

# BROKEN TOYS



50<sup>TH.</sup>  
& FINAL  
ISSUE

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Colour 2016



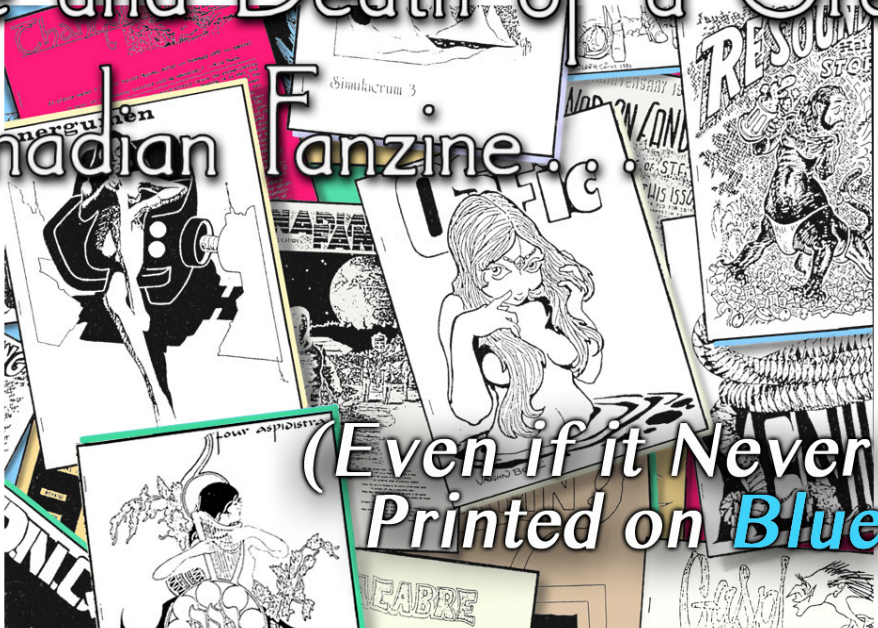


*It's hard to believe, but here we are, at the end of 50 issues of what may well have been Canada's last great traditional fanzine ... unless I publish another one, that is. **Broken Toys 50** © Taral Wayne, 17 September 2016, 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. Kiddelidivee Books & Art 311*

*The fact is, I never intended to give up fan publishing – just publishing as frequently, and in this format. I will return to this vanishing artform with **New Toy 4**, perhaps as early as the New Year. How often will I publish the “new” old zine? Once or twice a year, most likely ... whenever the muse gives orders. Truth be told, I've been holding back material for **New Toy** all along. For the time being, I am also publishing an apazine titled **Rat Sass**, for Rowrbrazzle. There are two issues at present, and the next is due in October.*

*And finally ... the surprise I've been keeping a secret. Technically this is the final issue of **Broken Toys** ... but it's not. For some time I've been wondering what to do about locs on the final issue, and finally decided I would publish a final, final issue, that won't be numbered, and will consist of mostly a letter column. **The Broken Toys Concordant** will also contain a complete index to all issues, and “Yes, I Said That,” two additional collections of Interlinos for 2015 and 2016. No deadline, but most likely sometime this year. And you were afraid I was retiring from fanzine publishing! Ha! But I do feel the wind at my back ... gently pushing me onward.*

# Life and Death of a Great Canadian Fanzine



(Even if it Never Was Printed on **Blue** Paper)

When I began *Broken Toys* more than four years ago, I had definite goals in mind. Up until then, my intention was to publish the next issue of a much larger zine, *New Toy*. There had been three up until that point, the first two in the 1980s and the third much more recently, in 2010. Response had been pretty restrained, and the effort involved had drained me of my resolution to follow up with a fourth issue. Yet the desire to publish hadn't abated. A large, quasi-genzine like *New Toy* just didn't seem to way to go.

Instead, I conceived a much shorter, more topical fanzine that I could publish with little effort on a highly regular schedule. Initially, I planned on a six-week interval ... in practice, though, the new zine appeared almost like clockwork at the beginning of most months. My plan was to publish only a few pages of original material along with a few pages of locs in every issue. It was an important consideration that the effort of producing each issue must *never* become a burden. I intended to write in a light-hearted vein, mostly, and to take advantage of my frequent schedule by focusing on fannish topics. My attitude was that nobody should be able to break into fandom without it being noted with a snarky comment in my new zine!

The appearance of my new zine was as important as the contents. I wanted it to be distinctive, but every issue should be unique as well. The idea I came up with was to use my extensive font library with suitable images ~~stolen~~ borrowed from the Internet to illustrate the toy theme. Most of the text would feature simple changes of font and colour for the titles, although occasionally illustrated by more ~~stolen~~ borrowed images. By these means I could produce issues that were attractive, different from other zines as well as each other, and required minimal effort to produce.

From the start, I wanted a vigorous letter column, and that meant writing replies to each letter that were as lengthy and thought-provoking as the loc.

The formula seemed simple, and with the first issue in January 2012, I somewhat impulsively put the theory to the test. For better or worse, I chose to continue a connection between my

old zine and the new zine through the title, *Broken Toys*.<sup>1</sup>

I often wonder how well I did. Clearly, I allowed myself to drift some distance from the initial conditions I spelt out for myself. The issues gradually grew from under 20 pages to over 20 pages on a regular basis. The lettercol grew along with the month's quota of original writing, as well. It was a bit of a surprise to myself when I began to add a little art, now and then, and sometimes used Photoshop to compose more complex titles. Still, I seemed up to the effort, so let myself follow instinct.

One clear casualty of changing goals, however, was the focus on fandom. It became clear, after a few issues, that I had exhausted pretty much all I had to say about fandom for the time being. News of stubbed toes and broken wind didn't come to me on a regular basis. Instead, I concentrated more on humour. "Let me entertain you," I repeatedly said. But even that approach had a limited shelf life.

After a year or two, as I began to write about my own health issues, *Broken Toys* grew increasingly downbeat in tone. No single issue was all sober reflection and gloom, of course. As much as I could, I mixed mood and subject matter, but there was no mistaking the downcast nature of many issues in the middle of the run. It became obvious even to me that *Broken Toys* was not a "snappy little fanmag," as Dan Steffan and Ted White used to call their 1990s fanzine, *Pong*. I had become the editor of an undisguised personalzine, like it or not.

By then, too, my initial resolution to never tax myself had evolved into an exacting exercise of my skills and energies. Far from exhausting me, I thought I had begun to genuinely flower as a fanwriter, and I looked forward to most issues, even though I barely finished one before starting the next. I doubt many readers looked carefully, but every issue's logo was a brand new experiment in layering images, fonts and effects in Photoshop, until I was almost able to conjure up highly sophisticated composites in my sleep.

One side effect of putting so much effort into *Broken Toys*, though, was that I had less time to write for other fanzines. For that matter, I wasn't bothering to distribute fanart, either. I was drawing less in order to make time for the keyboard. Admittedly, there no longer seemed much thrill when my art appeared in fanzines, anyway. Except for covers, few readers commented on fan art, and there were limited numbers of covers to be done for the ever-shrinking pool of classical fanzines. In pursuit of a distinctive style, I did not even use much of my own art in *Broken Toys*. I just let fan art go, quietly, gently into that good night.

It was sometime in the middle of my run that I added Walt Wentz as my "silent partner." There is no question that without Walt there would have been at least 1000% more typos in every issue of *Broken Toys*, and that my punctuation would have been so erratic as to confuse even an Elizabethan playwright. Should I, for any reason, choose the second-best word in a construction, Walt invariably suggested one better. On more than one occasion I threatened to list him as my unofficial co-editor ... but Walt wanted none of the blame!

The issues were growing longer and longer. *Broken Toys 13* was the first to exceed 20 pages, setting a record of 26. Six issues later, *Broken Toys 19* broke that record by two pages. But the next issue after that broke the record again, rounding out at 32 pages! The next few issues

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<sup>1</sup> I have also published zines called *Lost Toys* and *Stolen Toys*, neither of any great consequence. The nine issues of *Lost Toys* appeared in Arnie Katz's digital apa, *WigWam*. *Stolen Toys* was a single one-shot for a local convention. Should I need another such title, I have one more to use – *Forgotten Toys*.



stayed under 30 pages, but number 24, the first official Christmas Issue, shot up to 36 pages. I stayed under 30 pages after that, not exceeding that length until number 33, when the page count rose again to 32. From *Broken Toys* 37 on, the issues were *only twice* less than 30 pages. Number 40 was 40 pages. Number 41 was 44 pages. Number 49, the previous issue to this one, rose to an intimidating 52 pages ... and this, the final issue? Gawd only nose. It's looking likely to defy all sense or reason.

Hope Leibowitz has already complained that the last issue was more than she had any wish to read. Perhaps she has a point. Might it not have made better sense to divide the last few issues up into shorter issues, and continue publishing for another ten issues? Perhaps it would have, but massive letter columns pushed me relentlessly toward longer issues. At the end, I decided to make it perfectly clear that my final bow is not due to any exhaustion of inspiration or capacity. I think it is simply time to refresh my act.

It is natural, at this point, to think about the future. Several readers have said that they can't picture me *not* publishing a fanzine. What *will* I do, instead?

A careful reading of past editorials will remind those readers that I never said I was no longer going to publish fanzines. I was only going to stop publishing *Broken Toys*. In fact, I intend to begin a new fanzine, and take a fresh direction. Most likely, I'll publish the abandoned *New Toy 4* and continue from there. I have long personal reminiscences that have been set aside for the last three or four years, waiting for the right venue. At 12 and 15 pages, even *long* issues of *Broken Toys* were too short for "This Mortal Land," "Fly on the Wall," and "Jid the Barber."

*New Toy* will not only give me more space to play with, but also more time. I have no wish to publish more than once or twice a year. I will have more freedom as well, since the longer format won't feel crowded if I share it with other contributors. Although I don't know for sure whether I can attract material I want to publish – I have a Flashman pastiche by Mike Glycer – it is an open option.

With more time and space, I expect to use more of my art in *New Toy*. In exactly what form, I'm not yet sure. I doubt I'll feel much like drawing funny little cartoons with article titles worked into them. From where I sit that just sounds like work ... and my muse is nodding her head. Portfolios are one possibility – after all, art is content, too.

In fact, I've already published a new zine, called *Rat Sass*. This is strictly for *Rowrbrazzle* – the new OE is pushing to revitalize the old funny-animal apa that Marc Schirmeister began in 1984. I dropped out after a number of years, but *Rowrbrazzle* has held out all this time in spite of me! I don't intend *Rat Sass* to amount to much, but likely it'll be posted at eFanzines.com even if I don't bother to mail it out.

Another fan publishing project I have is to finally finish the digital republication of *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*. I began that more than four years ago, but found it impossible to complete while I had a monthly zine of my own on my mind. There is very little work left to be done on the digital *ASI* – mainly, I need to do a cover, and to figure out how I want to publish it. My original plan was to publish *ASI* as a CD, as I had the Glicksohn collection. But that costs a fair amount upfront, and I suspect I would have limited prospects to recoup my investment. The Glicksohn disk sold quite well initially, but since I am unable to take a new disk with me to conventions to reach potential new customers, I don't know if that's my best option. Another is to have the

material published as a book, using Amazon or Lulu. This will probably end up being a last-minute decision. Input is welcome.

However, I am most excited by the chance to spend more time writing fiction. Those of you who read the entire run of *Broken Toys* will recall a small number of excursions into outright fiction, two of them stories about original characters set in the Jim Henson world of *Fraggle Rock*. Groan if you dare, but I have four or five more of those planned. I don't intend this series to be a total waste of time. It may be an easy matter to alter names and settings just enough to avoid angry Disney lawyers thirsting for my blood, and sell the collection of stories as a Young Adult book.

Being honest with myself, though, I don't expect to remake myself into a professional writer. The market is highly competitive. Would-be writers almost outnumber their potential readers. I'm also going to be 65 in October. I know next to nothing about the modern market, online or otherwise, and 65 is no time to start learning about how to please the editors of a genre that I don't even read anymore. If I can sell any stories, that's all well and good. I think I can. But to depend on my writing for a living is a fool's errand. Even most professional writers have day jobs. I'll be retired and no longer have to make a living from what I write, so I intend to write entirely for my own pleasure.

Strangely enough ... I've had two stories accepted for publication, and I don't read *that* genre, either. So I'm not entirely ruling anything out.

When I'm the next J.K. Rowling, I might even remember *you*, the little people in fandom on whom I stubbed my toes in my rise to fame.

None of this speculation answers the question I originally posed, however. Is *Broken Toys* a success or a failure?

Perhaps the answer depends on which vision of *Broken Toys* I use as a measure? I don't think it ever became the fannish zine I wanted – even though there was some quite good fannish material in some issues. I don't think *Broken Toys* ever became any sort of “focal point” fanzine, either ... if I ever had that in mind. Robert Lichtman recently described a focal point zine as having “certain characteristics in common: frequency of publication (monthly being a seeming ideal), a welcoming, inclusive attitude on the part of its editor/publisher, and strong interaction between the readers and contributors.” Of course, Robert was not thinking of *Broken Toys*, he was thinking of Graham Charnock's *Vibrator* ... which, he went on to say, “meets all these criteria, and frankly I can't think of another current fanzine that does.” Well, of course *Broken Toys* does ... but I cannot help thinking he has a point. In some other regards, I don't believe *Broken Toys* is any sort of focal point for anyone but me.

What I think Robert left out of his criteria are the readers. A focal point has to have a body of readers who form a rather uniform community of interest, and, going even further, perhaps creates a consensus among them. *Broken Toys* has an exceptionally diverse body of readers, who are not all drawn from a single community, the one we call “fannish.” My readers are anyone I encounter who I think might be interested in reading my zine, and include fans, gun fetishists, bronies, folk singers, writers, poets, painters, animators, my social workers and random cranks on FaceBook. Many of them have never heard of Corflu, *Vibrator*, Robert Lichtman or FAAn Awards. They have too little in common with each other to even comprise their *own* group, much less have any pretensions of belonging to the confraternity of fandom!



But did *Broken Toys* need to be a “focal point?” No, obviously not. Very few fanzines ever were, despite being well liked in their day and remembered long afterward. In a way, the entire idea of a “focal point” fanzine is an artificial construct, and arguably none have existed at least since *Locus* evolved into a professional trade magazine.

Did *Broken Toys* actually entertain anyone? For a long time, I wasn’t very sure whether it did or not. I had not begun to publish massive letter columns yet, so I was reliant on the feedback of maybe six or eight eager loccers to gauge whether I even had an audience. That I was uncertain seems natural enough.

By the time lettercols were running to 12 to 15 pages, I was growing more assured of my audience, even if some readers seemed utterly impossible to provoke into any sort of response. What was most infuriating was that some of them were old friends, who made a good deal of noise about what good fanzine fans they were, and yet I have never heard once from them ... not even a “thank you,” to know whether or not it mattered to them if I sent *Broken Toys*. There was little to do but overlook the faithless ones ... or reluctantly drop them from my mailing list.

Oddly, my insecurities only seemed to grow as the letter column expanded. Each issue’s locs were written by mainly by the same people, and I constantly worried, what would I do if they all stopped? Fortunately, they never did ... although I did notice that loccers tended to flourish for a few issues, and then fade out of the picture. Only Lloyd Penney seemed always to be there ... and I made a bit of a game of trying to publish the next issue quicker than he could respond to the last! I think I beat him once or twice.

Then there were those pesky FAAn awards. If that was any criterion of success, I seemed to be falling short. *Broken Toys* climbed the list of finalists, but never rose higher than second place, year after year. It did not escape my notice, either, that some winners had only begun publishing the same year they won their first award, or that they had no art or graphics to speak of, and that they had virtually one tone of voice throughout. I began thinking in terms of my finely-tuned Porsche being beaten to the finish line by this or that commonplace Ford Cortina. But that’s territory I don’t want to explore very deeply. People like what they like ... and, truth be told, my likes are not that dissimilar. But I was looking for justifications for the growing investment of my energies, and not finding them.

Eventually, I adopted a different point of view. If I can almost routinely come in second or third – despite being a bit of an outsider, and without paper copies – I must be doing good.

In fact, when I announced I was bringing *Broken Toys* to an end with this issue, my readers began to make it clear that they were going to miss the zine. Perhaps that’s the best measure of a fanzine’s success – does it leave a hole that no one can quite fill when it’s gone? It’s little satisfaction, though ... like taking pleasure from the people mourning at your funeral. There must be some more positive legacy of my fifty issues of *Broken Toys* than that!

