



Broken Toys 44 – ©Tara Wayne. Extended-November (December) 2015 issue. The wind is cold, the trees are bare, and the streets are wet ... the only good thing is there is no snow yet! Thankfully, I have still not been turned out of my apartment at 245 Dunn, Ave. #2111. I still live in Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6. Locs can be sent to Tara @ bell.net. All issues of *Broken Toys* can be downloaded from <http://efanzines.com/Tara/index.htm>, <http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/> or <http://www.cdnsfzinearchive.org/> – This is Kiddelidivee Books & Art 303

OLD BUSINESS

Where There's No Smoke

While tidying up the last issue on my imaginary work desk, I noticed some loose ends.

One of them concerned the article I had published in *Banana Wings*. Taking his cue from “When Willowdale Burned,” Paul Skelton was concerned that my apartment was packed with dangerous chemical explosives about which I had taken an irresponsible attitude. He was worried I might blow up myself and my neighborhood, and then point a finger of blame toward some hapless third party. His letter and a few comments of my own to *defuse* the situation appear in *Banana Wings* 60.

I'm happy to say that this is no longer an issue.

As I have hinted, I took my problem to the Fire Department. Station 426 is down the road a little, around the corner and up Lansdowne a bit. I had passed the building several times, wondering how to approach someone about my little “problem,” but there was no obvious public entrance to the building. I finally worked up nerve to go around to the back, where I found a group of on-duty firemen sitting around, smoking. I gave them a well-rehearsed explanation for why I just happened to have elemental sodium, phosphorus and mercury in my possession, and asked what I could do about it. For an answer I

was given the number of the city's solid waste disposal unit. The city would even pick up my "problem" for free!

A few days later I dialed the city, and quickly found out that there was a catch. Yes, the pick-up service was free – but only if I had at least 50 kg. of potentially dangerous waste, there was no pick-up. I jotted down three of the locations of the city's disposal yards and gave my friend Steven a call at work. The good news was that he was willing to help by driving the unwanted materials and me to the nearest yard, near city port. The bad news was that Steven called there himself, and was told that they might not be equipped to deal with explosive or combustible materials. As usual, the clerk answering the phone didn't know.

Next Saturday, we went anyway. I'm happy to say that the clerk's uncertainty was unfounded, and the yard took the three jars from me without comment. Apparently, it would only have been a problem if I had brought in 50-gallon drums of the stuff. You know, the sort of amounts the city would have picked up *free*?

So now Skel can go to bed at night and sleep soundly. Any explosions he hears in the middle of the night are more likely to be from across the Channel ... not from across the Atlantic.

Fawkes News

Speaking of explosive events, I gather that November 5 was Guy Fawkes Day. We don't celebrate it in Canada ... in fact, we have hardly an inkling who Guy Fawkes was, or what the Gunpowder Plot was all about. But among my notes for future writing I found a few remarks about this strange plot to smuggle barrels of gunpowder under the Houses of Parliament, and blow up King and government all in one fell swoop! The curious thing about the plot is that it was intended to have been a blow against Protestant England. Hopeful Catholic diehards still imagined that armies of oppressed Catholics would somehow appear from the pubs and stews of Merrie Olde England, and reinstate the One True Faith once the hated Protestant king was removed from the throne. King James I was indeed a Protestant – of opportunity. When the throne was offered to him after Elizabeth's death, he wasn't about to let a little thing like who your priest was get in the way of ambition.

James I, King of England, was also James VI, King of Scotland, and a Stuart. His royal family had connections to France going far back in history, and was at the center of the Catholic cause in England during Tudor times. His mother had been Mary Queen of Scots, a staunch Catholic. Several plots had been hatched by English Catholics to remove Elizabeth in favour of Mary and restore the realm to the Church. Mary's father was James V of Scotland, who notoriously persecuted Protestants after Henry VIII broke with Rome and founded the Church of England.

Moreover, James' son Charles, who was crowned the second Stuart King of England, followed his father in religion, as an unenthusiastic Protestant. However, his wife, the Queen, Henrietta Maria, was a French Catholic, prompting hatred among the suspicious English. She bore two sons, Charles and James. Charles I was a short man, and became even shorter by a head after Cromwell's Revolt. After the Restoration, Charles II was caught out in a plot to convert back to Catholicism, and was in fact received into the Catholic church on his deathbed. His brother, James II, was already an avowed Catholic when he ascended the throne.

All in all, it is ironic that a Catholic plot would be undertaken against a member of a family of such

Catholic distinction. But that's history for you – one big muddle. If you've studied conflicts between

the Shia and Sunni in the Middle East, this sort of thing may seem familiar to you.

SECRET BALLOT

I was surprised a few days ago to get e-mail from R-Lorraine Tutihasi that demanded I correct a statement about voting for the FAAn awards. I assumed I had been accused of saying that there were restrictions on who votes to members of Corflu ... but I didn't remember saying any such thing. I wrote back to correct what I thought was a faulty memory.

It turns out that, in fact, such a statement *was* made in a previous *Broken Toys*. In issue 40, Rodney Leighton mentioned in a loc that that one had to be a member of Corflu to vote for the FAAn awards. Once reminded, I remembered that I *had* meant to correct that. But Rodney has a rambling and disconnected style of writing, and I overlooked the remark. There is no requirement to be a member of Corflu to vote. I believe the only restrictions are that the voter be a person recognized by the committee, be known to someone who is known to the committee, or be someone who can demonstrate some activity in fanzine fandom. Actually, when you think about it, that's rather *more* exclusive, not *less*. And it is also terribly subjective. But it was either that, or the FAAns might fall to the dreaded bloggers ... just like the Hugos.

Exogamy

Lest you fall into the error of thinking that I *only* write for *Broken Toys* these days, I mention again that "When Willowdale Burned" appeared in *Banana Wings* 59. I have also contributed a minor article, "Red Letter Days," to this year's *File 770* omnibus, plus an extensive update of my profiles of Rotsler Award winners. More recently, I've contributed "The Adventure of the Empty Page" to an upcoming issue of *Chunga*, which will be a tribute to Stu Shiffman. Andrew Hooper also says he would like to re-use much of *The Slan of Baker Street*. I published *Slan* two or three years ago, shortly after Stu's stroke. This included an article of Andy's, one by Rob Hanson and one of my own. "The Adventure of the Empty Page," continues from my piece about Stu from his stroke up until his death.

Finally, I've had a few locs published here and there. That about wraps it up. In fact, most of the sixty or so articles I've written this year *have* been written for *Broken Toys*. But you guessed that, didn't you?

And then there is my secret file – items not to be published until there is no-one left to give me hell for them.

TAKING LICENSE

Everything had fallen into place. Before I venture out of my apartment, a number of conditions must be satisfied. First, there should be no rain. A little rain will do Traveling Matt no harm, but a solid downpour is an unknown commodity. A little rain won't hurt me, either, but it isn't comfortable. Try sitting in the rain for an hour and see how *you* like it. The next concern is how much daylight is left for going places. I get up at all hours of the day or night, and can never predict more than a day or two in advance just when I'm likely to be awake.

However, most stores and offices keep regular hours even though *I* don't. This can be especially problematic in the winter, when darkness (and cold) comes early, and I like to be home before the sun sets.

However, as I have already said, everything had fallen into place. The late Fall sun went in and out of the clouds all day, but it was not raining. I woke before noon, giving me several hours before the sun retired behind the curvature of the Earth. There would be no better opportunity to correct a stupid mistake.

That mistake was a result of a suggestion that I apply for an Accessible Parking permit. I don't own a car myself, but from time to time I'm driven somewhere either by my Sister, Christine, or my friend Steven. Wherever we go, there is the issue of parking close enough that I can walk the rest of the way, from the car to the store or restaurant and back. Often there are accessible parking spots, but we can't use them without the appropriate permit from the city. Now that I could officially demonstrate the need for such a permit, it was time to seek one.

My doctor supplied and signed the necessary paperwork at my next appointment. But, to submit it, the form had to be taken to a provincial government office, Services Ontario – the same place one goes to apply for passports or a driver's license. There are many such offices in Toronto, fortunately, and the nearest one was well within Matt's driving range. At the next opportunity I took the form in and received a temporary permit, good until the permanent one arrived in the mail.

"When will I get the permanent permit?" I asked.

"Around six to ten weeks, probably. This is good until January, though."

It wasn't until I got home and I looked at it carefully that I noticed it was good until *January 2015!*



Wait, what? 2015? That can't be right.

It wasn't. That's why I had to plan a second trip to Services Ontario, to replace the first temporary permit with one I didn't need a time machine to legally use. At first, I wasn't even sure I would bother. After all, I have limited opportunities to use an Accessible Parking

Permit – only a handful of times a year. I figured I probably wouldn't need it before the permanent permit arrived by mail. But, then, why make any decision at all? If it were convenient, I'd return to the office. If it were not convenient, I wouldn't go.

And then everything fell into place, so I went.

As a side note, the government office is not the most convenient place to visit in a motorized chair. It *is* wheelchair accessible – it would be truly ironic if it wasn't – but only if by "accessible" you mean you have to drive up a short ramp, do an abrupt 90° turn in a very cramped space, and then pull open a heavily sprung door equipped with security bars that will deal destruction to either chair or flesh if not handled with profound respect. Inside, the line of applicants presses right up to the door ... that is, when it doesn't stretch right out through the door into the street. The line inches forward at a rate of one or two persons every few minutes – which is accounted good for a government service. It took me only about three-quarters of an hour to reach the head of the line.

The woman at Services Ontario was actually quite helpful. She saw the problem immediately.

"This is dated last year."

"Yes. That *would* be a problem, wouldn't it? I mean if I didn't want to be ticketed, right?"

"Right! I'll have to issue you a new temporary permit."

She came back a minute later with a new permit whose expiry date was January 2016 – I checked this time – and she explained that whichever lackwit had issued the first one had set the year on his rubber stamp incorrectly!

"These things happen," I said. "If you want to know how, ask your co-worker on the right. He's the one who issued it to me."

After negotiating my way out of that closet they called Service Ontario, the drive home in Traveling Matt was uneventful.

The matter was finished, but I couldn't stop thinking about it. I had probably obtained the first permit sometime in the late afternoon, perhaps within minutes of the office closing. Had that dolt been issuing licenses, permits, birth certificates, passports and gawd knows what all day with the wrong year stamped on them? If so, the office must have seen a lot of frustrated people like me turning up in the following days.

I wonder, too, how many tickets for illegal parking the police wrote in the days that followed?

And I wonder whether the city would accept “government error” as a valid excuse ... or just pocket the fines with a complacent smile?

Nor was that the worst that could happen. It's only *now*, as I'm writing these lines, that it occurs to me that the big dope may have been issuing mis-dated documents *all year*!

It wouldn't surprise me in the least.



[The permanent permit arrived early in December]

What to do When the Chips Are Down

Reprinted from *The Drink Tank 264*, November 2010, edited by Chris Garcia.

The other day my toilet exploded. Not in a huge, spectacular fireball, like in the movies, just a bang and the chips flying in different directions.

There were no casualties. Nonetheless, it was very disconcerting, since I was sitting on it at the time.

