

BROKEN TOYS 46

First issue of the year, *Broken Toys 46*, was very near a double issue, to accomodate the truly enormous letter column that had accumulated over the previous two issues. Luckily, I had second thoughts at the last moment. The January 2016 issue of *Broken Toys* is published by Taral Wayne, from 245 Dunn Ave. Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. I can also be reached at Taral@bell.net. Back issues are available as free downloads at eFanzines.com and Fanac.org. Kiddelidivee Books & Art 305, and counting down to *Broken Toys 50!*

Time appears to be very tricky this near a black hole ... so much so that I seriously considered publishing two issues in the same month again, but, for archival purposes, dating them January and February of 2016, regardless. The logic behind this was that I prorogued the letter column for last issue ahead to this one. However, I now face a 34-page lettercol that is longer than most full issues! So I considered dividing the letters into two columns, and publish only the letters on *Broken Toys 44* in this issue, and the letters on 45 in the next *Broken Toys*. However, I'm sure you see the trap this leads to as well as I can. So I will just have to trust to the readers not to respond *too vigorously* to *this* issue, and come hell or high water I'll catch up the letter columns in *Broken Toys 47*. If I have to, maybe it will be all letters. *Sheesh*. And to think I once complained that I didn't get enough locs...

I think it is fair to say that there is a broader scope of material in this issue. Apart from the usual self-pity and whining about the vicissitudes of aging, there is a tribute to *File 770's* eight years on-line, a terrifying journey into the bottom of my deep freezer, and a pleasant little jaunt to the scenic resort town of Pompeii, in the autumn of 79 AD. Bring a stout hat and respirator.

Lost Week

Here it is, Monday again, and I am writing about *last* Monday. I had a routine appointment with my family doctor that day, and brought with me a short list of things to complain about. First, the swollen left leg that medication had brought down to a reasonable size was swollen again. More importantly, the same diuretic that had flushed the fluids out of my extremities had also removed fluids from my right lung, and cured me of the difficulty I had sleeping ... but now the insomnia was *back*. I thought the two were surely connected, just as they had been before, and that I needed another course of diuretics to wring the excess fluids from my sodden body tissues.

To my surprise, there was no evidence that fluid had built up in my lung again, so there was no obvious connection, and so Dr. Lee could not explain either the insomnia or the swollen leg ... so she packed me right off to St. Joseph's Hospital *for a second time!*

St. Joe's is not far from where I live and the clinic where Dr. Lee practices. But your definition of "not far" depends of course on whether it is a brisk stroll along a sunny summer street, or hazardous crawl along icy sidewalks on a motorized wheelchair. In fact, it's about a mile down the street. But it was January, and the coldest day of the year so far, and the sun was already going down. I had driven to the clinic with Traveling Matt, but was not keen to drive it a mile more in ten-below weather, in the dark. Images rose in my mind of that car frozen by the lakeside that had recently been in the news. Dr. Lee whistled up a cab, however, and the clinic paid for it with a chit.

The cab was a full-sized van, equipped with a ramp for wheelchairs, so Matt was no problem. I was a bit surprised, though, when the cabbie seemed uncertain where the entrance to the hospital was. But it turned out that the inconspicuous doorway he picked was good enough to get me into Emergency. Once again I was a prisoner, trapped in a flimsy hospital gown with my tightly-whities hanging out.

From that point on, I resigned myself to many hours of waiting. It wasn't that the staff was inefficient. I was processed with due speed, and saw a doctor in a reasonable time. The problem was that I was there for "long term observation," which means watching to see that nothing happens for most of the time. Fortunately, I carry almost everything I need on Traveling Matt. And since my cat died two years ago, there is nothing at home that has to be looked after in my absence. With unconscious foresight, I had brought a long book to read, and had stuffed a fifty-dollar bill in my wallet before setting out that Monday afternoon ... never expecting that I wouldn't return that evening.

After a not-very-restful night, I was moved from the emergency ward to a room for two. The other party was an old man – actually, since I'm getting to be an old man myself, I should say a *much* older man – who didn't speak English. The curious thing was that there was always someone with him, day and night. Sometimes it was only a single person, but sometimes he was kept company by up to eight ... *none* of whom spoke English. I couldn't decide whether it was Spanish or Portuguese, but I had plenty of opportunity to ponder the question ... because all of them spent most of their visits arguing or pleading with the old man, who was very contrary-wise, and perhaps profoundly deaf as well. He argued with his family and the nurses incessantly, and very loudly. This seemed to go on all day and half the night, too. I never learned what his problem was, or why he was there, but snatches of English were suggestive. As far as I could make out, he was determined to pull the tubes and wires out of his body, get dressed and walk out, and be damned to the nurses!

Eventually I learned that the single person with him was a paid attendant of some kind. Ontario's health coverage plan doesn't provide warm bodies to stay up and watch you sleep, so I assume the old geezer in bed must have a heck of a private insurance plan. The others seemed to be family, and I remained mystified about what language they were speaking (or yelling) until I worked up the nerve to ask one of them. It turned out to be Spanish, which was somewhat unusual for Toronto. We have a large Portuguese community not far from where I live, but not so many Spanish speakers this far from Latin America.

In fact, I don't think he was very pleased about anything – not the food, not the window being open, or the window being closed, or the light being on, or the light being off, or the angle of the bed, or taking his pills, or his meals, or the time the sun came up in the morning.

Strangely enough, despite all that, and although one reason I was incarcerated at St. Joe's again was my inability to sleep, I slept fairly well that night. I slept rather well *every* night, in fact, confirming a suspicion I had that insomnia is often largely in the mind.

I can understand the old gentleman's complaints about the meals.

The first time I had stayed at St. Joe's, I was rather bemused by the meals served three times a day. The second time around, the menu seemed downright puzzling. How did the kitchen staff ever get it in their head that most Canadians preferred tea with their meals? Coffee was only served with breakfast. And who over the age of eight *ever* willingly ate a Kraft mac and cheese dinner? The typical dinner at St. Joe's appeared to be some variation of mashed potatoes, canned peas & carrots and a tiny portion of meat. It would seem that such fairly ordinary foods as pasta, curry, perogies, sausage rolls, falafels, stir-fries, jerk chicken, ragout, enchiladas, momo, pulled pork, quiche and fish 'n chips are all completely unknown to those who toil in St. Joe's kitchens. Based on the *prima facie* evidence, they had learned all they knew about nutrition from a 1962 Betty Crocker cookbook, and the only thing missing from my dinner tray was the lime Jell-O mold.

The book I fortuitously brought along, Barbara Tuchman's *The March of Folly*, was a godsend. It kept me occupied between meals and tests for most of the next two days. If I was to be kept any longer than that, I had no idea what I would do. Luckily, a volunteer told me there was a patient lounge with a library on my floor, and a visit there that same afternoon solved my problem. I brought back three or four books that were sure to tide me over for a week, if necessary. The Keith Laumer turned out to be pretty flaky, but I had been curious what had happened to "Retief" over the years. The "Jack Reacher" novel by Lee Child was a good, long, solid read, however – as had been the three or four I had previously read. To my surprise, I finished the Reacher novel in a single day. But what else did I have to do but read? I had also taken a Ben Bova novel, *Mars*. Bova was a writer I had not read since he was the editor of *Analog*, back in the 1970s. He had seemed a rather colourless, and uninspiring writer back then, but I was curious about this much more recent work. [See pg. 31 for more on the novel, *Mars*.]

There was a phone in the room, I noticed. I asked about it and was told how to use it, so called my sister at work so that family members would know where I was. Then I called my friend Steven, so that my friends would also know. Unlike my previous stay at St. Joe's, I called no one else ... because, unlike the previous stay, I would have to pay for calls. Well ... I wouldn't be laid up long, I figured, so I'd tell the others after I got out.

That evening, I had a surprise visit from Steven, who dropped by after work. It was good to see a friendly face, though I had very little to tell him as yet. An ultrasound had been made of my left leg that day, and I'd had x-rays of my chest, but no one had told me the results. As we chewed over the day's events, we must have grown a little loud, because suddenly a head poked around the curtain concealing the other side of the room and we were asked to keep it down a little. We really had been talking too loudly, but the complaint still seemed a bit rich ... coming as it did from the Spanish Quarter.

The ward seemed unusually warm to me. When I asked one of the nurses if she thought so, she said it certainly was – something was wrong with the thermostat, she thought. So I asked Steven if he'd do me a favour. If I gave him my keys, could he go to my apartment and bring me back a small fan I had set up in the kitchen? I wasn't sure I could sleep without a cooling breeze.

Steven did better than that. He also turned off a remaining light, brought me a bit of shaving gear and a magazine to read. But he had work the next day, and had to leave soon after, leaving me to my own devices once more.

Wednesday was much like Tuesday. I had a CAT scan, and gave enough blood to feed a vampire. There was some difficulty hitting a vein ... something that seems to be happening more often when I have blood tests. After three or four tries on the left arm, the nurse switched to the right arm, with little better success. After another two or three attempts, she got a shunt into a vein and took some blood. This procedure was repeated more or less daily. When I was finally released, my arms looked as though I'd been beaten with a crowbar.

Wednesday was also like Tuesday, because I had another visitor. My sister was downtown that day with one of my nephews, and dropped by St. Joseph's. We nearly didn't connect, since I was out of my room when they arrived. Fortunately, they bumped into me being transferred from one examination room to another while they were on the way out.

Thursday, too, was much like the days before. I was given another ultrasound examination, this time of the upper body, to see if I'd been filling with fluids again. The last tests were related to my lung action. I blew into and inhaled from tubes until I nearly passed out, which was simple enough ... but then I was told to sit in what seemed like a game show "isolation booth" to continue. That was a new one on me. Eventually, I had taken half a dozen tests but had no idea whether I received a passing grade or not. I had given at least a pint of blood as well, but no matter how much I gave, they still wanted more.

That evening, a doctor finally came by and discussed the results of all my torment with me. Unfortunately, she didn't have the report from one of the specialists, so she was reluctant to say anything definite. She *thought* I would be released the next day, however, so I brightened up. I spent all of Friday waiting for the final word and my release. The hands of the clock on the wall crawled across its face, hour by hour, and no one came. Finally, an unfamiliar doctor came by, who seemed surprised I was still there. He didn't have my release, either, but said he would try to get it. When he finally came back it was after dinner, he handed me an envelope containing as much of a diagnosis as anyone could agree on. Despite holding me a whole day longer than really necessary, St. Joe's was in a hurry to have my bed.

I drove Traveling Matt home in the dark. At least it was a little warmer than Monday, when I went in. When I got home I found the bread had gone moldy, but brewing a full pot of fresh dark-roast coffee more than made up for that loss.

The whole skinny seems to be that there's nothing wrong with me. The fluid that had collected around my heart before had not returned. There was no fluid in my abdomen. Heart beats like a metronome, lungs are clear and kidneys fine. My liver was a little fatty, but I already took a statin for cholesterol so there was nothing further to be done. There were no obstructions in the veins of my leg.

The only indications that anything might be wrong came from the respirologist, whose tests indicated some asthmatic characteristics in my breathing, and the possibility of sleep apnea. It was also possible that my basic condition – the Myasthenia Gravis that weakens me – could also affect my lungs, making it harder to breathe at night. While far from a clear diagnosis, at least it is confirmed that I am having trouble breathing at night when I try to sleep. The next step would seem to be to schedule a "sleep study." That could be a bit tricky, since the clinic is quite out of

the way. While public transit does operate a Wheel Trans service, it has to be booked, and there is no way to know in advance when the study would be over. I can picture being put out on the street at 2 a.m., no transport available until dawn and the temperature down to 15 below... It *probably* wouldn't come to that! They would let me stay in the lobby, I'm sure. Better still, I might be able to put the cost of a taxi on Disability's tab. But that's all a headache I'd prefer to avoid.