As a matter of fact, *there is*. Whether or not *Broken Toys* is a job well done has to be measured in terms of my own growth, both as an editor and as a writer. From the four years I’ve spent trying to put on a good face for the readers, I’ve learned to temper my judgment, to consider other points of view, to moderate my statements, and to let my letter writers take the flack for saying outrageous things! Okay, that’s a bit a bit Machiavellian ... if not downright Nixonian. But learning how to maintain a public face is still a good thing, because the face is the mirror of

the soul ... and if you can appear calm and collected on the outside, perhaps you're growing calmer and more collected on the inside as well?

Of course, the correspondence course I've taken in the school of hard knocks over the last few years may also take some of the credit, if some of the rougher corners of my character have been worn a little smoother.

It's undeniable, though, that the regular habit of writing several thousand words every month has had a salutary effect on my skills. They say that before you can write well, you have to write a million words of crap, and I think I've piled it up at least that high at this point. It's not only a matter of improving my ear (which is still a bit untrustworthy, I'm the first to admit) – it's a matter of finding your own voice, knowing how to flesh out a scene with the details that bring it alive, recognizing the intangible shape of a story so that nothing is extraneous and nothing important is left out, and, finally, developing a notion that leaves the reader feeling he is just a little better informed to cope with the world than he was before! Anyone can put down one word after another on paper, and produce a linear narrative. The trick is to use your mastery of language to make reading a joy. *That's* what the million words of crap that came before was all about.

So, somewhere in the course of *Broken Toys*, I passed my millionth word – an accomplishment that has certainly given me the confidence and incentive, as well as the experience, to continue writing. For the sake of whatever is to come, that *has* to be worth four years of work!

Still, when all is said and done, there is only one question that matters ... *did* I entertain you?

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It's only been two days since I posted the last journal, but what the hell ... I didn't have anything to say in it, anyway. Now I've got something.

Last October I published a short story titled "Every Good Neighborhood Has One" in the Halloween issue of *Broken Toys*. I thought no more about it until a few days ago, when an editor on Facebook called for submissions to a Halloween anthology. I sent him the story from *Broken Toys*, and he's accepted it.

This will be the second short story of mine he's published.

Mind you, I have to qualify that boast. *The Yellow Booke* is a real publication – you can order it from Amazon for about \$12. But I have no doubt that few copies are sold, if only because Dark



Fantasy is not a hugely popular genre. The publisher says *The Yellow Booke* is a labour of love, intended to promote the authors, both past and present. He doesn't pay for published material. He can't even send a contributor's copy to the writers ... but offers free .pdf downloads from his inventory.

Unfortunately, I have no interest in his inventory, since I only *write* dark fantasy. Ironically, I don't read it and don't even enjoy the genre much.

The big exception is the turn-of-the-century writer, William Hope Hodgson, who was killed in the final weeks of fighting during WWI. He wrote a number of books, and created a sort of detective named Carnacki, who investigated supernatural events. The Carnacki stories were a hoot, so I wrote one of my own, set in the years after WWI, when the author was himself dead ... and referred to him indirectly as part of the haunting.

To my surprise, there seems to be an entire school of pastiche stories about Carnacki the Ghost-Finder. Here I thought I had done something unusual!

The story accepted for the Halloween volume of *The Yellow Booke* was entirely different, involving a boy who knew something about a haunted house, trick or treating, and a spirit who wasn't recognized for what she was. Unlike the Carnacki story, "Every Good Neighborhood" is a lighthearted story with little morbidity or grue.

Today, I got the news from the publisher that he was pleased to publish the story. His exact words were:

"I truly enjoyed your charming story! It is a cheeky but devotedly sentimental homage to my favorite holiday, and I deeply appreciate that you thought to submit it to *The Yellow Booke*; we *love* return authors, especially those who were well received in past editions, like you. If you are still willing, I would be honored to showcase your work on *TYB*, and I think it would make a charming addition to the stories we have so far collated. I've attached the contract for your perusal, and I send you my thanks and appreciation."

Boo-yah! But *The Yellow Booke* still pays no money, and I'll have to buy my own damn copy ... again.

As a footnote, I also sold a poem, "The Devil's Riddle," to a start-up Internet magazine for \$5, but the publication is so obscure that it would take promotion just to raise public awareness to zero. I almost can't bring myself to add it to my resumé.

Robert J. Sawyer needn't have any concern that he might have to move over – I won't be awarded the Order of Canada in *this* lifetime.

[]



Throughout my adult life, my home furnishings have been dragged in from the curb, or cast-offs given to me by friends, or Christmas gifts from my family. I've used good money to buy new stereo equipment, computers, kitchen appliances, my old walker, even an air conditioner ... but I can't remember when, if ever, I've cracked open my wallet and counted out bills to pay for a new piece of furniture. Looking at the prices in catalogs, I can scarcely believe that *anyone* does!

Yet I had finally come to that test of my maturity. Not only was the two-seat couch in my apartment tattered from years of Sailor Mew sharpening her nasty little claws on the woodwork, the cushions were threadbare and squashed thin, like sink sponges that were long past their prime. Underneath the non-functional cushions was the iron framework of a fold-out bed. Sitting on my couch was like relaxing on a torture rack with only a dust cloth over the shackles.

I tentatively planned to spend about \$200 ... a sum that seemed munificent to a lifestyle structured around buying beans from No-Frills and budget shoes from Payless. To my shock and horror, the couches in Ikea's catalog began at *more than twice* that!

My sister took me to the nearest store last year, before my birthday dinner, and not one couch or sofa was remotely what I was looking for. They were huge, like aircraft carriers on legs. I had only 77 inches of space into which to fit a new couch. A single inch more would result in major operations to move book cases in my apartment, a task I was not up to ... and that intuition told me could have no positive outcome. Then I noticed that Ikea's display models were all



fashionably uncomfortable. The cushions were so soft that I couldn't sit down without sinking too deep to get out without a rescuer's helping hand. The upright cushions were too far back also, making it impossible to sit upright. Finally, once I had stopped sinking, the armrests were up around my goddamn ears. What did the designers of these torture devices think I was, an orangutan? Not one of them was priced at less than \$500, either. Most were priced even higher.

I began searching the internet, instead. Yet it was my friend Steven who found a page that advertised exactly what I needed. A simple couch, 77 inches long or shorter, with a firm seat, straight back, cloth covering, space underneath to hide more books and *only* \$425 ... before taxes, of course. The company also offered free delivery! I leapt right on it.

My new couch was supposed to be delivered Thursday. I was fully prepared to be disappointed, and be stuck at home waiting for a delivery that might be days late. So – naturally – the couch came on *Wednesday*, while I was at a doctor's appointment. Fortunately, my neighbor across the hall took the parcel in, so that it was waiting for me when I returned home that afternoon. As I expected, the couch came disassembled in a box, and weighed only 70 pounds, so it wasn't too hard to drag across the hall and into my apartment.

At that point, you'd be forgiven if you thought my troubles were over. All I needed to do was open the box and put the pieces together, right? ... But *no*. Before I had enough room to do anything, I had to get my old couch out of the apartment, and, on close inspection, I saw at once that it was too solidly built to knock apart ... as I had speciously thought I could. It would have to be removed from the apartment *in one piece*. Looking at the dog-leg turn from my living room into the hall, I knew there was no way the old couch could just be slid along the floor. I remembered that to get the couch in, we had had to tip it up on one end. The old couch was no 70-pound lightweight like the new one, either. It concealed a foldout bed with a cast-iron frame that I could only guess weighed twice that much. It took all my strength to tip it up by myself – and then, first thing, the spring-loaded bed frame began to unfold! That's when I remembered that it had to be tied down. That done, I got the couch on its end again. In my condition, this was not easy to do alone. Getting it around a couple of corners and out into the hall was tricky, also – since I didn't want to push over any bookshelves by accident. I had nearly done that once before and *that* was once too often. The final hurdle to overcome was the threshold of the door. *Why are* those bloody half-inch raised strips there, anyway? The old mattress and cushions went out last of all ... bouncing off the opposite hall wall.

It seemed as though all I had to do then was remove the new couch from the box and put the empty carton out in the hall with the other garbage. I had already spoken of this to Winston, the building's maintenance guy, so that he knew to remove it all in the morning.

I was only able to do all this without collapsing by taking it in steps, resting a while before moving to the next step. But, at last I had the new couch assembled – a simple matter of screwing four legs on at the corners and placing four cushions where they belonged. The entire operation had taken a couple of hours, but as I looked down at the brand-new addition to my domestic environment, I felt a surge of pride. I had done it all myself, even though I thought I might have to wait until another day when I could have help.

Unexpectedly, well after eleven-thirty that night, there came a loud banging on my door. I got up to answer, wondering who it would be at this ungodly hour. All my friends were too old for that kind of shit anymore.

It was some angry woman I had never seen before. Down the hall where, the elevators were, I saw a man waiting with a bulky baby carriage. “What do you mean leaving all this junk out in the hall to make it hard for me to get by!” she nearly shouted at me. I was taken aback, since you don’t usually expect people to be taking their infants for a stroll this close to midnight. I said I was sorry, but I couldn’t take it out to the back of the building myself, since I was disabled. But I had arranged for the stuff to be removed in the morning, I added.

That didn’t seem to satisfy her one bit ... she *demand*ed that I haul all the shit back into my apartment, and keep it there until I could haul it away properly! If she was a resident of my building, she had to know perfectly well that there is nowhere you can keep an extra folding chair in these units, let alone an unwanted sofa. I reminded her once again that I was disabled, and couldn’t do this. Her answer was as unfeeling as it was logically correct – that if I gotten it out into the hall, I could get in back into the apartment. Clearly, what she meant was, “I *don’t care* if you have a stroke or heart attack, I’ve got a point to make, I’m going to make it, and *you’re* going to do as you’re told!”

At that point I suggested she phone the police, and shut the door.

I hate bitches. It has nothing to do with their gender, it’s their plain, self-centered *meaness*.

About twenty minutes later, there’s someone *else* banging on my door!

Goddamn it, I thought, she really *did* phone for the police! I peered through the peep-hole in the door, and sure enough there’s a very large dude in a blue shirt and bullet-proof vest.

It was not the actual police, however, but the building security guy, just doing his rounds. He was apologetic, but he too insisted that I had to drag everything back into my apartment. It was a fire hazard, he said. Once more, I explained that Winston was going to remove everything in the morning, but to no avail. It couldn’t wait another – by then – five or six hours; the fire regulations had to be obeyed that instant. Once again I mentioned my physical incapacity ... could he had least be of some assistance? No, sorry, he told me, but he had to stand aside, looking all-very-important-and-everything, and watch while I obeyed the law.

He wasn’t unfriendly, I’ll give him that. He really did sound sorry that I might do myself an injury, but ... what could he do? All the while I struggled with the couch and bed frame to drag it back into my apartment, like a hermit crab backing into its shell, he stood there looking quite concerned, actually. He repeated solicitously, “take your time,” and “don’t hurt yourself,” but fat lot of good his guilty conscience did me. At least, at the last moment, he did hold the door during a critical moment when I didn’t have enough hands. Somehow, I spared him the necessity of leaving me unconscious on the floor by managing not to pass out from shortness of breath and overheating.

As he was leaving, the guard turned his head to tell me, “it’s for your own good, you know. In case there was a fire.” Apparently there had been one earlier this year in a city-owned building, in which a hallway had been blocked. A couple of people had died of smoke inhalation, leading to a big lawsuit against the city. As far as I know, that had been the first time anything like it had happened, and in any case the fire marshal’s instructions are not to rush into the hall,

anyway, but to stay in your apartment and await rescue. Meanwhile, I would have a helluva time getting around Traveling Matt, my powered chair, the junked couch and the large empty box all crammed into my hall, *should* a fire actually force me out of my apartment.

Yes, I can just see how *that* wouldn't be any kind of fire hazard. But it was all for my own good, right?

As promised, Winston came by the next morning and helped me move everything for a third time. He had a large dolly to wheel the old couch down to the dumpster, and out of my life.

There are times when I just despise people who put their "it's for your own good" rationale ahead of everyone else's actual good. Thank you, Winston, for renewing my faith in human beings.

I just wish I had had more time to sit in my new couch in the hectic days that followed ... but those are stories for another time.

## If it's Saturday, it Must be the TAFF Party

I wasn't sure if I wanted to go or not, but the TAFF winner was swinging through Toronto again this year, and, as seems to have become a "tradition" for at least the previous three years, there was a party at the home of Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz. It was the mild weather and lack of any pressing business that decided me. This year's winner, Anna Raftery, was not someone I knew anything about – I had read that she was big on filk-singing ... which led me to arrive late on purpose, *after* the sing-along was over. Unfortunately, I never met Raftery *at all* that night. I believe she may have been upstairs when I first arrived, but later I spotted a magenta-haired woman at the very back of the other room, who I thought might be her. Catherine later confirmed that it was. The problem for me was that I was more or less trapped in a seat in the front room that wasn't close enough to the couch to participate in conversation there, so that for all intents and purposes I wasn't *in* the front room. The back room was more or less off limits to me except to grab a little food and drink, because my physical condition precludes milling around or standing still to join in conversations. I'm good for a couple of minutes, but then I *must* sit ... and there were no chairs. Raftery never came into the front room, so that was that. Ironically, the TAFF winner this year was virtually without fanzine credentials that I knew of ... nor did she meet much of Toronto's active fanzine fandom. I saw Murray Moore sitting quietly in a corner of the front room, about as far away from me as possible. I don't know if Murray ever spoke to Anna Raftery. The Penneys weren't there, and both the Soltyses were absent as well. Not even Hope Leibowitz was present. Taken together, they and I constitute the currently active fanzine fandom in this city, and it would appear that, perhaps apart from Murray, Raftery met none of us. If so, the TAFF winner neither was a fanzine fan, nor met any active ones while in Toronto ... a curious detail I don't know how I feel about, given the original purpose of the fund. However, times have changed fandom, and I suppose are changing TAFF as well. I did have a pleasant conversation with Shirley Meier, mostly about various new ways to publish, and how that blurs the distinction between professionals and amateurs. For much of the time, though, I sat on the margins of other conversations, unable to participate, so after about an hour-and-a-half, I made my farewells to Colin and regretfully left the party. It was a lovely night to be out with Traveling Matt.



The camera follows Gobo Fraggles through a tunnel and into the Great Hall, where the multitudes of happy Fraggles dance and sing.

Isn't that what Fraggleshood is all about? Dancing? Singing? An endless celebration of the joy of life from the moment you wake until you drift off to sleep at the end of the day?

Clearly the Fraggles believe so. From Cantus the Minstrel on down, Fraggles make statements such as "music is life," or "we are the song" with monotonous regularity. It has even shown to be literally true, in episodes where for one reason or another the Fraggles have stopped singing and playing, and the Rock slowly began to grind to a still and silent stop!

Darl is a character about whom I've written twice so far, and have made notes for future stories. He has come to live in Fraggles Rock from "Outer Space" – our world. For him, the greatest challenge of fitting into life in the Rock is song ... because Darl *cannot* sing! Not a note. And since song accompanies almost every aspect of Fraggles life, Darl's inability to sing is plainly a liability of a major order. Other Fraggles look at him oddly, and some go so far as to say he cannot be a true Fraggles after all. Cantus is visibly annoyed by Darl's repeated assertions that he not only cannot sing, he will not even *try*.

This problem has not been worked out in the two stories I have written. In fact, it has not really been introduced as an important issue yet. But I have four or five other stories loosely sketched out, and the matter *will* be explored at the appropriate time.

By now, assiduous readers – I'm assuming *some* of you didn't just turn up your noses at the two published stories – will have had the suspicion that Darl and I are one and the same. I've denied it, but maybe it's time to be fully honest. It's *half-true* that I am Darl, because many of the circumstances of his life at the time he becomes a Fraggles *do* mirror my own. All the same, there are differences, too. He



has led a fairly different life than mine. As well, the issue of whether I am him, or he is me, is essentially irrelevant. The stories stand on their own merits. However, there is no denying that the underlying issue – of how a misfit fits into a society he desperately wants to belong to, and whether this is even something he *ought* to desire – are highly relevant to my own experience.

Yes. Stories set in the imaginative world of a children's television puppet show *can* have serious themes, and yet not violate the essential innocence and flights of fancy of the original. But, then, *Fraggle Rock* was itself like that. It was a children's show in which illness and death struck, where loss and gain were a fact of life even among creatures who led an otherwise idyllic life of music and play. *Fraggle Rock* could never be dismissed along with the likes of a *Care Bears* or *Pokemon*.