At this point, I should mention that it was a wooden toilet seat and cover. I had enjoyed the warm, organic pleasure of natural wood for many years, ever since coming across a discarded seat in a trash heap. No more plastic for me – cold one day, sweaty the next, plastic seats are for public washrooms, not the home. The old seat had been assembled with care, the wood fitting tightly and polished luxuriously, like the dashboard of a 1934 Duesenberg. But after years of sitting pleasure, the brasswork turned as green as jade and had corroded through. My improvised hinges came to naught, so I had to buy a replacement. Forty dollars was a lot of money, though, even for quality.

Wal-Mart's wooden seats were under twenty bucks. It showed. There were gaps between the wooden pieces that looked like the trench on the Death Star. I imagined nano-sized X-Wing Fighters peeling off and diving in. Despite its glaring imperfections, the replacement felt *almost* as good as the Rolls Royce of toilet seats that had previously given me so much pleasure.

Until the day it exploded.



None of the pieces were broken, fortunately. The glue had simply failed, and two pieces had come apart. They were tongue-and-groove type construction, and – with a little straightening – I was able to fit them together again. A new toilet seat was just about last on my list of things to spend money on, after all. I only had Elmer’s White Glue around the house, but I remembered from somewhere that carpenter’s glue was pretty much the same thing. White glue dries quickly, but I let it sit for twelve hours, just to be sure. I figured I had no pressing need for it any sooner.

Next day, I removed and replaced the brass brackets. They had been poorly positioned, and didn’t fit over the ends of the tube very well. Under duress, the tube sometimes slipped out of place and the hinge became unhinged.

It was finally time to bolt the seat to the bowl. That’s when I discovered that one of the plastic nuts that held the bolts had cracked. You could tighten it so far, but no farther. One turn more, and it slipped and was looser than before. The result was a toilet seat that shimmied from side to side while you sat. Most unsatisfactory. I needed to buy a new pair of nuts.

No jokes about that, *please*.

There are hardware stores, and there are hardware stores. Some are Home Improvement Centers, and are very little smaller than the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. They have so many rows of folding garden chairs, lawn hose, sprinklers, plastic tubing, copper pipes, electrical wire, rubber mats, circular saw blades, drill bits, screws, nails, sandpaper, tarpaper, taps, sockets, brackets, chain saws, routers, gasoline generators, propane torches, picture frames, bathroom tiles and house paint that 26 letters of the alphabet are insufficient. Footsore, the consumer wanders from aisle AAT to KBB in search of a “slip-fastening, circular Babbitt clamp.” Or is it an “adjustable screw-grip stay collar” he wants? Nor is he sure whether 7/8 inch is the same as 17.5mm. (It isn’t.) The hired help doesn’t know either, and only waves you in the vague direction of Sector G, North-Northeast corner of the complex. She was hired last week.

Instead, I went to the neighborhood hardware, and happily discovered that hardware stores were *meant* to be old-fashioned. A guy in a red shirt, who had run the store since 1966, looked in some boxes and gave me a single, chrome-plated nut. Cost? Ten cents. Cash on the barrelhead.

I twirled the nut home with my fingers, then finished the job of tightening with a kitchen knife. Perfect fit. And a perfect sit.

Now, whenever nature calls, I can relax on the job with a sense of security, and leisurely browse through the collection of exotic catalogs I keep in the bathroom for that purpose. An antique, hand-painted, hand-carved mahogany replica of the *U.S.S. Olympia*? Only \$1,999? Too costly, even if it *was* made in 1919. A table lamp in the shape of a woman’s leg, as seen in *A Christmas Story*? Tempting, at only \$49.95, but a *shade* tacky. How about an ex-Soviet brass diving helmet for only \$899? Naw... I think I’ve had enough brass for the time being.

LEFT OVER PARTS *SESSION 44*

We Also Heard From: Mitch Marmel, who wishes I could write about “Karno, the Other White Meat.” Unfortunately, while many know the story, it must never be spoken of. **Andi Schechter**, who confesses that she is not up to responding to fanzines, but at least did take the trouble to send me word. Andy Porter, who sent me the Parental Warning Signs Against Art. It’s a little late for *me*. **Walt Wentz**, who found two typos and sheepishly admitted the irony of *his* finding them *now*. **Kjartan Arnorrson**, who notes that the Internet is slowly eroding away the institutions of fanzine fandom, such as loccing. (Why bother when you can go to FaceBook and show off your ignorance right away?) **Jefferson Swycaffer** tells me that by coincidence he was just looking at an old issue of the comic, *Shanda the Panda* ... the one where I did all the bits that were Rocky & Bullwinkle playing the parts from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Those were *fun* to do! **Garth Spencer** wrote to tell me that he was certain he was forgetting to do something ... but then forgot to write anything more. **David Redd** dropped me a note to say he will be printing out my remarks on *Magnus Robot Fighter*. **Jay Kinney** responded to say he likes to keep his e-mail addie out of fanzines, to avoid spam. He’s been on the road a lot, as well. **Justin Trudeau**, the new Prime Minister of Canada, has announced that *Broken Toys* will receive backing from the Canada Council if he has anything to do say about it. Actually, I made that up, just to see if anyone reads this. I suspect that to qualify I’d have to publish a bilingual edition.

ERIC MAYER, GROGGY.TALES@GMAIL.COM

I have heard the name Roger Whittaker, but I can't recall hearing anything by him. The recording sounds pretty dire. The Beach Boys I never cared for. I liked hearing a few of their hits, like “Good Vibrations,” when they came on the radio. Nice, peppy pop songs. Still too sugary for my taste. Not something I'd listen to *except* on the radio. But I did buy their so-called “masterpiece,” *Pet Sounds* ... which pretty much made me gag.

I love The Beach Boys ... when they keep to surfing and hotrods. It’s when they stray into other subjects that I have my doubts. For instance, “Good Vibrations” and “Heroes and Villains” are tremendous ... but then there are embarrassing songs like “Be True to Your School,” which made me wonder if Brian Wilson wasn’t insane ... or some sort of Communist. I mean, who is “true” to something as prosaic and usually unpleasant as school? Did he also swear his loyalty to the local supermarket, or the bus company? What a geeky idea! I never had *Pet Sounds*, but it was supposed to be The Beach Boys best album. I’ll have to reserve judgement. What I know of the band is almost entirely from the “best of” collection, *Endless Summer*. The one exception is that I bought a used copy of *Smile*. This is a recently re-created version of the famously abandoned album that Brian Wilson would hope change the face of pop music. When the Beatles beat him to it, Wilson dropped his plans. Although this fueled speculation for decades, it was probably just as well he did. Judging from the 2004 re-creation, it was as thoroughly stupid as it was pretentious. *Smile* has its admirers. It has the clever vocal arrangements and bounciness of “Good Vibrations.” But the mawkish lyrics about farm life, country air, vegetables, fatherhood and God make me cringe. What the hell was he thinking? Did Wilson imagine teenagers of the 1960s were all Mormons?

Wandering the dark streets, mingling with the little ghouls seems like a fun way to enjoy Halloween vicariously, which is about the only way you can do so at our ages. It's good the Asians fit in. Maybe wearing masks all the time is the answer! Maybe next year you ought to decorate Traveling Matt with some skulls, or glowing pumpkins, or dress yourself like a zombie. So, do they have Halloween "costumes" specially designed for motorized chair users? You could decorate the chair too. Be one of those Rat Finks in a hot rod, for instance.

Once I was on the street, I had the same thought. I wouldn't dress up myself, but I have some Halloween props in my closet – I might have been able to attach a skull, a rubber rat, or a gravestone to Traveling Matt. Some people have gone a lot farther. I know of some Trekkies who dress their chairs up as Klingon Birds of Prey. That would be a lot of trouble, and I would feel like a damn fool to boot.

BRAD FOSTER, BWFOSTER@JUNO.COM

So, 50th. truly to be the final issue in the run? Well, after *New Toy* and *Broken Toys*, what will follow-- *Crushed Toys*? *Toys Reborn*? *Toys R Us*? (The last if you get a licensing fee...) There will be something, it is in your blood. Bwahahahahahahaaaaaa....

There has already been *Old Toys*, *Lost Toys*, and one issue of *Stolen Toys*. The first was a one-shot collection of my fan writing produced by Murray Moore for the second Ditto convention in Toronto. *Lost Toys* was the name of an apazine I did for Arnie Katz's digital apa, TePe. There were nine issues, but I didn't feel at home in the apa environment and dropped out. (TePe survived a few more mailings, but appears to finally be on the rocks.) *Stolen Toys* was a one-off, published because Graeme Cameron wanted to drum up interest in fanzines at the Convention. There were two or three other contris to his con apa, but no measurable interest in the effort at all. So ... what next? Given my plan to return to a longer format and occasional schedule, I think my next publication will be *New Toy 4*. I've literally been holding material for it for two or three years – articles that were much too long for *this* fanzine.

What to write about? For some reason, I truly do feel an article from you on why you don't watch "My Little Pony" would be highly entertaining. So, yeah, do that. On the other hand, the idea of offending other fan artists by talking about their art does -not- have that much of an appeal to me. Can't quite put my finger on why. Unless you did it with a religious angle, explaining why we are all going to burn in hell for the secret messages we have hidden in our work. And I know they are there, just have no time to really find them myself. Atom, in particular, was horrible about putting satanic symbolism in everything he drew. It's true!

I think I did write about why I don't watch *My Little Pony* quite a while ago. It wasn't half as amusing as you might expect. My reasons started with a very simple one – I had no cable connection. I have one now, but despite that I almost never turn on the TV except to watch a tape or DVD. I could have found complete episodes on You Tube, of course, and in fact have watched one episode of MLP. It confirmed that it was a cartoon aimed specifically at little girls, to sell cheap plastic pony dolls. I don't mind cartoons with strong female characters – there are any number. But I object to a fantasy world in which hardly any male characters exist ... and those only as spear-carriers and door-openers. Perhaps it is not intended, but the message seems to be that women only come into their own when they can exclude men. Typically, too, the concerns I saw illustrated were gender-stereotyped – gossip, fashion, and the pecking order. Finally, the director may have had her priorities, but clearly Hasbro's were to brainwash little girls into nagging their folks into paying \$12.95 for a nickel's worth of coloured plastic formed into the shape of a cartoon pony. I know I said that already, but I have always felt strongly about crap like G.I. Joe and Transformers, which were invented as toys, and a makeshift story only cobbled together afterward – nothing more than a

disguised 23-minute-long advertisement. See ... that wasn't amusing at all.

When we got to see all the rather bulbous inhabitants of the starliners in *Wall-E*, floating around on their couches, my first thought was that someone on that film had been a fan of the *Magnus* comics for sure. Me, I loved those. They came out back when I had no idea of what a publishing schedule was for a comic, and only found comics on a rotating metal stand at the local toy store, or at the corner food mart. The grocers had no idea when new issues would come out, of course. Not their job. So it was always an ongoing quest, and a great delight, to find each new issue. As I slowly thinned out my comic collection over the years, those Russ Manning issues were ones I always held onto. Ended up getting them all hardbound together to permanent keeping, long before collections like that really were made by comic publishes themselves. My hard-bound copies are still on the shelf in the spare room, along with the complete *Not Brand Echh*. (And, going back in there to check, also bound volumes containing Steranko's *Shield* comics. As well, other of Steranko's works, clipped and brought together; the full early *Conan* by Barry Smith, and the early *Master of Kung Fu* by Paul Gulacy.

