of Norwood's life, Reid found the culprit, a woman done wrong by him.

Not a food cozy, nor any recipes, but it might be wise to read this after you've eaten. The novel was humorous as many cozies are not, and reads well for a laugh.

IT'S A WONDERFUL KNIFE (2016) by Christine Wenger took place in December when Trixie Matkowski, proprietor of the Silver Bullet Diner in Sandy Harbor, New York, slipped on ice in a bad fall and broke her leg. She had a restaurant to run, events to cater, and the Christmas pageant and community dinner was near.

Things went from bad to worse when Liz Fellows, the pageant director, was found with a knife in her back. The knife came from the diner kitchen, as no one would be surprised to read. Fellows was a bossy woman but hardly worth killing, although someone obviously thought so.

Friends, family, and employees helped Matkowski with the restaurant and catering, but she managed to get in some snooping. The Internet is a wonderful tool if you're on crutches. Remarkably she managed to corral the murderer in person. The killer had been embezzling from the church and was threatened with exposure by Fellows.

After all that was sorted, it was still the Christmas season, on to the recipes. The Chocolate Whiskey Cookies had five jiggers of Jack Daniels in them, so don't eat and drive. From Canada, there was our contribution to the epidemic of morbid obesity, the Poutine.

WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Québec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. 2019 will be the 26th year of the WWP. Mark your calendars now!

At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of zinedom around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe.

At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour.

Raise a glass, publish a one-shot zine, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Paxton, C.G.M., and D. Naish (2019) **Did Nineteenth Century marine vertebrate fossil discoveries influence sea serpent reports?** EARTH SCIENCES HISTORY 38:16-27

Authors' abstract: *Here we test the hypothesis, first suggested by L. Sprague De Camp in 1968, that "After Mesozoic reptiles became well-known, reports of sea serpents, which until then had tended towards the serpentine, began to describe the monster as more and more resembling a Mesozoic marine reptile like a plesiosaur or a mosasaur."*

This statement generates a number of testable specific hypotheses, namely:

- 1) there was a decline in reports where the body was described as serpent or eel-like;*
- 2) there was an increase in reports with necks (a feature of plesiosaurs) or reports that mentioned plesiosaurs; and*
- 3) there was an increase in mosasaur-like reports.*

Over the last 200 years, there is indeed evidence of a decline in serpentiform sea serpent reports and an increase in the proportion of reports with necks but there is no evidence for an increase in the proportion of mosasaur-like reports. However, witnesses only began to unequivocally compare sea serpents to prehistoric reptiles in the late nineteenth century, some fifty years after the suggestion was first made by naturalists.

Speirs: I had the privilege of meeting De Camp at several Calgary science fiction conventions. He was a gentleman and a scholar, and looked the part. I've reviewed some of his alternative histories in past issues of this zine. His hypothesis about sea serpents was unknown to me until I stumbled across this paper, but it makes sense. It is known, for example, that UFO reports of the 1800s described them as glowing spheres like balloons, then in the early 1900s as cigar-shaped like Zeppelins.

Evans, M.J., et al (2019) **Hourly movement decisions indicate how a large carnivore inhabits developed landscapes.** OECOLOGIA 190:11-23

Authors' abstract: *The ecology of wildlife living in proximity to humans often differs from that in more natural places. Animals may perceive anthropogenic features and people as threats, exhibiting avoidance behavior, or may acclimate to human activities. As development expands globally, changes in the ecology of species in response to human phenomena may determine whether animals persist in these changing environments.*

We hypothesize that American black bears (Ursus americanus) persist within developed areas by effectively avoiding risky landscape features. We test this by quantifying changes in the movements of adult females from a population living within exurban and suburban development. We collected hourly GPS data from 23 individuals from 2012 to 2014 and used step selection functions to estimate selection for anthropogenic features.

Females were more avoidant of roads and highways when with cubs than without and were more responsive to increased traffic volume. As bears occupied greater housing densities, selection for housing increased, while avoidance of roads and responsiveness to traffic increased. Behavioral flexibility allowed bears in highly developed areas to alter selection and avoidance for anthropogenic features seasonally.

These findings support the hypothesis that black bears perceive human activity as risky, and effectively avoid these risks while inhabiting developed areas. We document a high amount of individual variation in selection of anthropogenic features within the study population. Our findings suggest that initially, wildlife can successfully inhabit developed landscapes by effectively avoiding human activity. However, variation among individuals provides the capacity for population-level shifts in behavior over time.

Pinkerton, E., et al (2019) **Reconciling social justice and ecosystem based management in the wake of a successful predator reintroduction.** CANADIAN JOURNAL OF FISHERIES AND AQUATIC SCIENCES 76:1031-1039

Authors' abstract: The reintroduction of a previously extirpated predator can engender conflict when the reintroduced species depletes customary fisheries to which indigenous communities have constitutionally protected rights.