Here's the rub: while the stories I write may explore Darl's place in his new life, I am myself as total odds with the *Fraggle* world. I don't think I could tolerate life among *Fraggles* for as long as five minutes before I would heft the nearest heavy stone and brain the nearest furry little singing bugger. Don't get me wrong: I love music. I have collected it on vinyl and CD for years, and must have several hundred disks. What I don't like is *amateur* music. At conventions, I've avoided filk-sings like a virulent plague, nor have I ever formed a taste for all that ersatz Celtic folk music to which fans have a – to me – inexplicable attachment. I mean... why *Celtic*? What has Irish got to do with anything? My disapproval of home-made music isn't limited to science fiction fandom, either. I recall a monthly party I attended, quite a few years ago. For two or three months, a small number of self-styled musicians had been turning up and sequestering the front room. One would plug in his electronic keyboard, another set up his bongo drums, and next thing you knew they were performing loud enough to obstruct conversations everywhere. Even in the back room, working my way through the cheese and chips laid out on the table, it was too often difficult to make out anything other people were saying. After two or three months of that, I lost my temper and shouted into the other room, "Shut the hell up, will you, we can't hear ourselves talk!"

Dead silence followed ... which was fine with me. I don't think they came to the next party, either.

I didn't feel at all badly about this. In fact, I felt entirely justified, even though it wasn't my party to be laying down the law. Making a din like that without asking if it was all right with the host was as much of a presumption, surely, as my outburst of temper? Well ... I was never reprimanded for it.

I myself never sing, and cannot play musical spoons, much less any sort of instrument. More than once I've wondered why that was. In my youth, I don't think I had any such inhibitions. Quite the contrary, I remember sometimes singing as a child, carried away with the sort of exuberance we tend to become strangers to as we grow older. Yet there is a memory that sticks in my mind like the poisoned dart in the neck of Batholomew Sholto!

I was quite young, still of an age where children were taken to drive-in movies in their pajamas by their parents. That way, when the child grew weary of watching Richard Burton's Antony woo Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra on the big screen, he or she could quietly fall asleep in the back seat. What the film was that particular night, I have no idea, but obviously it didn't hold my attention, because I was sitting in the back seat with a blanket over my head, singing some damn thing or other to myself. Then, like a bolt from the blue, I suddenly felt incredibly foolish. I didn't know why. Worse, I didn't know why I had never felt foolish about singing before that moment. I clammed up instantly, and I have few memories of ever opening up my mouth in song again.

Worse, in those days it was a maxim among educators that children had to be persuaded, manipulated, shamed or strapped into an appreciation of a long list of things such as sports, languages, literature and music ... for their own good! Whatever psychic damage was done in the process of forcing some

foreign taste on the hapless child was considered a small price to pay. When I stopped singing, one of the earliest casualties of the school curriculum were the morning exercises, which then included a dispirited rendition of “God Save the Queen.” No matter how they threatened, I would not open my mouth. Not for teacher, nor for Queen – after all, *I* had never met the lady, and owed her not a note. Music classes went much the same. While everyone else sang like mismatched hatchlings in a nest, I clamped my lips shut so tightly that a tire iron would bend trying to open my mouth. Teachers would order me to sing and I’d squeeze shut all the harder. No mere teacher was going to defy my will! It didn’t help at all that all music in grade school was infantile, if not downright imbecilic. I still have painful memories of some inane Polish ditty whose words went, “Stodala stodala stodala pumpa, stodala pumpa, stodala pumpa pump pump pump.” That still makes me want to upchuck.

The day came when they tried to teach us to dance, too. After threats of dire punishment, they got me to move as though each foot was embedded in a pail of concrete and I was shackled to a corpse. I scowled at the miserable son of a bitch who demanded this humiliation as though I would gladly watch him being disemboweled with an axe. I probably would have done it myself!

To be fair, I treated my Phys Ed instructors with the same stubborn resistance. Nobody, but *nobody* was ever going to force me to do *anything* and expect me to like it! It didn’t matter whether it was “Flow Gently Sweet Afton” or touch football, their souls would burn in hell first.

Of course, if we have any sense at all, we re-examine ourselves as we grow up, and when I reached my twenties, I was pushing my boundaries in all sorts of directions. I discovered that I actually liked cheese, as long as it wasn’t processed slices or that orange powder on pre-packaged mac and cheese dinners. Then, I even began to drink alcohol, despite having dismissed it as the vile poison that had destroyed my family and alcoholic father. I did draw the line at pot – although in a room so full of haze it looked as though the sofa was smouldering, I suppose it hardly made a difference whether *I* smoking it or not.

Once or twice, I managed to overcome painful inhibitions to join in a song or two – and provoked only raucous laughter from certain people. For many reasons, those people are no longer counted among my friends ... but at the time it hurt, so any flickering spark of song was extinguished once and for all. I knew I never going to try to sing again.

Never? *Never* ... but if, in his stories, Darl can find his voice, so can I. I will never make a sound, but I have been slowly learning the lyrics to songs that make me feel glad to be alive, sad for what I’ve lost, or grateful for the rather amazing life I’ve had.

“Feel the water flowing,  
Feel it coming, feel it going,  
In the river, in the rain and in the sky.

“One day it’s an ocean,  
One day ice in motion,  
One day it’s a teardrop in your eye.

“Once I wasn’t here,  
And then I suddenly appeared,  
And now I seem to be at home in earth and air.  
“Just like water flowing,

I know where I’m going.  
Look beneath your boots and I’ll be there.

“It’s just a dream away.  
You’re got to leave to stay.  
We’ll meet again someday,  
Just a dream away.”

– “Gone But Not Forgotten,” *Fraggle Rock* ep. 90

I can sing them inside, to the only audience that will listen – myself. Maybe Darl and I are more alike than I want to admit. We both feel outside the charmed circles that other people seem to inhabit. We both lack the voice to claim membership in one. I still draw the line at listening to filk singers, though.

# ***ALL THINGS MUST PASS***

*THE MATTER WITH*

*FURRY CONS*



God must love artists ... because he made far too fucking many of us ... and so we “starve.” Maybe that just proves that God actually hates us. There was an old Islamic saying that “God destroys Christians by making more of them to destroy each other,” and in a somewhat similar fashion we artists all fight each other to make a buck. Of course, all this assumes there is such a thing as a god, which seems highly improbable to me on the evidence available. But God is as good a starting point as any.

Recently, I read the problem one old-timer had been having with getting a dealers’ table at the cons he attended. That reminded me of why I dropped out of Anthrocon, a long time ago. The concom switched from a first-come/first served policy to a “lottery.” Dealers could only submit a *request* for a table, to be informed later if their name had been drawn at random. Or so the concom said – in practice, such a system was prone to obvious abuse. How easy to grant tables preferentially, and only assign the rest according to the luck of the draw! Whether that was the case or not, I’m in no position to say, but you can hardly blame me for my suspicions.

For the dealer, the trouble with this approach is that you can’t plan your attendance around a *chance* you may have a table next year – not even a *good* chance. You may be depending on that income, which then becomes subject to a roll of the dice. You can’t buy airfare soon enough to get a good discount. You may not be able to reserve a hotel room far enough in advance to get the con rate. You can’t make plans to share a car or a room with others. To be blunt – you don’t know if you’ll be going to the con at all ... and even if you do, it will cost more and you may end up losing money.

Of course, to the concom, the reason people attend is because their con is such wonderful fun that anyone would be happy to be there, even without a chance to earn back the cost of going. From the point of view of a dealer, whether you enjoy the con or not is entirely beside the point. Few fans can afford to spend upwards of a thousand dollars for a fun weekend more than once or twice a year. If you live along the East Coast or in Southern California, you may have more options – there will be a larger number of local or regional conventions that are within a day’s drive, or a short rail trip. A bunch of fans can decide to attend at very much the last minute, and by sharing costs, spend only one or two hundred dollars each. But most dealers have to carry stock, filling trunk or van space, and need to travel to the more distant as well as near-by conventions.

This argument did nothing to dissuade the people who ran the con I had been attending from its very beginning. Having no choice, I put my name in the draw, and a couple of months before the next con I got a message that I wasn’t getting a table. They did offer the forlorn hope that a table might be vacated, and then eventually I was told I could have a half-table. Tsk. By then, I would be able to get no breaks in my

travel arrangements, and have had nobody to stay with. Furthermore, even a *full* table was rather small for my needs ... I couldn't imagine how to make do with half the space.

Of course, the reason the concom had given for such draconian measures was that there are too many artists, all of them wanting space to sell their name-tags and fill sketchbooks, and thus pay for their McMeals and their share of crash space. Unlike most fandoms, furry fandom seems to be almost half artists, and only the other half to buy what they create. What venue short of a major convention center could provide enough dealers' room space for so many eager new faces?

For that matter, where did all those furry artists come from? Partly from the growing phenomenon of role-playing, which is sweeping *all* fandoms as far as I can see, displacing older activities to one degree or another. But I suspect that the reputation that furry cons have as good art markets has drawn freelancers from everywhere. Fantasy and science fiction are becoming increasingly mainstream, and it is a rare artist who will not do elves, giants, unicorns, druids, kittens, dragons, warriors, aliens, wildlife or anthropomorphic characters to flog at as many shows as they can find. Furry fandom is still a bit far out for the mainstream, but as far as those starving freelancers out there are concerned, it's fair game.

The more I thought about it, the less I even *wanted* to go to the con. Typically, all the enjoyment came from the dealers' room. I saw everybody there, sooner or later, and spent most of the day talking with them. Once the dealers' room closed up, though, the hotel evacuated. Everyone was out to dinner, and unless I had made arrangements earlier, I was unable to find a dinner party to join. Often, I found myself going to the Big Boy or A&W with whatever other dealer was left in the room ... not always my first choice of companionship. More than once there was nobody, and there was nothing to do but sit around the lobby for a couple of hours, without dinner, waiting for people to return to the hotel.

Not that much happened after they returned from dinner, either. Unlike SF cons, furry cons I've attended have not offered much night-life. There were parties, but half of them were a group of youngsters sitting around the TV watching videos of *Tiny Toons* or some anime or other. That held no appeal for me, since I watched enough of the same crap at home. Now and then a few old hands would get together in a room to confab, but I often found those gatherings strangely boring. Some artists would sketch wordlessly in the corners, someone else would sew eyes onto a costume head, or count his inventory, and the rest would sit around and smirk while they made vaguely lewd jokes that led me to think they were all slightly drunk. Some nights, time dragged pretty badly. I'm not saying there were never any good parties, but they are hard to remember after fifteen years, while the number of times I wished I had been at home – instead of LA, Seattle, Memphis or Philadelphia – are easy to recall. When it became obvious that my business as a dealer had come to an end, I realized how little I actually enjoyed furry cons. Apart from the money, being a dealer was all there was in it for me. I didn't go to them for fun anymore.

I gather that a lot of other old-timers have had this same epiphany since I had mine. It's a pity. We artists, writers and dealers created this fandom, developed it, gave it its reason to be, and provided the draw for furry cons for many years. And now, anonymous panels tell us we are no longer needed. Our *money* is wanted, if we have any to spend as ordinary attendees, but otherwise we are anonymous faces in a line at the registration desk, meekly waiting for admittance.

Why did we ever create furry fandom, if only for it to be taken over by such ingrates?

But I guess all things have their time, and then pass. The early furry cons were what we wanted them to be, and if the fandom has evolved into something else – which it certainly has – they can't take away what we once had.

In fact, if us old poops were younger, we just might begin it all over again.





*Goin' Home Again...*

They say you can't go home again. I'll be testing that ancient bit of wisdom by rejoining *Rowrbrazzle*.

Back in 1984, I was one of the founding members, and I stayed with the apa until 1991. I dropped out after mailing #31. After so much time, it's a bit of a stretch to recall precisely what my reasons were. As best as I can recall, the cost was one factor. It was the year my mother died, and I moved from my home of 15 years to an apartment of my own in Parkdale, a neighborhood of Toronto down by the lakeshore ... about as far away from north Toronto's Willowdale as you can go without getting your feet wet! I adapted well, but those years were stressful in any number of ways, especially in learning how too make too few dollars stretch too far. Money for postage was not high on my priorities.

But that wasn't the whole story. Well before mailing #31, *Rowrbrazzle* had settled into a very deep rut, I thought. The delightful diversity of personalities and styles of the first dozen or so mailings gave way to a hard core of members who seemed to be permanent fixtures, but possessed few of the charms of the members who had dropped out. They seemed a thoroughly predictable lot, who submitted the same sort of thing mailing after mailing. The majority of the material – whether fan fiction or comic stories – was amateurish, and didn't interest me very much. New members, who might bring a breath of fresh air, were few and far between.

I managed to see a few mailings after that. I would be in California for a Conference, staying at Marc Schirmeister's Pasadena ranchero, and he'd have the latest mailing lying around for me to browse through. By then, Schirm had left off being the Official Editor, and Fred Patten had taken over. Schirm would grouch that Fred had changed Schirm's policies and was leading the apa to eventual ruin... Maybe Schirm was right, who knows? *'Brazzle* remained much as it was when I left, even while the numbers of the covers rose from the 30s, through 100 and well beyond. I think it began to lose more members, and shrink, some time in the 50s or 60s. The attrition went on a loooong time, though.

I did a cover for #93, I think, at Edd Vick's behest ... but the mailing was a mere shadow of *Rowrbrazzle's* former glory. This was after Fred Patten's stroke, and Edd was the interim editor. William Earl Haskell became the regular editor later, and minded the store for another few years. During that time, I got into the habit of contributing drawings, reviews or short articles to Edd's *'Brazzle* zine, *Pawz*.

Now Edd is the Official Editor again, and he is actively seeking new members. He asked if I would rejoin, and sent me a sample of the 129<sup>th</sup> mailing.

I have to admit to being underimpressed. The membership roll seemed to contain all the same indigestible lumps it had when I left, 25 years ago. It was not as thin as some mailings I had browsed through at Schirm's place, though, and Edd had found a couple of newbies for the waiting list. There was, therefore, the *faint* possibility of improvement. Furthermore, I hate refusing requests ... especially from an old friend and the past publisher of my comics. So I'm going home again ... if I can.

If not, I can always quit ... and try again after *another* 25 years.

# LEFT OVER PARTS 49

## SESSION 49 ON ISSUE 49

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**WAHF** Greg Giacobe, who questions calling a “love seat” a “couch.” Gregory Benford, who remarked that those KTF fanzine reviews often had a political bias as well. William Earl Haskell, reporting on conditions in the Sea of Texas. Steve Fahnstalk. Ian Maul, who thanks me for not adding his name to my delinquent list. The ever-humble Bruce Gillespie, who worries that he also belongs on my delinquent list, though, as an active publisher, this is not so. Steve Martin ... but not the famous comedian. A list of typos that were missed was submitted by Bill Burns, who has consented to preview the next issue to see that does not happen again. Claire Brialey, who promises to consider Very Seriously a real loc before the final issue ... and hopes that I am not giving up publishing entirely. (Fandom does not get off *that* easily!) Mark Manning asked what happens after issue 50. Time comes to a stop, of course. Teddy Harvia, who is keen not to be left off the mailing list before time comes to a stop. Daven Haren sent a rather puzzling summary of the first 11 issues and hints at more. I’m not sure if this is his way of making up for not responding ... but he wasn’t *on* the mailing list then! David Langford wrote to say there was no time for anything but “horrible old *Ansible*,” and complain that nobody responds to it. See? I’m not the only one who complains about lack of response!

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Eric Mayer / [groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com) – You do realize that you have at least three issues worth of good material here? And if you get three issues worth of comments your last issue may be even longer than you are threatening.

If I had kept to my original intentions of 16-to-20 page issues, I might well be up to issue 80 or 90 by now ... then I’d have felt obliged to press on to issue 100!

I am probably going to shortchange you on comments about your thoughtful article on fandom simply because I have too much to say on the subject. I could relate all of my own similar history but I’m just too tired of it right now. It’s a task I can’t face.

Like you, I regret wasting so much time on fannish nonsense. I wish I had dropped out of fandom after the first five or six enjoyable years. Or maybe it would have been better had I never stumbled on fandom at all, except then I would not have met my wife, Mary.

Even more so than you, I always held fandom at arms-length and, yes, that might well account for why fandom has held me at arms-length. I honestly have no use for cons. When Mary and I started having our mystery novels published, I went to two mystery conventions to appear on a pro panel. Admittedly I got a momentary thrill from wearing a pro nametag, but that faded fast. I could attend as many mystery cons as I wanted and be on as many panels as I wanted but the whole convention

experience doesn't appeal to me, not even if I'm there in the exalted position of a professional. And you know how far one gets in fandom with an attitude like that! As you say, the fanzine – which is what attracted me to fandom – is irrelevant today.