Oh, an update on a letter from only a short time ago – we only had a little bit of water actually leak into the house, sending me back out into the rain, to fling a newly-bought hose into the alley and hook it to a new sump-pump. Plugged it in – that new sucker can *suck*! So, it kept the worst of the rising waters from flooding us inside this time. Once (whenever) the backyard finally dries out enough, will dig a pit to drop the new pump down into, try to arrange the new hose so that I don't trip over it whenever I go out back, and cross my fingers, hoping that, next time, it all works again.

Ah, life. Always an adventure.

Well, people *will* live out in the country, where there are floods, blizzards, fires, bears and people who speed in pick-up trucks.

DAVE HAREN, TYRBOLO@COMCAST.NET

Wot, no angst ? No disastrous brush with the Nanny state ? Not even a flat tire!! Glad to see it.

No, not even one! I can't account for it. You think that's why I had a bit of trouble getting this issue started, and why it's late?

" ... peering into the widows of the second floor was like looking into the blackness between the stars." There's a line to thrill a cultist's soul on Samhain. Sounds like Tanith Lee Scarabae territory.

I knew nothing about "Scarabae" until I looked it up on Wikipedia just now. So Tanith Lee is writing Gothic novels, full of incest and old family scandals now? Figures.

Now you have to hang out with the Pros, drinking champagne and eating caviar instead of rubbing elbows with the grubby ordinary fans. We can now polish our "I knew him when he was a starving artist in his garret in Toronto" stories, to use in the next name-dropping session.

If I had ever had that ambition, I think I can put it out to pasture now. You're not really a pro until you've been paid for your work, and even then there's only a handful of recognized venues off of which the fledgling writer can rub some status. I'm too old, now, to ever become anyone important in the eyes of those who have already pulled that trick off. So I'm afraid I don't expect much respect from any one ... not even fans. Perhaps especially fans.

Feel free to pontificate about Syria. If there was ever a clusterfuck of such monumental proportions I have failed to find it in history. Usually *someone* has a clear goal, even if the *other* participants do not. This one lacks clarity, I think that's the most charitable way to phrase it.

The factions in the Syrian civil war likely have only one goal: To establish uncontested power in as much of the country as they can. The only variable is the extent of their ambition. The Kurds, for instance, will be satisfied with a Kurdistan in the northwest of the country, and don't really care what happens with the rest. Assad and his Alawi faction want to re-establish control of all of Syria within it's former borders. Then there is ISIS or The Islamic State, whose stated goal appears to be to create an Islamic Empire that recreates, as far as possible, Islam at the height of its power, around 700 AD ... from which to subjugate the entire globe to the whims of Allah. Of course, they know that's simply not possible, so it's a matter of how much of an Islamic Empire they would be content with. I suspect that control of Syria and Iraq would probably be enough for the interim. Then there are outside interests such as Israel, which wants as much of the Islamic world as possible to be powerless and in chaos; America, which wants Israel to be secure; Russia, which wants an ally in the Middle East *and* a Mediterranean port; Saudi Arabia, which would probably like to see the Alawi (who are Shia) out of power in Syria, but are afraid of a rival Sunni state; and Iran, which prefers the Alawi to stay in power and keep the Sunni ISIS in check; The one power that apparently has no influence in the area is God. What he wants does not seem to be on record. Perhaps he is wiser than we and knows better than to get involved.

There was a marvelous take-down of Disney in this issue. Southern California is one of those alien places that boggle the minds of ordinary folk, and old Walt was as nutty as the rest. A classic of Mer'kin 'septionalisms. He made and watched too much TV for his own or anyone else's good. The vicious corporation he left behind has destroyed the entire concept of cultural continuity. No one knows what the results of that will be, the experiment isn't over yet. Between the Recording Industry Association of America, and the Motion Picture Association of America, they have destroyed the idea of any continuity, and, when the legal terms run out, the material will have crumbled into dust. The only way to recover any of it will be to use a time machine.

I've noticed a nasty tendency in fandom. They like to dig up some ancient who had a fairly decent reputation and trash them because they were racist, misogynist, failed to predict M-theory or some such bull shit. Historically, they were usually head and shoulders above their fellow man in the area of accusation. If they had done a straight-up explanation of how their own contemporaries viewed the world, modernes would demand they be exhumed and burned at the stake. Nobody escapes the times and culture they live in, and demanding they adopt post moderne claptrap by default only demeans their detractors.

Such reexaminations of the past tend to be politically motivated. Past writers, painters, poets, statesmen, entertainers and philosophers are trashed in repudiation of an idea that has fallen out of date. Trashing *them* trashes the *idea*, and asserts one's own political correctness. At the moment it seems fashionable in fandom to beat up on figures like Asimov or Lovecraft for their sexism or racism. There was the controversy over the Lovecraft award, for example – “how dare we name an important award after a man who was a White Supremacist and xenophobe.” Of course, the argument that we honour the man's work rather than his personal beliefs were about as effective as arguing in favour of clubbing baby seals. Then again, as far as I know, the Lovecrafts have not been renamed the LeGuins or Taniths ...

Anyway, I hope you didn't think I was doing the same to Disney for similar reasons. I have a longstanding dislike of the Disney studios over its paternalistic Americana, and when I read in a biography that Disney's own plans were straight out of the Hand Book of Big Brother, I couldn't resist underlining the passages. Later, they became the basis of my article. The fact is, I think Disney did and still does exemplify the

standing conflict in American culture – the desire for some sort of nominal freedom, but the habit of practical oppression.

Like the guide at the Louvre told the lady tourist who disliked those old paintings. The works are not on trial, Madam, you are.

I don't know much about art but I like Stiles, Foster, and Wayne.

Now I've ruined your day with plebeian commentary about art.

SAM LONG, gunputty@comcast.net

Just read *Broken Toys 43*, for which thanks. I enjoyed it as always. Here are a few random comments:

I don't think I ever met Ned Brooks, except possibly at DISCON II, but I knew of him and corresponded fannishly with him. Like many trufans, I was much saddened by his death. He was not that much older than I am. That's the problem I run across a lot these days: fannish friends who, when I first knew them (nearly half a century ago for some) were young and full of vitality, but who are my age plus or minus a few years, and have gone to that great Slanshack in the Sky; or if they're not there yet, have infirmities and difficulties, and I'm powerless to help them except (I hope) by cheering them up with communications like this. *And I don't feel too good myself.* That's something of an exaggeration – I'll be 70 by the end of the year – and I have the usual aches and fatigues of old age, but at least am in pretty good health. But I enjoy the positive way you manage to get around on Traveling Matt, do what you need to do to lead your life, and how you describe it all with humor and aplomb – if your tales of your adventures are to be trusted.

In general, yes, my accounts can be trusted to be truthful and complete ... except such details as taking vicious swipes at innocent bystanders, and using language that would upset the demeanor of passing sailors.

Laurraine Tutihasi: ship captains don't really have the power to marry passengers. Despite what we saw near the end of *The African Queen*, it was not legal for *SMS Louise's* captain to marry Charlie Allnut and Rosie Sayer. I don't know whether a ship's chaplain could legally marry two passengers. I daresay there are places where you can't get married, but generally speaking, if you arrange such things ahead of time, almost any place can be the site of an exchange of vows. I found, though, that in the UK, "you cannot marry in most forms of transport, this means trains, planes and automobiles are out of the question. In fact, the law states legal premises are those that are permanently immovable, comprising of at least a room that is permanently moored. You *can* get married in a boat or other vessel so long as it, like all other legal venues, is fixed in place permanently."

My first wedding was at a Registry Office in the UK, officiated by the Registrar; my second was at a gazebo in Springfield's Washington Park, with a Unitarian clergyman-engineer friend of mine presiding. Two friends of ours got married three times over two days: once in a Hindu temple before a Brahmin priest (her father is Hindu; she wore a sari, and her new husband wore jhodpurs and a kameez), once in more conventional attire under a *chuppah* in a banquet hall (he is Jewish), and, a few minutes later, before a Presbyterian preacher (she and her mother are Presbyterian). All perfectly legal, but not afloat.

The other side of the coin is "can you get married without any ceremony at all?" Can you be married if all you have is a paper saying so?

I liked the Halloween story. You can buy a book about "Haunted Springfield," but I have to say no place in

Springfield seems haunted to me. When I was a kid in Charlotte, NC, there was a house in a big lot about a quarter of a mile or so from where my family lived, and the lot was densely covered with trees and surrounded by hedges. It had apparently been built in the early 1900s by the Van Landingshams, a rich family, but, although I passed it frequently on my way to school and the like, I never saw anyone on the property. I guess I thought it was haunted then.

Whenever Springfield is mentioned, my first thought is the hometown of The Simpsons. While I've known many empty homes and other buildings, I honestly never thought of any of them as "haunted." My loss, I suppose. Some of them begged to be, though. When I was probably only five, there was a large empty lot behind our bungalow. The railroad had once had a right of way through it, but the tracks were long torn up. But an abandoned station remained. We kids were told the floorboards were rotten.; we could fall through and so were forbidden to go inside. But we could and did play on the verandah and look through the windows. Why I didn't think it was haunted, I'll never know. Perhaps nobody had read me any ghost stories?

PAUL SKELTON, PAULSKELTON2@GMAIL.COM

When we were younger Cas and I were more prepared to put up with Halloween. It was never traditionally celebrated here in the UK, but has crept in, dragging other New World customs (such as prom nights) along in its wake. We'd do the candy thing, but ever since we moved to this house, about nine years ago, we have gone into full *BAH HUMBUG!* mode. There's a 'No Cold Callers' sign stuck up inside the glassed-in porch. Not trusting entirely to that, though, we also lock the porch door so that nobody can get at the doorbell (a technique also useful against carol-singers in the long run-up to Christmas). We then retire to various rooms at the rear of the house. We thought we'd gotten away with it for another year but then, the following morning, your Halloween story sneaks into my mailbox, hiding at the back of *Broken Toys* 43. At least I can console myself that was a fictional Halloween, not a real one.

I had the impression that Halloween in the UK was at best a minor survivor of the medieval calendar ... like All Saint's Day. However, it has gained in popularity in a way that, say, Guy Fawkes Day has never caught on over here.

The Guy who plays Lister in *Red Dwarf* also had a part in *Coronation Street*, The UK's longest-running soap (though he'd only been it for the last few years). His character recently left the show and he was interviewed on the channel's nightly 'local news' show on the basis that *Coronation Street* is set (and made) just down the road in Manchester. Weeks can go by when this news show is the only TV show I watch and thus luck has it that I actually have my finger on a particular pulse, because one of the things he revealed he would be doing in the near future is a new series of *Red Dwarf*. Remember you read it here first (always assuming you haven't already read it somewhere else).

I've actually seen Craig Charles on *Coronation Street*. I didn't go looking for him, it was basically an accident. I was too engrossed in something to reach for the remote to get rid of the program when it came on, and by coincidence I looked up and there he was, in a pub! I gather he played a cabbie, and wasn't a very important character. Although it must have been a regular paycheck, he can't have earned much for being on the air five minutes every three weeks. I had also read that he left "Corrie" to work full time on the new *Red Dwarf* series. No doubt it paid better, as well as making him the star of his own show. Series XI and XII have been greenlighted, apparently, and may bring back Kristine Kochanski.