If possible, I would do the study at St. Joseph's. The respirologist said they had a *long* waiting list, though. One of the nurses didn't think they did sleep studies at St. Joe's at all! Until I've booked a date through the doctor, the whole business is pretty much in the air.

Until then, how do I intend to sleep?

Sometimes I think my sleeping troubles have a supernatural cause. How do I know that my apartment tower isn't built over an ancient Mormon burial ground, for instance? I slept well in the hospital, and also the first night I was back home. But then, the refusal of my body to quiet down and drift off to sleep returned. I would lie there, my breathing growing more shallow as my mind drifted away from conscious control ... and then suddenly I'd take a deep breath, as though ordinary air didn't contain enough oxygen, and I'd be wide awake again. After two or three repetitions of this, it was impossible to relax at all.

I've had pretty good luck sleeping upright in my office chair before. However, there seems to have been a price to pay for sleeping that way, and that's where I think my swollen leg came into it. While at St. Joe's, I was sleeping in a hospital bed that could be cranked up to a 60-degree angle, and with some pillows made even steeper. What is different from an office chair and a hospital bed, though, was that my legs were up in bed. My swollen leg went down significantly in the first couple of days, and was almost normal by the time I went home. Since then, I've eschewed the office chair, and found ways with the aid of a foam wedge and pillows, to sleep sitting up in bed, with my legs up instead of down ... and the swelling has gone away almost entirely.

So I was right – there *had been* a connection between my leg bloating up like a sausage and the difficulty I had in breathing at night. I simply had it backwards. My leg was not a symptom of something making it hard to sleep, my difficulty in sleeping was the indirect cause of the problem with my leg.

At the moment, I'm coping. Despite one tumble backwards off the bed while trying to sleep on the edge, I've been getting enough sleep to get through the next day. To avoid further falls, I now sleep with my back to the wall. There is a distinct possibility of a CPAP gadget in my future, I'm sorry to say. While I'm not looking forward to more encounters with government bureaucracy, to get the Ontario Disability Support Program to pay for it, you do what you have to, and take it one day at a time.

Meanwhile, life ain't half bad, all things considered.





File Still Open

A Celebration of a Newsletter

I went to the *File 770* site the other day, and saw that it was eight years old.

Eight years old? If *File 770* were a Windows operating system, it would be obsolete by now. If it were a new cell phone or tablet from Apple, *File 770* would have been three generations of technology ago... But then none of us old fogies would know how to use it.

Of course, I remember *File 770* from the Stone Age, when a glide of fingertip wouldn't operate the pages. No, you had to lift a paper sheet by one corner, and flip it over to reveal a *second* page beneath it, and so on! How unbelievably inefficient is that? All the same, the words were all there, and – astonishingly – pictures as well!

Of course, the prehistoric Mike Glyer didn't hit on the formula for *File 770* right away. He experimented with many other model fanzines and titles before finally hitting the sweet spot. Few of us remember *Scientifriction*, *Prehensile*, *The Speed of Dark*, *Rat Tail File*, *Galactic Jive Tales* and ... and ... well, those of us who are that old often have trouble remembering *anything*.

It hardly seems possible that I've been along for the ride with Mike for almost all of that time. When I first saw one of Mike's fanzines, it seemed that he was already a permanent fixture in fandom, and held a seniority that I could scarcely fathom. In fact, Mike's earliest fanzines appeared in fandom at about the same time that I did ... it was simply a couple of years before he added me to his mailing list. In retrospect, I see that a couple of years is no yawning gulf, no generation gap, but only about as long as currently goes by between the issues of *File 770* that Mike still publishes on paper.

We are contemporaries, and to a small degree I think of myself as a junior partner in Mike's various enterprises. I began doing art for him while he was still publishing his first genzine, *Prehensile*, and first wrote for him in *Scientifriction*. And I'm still waiting for my first paycheck...

I have to hand it to Mike for one thing above and beyond his longevity. Anyone can simply park himself in a corner of the con suite at conventions for year after year. Fandom is full of old codgers like that, who remember Isaac Asimov before he grew muttonchops, or who were scandalized the first time a fantasy novel won a Hugo for Best Novel. Being a convention couch potato was not for Mike, though. He has published continuously for 43 years, as near as I can figure. And what's more, he's consistently performed what I consider the hardest job in fanwriting – writing up the news!

I mean, what could be more boring? I did it for two or three years while publishing a newsletter called *DNQ* with Victoria Vayne, and could not bring myself to deal with some of the trivia that turned up in my mailbox. Every convention in the country wanted free publicity. Clubs I never heard of elected people I

never heard of to offices that didn't matter. Fans announced tribute issues to Philip Francis Nowlan or James Doohan. TAFF was open to nominations. Somebody was selling their collection of Arkham House hardcovers. Chicago was bidding for the Worldcon. *Dune* was being done by Marvel Comics. Uri Geller would attend a LASFS meeting. Some obscure fictional alien celebrated her 284th birthday! I filed most such "news" in the circular file, naturally. But Mike, the poor guy, takes his commitment to covering all the news of fandom so seriously that he dutifully produces the requisite number of words on each and every dreary press release that crosses his desk.

However, let me make it perfectly clear that what Mike *writes* isn't boring. Not at all. He takes the very thin gruel that is ordinarily sent him, and spices it up with pithy observations, apt comparisons and a touch of humour to wash the meal down with. All that takes the skill of a gourmet wordsmith. I read much of *File 770* with relish every day. All the same, it is hard to disguise an unappetizing dish with a spring of parsley and a turn or two of the pepper mill. When I find *some* topics on the plate, I push them to the side. This in no way reflects on the effort that went into preparing them, or the skill of the Master Chef.

Even as I acknowledge the magnitude of the task, I don't know how he does it. Year after year, trying to inject enthusiasm and relevance into the blizzard of self-serving announcements, mundane events and inconsequential convention details that blows into his e-mail box like a snowdrift on the kitchen floor when the door is inadvertently left open. How does Mike stay awake while he pounds the keyboard? What keeps him from screaming "I don't care! I don't give a damn about any of this!" as he stabs the "delete" button, clearing his mailbox of the deadly dull minutiae of science fiction fandom? What keeps the imp of the perverse from slipping in a few falsehoods and sly innuendoes, just to see if anyone reads all that drudgework?

I couldn't do it. In my brief stint as a newsletter editor I planted hoaxes, misrepresented the facts, disregarded all that I found wanting in reader interest, blatantly took sides in every dispute and swept under the carpet any least hint of complaint about my editing style. Not Mike, though. I won't say he's wishy-washy or that he lacks a bullshit detector. Far from it. But he brings to the job a determination, even-handedness and industrious methodology that I can only wonder at ... and thank the elder ghods of fandom that I lack, because at heart I am just not a newsletter editor.

So, whither *File 770*? Another eight years? Another sixteen? Or, like floppy disks and modems, is the Internet fated to be replaced by a newer and even more time-consuming medium? Will the *File 770* of tomorrow be snatched from the aether by Wi-Fi and read in a pop-up in our Google Glasses? Or will it be encoded directly into the brain's memory cells without even spending the time to read it? Then again, if the environment collapses and our economy implodes, we might be back to Mimeographs. I can see it now ... dark cells inhabited by silent fans, reverently cranking the hunched black stencil duplicators, printing the classics of a forgotten age whose language has become so archaic that little of the sacred screed is fully understood even by those who are charged with its preservation.

To be honest, there are many of us old fogies who would probably be relieved that we had no more new operating systems or applications software to learn.

But whatever form *File 770* takes in the future, there will always be Mike Glyer, fandom's most dedicated journalist, ensuring that no one ever misses a single word about Sad Puppies or Ray Bradbury's favourite bedroom slippers.

Waste not, Want Not

I cooked a pretty decent meal for myself the other night ... nothing remarkable, just a small steak that had been on special, some Brussels sprouts and fries with the skins. That's still more trouble than I usually take to feed myself, however. It wasn't a huge meal, either, so I felt like having dessert. The trouble was that I had nothing dessert-worthy in the house. Then I remembered that I had recently noticed that plastic bag at the very bottom of my freezer again. I come across it every now and then, and sort of think to myself, I better use that up ... some day. It was a bag of my mother's frozen strawberries, you see, and it had been there quite a long time.

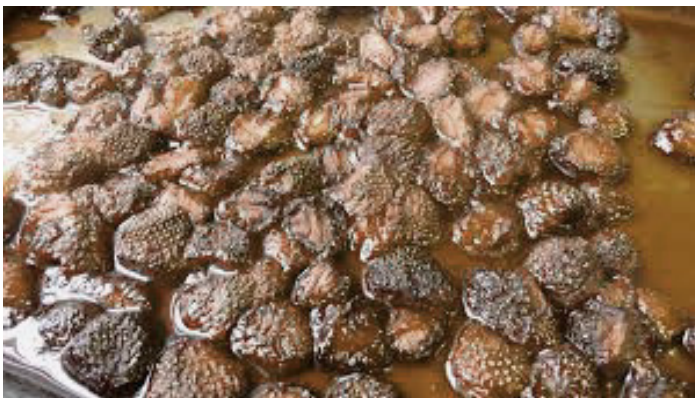
So I finally defrosted the strawberries, and left them in the sink, unopened, until after my meal. Much too soon, the steak was gone. It was time for truth or consequences. I untwisted the tie from the tattered milk bag and emptied the contents into a large bowl. The strawberries were *not* appetizing to look at, but they could have been a lot worse. There was no mold, thankfully, nor congealed clumps, and nothing had turned toxic black. There was a lot of juice, however, and the berries were, shall we say, one step from being liquid themselves. They had long ago ceased to be red. They did *have* a colour, mind you: a yummy brown, about like an old bruise. They didn't smell half bad, though, so I spooned one into my mouth.

It tasted a little funny, but not in a way that made you rush to the phone to call the poison control center. I put it down to Mother pre-cooking the strawberries. Adding a lot of sugar helped them taste still more like pie filling.

So I ate them *all*. My mother had cooked those strawberries for a pie, you see, a very long time ago. Then she froze them, but unfortunately, before she could bake any more pies, she died. They sat at the bottom of my freezer ever since that day, defying the passage of time. Mother died in 1991...

Those berries were 25 years old – older than some of my readers, I shouldn't wonder. But I got up next day without a bellyache, and have so far not made any sudden rushes for the loo. In their own way, those strawberries were still perfectly good ... but it's no use claiming they improved with age, either.

Now, I wonder if any of those 25-year-old turkeys in the freezer would be edible for Christmas?



Not my photo, but might as well be...

LEFT OVER PARTS

SESSION 45 We Also Heard From: **Jerry Kaufman, Terry Whittier, and E.T. Bryan** (who questions whether a toilet seat can really explode ... yes, it really did make a loud bang and impart violent motion to the subsequently independent pieces!)

Eric Mayer - groggytales@gmail.com

Another *Broken Toys*, another loc. Actually, I consider my responses less locs than a part of our ongoing correspondence. I don't loc much these days. If you change to *New Toy* and a yearly schedule, I'll be all but out of the fanzine business.

I'll hope to publish once *OR* twice a year. It depends on how often I feel like working on a zine.

I am glad you were able to dispose of your hazardous waste. Toronto can breathe easier. Also, it is a good thing you noticed the error on that parking permit. I wonder if the clerk did have the year set wrong for the entire year. I would think you'd only have to change the stamp once a year.