Your experience of sometimes getting along better and having more appreciation from people outside fandom than from fans rings a bell with me. As does your very accurate description: "I have found it to be full of an awful lot of disputatious, competitive, insecure, manipulative and judgmental people." Indeed, you are right. And I have not found these things to be generally true of other hobby groups with which I've associated. Absolutely none of those things could be said about any orienteering people I knew. In the realms of mini-comics and interactive fiction there may have been a few, but very few compared to fandom.

Maybe Danielle seemed impressed by your various artistic endeavors, because they are impressive. They are out of the ordinary. She recognized they represent a high level of achievement as things go in this world. Most "normal" people would. Only fans don't want to acknowledge achievement by anyone who isn't in with their in-crowd. Fans would rather tear people down.

I cannot go so far as to say that I regret having “wasted” so much time in fandom, or that I had not dropped out permanently after the “good times” were over. For one thing, I don't know just when that was. In fact, I think the “good times” were mixed in with a lot of “bad times,” and were intermittent even at the best of times. I had a good run from 1971 to 1977, for example. The early 1980s weren't too bad either. And things were positively buoyant when I renewed my interest in fandom in the late 1990s. I think my complaint is more that there I perceived unspoken limitations and missed opportunities in fandom – I might have spent at least some of the last 30 or 40 years pursuing some other line ... if I had found one. As it is, the things I might have done but never had the chance to do often weigh heavily on my mind. It is good, sometimes, to remind oneself of what one *has* achieved.

Something I might have added when talking about “disputatious, competitive, insecure, manipulative and judgmental people” in fandom is that when you write about them, you are in danger of describing what you see in a mirror. In all honesty, I've been no paragon of virtue myself, just because, perhaps, I have not played the game of fannish one-upmanship as well as certain others.

Which brings me to KTF reviews. We may differ a bit in our opinions on this subject. I never had any use for KTF reviews. I preferred that fans treat each other in a welcoming and friendly manner. Yes, even to the point of overlooking the shortcomings of their zines. Heck, if you want a brilliantly written magazine, read *The New Yorker*. Fanzines are – or were – supposed to be part of a friendly community. Give me one Gil Gaier in preference to a hundred Joseph Nicholases, or D Wests or Greg Pickersgills. Gil was a nice human being. Who outside of a few faanish twerps, thinks there's something wrong with that? Hey, what's so funny about peace love and understanding?

(Elvis Costello reference ... for those of you who are still lost in the 1960s and '70s, or didn't become hip until the Millennium.)

The KTF reviewers purported to hold fanzines up to supposed "standards." In the first place, this represented a total misunderstanding of what is important about any amateur effort, as opposed to commercial work. The beauty of fanzines is the freedom editors have to do exactly what they want without kowtowing to anyone else's idea of what a fanzine ought to be. KTF reviewers sought to gut fanzine fandom of the one major advantage it has over commercial publishing, the freedom to be entirely yourself.

Beyond that, the so-called "standards" the KTF Klowns espoused amounted to nothing more than that all fanzines should be like the fanzines they and their friends produced. Ridiculous.

But in truth, KTF reviews were not reviews. They were just an excuse for certain fans to act like adolescents, like members of a high school clique making fun of people who aren't in the clique, who aren't as clever as them. After all, every high school clique knows its members are more clever than anyone else. And, of course, since it was all an act and they weren't like that really, they could get away with being having their fun being immature assholes without taking responsibility.

Think about it. Did all the mockery and insults serve any critical purpose whatsoever? If the KTF reviewers' main aim had been criticism they could have made their points without all the ridicule. The ridicule, the making fun of others, showing off their own supposed superior cleverness, was pretty obviously the entire point.

Well, okay, to be fair maybe this was not their intent, maybe they were just so grossly inept and so blind to what they were doing that they had no idea what they were actually writing. I doubt it, because although their writing was pretty poor, it didn't display quite that level of blind incompetence.

I never found that bunch either clever or funny. I thought they were repulsive and laughable and ought to grow up. Unfortunately, as was so often the case, I was in disagreement with a large section of fandom. None of these guys was, or is, anywhere near as good at writing as they all like to think. Just because a bunch of buddies with the biggest mouths in fandom have been patting each other on the back for decades doesn't make them as brilliant as they pretend to be.

The beauty of fanzines may be that they are a form of self-expression that does not have to satisfy commercial or academic standards. By the same token, the beauty of fanzines is that I also don't have to read them. They may not have to be *The New Yorker* or *Atlantic*, but they do have to compete with those magazines (or any other reading matter) for my time and attention. Unfortunately, there are fanzines that are on approximately the same level as sitting on a park bench next to someone clearly senile, and listening to them babble ... in English heavily tainted by some unidentifiable language. Unless you have a special interest in dementia, why would you do it?

But I agree that the humane thing is to carefully avoid eye contact ... not seek street people out and engage them in conversations that are way over their heads, in a determined effort to publicly humiliate them. It *is* pointless, because if it was at all likely they would understand what you were saying, you wouldn't have to say it. Uplifting the Art of Fanzine Publishing is probably not an admissible motive for writing a Kill The Fucker-style review. It seems instead that the object of a KTF review is simply to entertain the reader. We *all* like reading attacks on odious public figures like Donald Trump ... but, unfortunately, the same vicarious thrill can be felt by watching the schoolyard bully beat up on the class dimwit. It takes a moment of introspection to realize the moral difference. One is righteous, intellectual honesty and the other the bloody-minded joy of sadism.

Rather than make grand pronouncements, though, I'd prefer to think the enthusiastic put-downs in fandom in the '70s was more a matter of forgetting context than of deliberately shot-gunning kittens that mewed off-key.

I used Gil Gaier to personify a particular style of fandom that was about as opposite the KTF mentality as it was possible to get. However, I am possibly less comfortable with it than I was with the bullying of certain



British fans in the 1970s. Gil was a very well-liked man, and his fanzine was popular. But something about it didn't suit me at all. While I see no value in rubbishing people who lack talent or high intelligence ... sincerity and openness are no substitute for them, either. I also recall the one time I met Gill, at some Worldcon, where he took me aside to ask a question I considered a little personal and rather inane that I can't bring myself to repeat. Touchy-feely can go too far!

Although there's much more in this issue, I reckon it is about time for me to shut up since I've already offended enough of your readers. I will note that your mention of Wonder Bread reminded me that it was a staple of my diet as a kind. Well, if you call it a "staple." I guess you'd perish pretty quickly on a diet of Wonder Bread and water. They were selling people a bag full of air. You could squash a huge loaf down into a tiny ball half the size of one's fist.

Yes, I readily see how that could be a selling point – the school lunch you carry in your pencil case! Don't like the flavour of bread? Don't worry, there's almost none in Wonder Bread!

I also wonder whether you have had results back from those sleep tests yet. I would never be able to sleep under such conditions.

I saw the relevant doctor on the 17<sup>th</sup> to hear the results. I suppose it was a foregone conclusion that his specialty was my sole salvation, and that I would have to use a CPAP machine. I'll deal with that elsewhere, but in brief I find the Infernal Device only made it hard to breath and impossible to sleep!

As for the FAAns...I've had my say and enough is enough.

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David Redd / [dave\\_redd@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_redd@hotmail.com) – Thanks for *BT49*. Meaty in size and content, I see. I've printed out your thoughts on Mars in film and fact for later perusal. Also some letters (pp. 19-25 and 29-30), although printing double-sided involved as much eyestrain as reading them fully on-screen would have. Oh well.

My occasional *BT* printouts, including these, will be joined by *BT50* (printing out the whole zine may be easier and more appropriate than doing several selections.) In other words, I'll have my very own "Best of Broken Toys" print anthology. Will have to seek out my longer staples. The result will be a sort of fannish AnthologyBuilder equivalent of the old musicassette mixtapes.

One of these days I hope to print out *Broken Toys* myself... I'd be curious to know what your selection for a "Best of" would be. I bet it would be very different from my personal choices.

Giving us personal news in a personalzine is fine, so your Aurora nomination news is fine too. Have no qualms. Congrats and good luck of course. But don't downgrade how you and your work appear to us! To me you're one of the High Achievers out there, not like me ... just hanging out on the fringes not actually doing anything.

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E.T. Bryan / [abpix.gremlin@verizon.net](mailto:abpix.gremlin@verizon.net) – "Clearly, the web is not meritocracy."

Taral makes some salient points about the "Facebook" entity. I agree of course. People with large followings can say the most mundane things and be rewarded with dozens if not hundreds of "likes." Not That There Is Anything Wrong With That, of course. As a not particularly social person, I was not that happy about venturing into the FB world. Doing so was based on information from a San Diego Comics Con panel which indicated that gathering fans on FaceBook was just a matter of posting something more or less clever every day and drawing the innocents into my webcomic parlor. Alas, experience has shown that it actually works the other way around. First comes the successful thing you do, then the "friends" who interact with you.

I've seen a lot of Names on FaceBook that neither post often nor anything very remarkable, yet have hundreds of followers, and even the most banal post will reap a bounty of comments.

Re: Neil DeGrasse Tyson. Not a big fan of celebrity scientists. I prefer the Richard Feynmans to the Carl Sagans. Both "celebrities," but for Feynman that is more an incidental annoyance rather than his goal. Like Tyson, Sagan will exaggerate scientific certainty for a "good cause," particularly one that gets publicity.

I view them as science popularizers, not scientists. Scientists study things and propose new ideas for evaluation by other scientists. Popularizers do not – they describe what scientists do, and have discovered, to other people, but do not do science themselves. One might as well call Michael Moore a politician. Science popularizing is a branch of media entertainment, of course, making someone like Neil DeGrasse Tyson more akin to Tom Hanks or Jim Carey than to Stephen Hawking. Of course, some scientists – such as Hawking – *do* also popularize science ... just not as show biz professionals.

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Steve Stiles / [stevecartoon2001@gmail.com](mailto:stevecartoon2001@gmail.com) – Sorry that you're down on fandom. Have I heard this story before? Seems familiar. The fandom I knew in New York is long gone, along with the fanzines and the people I knew who published them, wrote for them, drew for them (well, Moshe is still there, thankfully). No more of the club I once hosted, the Fanoclasts. No more of the New York I knew and loved – my old working class neighborhood is totally yuppified; I couldn't even afford a broom closet there. I toured Yorkville about five years ago and couldn't find a single store, or even a building, from the days of my youth. With New York, that's hardly surprising. And I'm now an old geezer so, after all, mine is truly an ancient history (excuse me while I chase some kids off the lawn).

My early life in fandom, begun in my teens, was a highly productive confidence-builder and helped to break me out of my introverted shell (big tip of the hat to the late Ella Parker, as well as the Lupoffs and the rest of the Fanoclasts), as well as to introduce me to different perspectives and thoughts that I wasn't exposed to when growing up in a conservative household – although I like to think I would've discovered a wider world than the Baptists' all on my own. (Jeez, if I *hadn't*, would I be voting for Donald Trump in November? I shudder to think.)

Moving to Baltimore in 1975 introduced me to a whole new set of friends and a different fandom that's now, once again, mostly vanished – people and clubs change, vanish or die. I still have a small core group of friends, but we see them much less frequently; perhaps this is an aspect of getting old. We did go to the 50<sup>th</sup> Balticon recently and saw a number of some vanished faces, and partied with

some newer ones. A young woman threatened to punch me out for my kidding her in a way she considered inappropriate – the newest generation, some of them, have gotten into a kind of PC that clashes with someone whose sensibilities were influenced by Lenny Bruce. We'll be going to another Worldcon, MidAmericon, for the first time in years. After that we'll be driving to Albuquerque for Bubonicon, partly to get more of a feel for that city and its fandom, because we hope to move there someday; that's kind of sobering, since the way things are going I'll probably be in my late seventies by then: will Elaine and I be able to make a whole new circle of friends and cope with a totally different environment in our old *old* age? It's a little scary, but also exciting.

Albuquerque? You want to move to Albuquerque? I understand why Linda and Ron Bushyager moved to Las Vegas – Linda loves gambling the way pigeons love old people on park benches. But why of all the cities in America would you and Elaine pick Albuquerque? It's full of... like ... you know... Republicans. Isn't it?

(Also, is there good rock & roll to be had in Albuquerque? One of the things that's changed in my later life is that few, if any, of my friends still share any excitement in listening to new music, while I still remain an avid fanatic and collector of indie pop and like that. Long gone are the days when friends would eagerly get together to listen to the latest Who album, or whatever. I miss those days.)

I remember hanging around Bob Wilson's apartment in The Annex neighborhood of downtown Toronto, when he was married to Janet. Two or three of us would sit in his tiny sliver of a room, where he wrote, listening to his earliest stereo set, deeply engaged in (and sometimes tittering at) Devo, Talking Heads, Steely Dan, Elvis Costello and other albums he had just discovered. Or sometimes a larger crowd would lie around the front room, which was much larger but not as fastidious, and listen to Yes or Steeleye Span. It wasn't all contemporary, but it was new to us, and I felt an urgency to listen to the records for the first time that I haven't felt about music since. What changed? Well, partly my experience of music grew much broader over time – though rather slowly, I admit. Music was never first nature to me. But also the opportunity to listen to it in a social context vanished – just how and why, I can't recall.

Anyway, good luck with the bankruptcy. I hope that Elaine and I will be financially secure in our last years, but who the hell knows these days? The politicians of both parties in this country don't seem to give a fuck-all as to what happens to the working and middle classes, since we don't line their pockets like the corporations do.

I was disappointed to read all the nits associated with *Gravity*; I enjoyed the film, but now that I know all the things that were wrong with the science in it I doubt if I'll get the same enjoyment out of that film if or when I re-watch it. Guess I'll stick to *Buckaroo Banzai* and like that.

It isn't the inaccuracies of *Gravity* that have deterred me from watching it a second time, it's the inevitability of everything that happens in it that makes it seem pointless to watch it again. It isn't so much a story as a wound-up clock that you observe while it winds down...

I do hope to see a Mars landing in my lifetime. The progress that SpaceX has made with vertical landings (just like the rocket ships of our youth!) is encouraging, as is the very existence of that company and the others who hope to make bucks in space. Syfy's *The Expanse* depicts a future of space commercialization, which is probably the only thing that will get humans out there – screw scientific research! Whether or not a colony on Mars will be sustainable remains to be seen; I wonder what life would be like for the first colonists: in one of Phil Dick's novels, the colonists had to be drafted and spent their free time drugged, using sets to imagine that they were living a normal suburban life back on earth. I suppose there'll be a lot of high-definition, even 3-D, sets depicting

seascapes, forests, and like that. And drugs. If I were a colonist I'd want the walls of my habitat or volcano tunnel painted blue or green – anything but red.

I didn't mention it, but I too anticipate that depression will be a serious problem with colonists, should anyone attempt to live on Mars. The entire planet is red, orange, rust, beige or, when you brush away the dust, neutral grey ... but, not only that, the light is dim and the horizon hazy. Living on Mars must be something like living in one of the famous LA smogs of the 1960s. Rather than windows, which might only add to the sense of oppression, you might find flat screen views from Earth on every wall – scenes from Paris, New York or London, forest views, stirring alpine landscapes, broad rivers and stormy seas, and blue skies with the dynamically changing topology of clouds for a start! They could be recorded, computer animated, or even live-streamed. It would be an easy way to distract colonists away from the basic question ... why did they ever choose to live here anyway?

I went through a period where I avoided any science fiction having to do with FTL, since there's very little fantasy, other than the tongue-in-cheek kind, that I care to read. I've been hearing, though, that there's a remote possibility that it might be possible to achieve faster than light travel without contradicting Einstein's speed limit. That is, of course, Michael Alcubierre's theory involving a so-called "warp bubble." I don't pretend to understand the physics, but while that's interesting enough, what's more interesting is that there are actually people at NASA who are researching Alcubierre's theory (at least they were in 2013). My own feeling is that chances of any kind of FTL drive being possible are slim to none, but it's exciting that even a slim possibility exists ... and who knows what can happen in the next hundred or so years? I had hoped to hear if Dr. Harold White's project at NASA was still ongoing, at a panel at Balticon, but that mostly dealt with asteroid mining. They briefly did mention the project Jim Benford is involved in, launching hundreds postage-stamp-sized probes at Alpha Centauri, propelled by lasers that would push them up to 20% of the speed of light. It would take about twenty years to get there, that is if the endeavor gets off the ground (heh).