Speaking of reading, I am gradually working my way through your back issues (I'm now up to issue 31), via downloads from *efanzines.com*, and in number 27 I spotted Bill Patterson's mention of Walter Jon Williams'

Dread Empires Fall series as being good space opera, so I have now downloaded these four books and have high hopes for them. I don't think I've ever read anything of his. I guess he became prolific after I'd pretty much stopped reading SF...but I noticed on checking out a couple of websites that a staggeringly high proportion of his stuff has either been nominated for, or has won, a Hugo, a Nebula, both, or some other award. It's a bloody good job he isn't Canadian as if he wiped a nosebleed on a tissue it'd probably snaffle an Aurora.

Earlier, I pulled your leg about burning issues of *Mota* or *Kratophany* as you read them, but I haven't had a chance to print your clarification. So, for the record, Skel doesn't burn fanzines after he reads them. He pickles them in formaldehyde.

As for the Auroras, I can only say that I find them incomprehensible. They may not actually be given to the worst nominees, but they rarely seem to go to the best, either. Much of the problem seems to stem from the misapprehension in Canadian fandom that fandom is about science fiction, not about fandom, so they invariably vote for the duller, most directly genre-related choice. Few of the voters seem to know what a fanzine *is*, let alone imagine one that was like *Broken Toys*. As a result, the Canadian imitation of the Hugo has actually evolved more quickly than the Hugo. Voters have rather consistently given the Aurora to whichever pro appeared in the fan category for some activity clearly academic or pro-related. Among the surviving BNF's in Canadian fandom, there have been few Auroras to go around. I believe Lloyd Penney won one of them several years ago, possibly as a fanwriter. Graeme Cameron won an Aurora for running a convention I think, and more recently for his column on the pro site, *Amazing Tales*. Dale Speirs has never won an Aurora, nor have I. In fact, I was only nominated for the first time two years ago ... and lost to some guy who gave an academic lecture to a scholarly audience. To my surprise, I'm up for one again this year, but expect to lose handily. I may have under 15 Canadian readers, only three or four of whom are likely to vote. More later in the issue...

Don't even get me started on The Faneds, the awards begun by Graeme Cameron.

Regarding 'Best Before' dates on food: I can advise Tom Turriffin that it isn't only in one-person households that food doesn't always get consumed in time. A few weeks ago I was having a cheese & onion sandwich for lunch and I just fancied a 'cup-a-soup' to accompany it. I usually mix two different packets in a very large mug and this time, rummaging among the various boxes in the cupboard I came up with a packet of 'cream of mushroom with croutons' and the last packet of 'cream of asparagus with croutons'... and very nice it was, too. It was only later, when I came to throw away the empty carton, that I saw the 'Best Before – APRIL 2012'. Three-and-a-half years out of date!

Fortunately, the expiry date is meaningless for all sorts of things – nuts and bolts, for example, soldering flux for another, and most of all beef jerky.

I was of course throwing the empty carton into the same colour recycling bin as Philip Turner, given that we are serviced by the same local authority. For our kitchen waste they provide a bespoke container which needs to be lined with a special disposable bio-degradable plastic bag. These, when filled, are simply tied and dumped in the green bin with the garden refuse (if any), which is the only bin still collected on a weekly basis. These have caused outrage in *The Daily Mail* (an easily outraged newspaper) which insists on referring to them as "slop buckets," implying that we're practically moving back to the Dark Ages. Whilst personally I have no problem with a handy food-waste receptacle in the kitchen, or with the need to split refuse up into four categories to help recycling, I must admit I hadn't given any thought to how this would work in an apartment building. When I first moved in with Cas we lived on the eighteenth floor in a block of high-rise flats. All refuse went into a plastic sack and down a central chute on each floor. Obviously this can no

longer work, nor could they feasibly retro-fit separate recycling chutes, so I guess all residents now have to drag their various categories of recycling down to some communal facilities. Bit of a bummer that, even for fit and healthy folk.

What Philip didn't make clear in his LoC on the 'downsizing' business, is that it applied to people in 'social housing,' where the State was in every case effectively subsidizing their rent to some degree, and in many cases in its entirety, for people forced to exist on state benefits. At the same time the State was paying a fortune to private landlords and hotels to house homeless people. It occurred to some idiot that if people could be encouraged to downsize it would free up some housing stock, and the 'encouragement' would be the big stick of reducing the subsidy/benefit and expecting the tenants to make up the difference if they had more bedrooms than they needed ... which quickly became known as a bedroom tax. It was one of the coalition government's first 'austerity' measures – an attempt to tackle the debt time bomb and get a grip on welfare benefits spending. A reasonable motive, but a bad execution.

It completely ignored the fact that houses are not just bricks and mortar, but first and foremost they are people's homes. There is also the social factor to consider – the neighbours, the friends, the general neighbourhood, the amenities, and the sense of place. Often, also, most of a lifetime's memories. You can't just yank people out of that saying "You've got too many bedrooms. Pay more or piss off somewhere else!" That's my 'feel' on it anyway. Another good issue.

I had to leave my place in Willowdale because I was "overhoused." But while I was reluctant to leave the neighborhood I was used to, it was entirely understandable that I couldn't stay all by myself in a three-bedroom place that I used to share with my mother and two sisters. It turned out that Parkdale was a better neighborhood for me in every way, too! I couldn't survive where I had been in my present condition – too few services, too spread out, and public transit inadequate.

PHILIP TURNER, FARRAGO2@LINEONE.NET

Looking for something to write about? Why not address whatever it is that would persuade you to get up at 6 a.m., which is what those sadistic bastards at the BT Sport TV channel do to us CFL fans once or twice a week. If your activity takes two and a half hours, as for a condensed version of a CFL match, you're allowed to go back to bed again for a while when it's all over.

Maybe I should just research whatever makes a person get up at dawn just to watch a Canadian Football League match. If you're living in the UK, maybe the four-to-six hour time difference might have something to do with it ... but that would put the game at 1 a.m. Toronto-time, which doesn't seem right either.

Nice to hear that your local taxes are going to fund a useful service, which will take charge of your casually acquired dangerous chemicals without getting you locked up as a founder member of Alky Ida.

I was only a associate member because my buddy Mustapha joined me up without asking. I kind of wondered why everyone at the social had a beard and a scowl.

All the talk about getting to grips with past writings strikes a chord with me. I'm currently striving to get my novels into PDF files to go on a tablet as a handy place to keep them accessible quickly. This isn't a problem for the ones which were written in the 21st century, as they tend to be in single files and readily knockable into shape. Most of the work comes from the ones I wrote between 1975 and the 1990s.

When I got my first PC at the end of 1992, there was an orgy of keying in old typescripts so that I could

create 32- or 36-page booklets with WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS, print the booklets and bind them together as a hardback book. The day I got my first scanner was one to celebrate, as it put an end to all that typing. OCR might create very eccentric versions of a scanned document, but it takes away a hell of a lot of work.

Along came more powerful computers with lots more space for storing and handling large documents; and WordPerfect for Windows, of course, which can still read files from the DOS era. Along came a piece of kit which lets me make softback books with a perfect binding, which is a hell of a lot quicker than building a hardback! For a long time, I lived under the illusion that I had successfully transferred all of my typed pages to PC. Then yesterday, I found that one of the books wasn't there when I looked in a sub-directory of my novels directory.

Aaaaagh! It was never scanned. It exists only as 120 single-spaced A4 sheets with marginal notes and enuf crossings-out to give my OCR program permanent indigestion. Still, I suppose knocking it into shape will give me something to do when the CFL & NFL seasons are over.

I remember early text documents that were only a few pages long, and plastic floppy disks that contained only 72 megs of memory. There was a command in some word processing programs that supposedly linked the files so that they would print out in one continuous text. It didn't work very well.

Hope you are bearing up as winter closes in on you.

I'm already laying in supplies and battening down the hatches. I bought \$75 worth of coffee beans a couple of days ago – about two pounds each of Light Ethiopian, Light Moca Java, Dark Kono, Dark Indonesian-Sumatran and Dark Columbian Supremo. A little later, I brought home a bag of different herbs and spices that I use in cooking, as well as oats, rye flakes, bran and kernels to add to my bread mix. I should have everything I need for the winter laid by before the first snow falls. Once it does, my ability to drive Traveling Matt anywhere will be vulnerable to how well streets and sidewalks are kept clear until Spring. Unfortunately, there's little I can do about the depressingly short days except take extra vitamin D every day.

MILT STEVENS, MILTSTEVENS@EARTHLINK.NET

With *Broken Toys #43*, I'll start at the end and work back towards the beginning. I liked your Halloween story. Why don't you try selling it to F & SF? They've published worse. They've published much worse. They might want it a bit longer, but that's about the only change that might be wanted.

Sell to F&SF? Do you think, if I start now, the *might* even get back to me about it before next Halloween? I doubt there'd be much interest *until* then. It's a very slight piece, though, never meant to be anything more. It might be possible to add a few hundred words, but they'd not be much to the point. Usually, people tell me to *cut* stories, not enlarge them.

Halloween is the only holiday where you have to make assumptions. You assume there will be N trick or treaters. You need some amount of candy depending on the value of N. Ideally, n (the candy) will run out about the same time as N (the number of trick or treaters) or t (the time T & Ters are likely to be roaming the streets). In Southern California, you indicate a willingness to give out candy by leaving your porch light on. If you run out of candy before 10 p.m., you have to turn off your porch light. This is equivalent to striking your colors during a naval battle. If *n* exceeds *N* by a major extent, it will be bad for both your teeth and your waistline. It also costs money you could use for something else.

This year, I assumed N were going to be 15 to 20 trick or treaters. That's about what I have been getting in recent years. Some of the kids who have come by impress me as being too old for this sort of thing. When I was a kid, you quit going out for candy when you left sixth grade. Some of the males who have come by my house in recent years have shown signs of growing beards. I understand in some parts of Southern California foreigners of all ages will come by to demand candy. They will become irate if you don't give it to them.

This year, things were different. All of the kids were little kids between pre-school and about second grade. They were accompanied by adults, and this is as it should be. Also, there were a lot more of them than usual. Maybe there has been a demographic shift in my neighborhood. In any case, I ran out of candy after about 30 kids. So I turned my porch light off a little before 9 p.m. You can't win 'em all.

Kids don't come to my building at all. Too much trouble trying to get hundreds of kids up and down the elevators, I figure, though it might also be that it's a city-owned and rent-controlled building, and the residents may all be as cheap as I am. Not in 24 years of living here has any kid come to my door ... but I do recall some residents sitting in lawn chairs in front of the lobby door, who were handing out a bit of candy from bowls. I'm also just south of Queen Street. In Parkdale, north of Queen is solid working class and middle class homes. South of Queen has some of that too, but a much larger proportion of transient housing, half-way houses, boarding houses, tenements, and highrise apartments like mine. I don't know if that accounts for less Halloween activity or not. My wanderings on Halloween night were all north of Queen

Halloween didn't menace my teeth or waistline this year. However, my choice of candy to buy was determined by what sort of candy I wouldn't mind eating myself. I bought large bags of the small Milky Way bars. There are many other good candy bars, but Milky Way is my favorite. Halloween represents 90% of my candy buying for the entire year. I don't have a notable sweet tooth, so there must be a lot of people who buy significantly more candy than I do. Judging by the people I see on the street, that seems likely.

ERIC MAYER, GROGGY.TALES@GMAIL.COM

Another enjoyable issue, but I can't say I have any writing topics to suggest. You list a bunch of them right after you request some. Well, there's a thought, though. Over the years I've had many, many ideas that never quite hatched. Some of those half-formed ideas have taunted me for years, even though I realize that in most cases they were flawed or just beyond me or their time has passed and they will never break out of the shell. You have any of those?