You would think so, unless the rules state that all date-bearing devices must be reset upon the closure of the office at a neutral setting, i.e. 0000. But surely no bureaucracy on Earth has ever *been that crazy?*

Interesting how the hated Protestant King James I came from a solidly Catholic family. Isn't religion just another tool in the politician's kit though? Does anyone with half a brain believe all these Bible-thumping Republican politicians running for President have the slightest interest in Christianity except so far as they can use it to gull idiots into voting for them? If you took the major teachings of the New Testament on topics from money to the poor and powerless and infirm and totally reversed them, you'd have the Republican platform. They're like Bizarro Christians.

It is a wonder that the modern American evangelist doesn't actually believe that Jesus rounded up all the Romans, all the Sadducees, all the Pharisees and crucified THEM, then founded a mega-church in Rome, built a theme park in Constantinople and turned Jerusalem into a Christian-only gated community, proclaiming "it is harder for a poor man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than it is for him to buy first class airfare from London to New York."

Neighborhood hardware stores are the best. At ours, the few times I've tried to fix anything there was always someone who knew his stuff, ready to show me what I needed and explain what to do and not to do. When the light switch in the bathroom went, for instance, I just took the whole broken fixture to the store and was given the right parts and instructions. On my own I would have been lost because the modern switch was different from the old-fashioned one which had gone bad.

Keith Soltys mentions one of my punctuation *bête noirs*, the Oxford comma. I was taught, sensibly enough, that a comma wasn't needed after the last word in a series because the "and" there performed

the same function. The Oxford comma is just a stuck-up snob with no purpose. Unfortunately, Mary and I have to use the damn thing in all our novels, much to my chagrin, because that's the style Poisoned Pen Press adheres to. And not just to my chagrin, but also to my confusion, because the legal publishing company I write for requires the opposite style. When I have to switch back and forth between writing novels and writing legal encyclopedia articles, my brain knows the different requirements but my typing fingers can't ever get it straight.

Me like simple rule. After word in list, is comma. No exception. No mistake "bait and switch" for "bait, and switch." But proofreader make me do his way.

The conversation in the loccol about garbage (and in particular Walt Wentz and his exciting trash adventure) reminds me that trash day is the only day of the week I need to get up early – six a.m. – to get the trash down to the road before the truck arrives. Can't leave it out overnight here because of roving cats, crows and bears. Rochester, NY, when I lived there, had terrific trash pick-up service. Never mind the usual stuff, they'd take anything. Old sofas, refrigerators – anything you could get to the curb. They had roving trucks with booms, which the regular waste truck driver would radio when he came upon anything oversized. Trash pick-up appeared as a specific charge on the property tax bill, but it was far cheaper than the private trash hauler we need to contract with out here in the sticks. (Even accounting for inflation over the years). We could pay another small fortune to have our recyclables taken away, but I prefer to take them to the county recycling center myself for free.

I am intrigued by the silver coin from Himyar. Must be a certain sensawunda in collecting coins from tiny countries hardly anyone remembers. Yet the Himyarites (why not Himarians as in "Conan the Himarian"?) were big enough, and important enough to themselves, to issue coins. Presumably the coins were accepted outside Himyar. Valued at the value of the silver?

Most coins of a given type tended to cluster around an average weight, and pass for a denarius or drachma. The Himyarite coin was a little light, perhaps, or the silver not up to standard, since it passed as a half-denarius, also called a quinarius.

The Canadian flag coin must be the first colored coin I've ever seen. Didn't know such a thing existed. How do they color a coin so that the color doesn't come off almost immediately in general circulation? Or was it assumed these would for the most part not be generally circulated?

We've issued tons of them, getting more attractive all the time. The first were Remembrance Day quarters in 2004, with red coloured poppies. Then came other themes, and another red poppy. Meanwhile, the mint was also pouring out non-circulating coins with colour. Some were genuine precious metal collectibles, others were cheap junk that appealed to sports fans. You could buy NHL team logos on one series of quarters only available in a \$25 set. While some coloured quarters were meant for circulation, the government hoped they would be hoarded instead, making a profit for the mint.

The trick seems to be to strike a rough area on the blank disk that corresponds to where you want to print the image. The paint or ink sticks to it better than to smooth metal. I think the coins are essentially silk-screened *en masse*. Will they wear off? Not too soon, it is hoped, but sooner than

the coin will wear out, for certain. Again, the government probably thinks of these as cash cows rather than serious currency. Once taken from circulation, how durable they are hardly matters.

Looking at the medieval coins, it strikes me (is that a pun?) the art of coin making hadn't advanced much since Roman times. It's especially interesting that the "same" coins could vary in appearance. That being the case, that they were hand-made and could vary, forgers must have had a field day.

Quite the opposite, in fact. Little had changed in the method of striking the coin between two dies with a hammer; however the Greeks and Romans were far better at carving the dies. They may have even had sophisticated pantographs to help with reducing the engraving from a larger model. Even so, no pair of dies were ever entirely alike. But the art of Roman and Greek die-making was heads and tails above that of Medieval Europe. (There, pun for pun.)

Maybe the model didn't fall straight down because the door was attracting it. The Hungry Drawer. There's a Carnacki story. Last summer I was mowing the lawn and when I tried to duck under a branch the bush reached out and whipped my eyeglasses off my face and into the vast, blurry chaos beyond. I literally can't see an inch beyond my nose (which is very short) Immediately I stopped the mower, got down on my hands and knees and began feeling around the grass. Nothing. I tried to slither along, afraid of putting my knee down on the lenses. Couldn't find them. Finally, beginning to feel claustrophobic with the blurry nothingness pressing in all around, I made my way back to the door, luckily not stepping on the lost eyeglasses, and Mary fetched my spare pair. Carefully returning to the scene of the loss, I spotted my eyeglasses instantly, hanging on a limb of the bush.

I hope you had better sense than to touch them ... it was plainly a trap!



Bob Jennings - fabfics@aol.com

Checked my email this morning and found the latest issue of *Broken Toys* ready for downloading. Then I took another look. Issue #44? What happened to #s 42 and 43? I never got them. Your electronic distribution system seems to have glitches, or perhaps you are trying to reconnect with people you had previously dropped from your mailing list.

My "electronic distribution system" is merely my going down the list of names in my mail browser, and saying to myself, "him, him, her, not him," and so on. Now and then I probably make mistakes and omit someone, but twice running seems unlikely. Unless... unless I really was pissed with you for some reason! *All right, what did you do?* However, even if I had been trying to slight you, all back issues are available at eFanzines and Fandom.org, so there's no excuse to miss an issue.

Anyway, another interesting issue. So far as your pre-download message about your current fandom frustrations; my advice is to let it go. Not your involvement with SF fandom; your constant agonizing about your place/status/interest/involvement/responsibility/whatever to fandom. First, it's just a hobby, kiddo. Involvement in SF fandom is a pleasant pastime, and wrestling with its essential place in your life is like endlessly contemplating the meaning of True Love. You spend so much time thinking about True Love that you probably wouldn't recognize it when it came around, or even if you did, after worrying the subject until it's in mental tatters means you probably wouldn't enjoy it much anyway.

Same with this hobby. Go with the flow. Do and enjoy the parts you like to enjoy, and ignore the rest. I personally think you have already reached the endless frustration point by narrowing the focus of your fmz reading to the point that nothing is going to seem up to your mental standards. Nostalgia is a warm glow, the reality was never as good as the memories, and there is plenty of decent fan stuff out there to enjoy if you care to check it out. Or, not, if you so decide. It's a hobby, and the degree of your involvement with it is strictly up to you.

All of this comes under the heading of much-heard advice, but easier to give than practice. I very much believe in letting go of things that have become a burden, but fandom is like smoking. It is easier to give up when you are not in a room full of people smoking.

You have Secret Files? Material not-to-be-published-till-years-after-my-untimely-death-or-murder-lest-awful-consequences-befall-known-individuals-of-merit-but-short-temper? Well, naturally, let me be one of the first to insist that you open those files and offer the material up for public viewing immediately. If you fear for your life due to the incendiary nature of the material and the certainty of libel suits that might be launched in your direction, then perhaps you could use some clever pseudonym, something like "Wayning Tarals" or "Excerpts from the Crabgrass Confessional; as related to a Silent Sentinel of Selective Sensitivity." I would be happy to run the series in my own fanzine, *Fadeaway*. Hmm, let me rephrase that. Even though you are clearly a Canadian and I reside in the USA, the little matter of libel and slander laws seems to be quite similar to both nations, with a lot of cordial reciprocity between jurisdictions, so maybe the tiniest bit of censorship might be in order first. But, knowledge about your cache of secret files is out now. I don't think people will make as big a deal out of this as, say, an 18-minute gap on a reel of Presidential transcripts, but you'll never hear the end of it until you release the material to the whining public.

Let's see ... this year alone I've written four pieces I choose not to unleash on the innocent public. One is a short commentary on the visit of the last TAFF winner, the second are my first thoughts on the Auroras, which were ruder by far than what I finally published, the third was a sarcastic note to *Weird Tales* for taking more than a year to NOT read the manuscript I submitted (and which was not long ago published by someone else), and the final piece was a 5,000-word short story based on someone I know. While it is wholly fiction, the character resembles a prominent fan well enough that many would recognize him in a shot. Unfortunately, he has little sense of humour about himself, and would never forgive me for writing it. The story was a natural, however, that begged to be written. As soon as he is dead, however, "Cutting Edge" comes right out of my drawer and into the next fanzine I publish.

Some years there's not all that much. Only one doc in 2014, for instance, a sensitive letter on a sensitive topic. In 2013 there were six documents I chose not to reveal. One, about my own health and mental state that was just too damned depressing. I'd hate to think I drove anyone to suicide over me.

In 2012 there were as many as 18 withheld documents! Many are trivia that had nothing to do with fandom, but one was an article on Phil Foglio at the Renovation Hugo ceremonies I wanted to write, but prudence led me to suppress. Another was a dialog between me and another artist on a third party who was (he thought) slandering me behind my back. "Not on My Watch" is an unfinished piece on ... say, why *didn't* I finish that? I think I'll move it into a folder for the next *Broken Toys*.

Good you got the parking permit cleared up. Of course if you had been ticketed for using an outdated permit, whoever got the ticket would have had to pay the hefty fine. Municipal governments are much

like the military ... the System is Perfect; only flawed individuals make errors, and those errors committed in good faith are protected by the Perfect System. AFTER the fine was paid, then, and only then, would appropriate forms be issued to you, allowing you to explain the error some Flawed Individual might, possibly, have made, and only after going thru a series of checks and balances, would a refund be made. Or maybe not, depending on how well the assorted refund forms were filled out and assuming, as always, that another Flawed Individual had not somehow worked his way into the system and landed in the department of rebates & refunds. I wonder what would have happened if someone had gotten a birth certificate dated the wrong year?

Who knows? He might be able to collect his retirement pension a decade early. Or a decade late.

Wow! You picked up and used a discarded wooden toilet seat you found in a city dump? You are a braver man than me kiddo.

The brass was a little green, but otherwise the seat was clean, and of course I scrubbed it good. All I wanted it for was to dump shit through it, so how fastidious should I be?

I was surprised to read in the letter column that you were holding some longer articles for a potential new publication because they would be too lengthy for *Broken Toys*. Why so? You are already creating a zine in digital format, so sending more pixels out across the ether doesn't seem like a major inconvenience to me. Perhaps you feel your current readership lacks the intellectual depth, the literary credentials as it were, to appreciate longer or more serious material, but you will never know unless you gave them a try at it. Considering your off-again/on-again plans to stop doing fanzines completely in a few months, and maybe give up the active parts of SF fandom entirely, I am curious as to why you would hold back finished material that probably would be interesting to the people already getting your e-zine. You've offered up the widest range of esoteric, even bizarre, subject matters in *Broken Toys* already (I mean, how many other fanzine writers discuss exploding toilets and scrounging up used wooden toilet seats from the city dump?). Surely we are entitled to sample the longer stuff as well as the snappers and the *Reader's Digest* excerpts.