I've read a bit about the warp bubble idea, and I can't say I understand the physics either, but mainly because nobody seems to explain it. The idea seems about as nebulous as a science fiction premise – if you can make a bubble in space, it is in effect its own universe and not subject to the laws of the rest of the universe. A spaceship can go FTL in the rest of the universe as long as it is not going FTL in its own universe. Where the idea falls down, of course, is that nobody has the least idea of how to make such a warp bubble. The best guess at the moment is that it would take "exotic matter" to create the conditions needed, but "exotic matter" seems to be a euphemism for "magic thing." Nobody knows what kind of exotic matter is needed, or if it exists.

The "Benford Project" on the other hand, sounds considerably more doable. One question is whether a postage-stamp sized probe can send a powerful enough signal back to be picked up by us. If not, what use is the attempt? I'd also like to hear a figure put on how powerful the laser beams would have to be, but if it's only something like an order of magnitude greater than some of the military missile-killing lasers that have been developed, I'd like to see this idea pursued. On the other hand, if we're talking about lasers that will cause global brown-outs for weeks at a time, then this idea is as preposterous as the "warp bubble" FTL drive.

Amused by your letter column comment about *Apollo Sulked*.

For those of you who have forgotten, *Apollo Sulked* is the "lost" Ayn Rand manuscript about the artists and writers of the world who go on strike, only to discover that nobody needs them. I'm still looking for a publisher...



Apologies that this is brief; that script that I've been waiting for forever has finally arrived and I'm plunged back into the world of professional freelance comic work – long hours, little pay. I've penciled ten pages and inked five of them. Then I insert the copy and clean up the pages, then add tone. Only about 180 pages left to go. So I'm putting in six-day work weeks. Will I be a success or will I be a flop on this, my comic book Last Hurrah? Will I live long to finish the damned thing? And now I must go and feed the next-door neighbor's cats.

190 pages? If you aren't being paid at least \$19,000 for this massive effort, I hope there is some other compelling reason for doing it ... such as the life-long desire to do the ultimate *My Little Pony/Spiderman/Lord of the Rings* crossover.

[Later e-mail]

[Moving to Albuquerque is] partly a health issue of Elaine's; she has had a cough for decades and the humidity of Maryland isn't helping. Albuquerque is, as you know, *dry*.

She also has a thing for the Southwest. I think it would be interesting, in the last years of my life, to move to a totally different environment, as I did when I left New York to Maryland. There is a certain beauty to Albuquerque/Santa Fe, and lots of museums. I think I'd like to get into studying the flora and fauna, which is more than I've done here – it was only last week that I bothered to find out that two of the trees in our backyard are beech and sycamore.

I like the desert and mountains a lot ... but of course you have to be mobile enough to venture out of the city. Hardly any point to living in the Southwest if you never leave the urban environment.

There's a thriving fandom in Albuquerque (I think). We're going to Bubonicon to check it out. Met two local fans when we were last there & liked them. There's also a scattering of friends from N.Y. & Baltimore in New Mexico, and there's George & Parris. However, it's somewhat daunting to try to make new friends in our old age.

I know there are furies there, but I hardly think those are the people you're looking to make friends with. One thing you didn't mention that the Southwest also has ... Indians who look like and live like Indians. We have those too ... assuming trailer housing, pick-up trucks and satellite dishes are part of the traditional lifestyle. But the Whites who live around them aren't any different.

Of course, I don't know how much of this is feasible; it may take a long time to sell our house. We're still working on improvements on this one, and I'm tied down with this damned graphic novel (which I *\*must\** start working on soon today). When I signed the contract, I thought I'd be finished at the end of 2015. Later I revised it to March 2016—ha! Didn't get the revised script for chapter one until mid-April. This is insane; how am I supposed to pack, move, set up again, when I'll probably still be working on the accursed thing? I hadn't counted on everybody involved in the project being so ridiculously slow (of course, I fully expect them to start bugging *\*me\** to speed it up—it takes a long time to layout, set type, pencil, ink, insert type, clean up & add tone in Photoshop). Break time before going to lunch. Afterwards we're going to see a movie called *The Lobster*. Sounds like surreal science fiction.

Today's work is going amazingly fast; inked over half a page in a few hours. I switched to mostly brushes, which was more of a help than I thought. With today's poor quality paper—the old standby Strathmore Bristol is like blotting paper – it's getting hard to ink with pens.

These days I just pencil, and use Photoshop to make it look inked. I used to think it mattered what happened to the original art, but now all that seems to matter is how it looks when digitized ... and only for as long as it takes for the viewer to move on.

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Philip Turner / [farrago2@lineone.net](mailto:farrago2@lineone.net) – Best of luck with your bankruptcy attempt. It's going to be a big upheaval.

My parents had a couple of bread machines (in succession rather than in parallel, of course) but the product was never as good as the bread which my mother made by hand. As someone who was let into the secret of that process, the actual "doing things" time isn't all that great if you use a Kenwood mixer with the dough hook in place to bash the mixture around. When that's done, you just have to divide it up and put it in the tins, then you can go and do other things whilst the dough rises. Then you just bung it into the oven and wait for the timer to go.

I was impressed by your repair technique for your clogged-up bread maker; that you had the good sense to tell yourself that it couldn't get any more broken and useless than the state which it had achieved, and so what the hell?

I'm still waiting for *The Martian* to be shown on TV. And not in any great hurry to see it, as I just knew it had to have been hyped out of sight. And hasn't it all been done before? Robinson Crusoe, published in 1719?

If being done before was ever a consideration, why have there been seven *Star Wars* movies?

You are dead right about the technology for getting to Mars. *Martian Land* (2015), the "mockbuster" for *The Martian*, had humanity going there in space shuttles! But until we can get there in a few days, or even one day, there's not much point in going. After all, would you want to wait 4 or 5 years for a replacement if the expedition's bread machine croaks? Then there's the gravity thing. Stay there too long and you won't be able to come back because your body won't take Earth's gravity.

I also live in an earthquake zone. The Great Romiley Earthquake of 1984 gave my mother a real shock when she saw my father's set of Encyclopaedia Britannica *rippling* in their bookcase. A lunchtime earthquake in 2002 obliged my father to leap to save a saucepan of soup, which was skating across the cooker, and it made my mother wonder if her gas-lift typing chair was about to collapse. Having retired late, I was still awake for the earthquake at 1 a.m. in February of 2008 and able to enjoy it. It lasted long enough to get my father worried about being shaken out of bed. My mother, however, slept right through it; but she was woken up by the Manchester earthquake in December 1944.

I have honestly never heard that there were earthquakes of any size in the United Kingdom ... Surely any decent football riot must outrank them on the Richter Scale?

I bet you're living in fear and trembling of spilling something on that new couch!

No... for that I would need visitors. What worries me more is that I might get a cat ... with claws!

Go to a sleep lab and what can you be certain won't happen? That you'll get to sleep. That the way the Universe works. (Or doesn't work.)

Just as well *BT #50* will be a PDF if you're planning 100 pages!

There's a big difference between what I plan and *might* happen ... despite my best efforts not to go overboard.

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Ron Kasman / [ron.kasman@gmail.com](mailto:ron.kasman@gmail.com) – I too have a bread maker. I use it all the time.

Thanks for the mention of my graphic novel. It is finished now and, piece by piece, is going off to the publisher, Caliber Entertainment.

Congrats on all your good fortune with fandom. I, too, have lamented the shift in comics fandom. Conventions are now 90-to-95% related junk, not comics. Meanwhile, the comic book dealers price their comics like they are gold. All in all, there is nothing there I want to buy. I am older than almost anyone at these conventions, and my interests are not their interests. I used to get a free pass and sometimes free food and a table. Now I get to line up with everyone else and pay a hundred dollars for the weekend. I understand why that has happened – there are good reasons. But the consequence is I don't attend these things anymore.

I was a guest at the Niagara Falls comic convention last weekend. I was on a panel about early Canadian fandom. There were five of us. There was an audience of about 25. That was OK. The preceding audience in that room was 2. I felt like I had done something important. I told that audience that I had actually done something very important, and I believe that to be true. I was part of about 500 people, almost all young men like myself, who saved a dying industry by shifting it from a business to an art form through our purchases and enthusiasm. Today, the whole world are comic fans, although now through movies and video games. I told them that there are a larger percentage of people wearing superhero T-shirts down at the Falls than there were at the 1971 Comic Art convention, and noted that it was called the Comic ART convention, not the Comic BOOK convention.

Anyway, it doesn't take much to get me back into fandom. A free pass and some applause is plenty. I will not be going to the other conventions, though, until someone decides that I should be contacted and courted. I am not blind. I expect that to happen when hell freezes over. Until then, I will attend the conventions that have a \$5 admission, all sorts of junk at junk prices, and, not surprisingly, like-minded individuals in attendance. There actually are a lot of us out there.

It's not that I mind "related junk," but I've noticed that "related" is an infinitely elastic term. It can include blades, leather goods, overblown jewelry, novelty t-shirts and buttons, bobble-heads, audio-books, military gear, energy drinks, games, apps, smart phones, fishing lures, shiatsu and even tattoos. The only thing required to justify the dealer's presence seems to be that they read (or watch) science fiction. If you can bake muffins with Mr. Spock done up in icing, there's a place for you at the con!

The Old School fans are an aging and increasingly dying breed, though. No con can hope to survive long on *their* attendance ... but, like any parasite, cons seek to survive long after the host organism is dead. So as the faded tatters of the fannish tradition disseminate into mainstream culture, conventions become mainstream. In future it will hardly matter whether it is called a Renaissance Faire, a Science Fiction

convention, a multi-media event, a Burning Man or a Sotheby's auction, it will be all the same junk that you see everywhere else.

I noticed at Anticipation how little being the fan GoH really mattered to the vast majority of attendees. I was scheduled for maybe three or four program items that were very ill-attended. One of them was a "meet the artist" event for me and a number of other artists. Nobody visited my table at all ... in fact, I don't think it could be seen because the line-up for Randall Munroe stretched in front of me, blocking the view. Under the circumstances, it is perfectly natural if con committees no longer offer us old farts free memberships or other privileges.

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Bob Jennings / [fabficbks@aol.com](mailto:fabficbks@aol.com) – Received the email version of *Broken Toys* #49 a few days ago; thanks for same. The results of the FAAn awards and the Secret Letter of Predictions was vaguely interesting but I continue to be of the opinion that the whole process is pretty incestuous. I would also like to know exactly how many people cast ballots in this year's competition. My guess is: not very many at all.

About 40, apparently, which is actually a few up from last year. Still, I read so many comments like yours about the FAAns that I think they ought to be renamed "The Fan Award for Fans Who Take Fan Awards Seriously." As I recall, this was a bit of a problem back in the 1970s, as well, when they began.

You may be correct that the amount of interest in the awards across the width and breadth of fandom, or lack thereof, more properly stated, might be because so few people are aware of the whole process. On the other hand, I haven't seen any effort on the part of anybody connected with the awards to expand the process. If somebody had contacted me and said, "Hey, would you please run this blank ballot in your fanzines?", I would have been happy to do so. I can name a few other fanzines that would have been happy to run the ballot form as well, but nobody said anything to me, or any other faneds (that I know about anyway), so a potential for expanding the voter base was lost.

My point, again, is that if this is supposed to be some kind of award system that truly reflects what people who read fanzines feel are the best in those various categories, then some way needs to be found to make sure that people reading both print and electronic fanzines understand that there actually are awards, and that they, the readers, are truly invited to participate in the process. Right now, that just isn't true.

Ironically, in an effort to simplify the process for people, the final balloting step of the process was eliminated. Voters simply voted for whoever they wanted, not for a slate of finalists. But, yes, I suppose that the nominations form with the categories could have been sent directly to fanzine editors to include in their next issues. As it was, I may have been sent the form by Claire or another, or I may have copied it from *File 770* ... I forget.

But your point was that the form wasn't widely available. I'm not sure, though, if it was for the lack of the administrators trying, or the lack of interest among fanzine editors. Perhaps future administrators should take note of the suggestion that they go to eFanzines and send a copy of the nominations form, along with a cover letter, to each and every zine published over the previous year or so.

I read with considerably more interest your comments about fanzine reviews, and the British system of trashing faneds right and left back in ye olden days of the 1970s. I can't say I ever had a lot of



contact with UK fandom back in the 1970s, so if I ever encountered those vitriolic reviews, fan feud bombshells in the making, I really don't remember it. From your discussion, I think I didn't miss anything.

However I was fairly startled by your remarks about there being no real fanzine review columns out there any more. I find this remarkable because for the past four and a half years I have been writing in-depth fanzine reviews for *The Insider*, the St. Louis, MO fanzine produced by Michelle and Richard Zellich.

Clearly you have not encountered that fanzine, which is a print-only endeavor. I review print only fanzines, in some depth. The print size is small, the margins are tight—1/2 inch on all sides. My latest column, which will appear in the upcoming issue, is eight pages long, and I do a lot more than just list who the editor is and what the contents are.

*The Insider* is available for The Usual: trades, LOCs, art or written material sent in that they print. A sample copy is sent out to anybody who requests it. Contact Michelle at [michelle@zellich.net](mailto:michelle@zellich.net).

Clearly, I've never encountered this fanzine or I would have stood a fair chance of remembering a regular fanzine review column. (No guarantees, mind you.) I don't recall seeing it posted at eFanzines ... proving the value of a central clearing house for zines, and the foolishness of not being represented there. I think it a good guess that Michelle doesn't download from eFanzines, either, or she might have encountered *Broken Toys* (as well as many other zines) that aren't published on paper.

At this point, staying in touch with a fanzine that is only available on paper would be somewhat problematic, unless the editor considers digital zines a fair trade. If they are not, all that remains is contrib or loc, and my time is limited. It is rare I find anything to loc about in some zines, too, particularly those that take the "science fiction" part of "science fiction fandom" seriously.

I suppose I should not be too surprised that you are not aware of this fanzine. It seems for the past few years, maybe longer, you have tried to confine your fandom contacts to a relatively close circle of friends. If you refuse to explore beyond the boundaries of the tried and familiar you miss out on a lot of what's happening in the world, including our little hobby. Of course you keep saying you are trying to wean yourself away from SF fandom, so maybe this is all just part of the process. Reading some of your opening comments about augmentative, opinionated fans and fruitless discussions, I am not surprised. Fandom is a hobby; it's not something worth developing ulcers over, or losing any sleep about. It is also relatively easy to avoid people who are irritating, or disagreeable. Life is too short to put up with jerks. In fandom, is it pretty easy to step around them or avoid contact with those people entirely, something you should have discovered a long time ago.

My tastes in fanzines leans heavily toward "fannish" zines, and always has. Probably more so now than ever ... though my definition of "fannish" would probably not match everyone's. Maybe "eclectic" is a better word, since accounts of pub-crawling appeal to me about as much as book reviews. The fact is, I don't really belong to any in-group or clique, so in-groupishness, per se, is not an option for me. If you were to examine my mailing list – a flexible 200 or so – maybe two dozen of them are close friends. The rest are a random mix of old fans and new, comics types, furies, artists, and people I've met on FaceBook or Deviant Art. I'll send *Broken Toys* to *anyone* I can get an address for. Why not? It doesn't cost postage? In a way, that's the trouble. Way too many of my readers are *not* familiar with the old formulas of fanzine fandom ... even if they know about other kinds of fanzines. Some never show a sign they have any interest in *Broken Toys*, so after a few issues I delete their addies. Two or three have told me directly they don't want to receive more issues. The majority never loc, and are plainly not inclined to vote for

awards. I don't even actually shun the editors of sercon zines of the sort I have no interest in myself. So, while I may write for an intimate audience, anyone is welcome to join the circle. And, sadly, the world is full of people who would far rather know about the final season of *Game of Thrones* then want to know about my broken bread machine.

But anyway, I suggest you try a sample copy of *The Insider*, and I would welcome your comments about my fanzine review column that appears there every issue.

Your adventures in bread-making almost made me want to go out and buy a bread-making machine myself.

Almost. Luckily I came to my senses before I headed out to the local WalMart. I like bread, whole-wheat bread, and some other non-whole varieties, but I don't eat that many sandwiches, and I also don't eat bread for breakfast. In fact, I almost don't eat breakfast at all.