I do have some lists of ideas, here and there, but I never look at them. It seems that there's always something new to work on, so that I have little time to worry about old, old stuff. However, ideas that are only a couple of years old, or were half finished, are on my hard drive, and stand a much better chance of being revisited. "Five Will Get You Ten," was a story with Saara Mar that I put aside a few years ago because I grew convinced nobody would read it. I had had a couple of such things appear in fanzines along similar lines that sank without a trace ... which was very disheartening.

If issue 50 will, indeed, mark the end of *Broken Toys*, what next? More of *New Toy*? Another zine? No zines? My fanac has dwindled to only a little more than reading and loccing *Broken Toys*, so I'm interested in what may follow.

I will revert to *New Toy*, probably putting out the first issue in late 2016, since *Broken Toys* is likely to take its final bow in June or July. The new zine will only come out once or twice a year, I think, and should give me

more time to consider the contents. I have a lot of stored-up material for the first couple of issues, and may dust off some of those unfinished ideas I discussed above.

What is this online journal you mention? Part of Facebook?

Some ideas are from remarks I've made on FaceBook, but I also re-cycle and expand upon journals I write on FurAffinity. I am a little bit shy of mentioning FurAffinity by name too much, since *most* of the readers have no idea what it is. On the other hand, I'm sure at least one in ten of my readers are members. In fact, *Broken Toys* has more than enough readers to ensure me a fanzine Hugo or FAAn, but they are drawn from diverse groups of people. Some don't even know what the *Worldcon* is, let alone vote for the Hugos. And they would be excluded from the FAAns with a unanimous vote of noses hiked in the air should they attempt to submit their choice. Oh well, I win a Faned or two every year ...

Which reminds me that I should talk about that sometime.

Congratulations on selling your terrific Carnacki tale. You're right not to take suggestions from amateurs. Fans are often ready, willing and eager to offer advice they are not qualified to give. Writing more dark fantasy might not be a great option if you don't care to read much in the genre. But I think it would be a good idea to try to find something you would like to write for which there's an actual market. Of course I tell myself the same thing. True, selling stuff at this point in our lives might not have much potential to change our lives, but it is still a concrete goal.

My Christmas in October consists of my signing up to start collecting Social Security next year. I waited until my "full retirement age" of sixty-six, when I won't be penalized for any earnings I have. At least not by having my Social Security payments reduced. At some point, earnings are not only taxed themselves, but cause one's benefits to be taxed. Oh yes indeed. We are taxed for Social Security our whole working lives and then when our benefits are paid out they can be taxed.

Re: Milt Stevens' problem reading fonts in your zine. Not too long ago I read somewhere that if a .pdf employs a font not present on the reader's computer, the reader won't be able to see it. This surprised me. If you want readers to be able to decipher any font in the .pdf regardless of what's on their machines, you need to export your document using the option to embed fonts – which on Open Office Writer isn't called that, so who knows what it may be called on other word processors or programs. It might be worth investigating if you aren't already doing it.

Oddly, this was one of the last things Ned Brooks and I talked about. We traded .pdfs with weird fonts back and forth trying to see if it was true, but so far as we could tell we were able to see fonts regardless of whether we had them on our computers so who knows.

I was told that a .pdf is essentially a .jpg, which is why you can easily embed pictures and fonts in the document. It is an *image* format, not a *text* format! When a reader like Adobe opens a .pdf, it should no more matter what fonts are used than it matters if there's an image of a horse or locomotive in the document. The doc is reconstructed pixel by pixel, not from from a lexicon.

If I recall correctly, Milt's problem was that Adobe Reader has a voice reading function. You can have it read the text to you out loud. The problem is that it likely does have to interpret the text, and can be baffled by unfamiliar fonts. Of course, the usual fannish way to deal with such problems is to abandon any attempt at niceties and stick to Times Roman or a common sans-serif like Tahoma. But I'm not as blind to style as a lot of fans seem to be, and like playing with fonts.

Re: R-Laurraine Tutihasi's comments about people getting married places other than churches and registries, including their back yards. In fact, Mary and I were married in our living room in Rochester, New York. The ceremony was officiated by Judge Valentino, who lived down the block from us. It was actually attended by several fans – Dave and Caroline Rowe and Mike and Susan Glicksohn.

Lloyd Penney's strategy of making lists to give himself some direction does have one flaw. Where is the to-do list starting with "Making to-do" list?

A sign of Panspermia, perhaps ... the first list originated on Mars? Or maybe it proves Intelligent Design? God created Lloyd Penney with an innate list of things to do?

I am glad you've found a solution to your infamous toxic chemical collection, the WMDs of Toronto. Better call the number and have them picked up before the inspectors return.

Hey, wait a minute...that article about Walt Disney you reprinted...In 2011 I wasn't publishing *Groggy* but *E-Ditto*. You did that on purpose, right?

A mind may be a terrible thing to waste, but it's fun to mess with.

Walt Disney sure had a dystopian idea of what the city of the future ought to be. Probably the Koch brothers would love it. Everything owned by the Corporation. Sheesh. The Koch Brothers. I remember when the creepiest brothers I had to worry about were those Smith Brothers on the cough drops.

As far as everyone staying employed, that would be easy. When anyone gets too old and feeble to do anything else, just put them in costume as Goofy or Mickey Mouse or whatever and let them sit on a street corner all day to add to the ambience.

Nice ghost story. Didn't realize at first it wasn't an essay. I wondered about this brother named Doug. There's an online magazine, that doesn't pay, *Kings River Life*, that looks for ghost stories every Halloween. In fact Mary and I have had a couple there. The editor is on a lot of mystery reader lists, and so the magazine presumably gets some readers.

Throwing in a few details that weren't about me that the reader might pick up on was one way to indicate "Every Good Neighborhood Has One" was fiction. Another detail that was unlike my own childhood was Russell's liking *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. In reality, I found them uninteresting.

I recall my parents did send me out as a beatnik one year, or maybe a hobo. Not much difference, I guess.

WILLIAM BREIDING, WMBREIDING@YAHOO.COM

It's true – I've not locced *Broken Toys*. I've not locced much of anything since I went to the Corflu in Richmond, Virginia, and then returned to Tucson this past summer. My apologies. I see you found a publisher for the Carnaki story. I'd imagine it's hard to find a paying market these days for such things in the "small press." I have a 21,000-word novelette, a Western, that I doubt will ever find a publisher, because of the genre. So it goes! I just finished the first draft on a 75,000-word mainstream novel that will also never find a home, I'm sure – it's the story of a group of people who've all survived sexual abuse from the same pederast when they were children. Set in San Francisco.

It seems that no matter how many publishers there are, there are always more new writers looking for a break.

Oh, for the good old days when magazines only paid ¼-cent a word, but somehow SF writers still seemed to live in a house, own a car, raise a family and smoke and drink far more than was good for them. You can't do it today on ten cents a word!

LLOYD PENNEY, PENNEYS@BELL.NET

Thank you for issue 43 of *Broken Toys*. As you say, there aren't many issues left, but in the meantime, we'll enjoy the issues we do have, and are to come. Comments for you will come *now*.

Will our history end? Maybe not, but no one will know if we don't record our history for others to read. Even then, no one may care, but that's not for us to decide. All we can do is all we can do, and hope for a little posterity. Awards are markers of posterity...I read your essay on awards from earlier today. I understand your frustration. There's a fannish attitude that insists you stand apart from such awards, but yet, the feelgood that comes from them can't be denied. If there is any consolation in these words, know that I nominate you each year, for I certainly know your work. I believe that any time I appear on the ballot, it is only because some of the members of the clubs in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montréal nominate me, and that is because of the letters I send to their clubzines. That won't last much longer, and I expect this will be the last year Yvonne and I appear on the ballot.

I honestly don't think Canadian fanzine fandom is healthy ... and the rest of Canadian fandom forgot about it ages ago.

There is pressure for the NaNoWriMo, or national writing challenge every November. I know of it, but do not participate in it. I write all the time anyway, and figure that such creativity isn't anything you can turn on like a water tap. What few articles I have written for fanzines, I was asked to write, so I really do need an assignment editor.

You can consciously turn your creativity on, but you have to be motivated – promise of a paycheck is one such motivation. Another is when a friend asks for a favour. What's this "NaNoWriMo" got to offer. I don't think I've ever heard of it.

Some in the local are saying what's next, and they are older than me. Yvonne and I have already had that conversation long ago. When we finally ended our con-running career after 30 years, we asked ourselves, what else could we do. Around that time, we saw displays from the local Steampunk group. Yvonne and I had been involved in Worldcon costuming back in the 80s, so we had a look, and we quite liked it, and have been involved in Steampunk ever since. That may not sound too fannish in some circles, but we have found a new community to have some fun with, we have added in our desire to be active and participate by me creating jewelry and Yvonne creating costuming pieces for Steampunk costumes. The fandom we know is fading, and we've simply gone on to something else to stay busy.

Steampunk seems about as fannish as Trek or Harry Potter, so although I have no desire to dress up in Techno-Victorian, I don't have a problem with it. Now the "Left Behind" is definitely *not* fannish!

My loc...I really do think the lists keep me going. I just check the list from time to time, do something on it, write down something else I think of, keep going. I have more time to look after the list... I lost my job of 13 months just before Thanksgiving. I had been given no warning, and no reason was given as to why I was

dismissed, so Service Canada, the group that looks after EI, and the Ministry of Labour are all now curious as to why they did this. So am I. There are penalties for doing what they did, so this should be quite interesting.

Well, I have done the page, and I've gotten it done in good time, too. Don't get used to it; I sure won't. I've been asked why my production of letters has tailed off, and I wasn't aware that it had. However, I am trying to accelerate my writing so I don't have a pile of letters to write before Christmas the way I did last year. Many thanks for this, take care, and have a good weekend.

JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER, ABONTIDES@GMAIL.COM

Good thing I'm not Churchy La Femme! (I'm one of the few *Pogo* fans who really liked Sternecky and Doyle's effort at a revival. I even subscribed to my local newspaper so I could clip out all the strips and archive them!)

I have some of those clipped out of the newspapers, too. Actually, Victoria Vayne clipped them, but later gave them to me. I liked them well enough, but to be truthful it was really Walt Kelly's art that I liked – I was rather indifferent toward the writing. Since I had a number of Walt Kelly books anyway, I didn't pay much attention to the Sternecky & Doyle reboot.

I, too, remember the old original *Magnus, Robot Fighter* comics -- but even as a kid, I felt they were too shallow, too one-dimensional. You're quite right that they went to an extra effort to be real science fiction. They had some daring, some innovation, some real "futurism." But, to my mind, not enough. And I liked the Valiant revival. I liked all of the Valiant universe; I thought they did a pretty darn good job of comic-book myth-making.

Mixing Dr. Solar, Turok Son of Stone and other old Gold Key characters into the Magnus universe just didn't work for me, sorry. And Rai ... a sort of Japanese Magnus painted like a Japanese flag ... wtf?

The current Valiant revival is not as good, but still isn't bad. They brought back Archer and Armstrong ... for a while. (Gone now.) And *it* kept most of its sparkle.

Interesting comments on Walt Disney's original concept for Epcot – an actual living community under incredibly strict idealistic terms of social control. It makes Walden II look like a hotbed of liberal free-thinking! It also points toward the current corporatist plutocracy in the U.S.