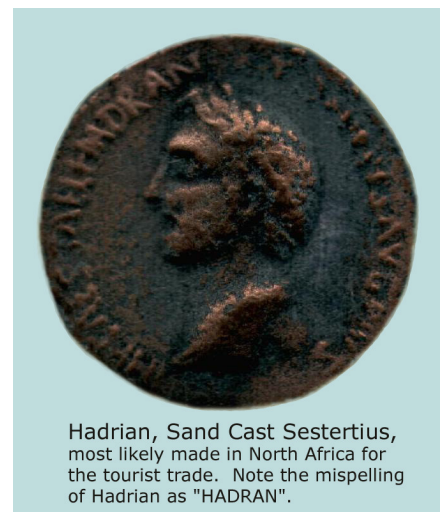
I had a distinct image of *Broken Toys* as a relatively short read that would tax no one's patience, nor would it be such a chore that I couldn't keep up with a regular schedule. I had chosen several limitations on format, also - no cover (usually), interior layout composed entirely in Word Doc, photographs or Photoshop manipulations instead of purposed, hand-drawn art, and other tricks to streamline production. The longer articles I have stored are better suited to a zine less economical with its space, such as I envision as *Broken Toys'* successor. My decision had nothing to do with the nonexistent "cost" of producing a digital fanzine, but everything to do with the zine's character ... as well as how the readers would approach it. I know most fanzine editors don't think this way, and just cram whatever they have into the pages of their fanzine like it was dehydrated turkey stuffing from a box, but the game gives me no pleasure to do it that way.

I bought some bags of candy for Halloween this year, but yet again, had no kiddies come trick or treating. There aren't that many kiddies in my neighborhood anyway, but the ones in the house down at the street intersection and the ones midway up in the other direction clearly are not wasting their time and energy canvassing this part of the township. Many people in this village would prefer that the junior ghost corps could be confined to a big village green sort of party where they could be properly supervised by adults and engage in festive party games, drink new-pressed cider and behave like little ladies and gentlemen. These geezers clearly have major memory glitches if they think children are going to knuckle under to that kind of manhandling when they could be out roaming the wind-swept streets, banging on the doors of total strangers and creating minor havoc. The thrill of the unknown with a hint of danger is part of the whole Halloween appeal.

Your comments about trolling the coin shows were interesting, but being no coin collector I have nothing much to add. Were these all shows a venue primarily set up so dealers can show and sell their wares, or were some actually conventions, where, presumably, there are other things going on besides a dealer room? You make all of them seem like the dealers were the only things there. One has to wonder (me anyway), where all the ancient coins come from, since governments tend to appropriate any archeological hoards discovered. With more collectors coming into the hobby, where does the supply of ancient coins come from? I presume there is some counterfeiting going on, and small finds that are never reported to the governments of Greece, or Egypt, or the UK, or wherever, but still, where does the influx come from? Just curious.

The coin shows I've been to have been primarily dealer's rooms. However, there were associated auctions, meetings of collector's groups and even a seminar or two at the larger of the shows I've attended. Numismatics is not the sort of hobby you can dress up for, or write fan fiction about.

Governments increasingly crack down on coin finds leaving their borders, but while this seems like a sensible plan, I've heard complaints from experienced collectors that some governments give the coins a less secure environment than collectors do, are less likely to study them with an eye to adding to the collective knowledge of the stuff, and, indeed, may only want the coins to sell them themselves. The United Kingdom buys all major coin finds on British soil, and pays the finder market prices, so this seems fair enough. China, on the other hand, just seems to resent any form of Chinese history leaving China, even though in the long run this would only mean vaults full of the same, dull, cast bronze coins with a square hole in it that are really of no academic interest at all. And, yes, there is a big problem with counterfeits. A bit of experience and a little reading will equip most collectors well enough to avoid any counterfeit they are likely to encounter. But some hi-tech forgeries involving compressed metallic powders are very difficult to detect. In theory, one could make a fake that can only be told apart from the real thing by something like neutron-activation. Fortunately, there's nothing to be gained in spending that kind of money to counterfeit a \$100 coin. Still, counterfeiting is big business in the Middle East and in Asia. It is best to have a dealer you can trust to know the difference. These are the two worst counterfeits that ever passed through my hands. They fooled nobody, so I got them for under a dollar each. I could write an article on each, they are wrong in so many ways. Note the misspelling of "Hadrian" on the sestertius.





Andy Porter - Aporter55@gmail.com

Well, I've got all those unresponded-to issues of *BT* sitting here, but alas for you, I never got around to reading them.

Probably for the best, at this point. You'd have to write a 40-page loc and I wouldn't be keen on publishing it all at once. I might have to start it's own fanzine - *Andy Porter's Loc Pick*, issue 1 through 4!

My life since "retiring" seems very full of on-line stuff, comments on stuff in the *Fictionmags* Yahoo group, reading various things on-line and commenting on them (and I always comment using my own name, which has gotten me some recognition, especially on local real estate and Brooklyn Heights history blogs), etc.

So here I go, commenting on *this* issue and letting the others go, unread. Sorry.

I too have Dangerous Substances here. I no longer have rubber cement or thinner. I have, though, kept the glue jar, which is for Union Rubber Company -- which changed their name from "Union Rubber and Asbestos Co." some time late last century, possibly around the time they discovered that Asbestos gives you cancer.

I do have fireworks, most of which I bought on a Fanoclasts trip to California back in 1966. The beginning of July I gave away some packages of firecrackers so old, they were made in Macau, and feature a little Black kid eating a big watermelon on the label. Gosh, a Google search brought up *a lot* of images; here they are: <http://firecracker.info/dixie.jpg>



I've got a couple of packs of Black Cat firecrackers that I never used.

I also have the last bits of a college-level chemistry set that my brother and I found on the street when I was maybe nine, he fourteen, a very long time ago.

I can't believe my parents allowed us to keep it. Needless to say, we set about mixing stuff, and some of it fizzed, and some of it didn't do anything, and I'm happy to say that none of it killed us.

However, I do indeed have a very few things still here, now much more than 50 years later. One is a vial of Potassium Dichromate (very pretty, bright orange); a vial of Nickel Sulfate (brilliant blue); Potassium Chromate, K_2CrO_4 ; Potassium Ferricyanide, $K_3Fe(CN)_6$; and a vial of unidentified light blue powder. They're held in with cork stoppers.

I have no plans now to get rid of any of this stuff.

Why bother? I suspect those compounds are largely harmless unless mixed with a suitable reactant and heated. I wouldn't sprinkle any on your meat loaf, though.

Toilet seats: I've been dissatisfied with mine since I got a low-flush toilet sometime last century. The seat is uncomfortable, and if I get lost reading while I'm on the throne, my legs tend to fall asleep, and then I have to carefully lever myself up, using the bathroom door knob to steady myself, until the blood returns to my extremities.

I've noticed at convention hotels how much more comfortable bathroom seats can be, and one of my Christmas (Chanukah?) gifts to myself will be a new throne.

But I think I'll stick with plastic.

I hate efficiency toilets. You usually have to flush twice, so I doubt any water is saved. Mine has a noxious plastic seat that you feel physically flatten out under your buns. The bolts attaching the seat and lid to the throne are also plastic, and will not stay tightened. After as little as two uses, the whole shebang starts to wobble again. I *should* buy another wooden seat with proper brass attachments, and toss the poor plastic sucker the toilet came with off my balcony.

Coins: I have what's left of my father's collection of Indian Head pennies. Much of the collection was apparently stolen from my brother's apartment, where my stuff was in storage while I was off at school, back in the early 60s. I also have a bunch of coins from Occupied France, inherited from my stepfather. I would really like to sell these off; something to attend to eventually.

A complete set of Indian Head pennies would have had good value, but unless we were talking about near-mint condition of all but the most scarce, the value would be lower than you might expect. There are probably two million such sets in private hands. Coins of the French Occupation during WWII are also fairly commonplace. I have a number of those zinc and aluminum issues. Once again, condition will affect the value of those coins enormously. Unless mint, I would expect the French coins to be worth at most a few dollars.

Cheer up. All my dad left me before he buggered off someplace was a set of Pan edition 007 novels.

Missing stuff: I too have had that happen. No, I didn't get up, move away from the desk, and yet

something I had a moment ago has disappeared. Usually it's because I absent-mindedly *did* get up and put it somewhere else, or I put it down and now it's covered by something else.

There was also a short story about that happening to a girl (especially missing pencils). Finally, she caught someone in her apartment who turned out to be a time traveler, who was one of many who went back in time to swipe minor items (that no one would likely miss) from the past life of the future President of the world...

It's always *President of the world ... not Prime Minister, Shah, Tsar, Pasha, Grand Vizier, Lieutenant Governor or Great and Powerful Wizard of Oz!*

Comments on comments:

I had a complete run of *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, but when Jerry Weist sold off my comic collection, they were sold off as well. Now I just have some of the images, gathered from the Internet. I'm also partial to covers from "Challengers of the Unknown," of which I also had a bunch of issues, also sold off. For instance:



At least now you can buy the entire Russ Manning Magnus stories in three volumes, published by Valiant. Of course, it will set you back by around \$65. Cheaper by far than buying the original 21 comics at \$5 to \$15 each, though!

And Halloween: In 1997 I got a review copy of "Flesh Feast," a computer game from SegaSoft (of course for Windows while I had a Mac). The press release came with an impressive torn-off life-size plastic hand, bone, blood and muscles visible. I sold off the game, kept the hand. Now, during Halloween, I carry it around, peeping out of my shirt pocket. I colored in the nails to make it seem like a woman's hand, adding to its repulsive appearance...

Backing from the Canada Council? Hey, I had ads (admittedly I ran them for free, but heck) from the Saskatchewan Wheat Board in *Algol*, and there was "Derek Carter's Canadian History" in a bunch of issues. (Gee, nothing on line. Guess I should scan some of them in...)

Carter was pretty busy in his career in animation after fandom, and seems to have preferred keeping his connections with SF quiet. He would tell people who recognized him from conventions

not to mention he had been to one, or knew anything about fandom. In fact, during the one conversation I had with him, circa 1973 or 4, he told me that apart from his friends he thought fans were childish.



Dave Haren, tyrbolo@comcast.net

"The Drop Zone" sounds all too familiar. One trick I learned to use when searching is to shine a flashlight parallel to the floor in hopes the cursed part will interrupt the light beam and show itself in the vast expanse of a bounce probability. Nothing ever falls straight down and stays there. The horror of building out-of-production stuff made it impossible to get tiny parts is when you drop one.

I seem to recall doing that on occasion, but it only works well if the missing part is significantly thicker than, say, a sheet of paper, so that it can throw a long shadow.

Someone just gave me a Monogram Revell Ju52/53M in 1/48th scale he said he bought as a teenager, the sprues are still in plastic bags. Once in awhile someone will give me something they found in Grandpa's garage, which has been partialed and usually has some impossible-to-get parts missing. I have gotten pretty good at making obscure parts, but the medical problems managed to knock out some of my dexterity, making it a real bitch to hew metal parts into some semblance of the missing.

I have more trouble seeing sub-millimeter details than I did ten or fifteen years ago, and no question it affects how easily I can manufacture a door handle for a 1/43 scale Alfa Romeo out of scrap plastic. More importantly, it affects how easily I can draw such details on paper!