*In the case of sea otter (*Enhydra lutris*) recovery on the west coast of North America, not only is Canada's Species at Risk Act in conflict with Indigenous rights, but it also illuminates gaps in the principles of ecosystem-based management (EBM), such as equity and social justice.*

Broadly, we ask in this paper how EBM might be advanced if Indigenous communities were viewed as components of ecosystems having rights to a sustainable future equal to other components. Specifically, we explore evidence of sea otter management among precontact Northwest Coast societies and a contemporary co-managed system proposed by the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations that would combine research with refinement of traditional hunting practices.

We show that barriers persist through lack of knowledge of past controlled hunts, ignorance of recent experiences of successful community-based clam management, distrust of Indigenous capacity to self-manage or co-manage a hunt, and divergent values among actors.

As the reintroduced sea otter made a successful recovery, growing at a rate of 19% per year between 1977 and 1995, and expanding its range up and down the coast, a conservation conflict quickly became apparent; the language of the acts above had not envisaged the impact on humans, nor conceptualized coastal

human communities as part of ecosystems past or present or containing people with any rights or roles in designing conservation objectives, targets, or the strategies to meet them.

The Nuu-chah-nulth, into whose traditional territory the sea otter were reintroduced, were not duly consulted or informed about the reintroduction. The failure to imagine the impact on humans was evident, for example, in a 1992 report on the Checkleset Bay Ecological Reserve established in 1981 to protect sea otters and their habitat. The report acknowledged that the indigenous people (the northern-most Nuu-chah-nulth Nation), into whose territory the sea otter had been re-introduced, held constitutionally protected rights to Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) fisheries.

However, it did not foresee that FSC shellfish would be profoundly reduced in numbers and size and that sustained FSC shell fisheries would become essentially nonviable with the reintroduction of sea otters as a protected species, one that could not be hunted by coastal First Nations as it had been in the past.

Del Toro, J., et al (2019) **The criminogenic and psychological effects of police stops on adolescent black and Latino boys.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 116:doi/10.1073/pnas.1808976116

Authors' abstract: Proactive policing, the strategic targeting of people or places to prevent crimes, is a well-studied tactic that is ubiquitous in modern law enforcement. A 2017 National Academies of Sciences report reviewed existing literature, entrenched in deterrence theory, and found evidence that proactive policing strategies can reduce crime.

The existing literature, however, does not explore what the short and long-term effects of police contact are for young people who are subjected to high rates of contact with law enforcement as a result of proactive policing. Using four waves of longitudinal survey data from a sample of predominantly black and Latino boys in ninth and tenth grades, we find that adolescent boys who are stopped by police report more frequent engagement in delinquent behavior 6, 12, and 18 months later, independent of prior delinquency, a finding that is consistent with labeling and life course theories.

We also find that psychological distress partially mediates this relationship, consistent with the often stated, but rarely measured, mechanism for adolescent criminality hypothesized by general strain theory. These findings advance the scientific understanding of crime and adolescent development while also raising policy questions about the efficacy of routine police stops of black and Latino youth. Police stops predict decrements in adolescents' psychological well-being and may unintentionally increase their engagement in criminal behavior.

Muzalyova, A., et al (2019) **Pollen allergy and health behavior: patients trivializing their disease.** AEROBIOLOGIA 35:327-341

Authors' abstract: Allergies are increasing in prevalence worldwide, with socioeconomic impacts and effects on quality of life. The aim of this study was to explore the health behavior and the utilization of different treatment options via questionnaires and to investigate for relationships of the above with socioeconomic factors. This cross sectional survey was carried out among pollen allergic subjects in 2016, using questionnaires.

A total of 679 allergics participated in the study (61.2% females). Their average age was 26.8 ± 8.8 years. Their symptom severity was 6.1 ± 1.9 , measured on a 10-step scale and symptoms lasted for 9.0 ± 6.8 weeks during pollen season. Of all allergics, 9.1% were not aware of the causative agent of their allergy and 17.4% had never undergone allergy testing.

Symptoms, especially in females, had strong impact on social life, everyday routines and sleep quality. Almost half of the participants treated their allergy without medical supervision, while only 32.3% sought medical support. Nevertheless, three quarters reported self management of their allergies with oral antihistamines. Compared to males, females sought significantly more medical support, medications and allergen avoidance strategies.

Knowledge about allergy increased the likelihood of treatment under supervision of a medical expert than no treatment, as well as symptom severity and interaction between female gender and symptom severity. The attitude of not considering allergy as a serious disease significantly reduced the likelihood of undergoing specific immunotherapy. This survey not only highlights the negative impact of pollen allergies on everyday life of allergics, but also that allergies are often neglected and untreated because of their trivialization by allergic subjects themselves.