I remember a bit from James Michener's *Hawaii*, where it was noted that about ten families owned some 95% of the real estate. No one was ever allowed to buy land from them, only to rent. One character in the novel said that this situation could not be stable, and that the big land-holdings would have to be broken up, either via taxation...or revolution. As it happened, it was taxation as well as free-enterprise and competition.

Cool haunted house story! My old neighborhood used to have one. It was a dead ringer (heh) for The Addams Family mansion. Damned thing was burned away by arsonists one night. Phooey.

Sorry for missing the last few *Broken Toys*! I'll try to do better!

You've done a lot better than some who I've kept on for old-time's sake, who for all their yapping about truefandom and fanhistory seemed unable to budge themselves to loc at all. I guess its easier to go to Corflu and just *say* you're still a fanzine fan. *Grumble.*

KEITH SOLTYS, KEITH@SOLTYS.CA

Re the Rogers Centre (aka SkyDome), the Argos will be moving from there to the soccer stadium at the Ex next year. It should be a much better place to watch football from, depending on the weather, of course. (Hey, we're Canadians, we can handle weather). The 'dome is OK for baseball – Nancy and I have been to a few games there recently. We usually try to get seats up in the 500s above home plate. You're looking almost straight down at the batters from there and the seats are fairly cheap.

Like Milt Stevens, I have similar problems with your PDF format. I have tried uploading the PDF to Amazon, which will convert it to Kindle format for me, but your comments in the LOCs come out completely garbled – just a few non-alphabetic characters. So what I do is take it to work and use Acrobat Pro to convert it to a Word file and send that to Amazon. That works. I do browse through the PDF to admire your artwork. I suspect that the Amazon conversion software is choking on the font that you are using, or there is something odd about your character encoding in Windows. No big deal – at least as long as I have access to Acrobat Pro. I did offer to send my Word version of your last issue to Milt but he didn't have any problems with that issue.

Naturally, since a .pdf *isn't* a text file! You would need an optical character reader to turn one into text. Of course, if people are trying to turn .pdfs into Kindle or Amazon files, I'm not surprised there are problems. The e-readers use proprietary software that is almost certain to create all sorts of incompatibilities with files not written for them. However, if you insist on playing vinyl in your DVD player, learn to expect problems.

Unfortunately, I can't tell in advance which fonts are likely to mess with Kindle's or Amazon's heads. Nor am I prepared to give fonts up and stick to simple fonts like Times and Arial all the time.

Re: Paul Skelton's comment on reading fanzines on an e-reader, it's easy on the Kindle to bookmark a page. On the Kindle Paperwhite, just touch the upper right corner of the screen and a little bookmark icon pops up. Touch it and you've bookmarked the page – it also shows you any other bookmarks you may have already created. I don't have my daughter's Kobo at hand, but I believe it has a similar feature. My vision has gotten to the point that I do almost all my reading on my Kindle or my tablet (for PDFs). At work, I do as much as possible on the computer reading paper versions of a document only as a last resort.

In #42, re David Redd's comment about trying to sell books, it's become almost impossible - there are so few used bookstores left, and the ones that are around pay almost nothing. I will have to try the online route for some of our more collectible stuff – the rest will probably end up being donated to Goodwill or some such – they already have several boxes of it.

Re: commas, I don't think I could define the rules – at this point in my career, proper usage is more or less instinctive. But I will mention one thing – I always, always, use the Oxford comma; that is, putting a comma before the last item in a list. In my line of work, avoiding ambiguity is a primary concern, and using the Oxford (or serial) comma helps to avoid it.

So that's what the "Oxford comma" is. I had used it all my life, but my proofreader has always "corrected" it. According to Wikipedia, there's no agreement on the question.

Re: paragraphs changing colour when moved, are you displaying paragraph marks in Word? If you are not, odd things can happen when you move text. I always tell our users at work to turn on display of paragraph marks. I know they bother some people, but if you can't see them, you will run into formatting problems

eventually. Also, do you use paragraph and character styles to control your formatting? They are the best way of ensuring a consistent format and will save you much time in the long run.

The best thing I can do is to be careful about empty lines, and not let them share font or colour changes with visible text.

That's enough for now, I think.

JOHN PURCELL, ASKANCE73@GMAIL.COM

Quite often these days, I find myself staring at a blank screen, wondering what to write about. This is not so far removed from those days when I used to stare at the blank piece of paper I had just rolled through the typewriter, but the principle is still the same. Fortunately, the best way to combat this situation is turn on the television news and start ranting at the bullshit happening in the world. That is always a good start. Or you could write about your latest medical malady, the battles with rising costs, or that you can't get no respect for what you do... There are all sorts of topics worth spewing venom upon. Even ending sentences with prepositions. That is likewise also a good topic.

Your mention of *My Little Pony* reminds me of the student I had last year – nice kid, smart and a good essay writer – who was a Bronie: a card-carrying member of *My Little Pony* fandom. The thought of a 20 year old male gushing over that cartoon show was almost enough to make me call the Vice Squad. Potential child molester here, was the first thought that popped into my head. I mean, he even showed me *drawings* – and fan fiction! – he had created. Good grief, he had a notebook filled with these things! Yeesh... Can we say, "creepy"?

Some furies are like that, so I know the type well. In fact, MLP is *so* appealing to a large number of furies that the two fandoms overlap more than Trek does with Science Fiction. Bronies tend to creep me out a bit too, yet, to be fair, it's probably not for us to judge. How long ago was it that the general public looked down on Science Fiction fandom as a sort of pathology? I'm sure you've had personal experiences with people who gave you a wary look when they discovered what you did with your spare time. When you come down to it, Bronies are people who are deeply into their role playing world, who presumably seek the love and acceptance among their fellow Bronies that nature clearly never intended them to have...

Interesting tale about your story "The Canaries in the Dark." It sure is good to know that the publishing world is still just as convoluted and unreliable as during the pulp era. But hey, you now can be called a published author! I would like to read that story, too, so thank you for sharing the link.

Since then, I discovered that there is a tiny world of writing and publishing out there that specializes in William Hope Hodgson, and particularly in the Carnacki stories. Next time I may find a niche publisher who will *pay me!*

About five years ago my older daughter and her boyfriend copied all of the existing (at that time) *Red Dwarf* DVD's that his parents had and gave them to me as a Christmas gift. Once in a great while I get the urge to watch them again, and they are a lot of fun. My favorite character was Cat; he was a snappy dresser, and Danny John-Jules played him so extravagantly over-the-top that he must have a blast in that role. According to www.reddwarf.co.uk, the show's official website, the tenth series aired in 2012; this is obviously not in the DVD set that I have, but I do have the 2009 miniseries "Back to Earth." A funny show, and I may have to order the tenth series to have the complete set in my hot little hands.

I got a bootleg copy of *Red Dwarf X* from a fan in the UK. But, a couple of months ago, I bought the legit set so that I could run the episodes on TV. You may be pleased to know that an 11th season has been given the green light, and that a 12th season is likely. It would be fitting if the final episode is just a leisurely tour of the ship, with the voice of Holly talking in the background. It only becomes gradually apparent that he is talking to himself, and his program is hopelessly corrupted. The camera tour finishes in a small bay in one of the holds, where Lister's casket rests next to Cat's, and Rimmer's light bead is exhibited in a glass case, no longer in operating condition. There is a framed photo of Kachanski on Lister's casket. Cat's has neon lighting that flashes his name, a photo album opened on the lid and a speaker that says "How ya DO-innnnn, Bud! I'm Lookin' GOOOOD" when anyone enters. At that moment enters Kryton, mimicking the motions of looking after the crew, just as he was doing for the dead officers of the crashed Nova 5 where he was first discovered in series III. "Oh heavens, I do wish that insane computer would delete itself and not just go on, babbling nonsense like a deranged Lord who thinks Scottish Nationalism is a Jihadist plot to destroy the Pound-Dollar! And just LOOK. Dust! Everywhere. Didn't I just dust here only last decade..." Fade to black. Slow tempo version of "It's cold outside, there's no kind of atmosphere, I'm all alone, more or less. Let me fly, far away from here, Fun, fun, fun, In the sun, sun, sun..." "

Clearly, I've missed my calling. I could so have been a hack television script writer!

So Eric Mayer computed out that he has produced a total of 130 fanzines over the years? That's not too many. His efforts made me wonder how many fanzines and apazines I have completed since 1976, the year of my first fanzine, and my total count is 190. Gee, if I produce a combination of ten more *Askances* and *Askens* in the next year I could hit the 200 mark. Like you note, that's nowhere near what that Garcia kid has cranked out, but it's still a damned lot of fanzines.

The recent deaths of Ned Brooks and Don West certainly give one pause, but it has been wonderful enjoying their works over the decades. I met Ned at MidAmeriCon in 1976, but never Don. This year has seen the passing of many friends, which is sad, of course, yet considering the aging of fandom this really should come as no surprise. Even so, we miss our friends and colleagues.

I met Ned at least once, but had corresponded with him over decades. D. West I'm certain I never met, and I doubt I ever heard from either. Judging from what I read in fanzines, he seems a rather stand-offish sort of person, who little respected what fell outside his circle of friends and interests. But I see from the outpourings from fanzines and on FaceBook that D. was a highly regarded, if not, in fact, *loved* individual in Britfandom. I find it a little puzzling.

Regarding Eric's "Democracyland" article, that's one place, Epcot Center, I have never been, and probably never will get there. Disney may have been a visionary and a brilliant animation innovator, but he was also an asshole. A couple months ago my wife and I watched a two-part PBS special on Walt Disney, and it was a fascinating history of the man, his work, and dreams. If you haven't seen it, I recommend the program. It's probably available somewhere on the Internet.

I have read several books on the man's life and the studio's history. I think he could be summed up as someone who truly believed he lived in a Land of Opportunity ... but who was also robbed in his earliest business deals, so became protective of his ideas, and jealous of every nickel they earned in his later life. He was friendly and apparently equalitarian at first ... but only as long as his instructions were carried out to the letter. His workers loved Disney, palled around with him ... but also feared him. Eventually, keeping busy and making money was all that held Disney's attention. His early love of animation he left increasingly to his most trusted employees, while he directed low-budget family films, built carnival rides and played with programmable puppets.

Well, I think this will do it. Thanks for the zine, and we shall see what the future brings in the 44th issue, whenever it appears.

If all goes well, this very morning!

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Speaking of recycling waste, our little hamlet employs a waste management company that provides everyone with three rolling plastic bins. One bin is for “green waste,” like shrubbery and garden trimmings or raked-up leaves; one for the recycling of paper, plastics, metal cans and such; and one for “kitchen waste.” Once filled, those bins are to be rolled out and left at the curb on Pickup Day – Thursday, in my case – when huge, grunting trucks trundle around the streets, their mechanical arms reaching out to clamp hungry claws around the waiting bins, raise them up above the gaping maws of the compactors, and shake the contents into the belly of the beast before contemptuously slapping their emptied victims back to the pavement.

This morning I woke up about 3 a.m. and dozed in drowsy comfort, complacently ignoring the dark, wet, miserable night outside until around 5, when I seemed to hear a lot of truck noises in town... and suddenly realized it was trash day, and Amber, my daughter, probably hadn’t put the bins out the night before. So I scrambled around, huddled on bathrobe and slippers, stumbled downstairs and dashed out into the rain and dark, hauled the garbage bin out to the curb, saw the truck had already passed and was coming back up the other side of the street, scampered across the wet asphalt dragging the bin behind me, hurried alongside the truck and whooped to the driver, who stopped, backed up a bit, then put it in gear and drove off into the soggy darkness, leaving me standing in the wet grass and clinging to the full garbage bin like some priceless family heirloom.