Tanith Lee is gone. She will be sorely missed by twisted folk, like me, who enjoy a little gritty commentary on humanity disguised as fantasy stories.

Terry McKenna said one of the Roosevelt ladies was supposed to have said, "If you have nothing good to say about anyone, sit by me." Considering the circles she was in, it sounds like the perfect attitude.

I was a Beach Boys fan but was disappointed to learn only one was a surfer. One of the Grandmas was a little old lady from Pasadena, but her garage was made for the teeny cars of the '20s; a super stock dodge wouldn't fit past the house and fence to get to the garage in the back yard. Once folks get older, they start striving for artistic relevance with new ideas or get stuck playing the same thing over and over.

This rarely works even in SF, where you are *supposed* to encourage innovations. So most of what you get is rehashings of ideas that weren't much to begin with. The idea that making everyone gay was done by the Greeks in BC, women warriors were also around at the same time, so deciding that these are the cutting edge of *moderne* lit'r'chur just means you had a crappy education.

It's almost never the idea that counts, but what you bring to it, or how you present it to the reader, that counts.

I liked the sight of Bohner's name since most are too chicken to pronounce it the way it is written. One

other character who causes the same thing is one of [Timothy] Leary's band who got into Gurning, and changed his name to Ram Dass because he was gay, and knew it would cause straights to become tongue-tied trying to avoid pronouncing it the way it is written (Rammed Ass) for the phonetically challenged.

I seem to recall a ribald story that George IV created some upper-class wit "Lord Penistroke" because the man was comically uptight, and would be forced to introduce himself with the word "penis." Of course, I may be imposing this story on the wrong people - it's hard to verify.

You have probably noticed by now that I lack PC sensitivity to *moderne* nuances.

I have seen your name in the Eros catalog, your choice to put that in your bio. I think you should have sent them the picture with your Hugo in the dumpster speech. That would at least give the Auroras something to strive for.

I don't recall being published in that comic, but I search the internet with the terms "Eros" and "Taral Wayne" I end up on a page it at Amazon, where copies of *Eros* are sold ... but I'm only mentioned in connection with *Beatrix* ... a comic that I *did* work on.

I stand in awe of Lloyd and haven't noticed any drop in his output.

I think Lloyd's discovered an app for his phone that writes locs for him.

Ship's captains probably perform marriages out of self-defense to keep folks from building a fire and jumping over it hand in hand. I love modern tendencies to grant the state control over something that is clearly none of their business. Same goes for granting a church control over something that is none of their business. These days every meddling ninny thinks they should decide who could be married to who, clearly none of their business.

Once you accept the fencing in you'll usually accept the fleecing and being plucked without too much squawking. Vilfredo Pareto called that good governance.

Now to fire this off into the depths of cyberspace before I say something rash.

I'm just guessing that it might be a little too late for that.



Steve Jeffries - srjefferv@aol.com

That reprint from Chris Garcia in 'What to Do When the Chips are Down' must contain the funniest opening line or two I've seen in a fanzine for a long while. It's only slightly moderated by the fact that it wasn't an entire toilet (which would be messy as well as potentially dangerous) but just the seat and cover. Disconcerting all the same.

We replaced our toilet sometime in the past. I can tell because it's a plain white style that doesn't match

the sink or bath, but I can't remember when. In our case I remember it was the cistern rather than the toilet itself that was about to explode in a potentially messy fashion since there was a long crack down one side which was starting to extend all the way from lip to base. And nowadays it appears that the bowl and cistern came as a single unit - or at least those that are not old fashioned enough to have a separate cistern high on the wall with a chain and handle.

Re: your comment to Dave Haren. I doubt if you'll find Tanith Lee is writing much these days, since she died of breast cancer in May this year it wasn't a very nice comment either.

I don't follow. As I recall, Haren acknowledged her death. But let me look at it again.

Okay, no, apparently neither of us was aware at the time. But someone who commented on this issue has mentioned it. I know very little about Tanith Lee's writing other than her first story collection, and if someone said she wrote about circus elephants, I'd have no reason not to believe them.

Perhaps being nominated for an award you've never heard of is akin to Groucho Marx's comment about not wanting to join any club that would accept him as a member. Or maybe not. You seem to take the whole awards thing a bit more personally, but then I've never got much higher than 7th equal letterhack some Corflu FAAN award. I know my place.

It isn't that I need awards, but when I see another good little boy get pie for answering teacher's question right, but when I answer the question right I *don't* get pie, I take umbrage at the unfairness. Of course, there's a lot of that going around in fandom. One guy wins a Hugo for best fanzine, and 20 other guys who have collectively been editing them for 300 years never come close. The only sane way to look at it is that the fan Hugos mean nothing at all, just random chance. (Random chance heavily influenced by personal popularity earned by attending a lot of Worldcons, I suspect.)

However, that doesn't really excuse the offhand attitude of the Aurora committee to their own awards. If they think so little of it that they can't be bothered to chase for details (or even go to Wikipedia where you have a page they could have lifted details from) then it doesn't really say much for the award itself, does it?

That was more or less my point.

Craig Charles (Red Dwarf's "Lister") can be found nowadays hosting a Funk & R'n'B show on BBC Radio 6.

Robert Llewelyn ("Kryten") used to do some sort of junkyard-wars show on TV, didn't he?

Portable document format (pdf) is not the same as .jpg, by the way. Completely different formats, (although some cheap scanners cheat by exporting a pdf as a series of scanned images of the entire page). A proper pdf rendition allows you to search, highlight and cut/copy text (something you can't do with a .jpg or .png image file, but my reader certainly allows with this copy of *Broken Toys*) and does allow you to embed font information if the selected font isn't likely to be available on the reader's PC.

So I've been told, but also that a .pdf is nevertheless a sort of image file.



Paul Skelton, paulskelton2@gmail.com

Firstly, let me just say that I am now all caught up on *Broken Toys* via the good auspices of *efanzines.com*. Thus it was that when you mentioned that your poorreader **Walt Wentz** had spotted two typos in the finished product last issue I was not shocked, but simply recalled with delight your fairly recent piece about your sister's wedding in which you filled the role of 'Father of the Bridge' (a little-known role which most, clearly less innovative, weddings don't even bother with). Of course most typos don't come as bonus joys but then neither are they usually causes for deep anguish and despair. They are mainly just very minor reminders that 'shit happens'.

That took real dedication. I like to think of it as a sign of approval and not just a wager you lost. When typos are bad enough, I revise the old release and have it reposted on-line. It won't replace all those faulty copies I direct-mailed to the readers, but anyone who downloads *Broken Toys* in future will at least be spared a *few* more howlers. For instance, issue 44 went out with a 2014 date! Check your copy if you got it from me directly. But anyone who downloads issue 44 now will get the correct date ... *2051, right?*

Of course back in the Middle Ages, when shit happened it tended not to be minor stuff like typos but instead, as you pointed out in your *Fawkes News* piece (neato pun), often ran to religious persecution of a painful and deadly nature. Actually I suspect your detailed knowledge of the Guy Fawkes business probably exceeds that of most UK citizens excepting serious history buffs. Had the Guy Fawkes conspirators simply wanted to get rid of the King/Head of State they'd have been better advised to go the normal US route and use a firearm. The first assassination of a Head of State using a concealed handgun had already taken place by then, Prince William of Orange in 1584. To quote from the beginning of Lisa Jardine's *The Awful End of Prince William the Silent* (Harper Perennial – 2005)...

"When Prince William the Silent was gunned down in the hallway of his Delft residence in 1584, his death rocked the cause of Protestantism in the Low Countries. Without their charismatic leader, the Dutch opponents of the occupying Catholic forces of Philip II of Spain looked likely to be brought permanently under the domination of the Habsburgs. In the event, the Dutch Protestant cause managed to carry on its opposition to the Habsburgs, and eventually succeeded in establishing an independent Dutch Republic. But the assassination of William of Orange with a small, concealed, self-igniting handgun had lasting repercussions across the face of Europe. William had been a marked man for many years, with a Catholic price on his head. Honour and riches had been publicly promised to anyone who could assassinate him."

The Catholics behind the Gunpowder Plot had probably come to the late conclusion that the majority of Britons – Lords, Commons and the Crown – were all against them, and were determined with one strike of a match, to rid the nation of the whole government ... the only way to usher in a government the God of infinite mercy would approve.

So, same old, same old... Without of course making any effort to actually look into their differences I equate the old Catholic-Protestant bloodlettings with the more current Shiite-Sunni Moslem squabbles. Same God, just different flavours of observance. To what I like to think of as my more rational atheist viewpoint this is bafflingly like, having agreed on which make and model of car to buy, killing each other over the choice of paint-job. Come to think of it, from my viewpoint, that would actually make **more** sense.

Sure! Revive the old nationalism in auto sports! Remember British Racing Green? The Rosso Corsa, or Italian red? German white or silver? I think the French may have staked out blue. Belgium was yellow, but who remembers that? Surprisingly, the US has racing colours also - the famous Ford GT wasn't white with blue stripes for no reason. Drivers didn't intentionally kill one another in racing, of course, but sufficient numbers of drivers (and spectators) did perish in racing events that I think even a God of War would be satisfied.



Philip Turner - farrago2@lineone.net

Falls over in amazement. Bonfire Night and Guy Fawkes was a mystery to you! That's almost as incredible as someone over here not knowing when Canadians celebrate their Thanksgiving – watching the CFL helps. Talking about the CFL, have you seen their new logo?



It looks like an old twin-engine bomber flying above the lettering to drop the bomb that caused the red explosion down below. (Explosions being something you know nothing about thanks to your persistence and beating the system to get rid of your personal bomb factory.) All the new CFL logo lacks is some flying Jihadi body parts around the explosion. Personally, I think my own suggestion for a logo is much better:



To me, it looks more like a radioactivity advisement on a piece of old scientific equipment. "Shock Hazard" ought to be next to it. Why not a more realistic football? This looks like a stale marshmallow. The second logo is certainly more colourful, but the 1970s esthetic is indelible. It just needs a wide tie, platform shoes and an Afro.

Stamping the wrong year on official documents sounds like a splendid way to keep demand for civil service jobs high – all those extra staff needed to cope with the customers who come back to get the job

done properly. Positively diabolical. And so's the associated "tickets for illegal parking" scam. Glue joint failure = explosion? That's pushing artistic license a bit too far, Tara!

You're the second person to challenge my veracity on that! But there was a loud bang (or crack) when the seat failed, and a couple of the parts achieved enough velocity to move several feet. Not much of an explosion, I grant you, but enough to quite startle me at the time.

I have a program called Tr@nslation Plus, which lets me translate between a number of languages, including English to French. Assuming a bilingual edition of your zine doesn't require a quality check of the translation – just a lot of French words will do -- this program would be able to square things with M. Trudeau and get you a whopping support grant for your zine. Worth a try?

But *this* you believe!

Please stick to proper fonts. Times New Roman is the last font I personally would ever want to use, and Arial is another. If I open your PDF in Acrobat Reader and go to file properties, I get a long list of all the fonts you use, so they are, indeed, embedded in the document.

Not a chance! Fonts are too fun. I know some people prefer their fanzines to resemble their old history exam paper from when they wee kids, but I have made a halfway adjustment to the 21st. century.

Walt Wentz's piece reminded me that back in the 1970s, I wrote a novel called [Night Flowers](#) which was about a covert war among the big operators running Refuse Reclamation Centers, where everything thrown away was separated into recoverables and landfill, or incinerated for power and heating. The concept of the RRC seems as far away now as it did in the 1970s. So much for the march of technology.