I have never been hungry in the mornings after waking up. I realize this is contrary to natural science, and the behavior of 99.99% of all the human beings on the planet, but I have absolutely no appetite in the morning. On the other hand, fifteen or so years ago my regular doctor, one of those good doctors who not only knew what he was doing, but one who cared enough about his patients to take the time to talk to them, sat me down and explained that eating something for breakfast was absolutely essential to my health if I wanted to avoid recurring problems, keep my weight under control, and also maybe live more years into the future. Eat something, anything, he said. So, I trained myself to eat a bowl of dry cereal with milk and some juice every morning. I force myself to eat it. I'm usually not fully awake so it's not awful, but I could cheerfully skip the whole process if I were less health-conscious. I'm sure fresh hot bread made right there in your own kitchen is wonderful, but eating it in the morning, much less mixing the stuff in the morning, is something I know I would never do.

But I did greatly enjoy your essay about the trials and tribulations of replacing the trusty old sludge pot and making your own special home-brew bread again.

Truth be told, you don't sound like a good candidate for making your own bread. Unlike the store-bought variety, home-made bread has no preservatives, and should be eaten in three days or less. You can still eat it on the fourth day, or fifth. It won't begin sprouting penicillin mold, or anything. But on day four it will probably begin to dry out and acquire a somewhat crystalline texture, and the flavour will be moving fast in the direction of "stale."

Only one more issue of *Broken Toys*, huh? I wonder if anybody has started a betting pool yet on how long you stay out of the fanzine biz. You mention this time how much you enjoyed taking a month off from the pressure of turning out the mostly monthly *Broken Toys* issue. Well and good, but the urge to zine is part of the genetic makeup of many trufans, and you have it ingrained deep in your being. I know that if I don't get the bi-monthly issues of *Fadeaway* out on time I get an antsy feeling, and start rearranging things to get the issue completed and out. I give you five months, maybe four, before you are back again with another fanzine of some kind; maybe even a reincarnation of *Broken Toys*. In any event #50, promises to be a Big Deal. Hope you haven't set us up for a fall.

You mean my Special Two-Page Issue might be a disappointment? Not to worry. Nor is there any reason to think I'm giving up fanzine publication. As I've said *repeatedly*, I *will* publish again, but it will be something other than *Broken Toys*. It will all be explained in good time.

Milt Stevens / [miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net) In *Broken Toys* #49, you talk about your current feelings regarding fandom. They seem to be somewhere between disappointment and ennui. I feel something similar. The fandom I joined was a shabby bohemia. It was filled with clever people who were always thinking of clever things, because that's what people do in a shabby bohemia. Clever ideas were about all the fans of that era could afford.

Then things went wrong. We became successful. Lots of people showed up. Most of them weren't very interesting. They talked about politics. They talked about politics loudly. They seemed to feel that if they just adopted the right political opinions, someone might mistake them for being intelligent. It doesn't seem to work, but they don't seem to have any other ideas. I think they might continue talking politics to themselves even if we were to leave entirely.

*\*Whew!\* So it's not just me...*

I suppose *Broken Toys* #50 will be mostly letter column. It's hard to avoid letters to final issues becoming somewhat funereal. "I come not to praise *Broken Toys* but to bury it. The feuds fen have live after them, while the humor is oft interred with their file copies." Unfortunately, the number of people who are scheduling the final issues of their fanzines is very small. If the number was larger, greeting card companies could issue a line of cards with appropriate sentiments included.

Even if I get a bumper crop of letters for the final letter column, the issue will still be full of new material. So far, indications are that the letter column will reach record size, as long as most entire issues! I have about 30 pages as I write this, which is about how more than I've ever received for any issue. At this rate, I might have over 35 pages of locs by August! Since I plan to add 30 or more pages of new material, I think we can expect a 65-or-70 page issue! At this rate of growth, it's a good thing this is the final issue!

Fanzines having final issues isn't at all unusual. However, most fanzines don't announce they are folding before they do it. They just stop and slither off to wherever unpublished fanzines go. Oooh, that just started a tangent in my brain. Unpublished fanzines must go to the land of Real Soon Now. The place has a vast library of all the books people never got around to writing. It also is crawling with all the children of all the women guys never had the nerve to ask out on a date. This idea could easily become novel length.

*I think that place where all the children go who were never born because guys didn't ask women out for a date is Texas.*

Whew, I'm glad to be back from that tangent. I suppose I should say something profound, if I can think of anything profound. Profound thoughts have a way of not showing up when you want them, but I better say something anyway. I've really liked a number of the fiction pieces you have published. With all the spare time you will have acquired by not publishing *Broken Toys*, you should write more fiction.

Having more time to write fiction is, in fact, one of the benefits I hope to enjoy when I've retired *Broken Toys*. It would be nice if some of it were publishable, but I don't hold out much hope. The game is far too competitive, the advantage belongs entirely to those who conform to expectations, and who already have names in the field ... and, finally, the market has become unfamiliar. I don't have much of a clue what's going on any more.

Ray Palm / [raypalmx@gmail.com](mailto:raypalmx@gmail.com) – I enjoyed your article "To Sleep, Perchance to Snore..." about your sleep lab experience. A lot of it sounded familiar to me, from getting unattached from the wires so that you could take a leak to washing that goo out of your hair after the study was over. I wrote about my first eXperience on my blog way back in 2006: <http://xrayer.blogspot.com/2006/12/counting-electrodes-instead-of-sheep.html> . I've had two more studies since then. Each time I had trouble falling asleep.

It took me a long time to get used to sleeping with a CPAP unit. But once I was acclimated to it, I did get better sleep. Like you I'm also overweight, and was told by a doctor that if I shed the poundage it "might" take care of my sleep apnea.

Even before my sleep study, I began sleeping normally again... Ah well, I see the doctor in a few days, to find out what he thinks he's "discovered."

On the topic of zining: I never forced myself to publish on a regular schedule, like monthly. I write when I feel like it and have something to say. Even then it can be a chore, especially when the freakin' computer and the printer act up. I'm mainly digital now, but still have a handful of dead tree format readers. Even with a few snail mail readers, it's a pain when the printer jams or it decides on its own to print 100 copies of one page. Time spent screwing around with computers and printers is less time to research and write. As you can guess I get more than a little irked by it, and eXpress my displeasure vociferously. My neighbors must think I'm nuts, but I do get through the obstacles.

My earlier systems were a great vexation to me, precisely because they demanded I put in time and effort on something I had no interest in (the computer) instead of my real work. I began to wonder if it was likely that our future wasn't a utopia of liberated creativity, but instead a hell in which we did nothing but serve our own tools. Thankfully, my next system worked well, and problems were rare, and the Acer that I have now has been almost trouble-free.

Regarding your comments on SF fandom. I was really into comic books one time, attended a few conventions, but never got involved in the fandom aspect of it. I was also into SF but never got into that fandom. I do follow and comment on ufology/paranormal topics, but like with my other interests I remain on the fringe. I was struck by your observation that you relate to fandom at arms length. I can understand feeling like an outsider with outsiders.

Looking forward to your next (final?) issue.

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Joseph Nicholas / [excellenceingardening@gmail.com](mailto:excellenceingardening@gmail.com) – I was fascinated, and startled, to read that you were considering have yourself declared bankrupt in order to absolve yourself of your debts. Although you say that your creditors wouldn't be able to touch your disability payments, what would happen to all your stuff -- your accumulated books, comics, models, toys, old coins and whatnot? Wouldn't that be assessed for its capital value, and taken to be auctioned for the monies thereby generated to be applied against the debts? That is certainly the case under UK bankruptcy laws: here, a bankrupt can retain any items necessary for the pursuit of their job (such as tools and a vehicle), plus necessary household furniture and related items (although they may be required to replace them with cheaper items), but everything else has to be surrendered to the trustee administering the bankruptcy. Presumably the law in Canada is different, or you wouldn't be contemplating such an apparently drastic step.



Personal effects are exempted, and things like a cheap computer, TV, books, models, old fanzines and so on are considered personal ... mainly because they could not be sold for much, or without great trouble. Used books are extremely hard to sell, and raise pennies on the dollar at best. Model kits once built are worth nothing at all. And fanzine collections have no recognized value outside of fandom. If I'm wrong, and the trustees want to sell off toy cars and record albums in a desperate attempt to see that multi-billion-dollar banks don't miss a dime that's coming to them, I can always back out. It would be so nice, though, not to get two or three irksome calls from credit agencies on most days. I might even consider swapping my land line for a mobile phone. At present, why would I want to carry an instrument around with me that makes it easy to get regular nuisance calls?

Your mention-in-passing (in a response to Philip Turner) of the Avro Arrow prompted me to read further about it, but also reminded me of Britain's TSR2 strike bomber, another very-advanced-for-its-time aircraft that fell victim to rising costs, inter-service rivalries and rapidly changing political priorities. Like the Arrow, the TSR2 was developed and first flew at a time when missiles (theatre and strategic) were thought to have eclipsed the need for manned aircraft; like the Arrow, the airframes, tool jigs and engineering drawings were destroyed at speed once the Labour government of the day had taken the decision to terminate the project; like the Arrow, the speed and thoroughness (but not quite that thorough; there are two surviving airframes, with some components, in the Imperial War and RAF Museums) with which this destruction was effected has given rise to a number of conspiracy theories, most centering on a perceived need to suck up to (or appease, or pay back) the USA. (The Labour government did initially propose to buy American F111s as a replacement for the TSR2, but that fell victim to public spending cuts later in the 1960s.) But the fact is that the aircraft was having trouble meeting its design brief: increased weight, vibration problems with the engines and undercarriage, needing a longer take-off run, requiring a shortened combat radius – all contributed to its cancellation.

I'm somewhat familiar with the TSR2. Beautiful plane. It might have been worth pursuing, despite the cost overruns, since the UK planned instead to buy American F111s ... which themselves had plenty of development problems and were a disappointment. In the end, they were mostly repurposed to electronic countermeasures, reconnaissance and surveillance. A much cheaper, older plane could have done as well. I've seen a photo of a TSR2 (mockup or prototype airframe, I guess) in a British aerospace museum. It was sent to me by a RAF enlisted man, if that's the right term, who was himself struck by the resemblance of the TSR to the Arrow story. He was also into what is called "macro" art – female giants – so I Photoshopped his own shot of himself next to the plane ... making him loom over it.

There were plenty of conspiracy theories around the Arrow – both about how the jealous Yankees sabotaged a competitor to their own designs, and how one Arrow escaped the slaughter and remains hidden somewhere just like the King Under the Mountain. Unfortunately, there are more prosaic explanations. The Canadian Prime Minister also listened to the pundits who believed that manned air combat was a thing of the past. (Ironically, we may actually be approaching such an era.) The PM also distrusted big government projects that he saw as favouring the industrial east, and focused his policies on the small-town agricultural west. Better to close the AVRO factories and subsidize wheat! Canada got rich from wheat in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and would remain rich by selling grain to hungry Europe and Asia. Of course, he couldn't see what a stupid idea that was ... he was from the agricultural west himself, and overlooked the history of commodity prices going up and down like a yo-yo, responding to weather, transportation costs and global supply. In the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, economies that lived on commodities became impoverished, not rich. Anyway, there is some evidence that elements in the Pentagon were interested in buying the Arrow for the USAF, rather than suppressing it. And the hidden Arrow appears to have been the nose section of one that was hung in a barracks in an RCAF base for many years, and is now on display in the air and space museum in Ottawa.

But I'm pleased to say that I actually saw its maiden (test) flight. We were then living in the village of Porton, outside Salisbury in Wiltshire; my late father was then working at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment at Boscombe Down, also near Salisbury. (Boscombe Down is no relation whatever to Boscombe, a suburb of Bournemouth in Dorset.) The first flight was televised live, even though it took off an hour later than planned and my mother and I spent a lot of time just waiting for something to happen (this was a time when there was no daytime television at all – and thus no schedules to clear or other broadcasts to watch); but a few minutes into the flight we realised that if we went out into the garden we could see the thing for ourselves, in living colour rather than grainy monochrome. And there it was, proceeding slowly across the sky, with its undercarriage down, with a couple of Lightning chase planes following closely. A great sight. ("A triumph of British skill and engineering," or whatever plummy-voiced patriotic nonsense the BBC commentators of the day indulged in.) By sheer serendipity, in Australia earlier this year I met someone else of my own age who had also seen that first flight, and had emigrated from the UK a year or so afterwards because his father had been employed by the aircraft's manufacturers and had lost his job as a consequence of the TSR2's cancellation. Small bloody world, what?

To conclude, two corrections to your piece at British KTF fanzine reviewing of the 1970s. Firstly (the smaller correction), it is possible that what I wrote then may have been perceived from your side of the Atlantic as some sort of model of the style, but it did in fact originate with and was perfected by the Ratfans of the early 1970s, in particular Greg Pickersgill. Secondly (the bigger correction), that you have Rich Coad's nationality entirely wrong: he's an American by birth, who lived in London for a few years in the early 1970s and was associated with the Ratfans during that period. I am doubtless just one of 94\* people who has written to you to point out this second error.

\* 94. A Private Eye joke. Google will find it for you....

I appreciate the measured tones of your correction. I half expected bloody reprisals because of that article. I was honestly not away that Rich was a triple agent! And the Ratfan phenomenon was one that I saw only as shadowy figures moving in the dim recesses of British fandom. I do have a few Rat zines, at least one of Pickersgill's, but not enough to have formed a detailed outline of the group. Strangely, you are the first and so far only one to point out the Rich was American after all. But, although some letter writers are dependable to a fault, it is probably easier to get money out of most fans than a loc these days.

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Lloyd Penney / [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net) – Thank you for the penultimate *Broken Toys*, issue 49. I promise that when issue 50 arrives, you'll get a loc, even if there's no issue 51. With that, off to see what I can type up.

I wouldn't dream of wasting locs by not publishing them! Where to publish locs on issue 50 has been the question. I briefly considered an unannounced issue 51, that was only locs, but that wouldn't solve the problem completely. People would want to comment on the locs, and where would I publish *those* locs? The most sensible solution seems to be publishing locs on *Broken Toys 50* in *New Toy 4*... whenever that will be.

Yes, you were on the Aurora ballot, but as we are starting to realize with the Auroras, the fan Auroras are not for fans doing fannish things for other fans, but for fans doing fannish things for pros. The average Aurora voter may be an SF reader, but so many of them have no connection with fanzines, or even no connection with fandom as we know it. We mourn fandom's slow passing, and the fact we can't even get nominated for awards we'd won before is just another sign of that passing.

I'm hardly likely to be broken up by the outcome of the Auroras, whatever it may be. From the beginning I felt they were an unnecessary award, and, while the professional categories may have grown into usefulness, I don't think the fan categories ever did. Like it or not, Canadian fandom is an offshoot of American fandom, neither distinctive from it nor independent of it. There might as well have been awards for the best fanac of the year from the Bronx. Once you eliminate so much competition from the race, how much of an achievement is it to have won?

Yvonne and I do that every so often ... look at what we're doing, and see what we can stop doing or drop entirely to relieve the pressure if we're a little over-committed. With a little fanac review like that, that's when we decided to drop convention running, and to be honest, no regrets. Other activities may have to be slowed down, or stopped, in the next few years.

I guess fandom, or any other social group, is never quite what you want or need it to be, even in those halcyon days when you first discover it. "Disputatious, competitive, insecure, manipulative and judgmental" ... yes, that is humanity alright, and pretty typical these days. Two friends of mine, both former Toronto fans now living in Vancouver, have spent the last number of years, and far too much money, trying to get a renaissance faire going in the greater Vancouver area ... without much success, mostly because of people and entities who agree to provide services, either with a verbal or even written contract, and fail to complete the contract, often because they just don't feel like it. Small businesses have a helluva time doing business, and it's something I wouldn't want to have to do myself. Most people do not have a conscience telling them to do what they promised, and fandom isn't so different.

Yes, we find the social arena we like, and compete within it. I admit I haven't been too successful in that competition, but I prefer to chart what success I have had with friends and acquaintances along the way, and I've built friendships that will, I hope, last me the rest of my days. Finding other interests have expanded that tally of friends, and I have found there's the same politics and bad manners as in our fandom. Still, the good greatly outweighs the bad, and we carry on.

*"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." – F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby*

Bankruptcy doesn't sound good at all, but at age 65, you'd like some financial stability. Those proceedings may be what you need for a financial reset, and a decent retirement. Everyone could use someone like Danielle.

It will also simplify matters greatly if I can keep a bank account without fear of its contents being taken without warning. The cards who hold my debt don't care if I pay my rent or eat, and will take their money against my greater need without hesitation. It happened to me early on, and I haven't kept money in a bank since.