Disconsolate and deflated, I slogged back across the street and left the bin sitting slaunchways at the end of the driveway. It occurred to me, belatedly, that perhaps the driver had rejected my last-minute contribution because he was driving the “Green Waste” or “Recyclable” truck, not the “Kitchen Waste” truck. I can imagine the rigid trashman social hierarchy prompting his reaction when he glanced out the window, identified the bin and snarled: “Hah! Kitchen Waste in MY aristocratic vehicle? Not freakin’ likely, schmuck!”

I slumped back upstairs, kicked off my wet slippers, slid into the still-warm covers and managed to get in a pleasant hour or two of dozing and daydreaming, then finally dragged myself out of bed and got distracted with proofreading. Looking out my window, I could see the trash bin still blocking the end of the driveway. Oh, well. Maybe the Kitchen Waste truck would still come around...

(NOTE: It finally did. Like Santa or the Easter Bunny, when I wasn’t watching.)

HEADS AND TAILS (Two Coin Shows)

The Toronto Coin Expo (October 2nd)

Once again, I was headed to the Main Reference Library at Bloor and Yonge. I’d been there previously for a small comics convention, to meet an artist I admired. This time I was going to the Toronto Coin Expo, a show I had not previously attended, to meet my regular dealer, Robert Kokotailho. Robert is a

fount of knowledge about ancient coin history and coin collecting who ordinarily runs a store in Calgary. I trust him implicitly. He gives me favourable prices, marked down from his website, and allows me to pay over convenient periods of time. I didn't want to attend the show just to pick Robert's brains, however. I owed him money and wanted to give it to him in person, rather than shelling out an additional \$7 or \$8 for a money order. I also had two coins to pick up from him.

The hell of it was that they weren't the coins I had originally bought. I had ordered a nice silver penny by Henry II, a small bronze "semi" by Trajan, and a denarius by Marcus Aurelius that was somewhat routine, but inexpensive as silver coins go. I ordered them months ago, and they never arrived. Weeks went by, and finally after two months both Robert and I agreed that the Post Office Monster had eaten the package. I was lucky that I wasn't on the hook for them, but Robert complained that the Post Office had been unusually bad lately – it was the second shipment that had disappeared that month! He said it was just part of the "cost of business," but I felt bad about the loss. I had badly wanted both the "semi" and the English penny, but I also hate to see a nice guy get screwed.

It was bitterly ironic, also, that the coins – lost and buried in the ground for almost 2,000 years – were discovered only to lost again by the Post Office!

Robert had another Henry II penny, however. It was a bit pricier, but also a bit nicer than the lost item. He told me he could bring it to the Coin Expo, since I was planning to meet him there anyway. I decided to shop at Robert's webpage to see if there was anything else of interest, and settled on a silver coin from the small kingdom of the Himyars.

You probably haven't heard of the Himyars, and I don't blame you. Kingdoms about the size of Manhattan came and went in the Middle East for millennia! They hardly mattered unless their armies were plundering your sheep or ravaging your womenfolk. The Himyarites were contemporaries with the Kingdom of Sheba, and in fact they conquered the Shebans twice. Both kingdoms ruled over small swaths of territory on the heel of Arabia that we call Yemen today. Himyar had a complicated history that included becoming Christian under the Romans, and then a fanatical Jewish state for about a century. Proscriptions against Christians were probably one reason why Christian Ethiopia, with Byzantine support, invaded in the 6th century AD, and put an end to Himyar as an independent entity once and for all. Then along came Islam, which put an end to several centuries of Christianity there as well. Although it is called Yemen today, the factiousness and viciousness of the area has become well ingrained ... and is not likely to let up in the near future.

The coin is not as sophisticated as Greek or Roman coins of the time, which was roughly contemporaneous with Julius Caesar, but it is not unattractive. The inscription is in some local script that is so obscure that I've already forgotten everything I knew about it.



Himyarite 1/2 AR Denarius

I was particularly interested in Henry II because I had recently read a biography. He was one of medieval England's more powerful and influential monarchs, ruling with an iron gauntlet from 1154 to 1189, and is chiefly remembered for two things. First, he inspired (or coyly ordered) the murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket. Most people will boo or hiss on cue, but in fact the Archbishop may have had it coming. He had been appointed to that high ecclesiastic office by his friend, the king, who naturally expected the Archbishop to side with him in his perennial disputes with the Pope. To Henry's surprise, the new Archbishop all of a sudden became religious, and unreasonably *sided* with the Pope!

To further confound the English king, the murder of the Archbishop in no way improved his relations with the Eternal City.

The other thing Henry II is known for today is for siring two fictional kings – Richard the Lion-Hearted and “Prince” John. There were two actual Kings Richard and John, of course, but they resemble the figures in the legend of Robin Hood about as closely as the historical St. Nicholas does Santa Claus. In fact, there was little to choose from between the two Plantagenet brothers. Both rebelled against their own father to seize his throne while he was off crusading, both were prone to temper tantrums and neither thought anything of ravaging the French countryside to seize more possessions for their crown. Legitimate though they were, they were thoroughgoing bastards, just like dear old Papa.

The Henry II coin was listed as Fine, which means it's in pretty decent condition, considering it didn't cost hundreds of dollars. You can read most of the inscription, and distinguish a certain style about it. Style is important with early English pennies, but I'll come back to that point later.



Henry II, AR Penny, London, 1180 - 1189

Since I was at the Coin Expo, there was one other thing I wanted to find. Robert didn't have a table at the Expo, since he was there mainly to buy new stock. So I went from table to table looking for the commemorative Canadian quarters I lacked. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the modern Canadian flag, they were uncommonly handsome, and came in two varieties. On one, the flag was depicted in full colour. The other depicted the flag with a frosted finish. I had gotten one of each in my change, months before, but wanted additional quarters because I like to save two, needed another to exchange with a friend in California and might need to provide my sister with one. However, those coins had become impossible to find. Not one ever turned up in my change again. To my surprise, none of the dealers at the Coin Expo had them either! One and all, they complained about their orders being short-supplied by the mint, and they had quickly sold out. What happened to those coins, then? I asked. Nobody knew. Either the mint didn't think the 50th anniversary of the modern Canadian flag as important as Winnipeg acquiring an NHL team, so had not minted as many quarters for the occasion,

or somebody – let's say Saudi or Japanese speculators – had bought them all up at the source. That may not be so, but I'm just sayin'. I had reached just about the last dealer at the show when one admitted he still had a roll. How many did I want? He asked too much for them, but not more than I could afford, and at that point I wasn't going to let frugality stop me. I bought three pairs of them, giving me four pairs in all.

I went home a happier but poorer collector.

Torex (November 19th)

It was not my plan to attend another coin show so soon ... little over a month since the last. However, the year was winding down in a rather nasty way, I thought, and any reason to get out of the house while I still could was welcome. I also had not had a chance to look at Robert's stock at the Toronto Coin Expo.

Unfortunately, Saturday was a beast, weather-wise. The forecast for Sunday was considerably better, a pleasant mix of sun and intermittent overcast and moderately warm. The coins would be well picked over by then, of course, and the show closed early, but it was either go on Sunday or wait until the next Torex, in February. Given that February is the depth of winter, and Traveling Matt does *not* like snow, it might not even be possible for me to go then.

As it happened, I barely got to the show in time. While still open to the public, there was almost nobody there at all, and all but two or three of the dealers had packed up and left behind empty tables. Fortunately, my dealer Robert was one of those who was still doing business. I stopped in front of his first glass showcase and began inspecting the coins. As usual, the coins displayed under glass were out of my price bracket, starting at three or four hundred dollars and going stratospheric from there. But Robert also has trays of more reasonably priced items, where I quickly spotted a small, corroded bronze object of interest.

It was a farthing minted in the reign of Charles I (1625 to 1649). It was a tiny little thing, dark and so badly preserved that I couldn't make much detail. The bronze farthing coins had only been introduced a few years earlier, by Charles' father, James I, and served as small change in common transactions. This one in particular must have seen a lot of service before it was finally dropped and lost. I could barely make out a rose and crown on one side, which gave the coin the name "Rose Farthing." The other side was a corroded lunar landscape where nothing could be identified with any certainty. Nevertheless, it was graded VG, so I imagine that to see anything on both sides would have indicated museum grade! The coin was only \$5, so I set it aside for myself.

Curiously enough, I had other coins of Charles I, and adding a farthing to the sixpence, shilling and half-crown I already had made good sense. It looks marginally better to the human eye than this computer scan would indicate.



Charles I, AE Rose Farthing

I also came across a number of rather nice denarii from the late Republic, priced quite reasonably from around \$45 to \$75. Normally, these coins are attributable to one of the Roman Senators elected to hold the office of Quaestor, who supervised the mint. Few of these time-servers achieved lasting fame, but now and then one left a mark on history. Such a man was L. Appuleius Saturninus. Saturninus shook the Republic's constitution by attempting in 100 BC to run for Tribune for a third term – one more than the law allowed – and was declared a public enemy by the Senate. After a pitched battle with the Senate's partisan mob, Saturninus and his surviving followers took refuge in the Senate house itself, where he assumed he was inviolable. Apparently not, since his fellow Senators scaled the roof and began to pelt him and his followers with loose tiles from the roof ... and didn't stop until they broke his head. This probably wasn't constitutional either, and the controversy was in some ways the beginning of a long, gradual decay of Republican restraint that ended in two civil wars, a public assassination and a permanent military dictatorship.

(At this point it is amusing to stop and imagine John Boehner being pelted by *his* fellow members of Congress when he resigned as Speaker of the House.)

The coin itself was minted in happier days for Saturninus, when he was Quaestor in 104 BC. It is a very ordinary sort of denarius, with a helmeted head – a personification of Rome – on one side, and a four-horse quadriga on the other. It is really only the authorship of the coin that makes it interesting.

Notice, though, the proofing mark – a circular punch that has ringed the eye on the obverse side, making it appear as though “Rome” wore glasses. Such marks on early Roman coins are very common – evidently bankers and businessmen did not trust the coins that passed through their hands to be silver all the way through. Masses of surviving counterfeits, with copper or bronze slugs under a thin layer of silver, attest that their suspicion was well founded. I have one or two such “fourees” – a French word meaning “stuffed” – myself.



Republic AR Denarius 104 BC
L. Appuleius Saturninus

I was not terribly excited by either of my finds up to this point, but then I made the kind of discovery I was hoping for! It would cost a pretty penny, so to speak, for what was only a penny itself ... but *what* a penny it was! It was minted by King John of England, the one and only. You know the guy. Everyone hates him because of Robin Hood and his trying to usurp the throne of his *goody-two-shoes* brother, Richard the Lion-Hearted.