I never understood that myself. Clearly, the way to enlightened waste management is not to convince the consumer to sort his garbage at home in his spare time, store it in his cramped quarters and then drive all over town to a dozen different sorts of waste reclamation yards! Yet every time there is another colour plastic box, that's the program!

Your article on coins was very informative. Wretched the Lionheart is now seen as a scumbag of the first water and all John Lackland did was lose his baggage (and the crown jewels) in the Wash and put his seal on the Magna Carta. I wonder if my 1972 ice hockey silver Canadian dollar is worth a fortune yet.

P.S. Paul Skelton might mock the *Daily Mail* but at least it has the good taste to print my stuff (see attachment).

Wordy wise 2015/12/08

GLITERARY AGENT — supplies sparkly stuff for decorating Christmas cards. <i>Dave Cullen, Alwoodley, Leeds.</i>	DAME OF THRONES — cleaned-up pantomime version. <i>Philip Turner, Stockport.</i>
PLAY IT, PAM — The Casablanca remake has a transvestite piano player. <i>Mark Wraith, Newark, Notts.</i>	DUNE IS BUSTIN' OUT ALL OVER — from The Desert Song. <i>Antony Dean, Keighley, West Yorks.</i>
BECCLESIASTES — a book of the Old Testament Suffolk town. <i>Mrs Sylvia Dugard, Witney, Oxon.</i>	LITTLE MOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE — it's a big world out there, Mickey. <i>Anne Taylor, Wigan, Gtr Manchester.</i>

■ SEND your contributions to Peterborough, Daily Mail Letters, 21

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Milt Stevens - miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Broken Toys #44*, your comments on getting rid of toxic material reminded me of the sorts of things that are brought to the front desks at police stations. A guy walks in and slams down a WWII era hand grenade on the front desk. "Look at what I found in my grandfather's garage. What am I supposed to do with it?" The answering squeak from the desk officer might sound something like "Call the bomb squad." As you probably have heard, old explosives are touchy if not feely. If you sneeze in their direction, they may explode. Standard procedure is to call the bomb squad whenever old explosives are encountered.

I once had a chance to watch the bomb squad in action. My office was located in a high-rise down the block from Hollywood Police Station. Someone had brought a pipe bomb to the front desk of Hollywood Station. The bomb squad had dug a hole in the front lawn and moved the pipe bomb to the hole. They were then trying to detonate it. The first effort resulted in a Pffft and a small cloud of smoke. The second effort resulted in a Pffft and a small cloud of smoke. The third effort resulted in KA-BOOM.

They say the worst job on the LAPD is place kicker for the bomb squad. I'm willing to believe that.

Every now and then I'm reminded that you worked for the police department. But I was never very clear in what capacity. Hard to imagine you in a squad car with Gunthar Toody or Francis Muldoon. Walking a beat? Desk Sergeant? Expert application of the rubber hose in the back room? The donut guy?

Remember, Remember, the fifth of November. I always found that a useful little verse. The fifth of November was my mother's birthday. If she were still alive, she would be 110 this year. She actually died a couple of weeks before her 99th birthday. In some years, the fifth of November is Election Day. These days, one shouldn't think about explosives and our government in the same paragraph.

No sir! Homeland Security, the NSA, the FBI or the CIA is likely listening!

Talk about blank computer screens made me remember the old days when the screens were black and you typed on them with white letters. That color inversion made me feel as if I had been sucked out of the universe and was typing in some sort of Bizarro space. A white screen with black letters makes me feel much more comfortable.

As far as awards are concerned, I still pay attention to the novel category in the Hugos. All other awards can just slither by without my attention.

I don't even pay much attention to the major Hugos. I read so little new SF that many of the names in contemporary SF mean nothing to me.



Neil Jamieson-Williams - swill@uldunemedia.ca

As you know, I rarely LoC, and this is my first LoC to *Broken Toys*. Usually, there is little in your zine that fires me up enough to the point where I consider writing a LoC (the same goes for almost all other fanzines)... However, with issue #44, I had to make some commentary regarding your article, "Flickering Lights: A Dim View of the Aurora Awards."

To begin with, it seems extremely odd to say that you find little in *Broken Toys* that interests you *despite* the relatively broad ranges of subjects that my loccers and I have written about.

However, I understand your position - like most fans, Canadians in particular, you are a fan *of* science fiction. You want to talk about it, analyze it, come to know the subject more fully, deepen your understanding of the genre, and spread the evangelistic fervor to other people. I felt like that once, myself. However, I only read a little SF these days and have satisfied my curiosity about the genre and its history pretty thoroughly. I have no desire to see additional converts in the streets, chanting catchphrases from *Game of Thrones* or *Dragonfly*. I'm so hopelessly out of date that I probably wouldn't recognize them in any case, nor would the ultimate victory of science fiction *uber alles* enrich my life in a way I can foresee.

In short, I am an apostate. You are not.

Like many older fanzine publishers, fandom is a common language and body of traditions that helps bind us together, but no longer a cause to which we offer devotion. We regard ourselves as self-published writers and artists, rather than fans who promote some *other* person's writing and art. We probably have no business calling ourselves fans, but we were once, and our lapse is highly variable.

Even I have been known to review a book, now and then. But it would be a mistake to imagine that I get the same sort of satisfaction from a disposable summary of some book I had just read than I do from a richly expressed reminiscence from some part of my life that seems strange or magical to me. Or a sharply crafted witticism. Or even just a slice of my humdrum existence.

Other Old School fans may have less extreme positions than that, or even more. But one thing seems clear, that as fandom has doubled its size, again and again, the typical fan has a much less "evolved" stance - to him the genre is full of cool stuff he is excited about and wants to be saturated in. Which seems to be why fandom seems much more sercon these days ... Canadian fandom in particular. It's not that it has become stodgy, but because it is primarily in this aficionado mode. They go to conventions to horse around and act "fannish." But there is no clear need for a "fannish" zine.

I'm given up judging this as either good or bad. The idea of judging it is inappropriate. What I keep trying to make understood is that the modern kind of fandom is not for me. It might have been once, but whatever role I had in fandom for most of my life appears to have become very marginal in fandom today. I'm best doing what pleases me rather than hanging around in the wrong

bar, complaining about the company I keep.

I am going to keep this short (though I may return to this subject in *Swill #30*) and I will try and be somewhat sweet (as opposed to dripping with corrosive materials). As you know (*Swill #27*), I view the Hugos as being the Peoples' Choice Awards of speculative fiction – the Auroras are the Canadian Hugos -- and I place more stock in the Nebulas and our Sunburst Awards. All right, that's out of the way, so I will proceed with my attack (hey, this is the Lord of *Swill* writing a LoC ...).

Attack? Tell me more about your father, young Mr. Skywalker... Why use a word like "attack?"

We must have downloaded different voter's packages – perhaps there was a special package for multiple Hugo nominees – because, in my package, you were treated no better or worse than any other nominee in your category, Best Fan Publication. Everyone had no bio, just a text file that stated "Editor X for Fan Publication Z" followed by a the web link to the nominated fan publication or a line of text stating it was enclosed in the folder – and Graeme Cameron didn't even have that text file in his folder, just the two eligible issues of the *Space Cadet*. In my voters' package, not even the nominees for Best Novel have bios or author photographs (other than a .jpg of the front cover of the nominated book); the format is very similar for all the award categories. I believe this is done to reduce potential advantage or favoritism, or at least that is my speculation...

I was speaking of an on-line page prepared by the Aurora administrators with capsule bios of the Aurora nominees, not the Hugo voters' package. I have never had a problem with that. But I may not have been as clear as I might have been that I was led to this page by a link to (so I thought) of an Aurora voters' package. It turned out to be a page of information only. There turned out not to be a "voters' package," nor did I explicitly say there was.

It's not an important issue, in as much as I concluded that the lack of any real data there was unlikely to have any effect on the vote. It just seemed to me to be a slapdash attitude.

As to whether or not the voters' package was useful, it was to me. I do not read YA novels, nor would I be inclined to buy the nominated ones just to research my vote. Same goes for novel series that I am not already following. And so on; I'm glad of the voters' package.

Again, I wasn't talking about a package of sample work supposedly offered by the Auroras.

Although I do find it a little mind-boggling that you would read a list of books someone handed you, based on a vague consensus that these might be "good" reads. It is the sign of a true believer, when someone sacrifices his limited time for the greater good, as he perceives it. You wouldn't catch me promising to read a stack of unfamiliar books for the sole purpose of voting on them. The world is full of too many books, and there are others that I'm more interested in reading than these.

Regarding the informing of the nominees, that they had been nominated – ideally, you should have heard you had been nominated from the Aurora's themselves, before anyone else congratulated you – but, you know ... volunteer organization ... shit happens.

Indeed. One might go so far as to say shit happens *because* of organization, which creates opportunity for it.

Finally, in Best Fan Publication the winner and runner-up were deserving. *Ecdysis* is on the verge of being a semi-prozine, I agree, however, the Auroras do not have a semi-pro category and so it belongs in the fan category. It is a good publication, though it is in no way old school fannish (the eighties & nineties) or old school faanish (the seventies and further back in time), but it is a zine aimed at contemporary fans here in Canada.

I think I covered that when I said, "I am not a fan." However, there's another issue here, and that is one of trying to judge a sercon zine when one doesn't care much for them. The earliest issues I looked at seemed promising, but I did not know the authors, nor was I familiar in some cases with the subjects they wrote about. So I have never attempted to judge whether *Ecdysis* was a "good" zine or not. It was just not one aimed at my interests. I can say less about it now than I could about its first two or three issues, except that it has gotten slicker looking. I don't know whether the contents match its appearance, however. If I read an article on a writer, a book or a genre-related subject, I look for insights, clever expression of the ideas, insider information perhaps, or a personal viewpoint. Most reviewers, however, simply describe the plot and give a few details that I find as inspirational as an Auto Club road map. If I were to try to judge *Ecdysis*, it would be along the lines of my own interests.

The winner, *Speculating Canada*, is the website/blog for a speculative fiction radio show -- the website/blog is good and the radio show is even better (though I am biased here having worked on the *Ether Patrol* in its early years, plus a lot of other work in radio). Now, I do know that you are firmly of the belief that Best Fan Publication should be a fanzine, and I both agree with you and don't on this, but the point is, they are not going to change the category back to Best Fanzine.

Certainly not. While the category should not have been conflated with other media in the first place, trying to "cleanse" Best Fanzine now would be like going back to Morse code. Nor do I expect to split Best Fanzine up into an appropriate number of categories. Fanzine fandom in Canada is tiny, and of no interest to 98% of Canadian fans. The question should rightly be asked, why should the Auroras even recognize such a niche interest?

Your choice, regarding the Auroras, to ignore them in the future and the request that nobody discuss them in your presence, is, of course, your choice to make. I don't think it is a brilliant choice, it is a choice that removes any potential influence or voice (which you do have) from the awards, but it IS your choice to make. As for myself and *Swill*, though I can't speak for Lester, I shall be making a different choice.

I have a little influence on Graeme Cameron, half a dozen other individuals in Canadian fandom, perhaps even a tiny smidgeon on you, but *not* on Canadian fandom at large. Realistically, *none!* I have no way to even reach them with my ideas or opinions, so what influence *could* I possibly have? At an upper limit, my zine is read by two or three hundred people who are spread over several different circles - some don't even know what a Worldcon or a Hugo is. I doubt my pieces in Graeme's zines or locs in Felicity Walker's BCSFA clubzines are read by any larger number ...

probably fewer. I cannot attend conventions or seminars. So I ask you, *who's listening to me?*

It astonishes me that we have just spent three pages saying so very little. It must be your academic training and writing style ... although my stubbornness has probably played a part too.