Way, S.F., et al (2019) **Productivity, prominence, and the effects of academic environment.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 116:10729-10733

Authors' abstract: Faculty at prestigious institutions produce more scientific papers, receive more citations and scholarly awards, and are typically trained at more prestigious institutions than faculty with less prestigious appointments. This imbalance is often attributed to a meritocratic system that sorts individuals into more-prestigious positions according to their reputation, past achievements, and potential for future scholarly impact.

Here, we investigate the determinants of scholarly productivity and measure their dependence on past training and current work environments. To distinguish the effects of these environments, we apply a matched-pairs experimental design to career and productivity trajectories of 2,453 early career faculty at all 205 PhD-granting computer science departments in the United States and Canada, who together account for over 200,000 publications and 7.4 million citations.

Our results show that the prestige of faculty's current work environment, not their training environment, drives their future scientific productivity, while current and past locations drive prominence. Furthermore, the characteristics of a work environment are more predictive of faculty productivity and impact than mechanisms representing preferential selection or retention of more-productive scholars by more-prestigious departments.

These results identify an environmental mechanism for cumulative advantage, in which an individual's past successes are "locked in" via placement into a more prestigious environment, which directly facilitates future success. The scientific productivity of early-career faculty is thus driven by where they work, rather than where they trained for their doctorate, indicating a limited role for doctoral prestige in predicting scientific contributions.

Christensen, P.R., et al (2019) **Closed-loop recycling of plastics enabled by dynamic covalent diketoenamine bonds.** NATURE CHEMISTRY 11:442-448

Authors' abstract: Recycled plastics are low-value commodities due to residual impurities and the degradation of polymer properties with each cycle of re-use.

Plastics that undergo reversible polymerization allow high-value monomers to be recovered and remanufactured into pristine materials, which should incentivize recycling in closed-loop life cycles. However, monomer recovery is often costly, incompatible with complex mixtures and energy-intensive.

Here, we show that next-generation plastics, polymerized using dynamic covalent diketoenamine bonds, allow the recovery of monomers from common additives, even in mixed waste streams. Poly(diketoenamine)s ‘click’ together from a wide variety of triketones and aromatic or aliphatic amines, yielding only water as a by-product.

Recovered monomers can be re-manufactured into the same polymer formulation, without loss of performance, as well as other polymer formulations with differentiated properties. The ease with which poly(diketoenamine)s can be manufactured, used, recycled and re-used, without losing value, points to new directions in designing sustainable polymers with minimal environmental impact.

Quinton, J.M., and P.N. Duinker (2019) **Beyond burial: researching and managing cemeteries as urban green spaces, with examples from Canada.** ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS 27:252-262

Authors’ abstract: Cemeteries existing within cities are often omitted from the “green space” narrative despite their high levels of vegetation. Given the relatively small areas of green space in many cities, it is important to appropriately manage these landscapes to ensure that residents can access green spaces and enjoy the many benefits they offer.

The purpose of our paper is to demonstrate that cemeteries should be managed and researched as urban green spaces that provide ecosystem services. We compared and contrasted cemeteries with urban parks and used their similarities and differences, as well as a review of existing cemetery and other green-space literature, to discuss how cemeteries can provide a wide variety of ecosystem services.

We found that cemeteries and parks both have high levels of vegetation, similar perceived safety issues, and some common rules and regulations, while differing in their consideration as public spaces, effect on real-estate values, historical-cultural value, and funding and management goals.

Despite the differences, we believe that the vegetation (particularly trees), monuments, other infrastructure, and atmosphere within cemeteries make them well-suited to providing ecosystem services such as recreation, human health and restoration, stormwater management, microclimate regulation, aesthetics, and so on.

Cemeteries can also potentially provide ecosystem disservices such as allergens, invasive/dangerous/poisonous species, and the degradation of groundwater quality. However, we believe that the potential for ecosystem services far outweighs the potential for ecosystem disservices in urban cemeteries, and as such we believe they should be studied and managed as green spaces with functions beyond those of interment and mourning. Given the general superiority of trees over other vegetation in providing a diversity of ecosystem services, we urge cemetery managers to consider options for increases and improvements in cemetery tree populations.

Zhang, L., et al (2019) **Scale-free resilience of real traffic jams.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 116:doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1814982116

Authors’ abstract: Traffic congestion has become the most stubborn disease for the health of a city. Like the self-healing ability of a biological unit from diseases, transportation can also recover spontaneously from various disturbances.

To describe this recovery, we define the resilience metric as the spatiotemporal congestion cluster, which can be used for other network systems. Based on large-scale GPS data sets, we reveal that the recovery behavior of transportation from congestion is governed by three scaling laws for all of the congestion scales. These scaling laws are found independent of microscopic details, including fluctuation of traffic demand and corresponding management.