Homemade bread is great! A friend of my father's used to provide our family with homemade breads all the time, breads so moist and good, they were almost cake. I'd love to do that again, but right now, Yvonne and I have embraced a low-carb diet, and the pounds are happily falling off. We used to buy the baker's fog at the supermarket, but any bread we do have comes from the Dimpflemeier's Bakery outlet store just south of Kipling station. Even their white bread is of far better quality than anything from a supermarket. (Dufferin Mall is slowly gentrifying, where fashion is more important than everyday goods. We are north of Sherway Gardens, and it is gentrifying even more. That pleasant mall is slowly expanding into a behemoth, where there's dozens of clothing stores, but no place to

buy greeting cards, or things you'd expect people really need. We now usually go to Cloverdale Mall, much smaller, but very practical.)

I'm familiar with Dimpflemeier's bread – they make a good dark rye.

The slow changes at "Sufferin' Mall" are dismaying. How much fashion can people wear? Does the average person have closets and drawers stuffed with dozens of changes of clothes? Do they discard clothing before it's even broken in properly? The changes haven't been entirely for the worse, however, I've noticed that the HMV record store is back, so maybe the changes aren't irreversible.

I never saw *The Martian* ... still, I think the technology is mostly there, but will Uncle Moneybags to the south care to spend that money on research, or will he simply continue to line the pockets of the 1%, while cutting further back on scientific concerns? If they can send a man to the moon, why can't they send a man to the moon today? If we weren't so busy fighting useless wars, and the perceived constant threat of terrorists, where would we be today? Mars? Further? I usually say, Save the Planet!, It's the only one with chocolate...and coffee ... and bacon. You'd think most people would vote with their stomachs...

The simple answer is that they can't return to the moon because the hardware no longer exists, and they don't even remember how it's made. They appear to be relearning, but it will take time. The big aerospace companies also seem to have grown increasingly bureaucratic and stodgy. It's doubtful they can develop any project as quickly as they did Apollo-Saturn in the 1960s. Look at the F-35...

Hmmm...Brexit or Bretturn? As Canadians, we have found, I think, that you're better off together than apart, so I would vote for Bretturn, and stay in the EU. Even the threat of leaving has lost Britain a few billion pounds, so I think staying is the smarter choice. However, seeing the Brexit choice is manned by political half-wits and right-wing knobs, I would like to think that staying would win. I guess we will find out in the next couple of days.

I knew little about the issues at first, but have finally acquired a working understanding of them ... I think. My conclusion is *stay*. The Brexit argument is mostly based on faulty economics and bullshit immigration hysteria. The British should continue to use the Pound, however. Surrendering control of your central bank is not a good idea unless you want your interest rates and the value of your currency adjusted to suit someone else's needs. That's all academic, however, as the Brits have voted to leave.

The local ... I am slowly wrapping my head around the idea that I will have to severely weed my book collection, or perhaps give away my fanzine collection, in order to reduce what we'd have to move should we have to leave 24 Eva Road, which we can see doing as retirement beckons, as it did with John Nielsen-Hall. Seeing how little demand there is for books in any condition, I could offer them free at our local library, or simply dump them on a table and escape. Maybe at Ad Astra or any other local convention that isn't charging for the use of a table... Too Much Stuff is our problem, too, and at some point we will do something about it. I hope.

I gave a little thought to unloading books at SFContario or Ad Astra myself, but there are two problems. First, I can't carry more than one backpack full of books to give away. Then, I'm not willing to pony up the cost of a day pass so that I can give away books. Hell ... they should pay *me*! Hundreds of free books ought to be quite a draw for the con.

The generation that wanted to run cons is almost as old as the fanzine generation ... correct. We ran cons for 30 years, and that was enough, and all of the people we ran cons with are gone, and so are



many of our successors. Now, hotels and their function space are quite expensive, and starting a little con these days is quite prohibitive. (The comics/Dr.Who/anime/gaming fans of today try to start their own little one-day events, but can't get those off the ground because of costs. Those with some cash can get them started (there's a huge comic con in Niagara Falls now, recently went from one day to three), but a group I am familiar with tried to start something similar in Mississauga, and failed miserably.) Who stages cons these days? Large, international corporations with lots of cash to pay for huge hotels and convention centres, and for the guests that will attract those who want to attend. Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland can't put on a show any more...

Keith Soltys's loc: I was a full employee when I was mysteriously let go, and I would have lost my access to Employment Insurance if I hadn't told Service Canada that I was let go with two weeks' pay instead of notice, and I was never informed as to why I was let go. I think the company downsized to free up \$\$ for the extensive renovations they were doing to the building we were in.

My loc ... I did vote for the FAAn Awards, but Yvonne did not, feeling that she didn't know the field well enough to nominate/vote. That's how I feel about the Hugos and Auroras... I know the Aurora nomination period has started, but I am thinking of giving the whole thing a pass. I have found that Michael Ford is running to replace his late uncle in Etobicoke Ward 2, but even though he seems a decent fellow, his campaign is running some of the tricks that got Rob and Doug elected, tricks that may push other good candidates out of the way. Steven Baldassarra was at the last Third Monday, and I think we does come to get out of the house for a break, and a chat or several, and to be social.

The Fords seem intent on ruling over that ward as a family dynasty – that's enough reason to vote against Rob Ford's nephew, even if he was a saint. There should be no family fiefdoms in Canada.

KTF reviews ... I couldn't do it. If there were hundreds of fanzines around, perhaps I could be more critical. But, in this era where the fanzine is few and far between, every publication is a good one, IMHO. I wanted to get the word out, rather than be negative, and I figured that I wasn't a good reviewer, and so I shut it down. There are better critics than me out there, and you're right, it is a dirty job, with time I'd rather spend in the locol.

We are in the Age of the Twilight Zine.

I don't have sleep apnea problems ... most times, I don't have sleep. It's probably ultimately bad for me, but a decent night's sleep for me now requires two aspirins and a 10mg melatonin tablet. My doctor seems fine with that, so I guess the sleep justifies the pills. Wish I didn't have to, but I do.

My own sleep seems oddly sensitive to the weather. I suspect that the nicer it is outside, the more trouble I'll have getting to sleep at the end of my day. I have nothing but guesses about why this is.

Well, don't know what got me started on this huge loc, but I am pleased that I am well into the third page. Maybe it's the fact I've been drinking coffee all day, who knows? Anyway, I am done, and looking forward to issue 50. Make it as big as you wish, we will read it from e-cover to e-cover, and as said at the top, I will loc it as any other issue. Thank you for this one, and advance thanks for the final one. See you then.

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Paul Skelton / [paulskelton2@gmail.com](mailto:paulskelton2@gmail.com) – Have you noticed that in all pictures of bread made with a bread-maker, they never include the cross-section of the loaf that shows the

hole left by the paddle? Cas has 2 bread-makers (one inherited from her mother), but no longer bakes bread. She used to make a fairly dense bread which was perfect for toast or for eating with soup, but our local Sainsbury has an in-store bakery that does an excellent farmhouse multi-seeded, to which we are both partial, so it often became too much trouble to make our own. Plus of course that it simply wasn't cost-effective...mainly because we'd buy stuff in bulk, bake frequently, then not bake any bread for ages and discover the next time we tried that the dough hadn't risen properly because the yeast was too old, and the flour was also past its 'best before' date. So we'd bin everything, buy fresh ingredients, and then go through the same cycle again.

No, if you're only using half the makings and throwing the rest away, I guess it wouldn't be cost-effective. I'm not certain what my cost-per-loaf is, but think it is under \$1. That compares quite favorably with loaves in the supermarket that are often more than \$2 each. I can buy a loaf at the Dollarama for a single dollar, but it's not very nice. I only use it now and then to soak in egg and fry. It serves the purpose of soaking up egg well enough, and the bread cannot be tasted.

I've had three bread makers in all – the first two I wore out. You're right about the hole for the paddle, but the new machine leaves the smallest hole of all ... and the fresh loaves don't stick at all, and drag the paddle with them, as the old machines did. Then I'd have to wreak havoc on the bread to pry it out!

Now let me see if I've got this right – you have been publishing a zippy monthly fanzine titled *Broken Toys* for years now and you feel it's time for a change. You want to do something bigger and less frequent. And here is a bigger, less frequent fanzine and it's, er, wait ... *Broken Toys* 49.

There will be other changes which will become apparent in all good time.

So obviously what you are really fed up with is coming up with ideas for your cover masthead. But hang about; suddenly here you are going all coy and writing about fandom surviving without you ... and this despite Cas informing me the other day that you've already announced on Facebook that you've begun *Rat Sass* 1. Ah, I just asked her to check and noticed that it's for *Rowrbrazzle*, so I suppose it's a withdrawal into furry fandom then, and no replacement mainline zine (which is what I had foolishly been expecting). Well, I guess that, given that you are pretty damn good at the furry stuff, you are pretty much guaranteed to get the satisfaction from peer-group recognition in *Rowrbrazzle* that you have felt lacking from the response to *Broken Toys*.

*Rat Sass* is intended as only a *Rowrbrazzle* zine, for the monthly funny animal apa run now by Edd Vick. (Marc Schirmeister founded it way back in 1984!) With a little luck, Edd may breathe a bit of fresh air into the apa, and attract some of the older, more interesting members. It might be a pleasant way to renew some old ties. If not ... I can always drop out. I don't intend to cease publishing for the broader fandom, though. As I've said repeatedly, I intend to revive my previous personalzine, *New Toy*. There should be more detail about that in the editorial to this issue ... that I won't write until publication approaches.

At least your signing off wasn't exactly an *ASI* moment. Much of what you wrote in your editorial mirrors my own thoughts and sentiments, albeit sometimes with subtle differences. I've pulled out some extracts below to show what I mean...

*"No fan writer whose writing doesn't reach a vast audience on-line will be read, nor will his opinions be noted."*

Not quite so – your opinions are read and noted, just not by many people. Of course if the whole point behind expressing these opinions is to Change the Universe, then I guess it would amount to the same thing. Some of us, though, just like to \*grump\*.

I know I do. The squeaky door gets the oil, and all that.

*“The fanzine, in other words, is irrelevant to fandom today. As a medium, it is as dead as smoke signals.”*

Entirely agree. We are lungfish in a very small and drying pond...but I'll enjoy what I can while I can.

*“The fanzine as I knew it is a fading hobby pursued by a fading generation of older fans who form a closed circle that is gradually shrinking without hope of resurgence. Moreover, it shrinks unevenly, with tight knots of it maintaining a connectedness more typical of fanzine fandom thirty or forty years ago, while others struggle like lone swimmers in an empty sea – keeping their heads above water for now, but who is there to notice when they go under? Most of the time, I feel that I am one of those swimmers. I am holding my head up ... but no one is near enough to offer encouragement.”*

Sad, but true, I guess. I know I came late to *Broken Toys*, but I have enjoyed the issues you sent me and did indeed look forward to it each month. I will miss it. I guess the difference between us (well, one of them at any rate) is that you feel a need to matter, or make your life matter, in the greater scheme of things, whereas I've always assumed my existence has no cosmic importance, even unto the microcosmic level.

I've frequently been around highly egotistical and self-assertive people – in fact, that was my earliest experience of fandom – but have never had the temperament to sit back and let them have center stage all the time. They were too fascinating to just leave the scene, but I wanted my voice heard, too.

*“To this day, interacting with a fandom at arm's length has limited my relationship with it to words and pictures. I have many acquaintances in fandom, but few genuine friends.”*

You've described me to a 'T' there, albeit I can't even claim the pictures.

*“I think that my social distance can explain a great deal of my status as everyone's second or third choice ... but rarely anyone's first ... “*

Though I note in the FAAns voting breakdown you garnered 13 first place votes, 15 second place and only 16 in the third-thru-fifth, which doesn't quite tally with the sentiment above, but which seems to imply that the folks that like your stuff tend to like it a lot.

Yes, but say that in a flourish of snappy patter!

*“...for a lost TAFF and DUFF race, 11 lost Hugos and a suspicion of doors that never opened.*

*I don't want to end on that note, so let me state that I found genuine friends in fandom, have encountered very nice people through its auspices, and have little to complain about the place I occupy in it in 2016.”*

TAFF, DUFF, and Hugos are of course all big historic deals in the microcosm, and hence tough to lose I guess. Both Atom and Vinç tried to persuade me to stand for TAFF, saying you had to run at your peak of activity rather than wait until you felt 'worthy enough'. It was all about popularity. I could

never have handled all that ‘in-person’ stuff. Even now I tend to hide. Not to mention that I was never popular enough anyway.

I’ve noticed many winners tend to be at the height of their popularity, but not necessary “worthy” in the sense of a long and distinguished career as a top fan. If anything, this seems to be more pronounced in recent years than during the ‘70s and ‘80s. With all due respect to the winners, my usual reaction to hearing they had won TAFF or DUFF was, “who they hell is that?” And the fan Hugos are increasingly inaccessible as the voters fail to distinguish between fan activity and semiprofessional activity. I think we must put the Hugos out of mind as a lost cause.

FAANs and Auroras are of course small fry in comparison, but given your closing remarks the fact that even a shrinking fandom considered you to be one of the top 4 all-round fans must give some satisfaction, particularly as the FAANS are often cited as being controlled by a certain clique of which you do not consider yourself a part.

There are two sides to every life, I suppose. The successes and the failures ... the summation of which is made all the more difficult by the unknown variable that represents what was possible. And who can ever say what was possible?

I certainly have nothing to quibble with you regarding “Overselling the Dream.” I thought I had with your ...

*“Mankind’s Manifest Destiny never seems to take any other form than an American one – never one in which a Chinese or Indian flag flies over the first human Mars colony, or in which the lingua franca on Mars might be Arabic or Russian.”*

... given that I have (but have yet to read) Paul J. McAuley’s *Red Dust*, the blurb for which begins “Five hundred years after the Chinese terraformed the Red Planet...”, but a quick check on Google revealed he was an English SF writer and hence exempt from consideration as part of “the American Expansionist impulse” which you were discussing.

Bound to be exceptions, anyway. Didn’t they speak Portuguese in one of Poul Anderson’s space opera series? That’s almost as off-the-wall as a future in which everyone spoke Welsh.

I don’t know whether or not I’m a member of Eric Mayer’s ‘Corflu Clique.’ Cas and I attended the last two Corflu’s in this country and hope still to be alive to attend the next, whenever that might be. I have not attended, nor ever expect to attend, any Corflu in the US, due to simple financial considerations. (What I lose on the swings Lloyd Penney could gain on the roundabouts, as I understand there is a likely bid for Toronto in 2018). Nor do I vote for ‘best,’ but simply for the stuff that has given me the most enjoyment over the course of the year in question. I don’t think my opinion makes something ‘best’. Would any sane person? “We took this poll where around 40 people voted for the stuff they most enjoyed, for all manner of personal reasons and using around 40 different sets of criteria and the name that topped the poll in this particular category is...” is a bit wordy and windy and yes, it may not be correct to substitute the word ‘best’ as a shorthand for all that, but that is the way of the world, not just Corflu.

A Corflu bid for Toronto in 2018? Why does nobody tell me these things? Just when I persuade myself that I have some small part in the grand scheme of things, I find out I don’t. So, who’s putting on the bid this time, I wonder? Time to make a few phone calls and interrogate the usual suspects.



[What I've discovered is that while there was some talk of it at the last Corflu, no actual work has been done to mount a bid, so far ... but if a Toronto bid gets off the ground, I should hear about it.]

The idea that anyone could be best of anything is inherently inappropriate as a way to judge the arts. I think the desire to rank people in a simple linear way must be a hold-over from medieval jousting, where only one knight is left standing after all the rest have been beaten to the ground. But in reality, is Elvis better than Johnny Cash? Are bananas better than oranges? Is a Rotsler better than a Stiles? It all depends on what you want.

Your eagerness to make your point after Eric's *Sealed Envelope* caused you to get a bit careless. I wasn't aware Dan Steffan had become British for the duration of the 'Special Publication' category and I'm not sure that Bill Burns doesn't have dual nationality, given the length of time he's been living in the US. I certainly consider him to be a US fan these days. In fact, if you look at the names of the fans involved, that would make the transatlantic egoboo balance equal at 6-6, or 5.5-6.5 if we are splitting Bill down the middle (which I suspect he'd rather we didn't do).

Considering the respective sizes of the fandoms, that's still a remarkable outcome ... although maybe not so much, considering the respective sizes of the fanzine fandoms.

But, all in all, another fine, enjoyable issue. All that remains is now to look forward with regret to the final one.