John Nielsen-Hall - johnsila32@gmail.com

You and Eric are a bit misguided about the Beach Boys. "Be True To Your School" dates from the early part of their career and reflects the baleful influence of the Wilson boy's father, Murray. Basically, he was dictating what got written, and it was exclusively California teenager preppy stuff, because he apparently couldn't see further than the idea that the band were a teen fad that had to be milked for all it could be milked for while it lasted. Murray Wilson was not a nice man. You can read up on all this stuff from many sources. It's not a bad record, like a lot of their early records, but stupid.

I was speaking only of the song, and wasn't aware there was an album of that name.

The other lyric I think you are criticizing, though you don't say so, is "Disney Girls" from much later. The full title is Disney Girls (1957) and the lyric explicitly states that it is a fantasy, and by extension, the whole world it refers to is a fantasy.

"Disney Girls?" You're not making this stuff up, are you? Never heard of such a song or an album.

*"Oh reality, it's not for me
And it makes me laugh
Oh, fantasy world and Disney girls
I'm coming back"*

This actually was written about the time of *Smile* but was recorded somewhat later and finally showed up on the *Surf's Up* album of 1971 or thereabouts. A lot of people had a bad reaction to Brian Wilson's solo reconstruction of *Smile*. Personally, I liked it and in fact nearly all of the material on it exists in extant Beach Boys recordings scattered across albums like *Smiley Smile* (the cock-up that EMI put out after the abandonment of *Smile* itself), *Wild Honey* and *Surf's Up*, making it possible to put together much of what it should have sounded like. It wasn't ever going to be *Sgt. Pepper*, but it would have built on the foundation of *Pet Sounds*, which, I must insist, was and probably remains the finest pure pop music album ever recorded. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that if you don't like *Pet Sounds*, you really don't like pop music.

*I like the Beach Boys, but I'm more familiar with the surf and hotrod stuff than later songs. My entire collection consists of a couple of anthologies, *Endless Summer* and *Sunshine Dream*. I got the latter for "Heroes and Villains" and "Good Vibrations." I haven't listened to *Sunshine Dream* in more than two decades! Looking at the contents, I recognize some of the numbers as reasonably good ... the rest draw a blank. I have never heard *Pet Sounds* as a complete album - it has a good reputation, and some of the numbers are familiar. I do like "God Only Knows" quite a bit. More than that, I can't say. It's just that I've listened to Brian's recreation of *Smile* several times, and*

it just *never* sounds any better. "Good Vibrations" and "Heroes & Villains" are standouts ... the rest rise to harmonic curiosities at best. Then there are songs, from other albums, such as "Cotton Fields" and "Sloop John B" that just make me feel embarrassed for The Beach Boys.

Sorry for the thin and peripheral comment on so fine and varied an issue. I remain one of your devoted readers, however rarely you might get any evidence of it.

Your reassurance that you are a "devoted reader" is only needed now and then ... so that I don't succumb to the fear that there are no readers at all!



David Redd - dave_redd@hotmail.com

Thanks for 44, Taral. Actually I also downloaded your covering letter as a *BT44* Supplement. Querulous tone? Well, they're your life and your personal thoughts. They're OK. It's a personal zine. As in, your coin-collecting article is more history than coins, but that's fine too. (In the old days, being a thoroughly nasty chancer must have been a prime qualification for kingship.)

Well, I thought the piece on the Aurora Award would probably irritate at least two sets of people. First, those who think the Auroras are a peachy keen idea that doesn't deserve criticism. And the second set would be those who would just dismiss the whole piece as sour grapes. I suppose the rest of the issue strikes a higher tone ... though it is rather heavy on coin history.

Don't expect a break in the near future - I have the germs of at least two other pieces on coin history I can write about in upcoming issues. Now I wonder if it's such a good idea to.



John Purcell, askance73@gmail.com

Here it is, Taral. That loc on the 44th issue of your zine. Looking through that particular issue again to jog my memory, there are indeed a few things to say, so I might as well get to it and create more free space in my brain. The room might come in handy.

It is a common mistake to think that clearing the mind of bothersome ideas creates free space. In reality, the discharged brain cells fill up again, and most likely with information that is even more useless, if anything. Where once you knew something about the purchasing power of a Roman denarius, you are apt to end up with the knowledge of who won the track and field events at the last Olympics.

It is good that Paul Skelton can now rest easier knowing that you have properly disposed of those combustible liquids. In fact, it is good that your neighbors never knew that those items were in your possession in the first place. If they had gone off you would never have heard the end of it. "Such an odd man," they would whisper to themselves while huddling on the sidewalk outside the building as debris from the 21st floor fell around their feet. "I have always wondered about him," another would say,

adding, "Obviously of *muslin* descent." You likewise can rest easier since conversations like this don't have a chance to exist. Or do they?

I am probably a cypher to most of the people living in my building, but when I come to anyone's attention I seem to make a good impression. People's eyes bug out at all the amazing treasures I've filled my apartment with, and would like to spend hours pawing through it. Despite some of the officials who have been through here, so far none of them have made a report that resulted in a SWAT team busting in my door on a warrant for the massive possession of illegal firearms, for instance. Anyone seeing my wall of plastic kit and modified toy firearms could be forgiven for mistaking them for real - but it doesn't seem to have happened. That was one reason why the visit from the fire inspectors was such a shock. It felt as though I were a refugee being brutalized by the Red Cross - totally unexpected!

Your reasoning as to the exclusivity of the FAAn Awards does make sense, but I doubt that any bloggers will give a fig about them since the FAAns are such a niche group honour that they don't have the public persona of the Hugos or Nebulas. I think the FAAn Awards are safe. For now.

I doubt the majority of fandom has heard of the FAAns or gives a crap about them. And we're better off if it stays that way. If ever the bloggers and semi-pros start winning them, they will also begin bragging about their win, and others of their ilk begin to covet FAAns.

Huzzah on acquiring your parking permit and getting the dates corrected. A five-year term is good, I have no idea how long a handicapped permit runs here in America, although I'm positive that term length varies from state to state. Hopefully we will never have the need for such a designation, but if my wife's spine continues to deteriorate, I suspect we are probably five years from such a need. Well, if so, then we shall deal with that then. But I am glad you're now set up.

Your comments about the Beach Boys and their landmark *Pet Sounds* album reflect my view on that band. I never really cared for them at all, and felt that songs like "Good Vibrations" were simply psychedelic, drug-induced explorations of what they could do with their vocal harmonies. Of course, discovering the theramin was obviously a lot of fun. I have to be in the right mood to enjoy their music.

So you might resurrect *New Toy* as your next fanzine? Not a bad idea, especially since you said in your response to Brad Foster's loc that you've been hanging onto material for it for a few years. Sounds good to me.

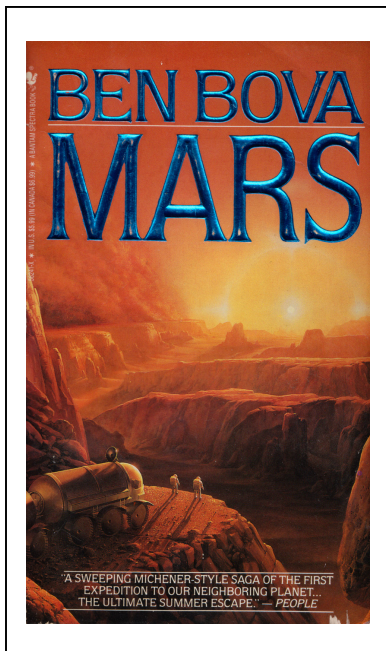
After glancing through the assorted letters you have in the 44th issue, I have determined that my brain has now been suitably emptied. Nothing left up there to say. Therefore, it is time to scamper off and get onto writing one more loc this morning before I go to the store and get a few odds and ends for Christmas dinner tomorrow. That, and drop a few newsletters off in the mail for my wife: she's the correspondence secretary for the Brazos Valley Art League (B-VAL), which means she puts out the equivalent of a 4 - 8 page fanzine each month that has news of upcoming art shows, classes, demonstrations, and other contact information for artists in this area. It keeps her busy for a few days each month, and it's interesting to listen to her grouching about the illiteracy of the "contributions" she receives. I might run off an extra copy of it some day and ship it to you so you can see it's like. Very different from *Askance* and *Askew*, I assure you.

One of the strangest fanzines I have is called *Crew*, and it was produced for the employees of a certain McDonalds franchise. As you'd expect, it was mostly BS to exhort the employees to work harder, and give a shit about the company profits. But it *was* mimeographed. I cut the electrostencils myself, when I used to work at Gestetner back in the 1970s.

Now I'm done. Take care, and have a splendid holiday season, and stay warm. We are in the 70s and 80s here, which even for this part of Texas is unseasonably warm. Next week will be more "normal:" daytime highs in the 50s and 60s, lows in the mid-20s at night. For the locals, that's positively freezing. For us – transplanted northerners (Minnesota and Iowa – that feels like late spring or autumn weather. We laugh at them as they bundle up and shiver and complain while we walk around in shorts and t-shirts. Wussies.

It's been in the high 50s and even low 60s here in Toronto - very unlikely weather for the time of year! We must have set records!

Letters on Broken Toys 45 will appear in the next issue.



In fact, I've been reading it over the last few days. It seems an improvement over what I remember, but still not especially vivid. In fact, it rather plods in some ways, as though the author had absorbed the lessons of the New Wave and learned to insert a variety of in-depth characterizations into the story, but did not have the knack of making them compelling people. Of greater interest, though, was comparing Bova's picture of Mars with the one we know today. The book, Mars, was published in 1992, years before the landings of Spirit, Opportunity and Curiosity, so our knowledge of the Martian surface was somewhat limited at the time. Understandably, there are no mentions of perchlorate salts or "blueberries." Whether or not there is ice under the surface of the Red Planet is still a mystery in the 1992 novel. Now, of course, we know that there in places there are vast amounts of buried ice.

According to Bova, the first manned landing on Mars occurs On the 50th anniversary of the first American satellite, which would date it around 2007 ... nine years ago. Yet this first manned expedition to Mars is supported by a sophisticated network of space stations, shuttles, tugs, inflatable habitats, manned rovers and remotely piloted aircraft – technology we aren't within 20 years of achieving yet. Since Bova wrote this novel in 1992, he appears to think it was possible to develop all this infrastructure in a mere 15 years! But, wait, what's this? The astronauts are using videotape, and don't seem to have flash memory! Such are the perils of writing science fiction.

POMPEI & CIRCUMSTANCE



So busy was last summer that I scarcely had time to write about it all. But now that winter is here, very little is likely to happen until Spring, and I'm free to write about almost any piddling little thing that happened in sunnier times. One of those events I had hitherto overlooked was a visit to the Royal Ontario Museum to see the Pompeii exhibit.

I had had my eye on the traveling exhibition since mid-summer, but the admission price practically took my breath away. A few weeks later, however, Alan Rosenthal made one of his periodic trips back to his hometown, Toronto, and he called to ask if I'd like to visit the exhibit with him and Bob Wilson as his guest.

Would I? Would the people who make those annoying calls you get on the phone like you to sign up for cable TV or subscribe to the paper?

It wasn't an altogether nice day when I set out for the ROM. It was rather cold for the time of year and there was light, on-and-off-again rain. It didn't seem anything Traveling Matt and I couldn't handle, though, so I packed an umbrella and gave myself an extra 15 minutes travel time to be sure. I arrived on time and without incident along the way. Well... almost without incident, but I'll return to that later.

Bob and Alan were waiting for me just inside the exhibit entrance. Alan apparently had the tickets already, so we just went inside.