Never mind the pusillanimous cad seen in popular depictions, John was a bad man ... yet not as bad as usually thought. He broke his word, fought with the Church, undermined the traditional relationship of the Crown to the barons, but all that was absolutely standard operating procedure for every Plantagenet

king before him. His brother Richard, romanticized as “the Lion-Hearted” was no better, and arguably worse. The cost of Richard’s crusading and the ransom demanded for him after he was captured by a disgruntled Christian ally are largely what drove John to raising the taxes! Richard could not even be bothered to live in England. In his ten years as King of England and the Angevin Empire in France, he spent no more than six months in his damp, chilly annex. To raise funds to fight the infidel, he was reported to have said he would have sold London to finance his army. He almost certainly could not even speak English. John, at least, could do *that!*

Their father was King Henry II, a brutally powerful monarch in his prime, who extended Angevin rule in France to its greatest extent. France would not come so near to becoming part of a unified realm with England again until Henry V, in the early 15th century. But like all the Plantagenet kings, Henry was self-centered, ambitious, remorseless, a bully and overreaching. He was so overbearing that his own sons, Richard and John, leagued with the King of France to rise against him.

Nor was John’s son, Henry III, any prize. One by one, he reiterated his father John’s mistakes – and worse. He filled the court with Frenchmen in preference to his own English barons, alienating the noble class on which the crown depended. He harassed the Jewish money-lending community, a move as economically stupid as Reagan-era tax cuts for the rich. Eventually, the barons could take it no more and briefly dethroned him, just as John’s barons had dethroned *him* in 1215. It was only Henry’s son, Edward I, a strong and energetic king, who saved the crown for the family line.

Not to mention giving Mel Gibson his comeuppance.

By an interesting set of circumstances, I now have a penny from the reign of all five of those Plantagenet kings – Henry II, Richard I, John, Henry III and Edward I – a swath of about 150 years of early English history!

Unfortunately, I have no coins to fill the gap between Edward I and Henry VI, another span of about 150 years. A silver penny by either Edward III (1312 to 1377), or Henry V (1413 to 1422), would be a good place to start ...



John I AR Penny, 1199 - 1216 Richard I AR Denier 1189 - 1199 AD

I doubt you can make out the lettering well enough to read it. The style reflects the use of goose-quill pens on parchment or vellum, and often looks nothing like modern letters. However, it says “Henricus” over the king’s head. Neither Richard nor John put their own names on their own coinage! Richard’s name appears only on his French coins, minted in Poitou. Why? I don’t have a clue. It seems unlikely

it was out of respect for their old man, since they tried to usurp his throne. Laziness, perhaps? With Richard, it's possible he just didn't think asserting his rule in England mattered all that much. The question led me to e-mail my dealer, Robert, to ask "How can you tell who struck which coin?"

Most medieval European coins look frustratingly alike, and English coins more than most. On the reverse there is a cross with some heraldic emblems between the arms. Around the rim is an inscription of balloon-like letters in Latin. On the other side is a similar inscription, and the stylized head of a king. No effort is made to make the portrait resemble a living king – it is purely a symbol of royal authority. Yet I noticed that there are microscopic differences in the portraits. Being handmade, every set of dies was different from every other, leading to huge differences between two coins that are ostensibly the identical type. But little details appear to be consistent from one reign to another – how many whisker-curls does the king's face have, and how curly are they? Is the nose wide or is it beaky? Slight though these differences may be, they appear to be a consistent clue to the true identity of the king issuing the coin when the inscription is illegible, or when – as in the case of Richard and John – they could not be bothered to put their own names on their coinage at all.

Apparently, my speculation was spot on. The only other way to narrow down the possibilities is the exact combination of mint marks in the inscription on the reverse. Some mints were not in use by one king or the other ... or did not mint coins with an anchor or barrel together, or with a bell or a star at all. This is the sort of thing that drives a collector to pedantry, and to assembling libraries of books that set him back even more than the cost of his collection!

Royal Ontario Museum (27 Dec.)

Recently, I have had a chance to examine a number of Roman coins that were on display at the Royal Ontario Museum as part of the Pompeii exhibition. They were purported to have been unearthed at the site of the buried city, but several considerations make this most unlikely ... as confirmed by my dealer Robert when I consulted him.

Ah, but let us leave Pompeii to be another story, for another time!

Flickering Lights: A Dim View of the Aurora Awards

A few days ago, I read one of the recent columns by Graeme Cameron that I hadn't read before. From there, I followed a link to a page for this year's Aurora Awards. There was something called a "voters' package" that I was curious about.

As I expected, there were short bios and in most cases a photo of the nominees in every category. Most, but not all. Mine, for instance, consisted of three words. Two were the name of the fanzine I was nominated for, and the other word was "editor." Wow. *That'll* certainly help the undecided voter to make up his mind!

Just so that you have a little background about me and the Aurora Awards, I had never been nominated for one until last year. This was in spite of something like 45 years in fandom, during which I had racked up 11 Hugo nominations, been the fan GoH at a Worldcon, won the Rotsler award, and enjoyed numerous other distinctions. Yet until last year, few in Canadian fandom thought I was material for an Aurora!

I was whupped handily, by what I believe was someone's online blog ... but that was hardly unexpected. I doubt there are more than a dozen possible voters on my *Broken Toys* mailing list, because that's about as many actual fanzine fans as there are in this country. What *was* unexpected was that I had to learn about the nomination in the first place when Felicity Walker congratulated me on FaceBook! I recall someone else enlarging happily on his nomination on FaceBook, but no one had contacted me.

Fancy that. Evidently some nominees were told and didn't have to read someone else talking about it, but I wasn't one of them

This year they did better, and informed me by e-mail. I have been told that the committee responsible for the award was supposed to ask for biographical material and a photo. However, I don't remember this ever happening. Let's for a moment suppose they had, though. To begin with, it doesn't seem like me to overlook a request of this nature. I have a choice of bios and photos that I can find and upload the same night. I don't understand why I wouldn't have done it the moment I got the request. But let's further suppose that somehow I *did* forget – here's what annoys me: they had my e-mail address, so could easily have reminded me.

When I asked about this unofficially, I was told that their obligation was over with the first request. I wasn't entitled to a second chance.

Even if they didn't want to e-mail me a second time, there are several fans in the Vancouver area who could have given them a few facts. Better still, a simple search of the internet will instantly take you to pages about me in Wikipedia, in the Canadian Fancyclopedia, in the fanzine Wiki and on the 2009 Worldcon website. There are likely several other sources of biographical information (and photos!) about me on-line. All things considered, my name comes up ridiculously often in a Google search. The only reasonable assumption anyone can make is that the award committee didn't want to be bothered.

Now, I concede that these bios on the Aurora web page don't matter much. I suspect that not many people study the Aurora's voters' package very carefully, and it's debatable how much the contents influence anyone's voting preference. Still, if it has any influence at all on the vote, the fact that some nominees have encouraging blurbs to promote their cause, but a few others are just described as "editor," is inherently biased. It diminishes whatever small odds in my favour still further, from "practically zero" to "indistinguishable from zero." But the award committee apparently didn't care about that. Or should I even wonder about their impartiality?

But that would seem to be going too far. I was not the only nominee treated in an off-hand manner. So were Tanya Huff, Charles de Lint and William Gibson, to mention only three. August company for me to be in, I admit.

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The Cancon this year was SFContario, here in Toronto. There were patches of rain, that might have soaked me on the way in Traveling Matt, so I stayed home ... and maybe just as well. I really didn't need to be there to hear the Aurora winners announced. Most of those winners were writers I barely knew about, or publications I had never heard of, so it would have been hard to take offense. The only

difficulty I would have had was to stifle a yawn. I read so little new SF and Fantasy that most of the names were meaningless to me.

It was the fan categories I really wasn't eager to hear. I had expected Graeme Cameron's *Space Cadet* to be a winner, but *Broken Toys* actually beat Graeme's zine by a smidgin. I was surprised. *Broken Toys* still only placed third overall, however. Second was a relatively little-known genre-oriented zine called *Ecdysis* that appeared in 2014 and so far has only five issues. It is semi-literary, semi-media, but not slick enough to be called semi-pro. The winner by a wide margin, however, was an on-line blog called *Speculating Canada*. I had to search for it with Google, and what I found was the usual round of reviews and opinion pieces on books, magazines and movies. *Sigh*. I guess the voters have spoken, and devotionals to writers, *Game of Thrones* and news of the upcoming *Star Wars* movie is what they want.

Modern fandom has spoken ... and said fanzines are obsolete. Hardcore blogs, conventions and FaceBook have taken their place.

It would seem that the choice presented to me is to either be false with myself, and pretend to care about what fandom is becoming ... or to find other ways to make better use of my time.

The sensible choice is the latter. Which is why I really did not want to hear about the Auroras.



The Laws of Nature are deeply perverted, on a level that physicists won't talk about.

A friend of mine wrote an amusing little piece about a poster he wanted to hang on his wall. He bought a frame, only to discover that he had misplaced the poster. He put the frame down somewhere, and later found the poster right under his nose, exactly where it should have been. But when he went to get the frame, it was nowhere to be seen! It is only surprising that, when he finally got poster and frame together, he didn't lose the hammer!

This must happen to all of us at one time or another, but I had a similar incident occur to me not two days ago!

I was inspecting a diecast model of an A6M2 "Zero" fighter in 1/72 scale. I had bought it "for Christmas" for myself. It was perfect out of the box, with one *small* exception. There is a device on aircraft that is like a straw usually mounted on the wingtip and pointing forward, that measures the force of the airstream jamming into it, to indicate airspeed to the pilot. It is called a pitot tube, and on this model it was bent *upward* at an unsightly angle. It's easy enough, usually, just to bend the thin little shaft back into the correct position. But in this case, it was firmly attached to a base that preferred to come off the wing rather than bend. It didn't simply *fall off*, however. It was left hanging, leaving a gap. Again, not a big problem because I could just squeeze a little glue into the gap and gently push the part back into position. It would not even create a noticeable seam.

However, just as the tip of the glue tube touched the spot where I wanted to glue, the whole damn thing decided to drop off!

It should have been a straight fall. I was sitting on the sofa, knees apart, with the Zero in one hand, the glue tube in the other. A straight line from my hands to the floor would have put the fallen part in plain sight. But, even as it fell, I knew perfectly well that the laws of gravity would dictate nothing of the kind – instead, the part would vanish instantly!

Which it did.

I was used to that sort of thing, of course. I never figured out how they did their vanishing act, but I had searched the floor on hands and knees for small plastic parts like this many painful times. You would be forgiven if you believed that anything so light and flimsy could bounce, but if it *did*, surely it could not bounce far? Yet on occasion I've found such things as much as ten feet from where they logically should have landed.

I knew the drill. First, remain seated, and carefully scan the floor below. Secondly, put the model down, then check the creases of your shirt and pants. Third, stand up slowly, and watch for something to fall of your clothes. Turn and check where you were sitting. Fourth, get down on the floor and scrutinize it inch by inch, carefully reaching under the desk and sofa to sweep dirt and dust bunnies out into the open. Check the detritus carefully. Gradually, I worked a larger and larger circle, until I had to move the desk to the other side of the room, and was searching five or six feet away. No pitot tube.

By then I was growing pretty angry. I don't like it when the laws of physics are violated just to snatch away the joy I feel in a bauble that ought to be perfect. I take it personally.

When all else fails, though, there is usually one last thing to do in a search for missing parts – look somewhere improbable, even impossible. I opened the drawer in the desk in front of me and looked around the clutter inside. Sure enough, there was the pitot tube, somehow teleported inside a closed drawer!

What gets me is *not* that it happened ... but that this wasn't the *first* time I had found a missing piece in that diabolical drawer! *Once* is a fluke of nature. *Twice* is a law!

Quantum entanglement comes into it somehow, I just know it does.

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