As most of you probably know, Pompeii was a Roman city destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D. You may be less aware of the nearby coastal town of Herculaneum, also destroyed by the eruption. In fact, there were a number of smaller towns in the area that suffered total or partial destruction in the same event – Misenum, Stabiae, Oplontis, Surrentum, Neapolis, Nuceria and doubtless many more tiny hamlets whose names have not come down to us. Much has been learned about both the disaster and first-century Roman life by the excavation of these sites. Pompeii and Herculaneum in particular are exceptionally well-preserved, and rich sources of information. Unlike ancient Rome, which was lived in as it fell to pieces or was demolished to make way for new construction, the cities under the shadow of Vesuvius were emptied of their populations and covered in tons of volcanic detritus literally overnight. It is as though the cities of Atlanta or Bristol were to be emptied of life and wrapped in cellophane for posterity.

The exhibit featured actual artifacts recovered from the buried cities – jewelry, kitchen utensils, dinner ware, tools, oil lamps, gladiatorial armour, musical instruments, statues, murals and minor artistic kitsch in abundance! No guide dragged you from exhibit to exhibit, simultaneously boring the toga off you while hurrying you along. The three of us took our time, reading the labels and taking photographs. I was surprised by how much material was on tour – this was no room or two of familiar knick-knacks, but room after room after room containing hundreds of things ... from a pair of workman's calipers to a priapic candleholder, from wind chimes to toe rings, a loaf of carbonized bread to a childhood good luck charm. (Fat lot of good *that* did anyone!) One of the more interesting exhibits was a complicated Rube Goldberg-looking device whose label said was most probably a wine warmer.

One room featured a mockup of a bakery store, based on a real-life painting hanging on the wall nearby.

In another corner of the exhibition were a long sheet of cotton and some paintings of figures of Romans in togas. A sign invited visitors to attempt to wrap themselves accordingly. I watched for a couple of minutes as people tried and failed piteously. In fact, I don't think the sheet was the correct size and shape to do the job right. Although I'm quite capable of leaving Traveling Matt and walking short distances, I didn't feel up to taking *my* turn at making a fool of myself.

I did, however, take photos of Alan and Bob at a staged photo op. A gladiatorial trident and shield were attached to the wall in such a way that visitors could pose with them and be photographed without the supports showing. I called Alan the Genial Gladiator, Bob the Literary Gladiator. Perhaps ill-advisedly, I tried for an action pose for which the shield seemed oddly too low to put my shoulder into it properly. Sadly, I became the Drunken Gladiator.

As though to remind the visitor that these artifacts were not recovered from an empty, abandoned site, there were also the dead. No one knows how many died as a result of the ash fall and pyroclastic flows from Vesuvius, but hundreds left their remains for us to exhume. Those in Pompeii may have died chiefly from poisonous fumes or the effects of abrasive volcanic ash in their lungs, while those in Herculaneum were incinerated by a tsunami of red-hot air mixed with ash that raced down the mountainside at up to 100 m.p.h., and may have reached temperatures over 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Whatever the fashion of their deaths, suffocation or heat, while in flight or while taking cover, alone or in the arms of loved ones, they lay where they fell, and were covered over by glowing ashes and pumice. There the overburden turned into rock around them, and they rotted ... leaving hollow voids.

These vacancies preserved the shapes of the original victims. In fact, remnants of their bones can sometimes be found too, settled in the bottom. When filled with plaster, the holes produce human-shaped manikins, twisted in the positions they held at the moment of death. It can be rather unsettling to look at them, and realize that these crudely preserved shapes are all that is left of young women, mothers, small children, strapping gladiators or crafty tradesmen, whose lives came to an abrupt end so that they could end up on display to crowds of gawping strangers.

The casts of the dead, however, were one of the few things in the exhibition that were not genuine. The originals are so delicate that they were left in Italy. These were merely laser-contoured copies.

I took particular interest in several display cases full of contemporary Roman coins. I doubt any of my readers are unaware that I collect Roman coins, or would be surprised that I inspected each and every one with exclamations such as, "I have one of those!" Or "One of those, too – and mine is better!" And also, "I *wish* I had one of *those*!" I'll spare everyone the photos I made, since the lighting was poor and I couldn't get very close.

A few days later, though, I shared the photos with my favourite coin dealer, Robert. He surprised me by saying those coins could not have been found at the site – they must only be *similar* to coins actually found at Pompeii and Herculaneum, because such coins tend to have taken on a slightly yellowish hue from the corrosive sulfuric gases, while these samples were untouched. Also, one of the denarii produced by the emperor Vespasian the year before the eruption showed the wear from thirty years or forty years in circulation ... obviously not possible if that particular coin had been lost in the eruption. I really ought to have caught that one myself.

It came as no surprise that the exit door led right into a gift shop. As gift shops go, it was rather good, offering an assortment ranging from reasonably priced books all the way up to exorbitantly priced coffee-table tomes. There were t-shirts and postcards, naturally, but also candies, bath soaps, miniature statues and busts, games and even some sets of replica ancient coins. I was very tempted by those, but when I added up the price I realized that it was more than some *real* Roman coins cost! Some replicas I own are at least gold plated, but these were

ordinary pot metal. Instead, I brought home two three-inch-tall figurines, one an ordinary legionary and the other a centurion. The detail was excellent and the price not out of reason.

We had an arrangement to meet after the exhibition with Bob's wife, Sharry. We were finished about two hours early, however, and it turned out none of us had eaten. So we found the museum cafeteria, bought desserts and parked ourselves at an empty table for an extended conversation. It wasn't until dinnertime crept up on us and we left the building that we discovered how the weather had turned decidedly for the worse. It had gotten blustery, colder and the drizzle was now light rain. It also appeared that we had made an arrangement to meet with Sharry at a place that didn't exist! In the ensuing confusion there was a danger Sharry would not find us, and we not find her. It got sorted out, somehow, but once we were all together there was still the problem of where to go. There was no Swiss Chalet restaurant, which Alan and Sharry favour, anywhere near the museum. In fact, that stretch of Bloor Street has never been a good place to find a restaurant. We couldn't think of even one that was close enough to walk to. There was the added difficulty that I could not get Traveling Matt up stairs to doorways.

Alan proposed the main party take the subway west, to Dufferin Street, and walk a block south to Dufferin Mall, where we knew for a fact there was a Swiss Chalet. I would drive Matt to the mall alone. It was on my way home anyway, so no further drain on my limited battery power. Unfortunately, Bob and Sharry balked. The weather was foul and it was dark by then, and felt much later than it was. They decided to go home. Alan shrugged and said he'd meet me at the Chalet if *I* was up to it. Since I had to go that way anyhow, I agreed.

Alan and I had a fine dinner of barbecued chicken and the trimmings, while Matt recharged from a wall socket. But getting there was a *beast* of a time! We had been out in the cold for a while already, and by the time I had driven more than a mile in an open chair through periods of light and heavier rain, with a cold wind in my face, I was envying Bob and Sharry, who I imagined might already be home by then. Alan had had a slightly easier time of it as he was in a dry, warm subway car most of the way, although he had at least a couple of blocks to walk, himself. After dinner, I had another mile or so to travel in Matt before I was home. Curiously, though, the final leg home didn't seem as punishing, possibly because I had a warm meal under my belt, but more likely because my way was mostly south, not west into the teeth of the weather.

Still, in spite of a terrific afternoon and dinner, I've seldom been more glad to be home.

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There remains one very curious incident of the day, one that I alluded to earlier. On the way to the museum to meet Bob and Alan, I ran into someone on the street who I used to know. I saw Phil Paine by the side of the street, apparently watching for something. A car maybe, or someone on a bicycle? He was carrying a delivery bag, so was on the job.

I hadn't seen much of Phil in the last few years, but our previous chance encounter had been at a party only about a year before, when Jim Mowatt was in town for TAFF. I thought I'd stop and say hello before hurrying on. Oddly, Phil didn't seem to notice my approach, or my hail. I think I repeated myself, so that he finally turned to look at me with a blank face, and then turned away to watch the road again. No "hello" or apparent recognition. Perhaps he was preoccupied, but this seemed ridiculous. I had no idea what to make of it, but decided that since I had business elsewhere I had better get to it. To this day, I can't explain the incident. Alan and Bob were equally mystified when I told them. But even at the best of times, Phil has always been something of a puzzle to the people who think they know him.

Toronto can seem like a small burg to those who live in it long enough, and hard enough, and seems to be inhabited by a cast of characters more suited to a noir novel than real life.



GENIAL GLADIATOR



LITERARY GLADIATOR



DRUNKEN GLADIATOR



CENTURION AND LEGIONARY FIGURES, ABOUT 1/18 SCALE, LIKE MOST OF MY CARS.



BRONZE MAIDEN



HERA, JUPITER, DIVUS AUGUSTUS



GOLD & EMERALD NECKLACE



FLUTE & CYMBALS



GLADIATORIAL HELMET & ARMOUR



MARBLE SATYR & GOAT



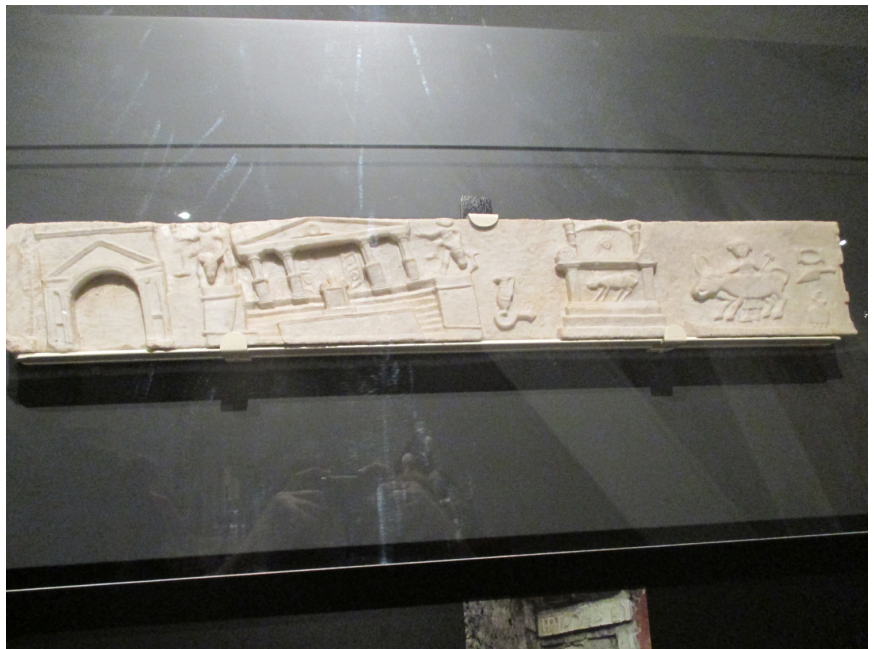
CAVE CANEM!



CARBONIZED LOAF OF BREAD



WALL PAINTING OF BAKERY



STONE FRIEZE SHOWING OLD EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE



KITCHENWARE



COLOURED GLASSWARE



BRONZE STOOL



MARBLE TABLE



WINE HEATER



GOLD RING AND ARM BRACELETS



BUST OF A ROMAN WITH A BUSTED NOSE



ROMAN COURTESAN – notice the traces of colour that still remain on the marble. Ancient sculpture was painted, rather than left in the natural colours of the stone. Perhaps one should keep this in mind when thinking of Medusa. Her power to petrify people with her gaze may have left them still lifelike!



A DOG WHO WAS LEFT BEHIND



A WOMAN AND HER DAUGHTER

EXODUS AND GIFT SHOP