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Walt Wentz / [wentzwalt@gmail.com](mailto:wentzwalt@gmail.com) – I happened to mention to Walt that the article on Mars in the last issue had drawn little response. What was odd about it was that "Overselling the Dream" was exactly the sort of thing I expect to excite the space cadets most ... but I apparently miscalculated. So Walt wrote back:

I tend to agree that such an expedition will be far in the future, if it ever occurs at all, and that a permanent "colony" is even more improbable. Mars would be a rather desperate gamble as an Ark for the preservation of Earthly species... for both plant and animal species would have to be carried along with humans to create even a temporarily viable human colony. And that colony would have to be located far enough underground to withstand solar storms and modest meteor strikes. (A moderate-to-large impact, of course, would probably destroy the colony, even if only by shock waves cracking the walls of the underground bubbles housing it).

As for power, either plutonium generators and/or truly huge solar arrays (which would have to be automatically cleared of dust) would be required... and both would require raw materials and massive infrastructure not available on Mars, and therefore finished components would have to be shipped from Earth.

Martian water ice is supposedly available underground, but no doubt is loaded with sand and salts that would have to be separated out and disposed of in huge slurry ponds... creating the sort of mess the coal and oil industries have bequeathed us here on Earth. And the fragile Martian crust might collapse over the cavities left below.

All in all, if men ever go to Mars to stay, I suspect it may be in the form of a few superior human minds transferred to AI robots, which would then be dumped onto the surface to wander about and

satisfy our curiosity at long range. How long such a disembodied human mind could remain sane under those circumstances might make a plot for an interesting novel.

Of course, even that distant possibility is dependent upon our species maintaining its sanity here on Earth. I will have to wait until after the elections to offer an opinion on that score.

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John Purcell / [askance73@gmail.com](mailto:askance73@gmail.com) – Well, it seems only right that I get a letter of comment off to you for inclusion in the last issue of *Broken Toys* that you're projecting to be out in August, if I'm reading your colophon header correctly.

...and you are, though I won't necessarily hold myself to it.

Seems to me that producing 50 issues of a fanzine is a damned fine run. You are rightly proud of your achievement, and to be nominated for the Aurora Award for fanzine is a fine honour. I have seen *Ecdysis* and *Warp*, which are fine in their own way, but I prefer the more eclectic, rambling contents of a fannish mind. The sercon stuff has its place, and that seems to be Canada. If I could vote for the Aurora, my choice would be *Broken Toys*. Your curmudgeonly tone sets it apart from the others. Serious and Constructive science fiction fanzines? Pshaw! Who needs them? Give me somebody who is willing to vent in an entertaining fashion.

But Canadian fandom *is* very sercon. Or rather, it *has* a sense of fun, but no sense of fandom for the sake of fandom – it's about science fiction. Nor do they have an appreciation of fandom's history. The fandom they know revolves almost entirely around conventions and the things they do at conventions, here and now. As far as Canadian fandom goes, *Ecdysis* and *Warp* are the fanzines they enjoy ... and deserve.

Speaking of venting, I am now accepting submissions of articles and artwork for *Shitgibbon: the Rant-thology*, which will be exactly what it says: a one-off fanzine in which fans can creatively rant and rave about whatever topic pulls their chain. Politics, Brexit, popular culture, smofs, poorly run sf conventions, the weather in France, warm beer, music, the Zika Olympic Games... Take your pick and have at it. My goal is to post it to [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) and mail it as a pdf directly to the fans in my address book; I might even print off contributor's copies. We shall see. Since I want it posted at least a week or so before election day (Nov. 8, 2016), the due date will be October 1st so I can have three weeks to assemble the beast. This gives people three months to put something together and ship it in. Here is hoping this can be done. It sounds like it would be a fun project.

An opportunity to behave like a raving, angry crank on a soapbox? Like normal, in fact? Who could resist?

So you've knocked some rough corners off your character over the years? Aw, what a shame! I would have used a Dremel. Much faster.

Yeah, the content in this penultimate issue is varied, which is to be expected. Bread-making, the feasibility of going to Mars, the Auroras, musings about your fan career: all are good topics. The letter column is once again fun reading, covering even more esoteric terrain. All in all, a good issue. Again, you should be proud of this problem-child fanzine. I think it has been very good for you. Everybody needs an outlet, and this has been yours. Of course, so are other peoples' fanzines, such as *Shitgibbon: the Rant-thology*.

You're right. By publishing *Broken Toys*, I've gained the attention of far more readers, who have probably formed a far more vivid impression of who I am, than almost anything else I could have done. Maybe I

should have begun fifteen or twenty years earlier, when our branch of fandom counted for more in the larger scheme of things. To be honest, though, I think I needed all this time to find my voice and refine my skills as a writer. Had *Broken Toys* been published, say, from 1996 to 2000, I think it would have been a far less carefully tuned instrument.

I am going to keep plugging that zine. Too bad I let Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz convince me to change my mind from the original working title: *Hoofwanking Bunglecunt*. I thank the people of Scotland for their inspirational, inventive invectives. I don't know if I should thank Donald Trump for traveling to Scotland and making an ass of himself while there. If he hadn't done that, then the resultant marvelous string of Scottish insult tweets would never have been created. However, I don't want to credit Trump for anything positive, so instead I shall give credit where credit is due and thank the Scotch.

Blended or single malt?

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Keith Soltys / [keith@soltys.ca](mailto:keith@soltys.ca) – Hi, Taral. I guess it's time to get a LOC in on *Broken Toys* #49. I guess I'm going to have to look at a few fanzines on [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) now that *Broken Toys* won't be coming every month.

If you aren't reading them now, I highly recommend *Vibrator* (Graham Charnock) and *A Meara For Observers* (Mike Meara), which have been frequent and friendly in the past. *Sparticus* (Guy Lillian) can be thoughtful and entertaining. Other frequent zines of note include *Askew* (John Purcell), *Flag* (Andrew Hooper), and *Counterclock* (Wolf von Witting) but appear on very irregular schedules. *Banana Wings* is a must. Then there are the various longer zines that occur once or twice a year ... or, like *File 770*, even less often.

I suspect you are right in saying that fanzines are irrelevant to fandom today, although you might want to qualify that by defining both "fanzines" and "fandom." But the old-school printed fanzine is pretty much dead, as are many of the old-school fans who kept that particular genre of fandom alive. I've always considered myself an SF fan and have been involved at various points in both fanzine fandom and convention fandom. But first and foremost, I've always been a reader and consider that as valid a form of fandom as any other.

On-line venues may be taking the place of fanzines as we knew them, but they don't have the character of periodicals. Even if a website has separate features and columns, the lack of borders between the elements eliminates the "periodical" nature of publishing. A website is never so-many issues, it's always just *one* website, making it a different animal from a magazine or fanzine.

If you're looking for other markets to explore, you should consider your non-fiction, like your essays on Parkdale. There are markets out there for that kind of writing, as I think you've already found out. Whether there's any or much money to be made is another matter, but it's probably worth exploring.

There used to be a local tabloid, but I haven't seen it in years. Nor has anything appeared to replace it. However, the LOFT organization says they will be running an old piece of mine, "Tea With Murder in His Eyes," in their quarterly magazine. No pay... of course. I think that's how my ticket was punched at birth – "must on no account become rich or famous regardless of merit."

Re: space exploration, I've always thought that going to the moon first would make a lot more sense than trying to go directly to Mars. I think the main problem that will have to be overcome is that of sustainable life support. Starting a base somewhere that is only a few days away from Earth makes a lot more sense than trying to establish a colony on a world that is months away.

Re: Lloyd Penney's letter – online mags are no longer the "minor leagues." Web sites like *Tor.com* and *Clarkesworld* pay rates comparable to the digest magazines and may have bigger circulations, although it's hard to compare – apples to oranges and all that. I don't see the digest mags surviving much longer, unless they can drastically expand their online presence, and I don't see any sign that they are doing that.

I've looked at some of those, but I write what I write, not necessarily what they're looking for. Despite being a big reader of SF in years past, I somehow can't picture writing the stuff.

That's about it for now I guess. Please keep me on your list for any other zines you decide publish. I've enjoyed *Broken Toys* and I'm sure I'll enjoy any other zines from you.

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Brad Foster / [jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com](mailto:jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com) – Been a busy 2016. Some good, mostly a pain in the ass, and all keeping me from doing a lot of stuff. Things fannish have been stacking up for months, both in fanzines and letters stacking up on my desk, and emails stacking up online. Realized I will not be able to catch up, so just hoping to clear it out, and try to do better for the rest of the year. (Looking into finally getting the long-needed cataract surgery in next month or so, which should help get me back to reading, writing, and most importantly, drawing at full speed again!)

I had noticed that you seemed relatively absent over the last few months – having your brain wired and other things you describe below would explain it.

Among the many hassles has been my Juno email account giving me all sorts of problems. So, am going to slowly close that out, and moving things fannish to this one. So please remove my old account ([bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)) from any of your records for me, and from now on use only this one: [jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com](mailto:jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com)

Everyone is writing this down, I trust?

Here's hoping for a better second half of 2016!

Now, as for attempting an actual loc on issue 49 here ...

This line in "Conflicted Issues" caught my eye: "Regardless of what fandom should or shouldn't be, I have found it to be full of an awful lot of disputatious, competitive, insecure, manipulative and judgmental people." So, in other words, fandom is just like the real world, and pretty much any group of more than a dozen or so people, regardless of what mutual interest got them together in the first place. I've found myself involved in a number of small and large "sub-groups" in society over the years, and all have their share of the highs and lows of examples of human behavior. It's good to read you've realized it can be a waste of time to argue with the folks you don't jibe with, especially as there are always plenty of folks we -do- get along with to spend more time with. But, better late than never, right?

Realizing that it's not a good use of your time to hang out with unpleasant people is easy. The real trick is finding alternatives. They're out there, but sometimes you can't separate them from the dross you'd like to avoid. I find this particularly true of fan groups, where the neat people you want to know are determined to herd together with all the other people you'd like to avoid.

My own sf fandom over the decades has also been very much the paper-and-mail one. Have done the local convention route, but even there my interactions were more through Cindy's connections with people than my own. Just really, really bad at remembering people by name/sight, connecting them to what we might have in common. Mail always allowed me to go "pull the file" and remind me of the last conversation, etc. I always feel slightly embarrassed in public, worried I will insult someone I - should- know by my blank stare when they come up. I try then to be extra-friendly to *everyone*, just to be sure. Seems to work. :)

I wasn't good in large fannish groups at conventions either. I'd have the same problem of trying to remember when I last saw the person talking in front of me. It might have been a year ago... or maybe two. It never helped that I assumed from the start than anyone I met would never be seen again, so I made no effort to try to remember their name, their face or what they said. In conversations, the topic would almost always drift away from anything I knew about, to Poul Anderson's life, feminist science fiction, comparisons of single or double malt whiskeys or some other thing I didn't give a damn about ... so all I could do was sit quietly and listen to nothing I wanted to hear.

Yeah, our fandom of fanzines is, indeed, fading with us old folks. Still out there (as evidenced by all the unanswered emails with attachments, and the pile of actual print zines over there on the corner of the drawing board), but nothing like it used to be. Things change. I try to find new places to get my art to, new groups of fun things, just like when I first found *this* fandom. And, meanwhile, we will all go out fussing and pubbing-our-ish.

I hope the bankruptcy goes well, and gives you the peace of mind you are looking for in that regard. We're not quite there yet, though this past year I have had to set up a half-dozen new loans for various unexpected bills, large and small. Don't know how much longer we can do that. Some of these will actually be paid off in a year or two, so if we can just not get any *new* ones for a while...

Some interesting nits you picked with "The Martian." I enjoyed both the book and the movie, so had no nits of my own.

I must be pretty good with nits. Many people have commented that I'm a nitwit.

Only one more to go? Guess will have to hope your posts on Facebook pop up more often in my feeds after this to keep up. (Wish there was some way to tell FB that, "Yes, *these* are the people from whom I really *do* want to see all posts," but it all seems just hit or miss what you get to see ... and what you don't.)

Enjoyed the "Kill the Fuckers" article very much. I, too, have often been more of the "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all" school of writers – while at the same time, I loved to read the reviews by writers who could really rip a new one out of their subject.



Your photo reminded me that Cindy took some shots of me when they hooked me up to a portable EEG monitor at the beginning of the year. I'll see if I can find those – I think the one where I leaned over to show the top of my head gives the best impression. (Unlike you, I only had them on my head, but they made up for that by gluing something like two dozen of them there – finally, being bald has paid off!) Had to keep it on constantly for three days, making sure to carry the little monitor around and not yank loose any wires. Interestingly, I actually had no problems with it. Wore a hoodie with large pockets that I could slip the monitor into during the day, and even able to tuck the monitor under my pillow at night, and didn't strangle myself in the cords at all.



Brad Foster

Your photo immediately brought words to my mind: “Breaking Brad.”

Of course, in the end, nothing at all was found from this round-the-clock monitoring, and if I had known in advance the outrageous amount I would be charged for this “Well, let's see if this will work” test, I would never have approved it. Will be another three years to pay that one off. Pretty much the cost of the full cataract surgery I have had to put off for months is sitting there glued to my head. What a waste.

Looking forward to the next issue, trying not to think it will be the last one.

Yep... another era is coming to a close. History never ends, of course, but up to a certain date it's dinosaurs, vikings and moonshots, and after that are just golf scores and discount coupons for Hamburger Helper.

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David B. Williams / [dbwilyumz@tds.net](mailto:dbwilyumz@tds.net) – Lots to comment on in the latest BT, but I will restrain myself and focus on one topic.

I have to agree with everything you said about *The Martian*, but I also think you were far too negative in your assessment. I don't find many of your concerns personally objectionable. *The Martian* is a movie, after all, a story fabricated for entertainment value. It is also science fiction, a sub-genre of fantasy, so it is supposed to be an imaginative fabulation. I emphasize the fact that *The Martian* is science fiction in the purest sense of those words. It is a story that could not happen without its scientific explanations. Every event and action is justified by a known scientific principle, however improbable. What's fantastic is that all these lucky breaks could happen together. That's why we sci-fi fans have always embraced the “willing suspension of disbelief” in pursuit of our amusement.

*The Martian* is top-grade science fiction (especially for Movieland, where SF seems to be the favored category for bad movies). It contains no magical Force to convey supernatural powers to its characters. There are no hyperspace drives, time portals or teleportation booths. Every little trick

and stunt is possible, however improbable. I for one was impressed and recommend this film to one and all.

I may not have gone through the motions of first extolling *The Martian* for what a fine film it is, and by launching directly into the small errors, created a more negative impression than I wanted. But as a writer, my main focus had been on exploring Mars rather than the Hollywood film.

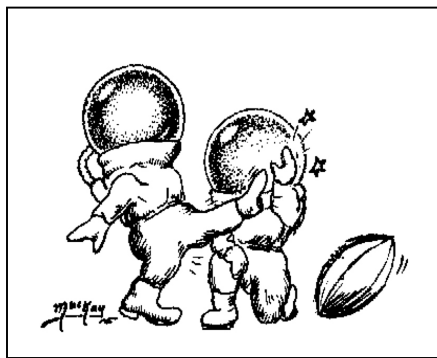
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Victoria Wayne / [Addie@withheldbyrequest.dnq](mailto:Addie@withheldbyrequest.dnq) – The end of *Broken Toys* puts me in mind of the end of *DNQ* back in 1982 – around the same time as my total gaffiation. Do I regret...? No, not really. Fandom was already changing then. Certainly the technology is better – instant cleanup of mistakes as opposed to corflu and stencils; infinite fonts instead of Letraset; cheap and easy delivery by email as opposed to trusting the post office not to go on strike *again*. Much about personalzines must by now have been replaced by blogs and social networks, but since I have no involvement with Facebook and the like, I can only suppose.

But, *Broken Toys*, I'll miss; while not exactly the same as the hardcopy media of the past, I liked seeing this reminder of bygone things every month or so, and it was a way of staying in the loop.

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*I asked for a loc ... what I think I got from Barry was his autobiography. At the very least a full article, but here it is in the letter column, anyway, because, as we all know, I don't publish article by other writers.*



## *Don't get me started* *Barry Kent MacKay*

As for me, and my life leading up to, during, and after my involvement in Fandom, don't get me started. You say it's okay? You are the only editor who has no concern about word count? Okay, then. I'll start. As American poet Adrienne Rich put it, "Every journey into the past is complicated by delusions, false memories, false namings of real events." Still, I'll do my best.

When I think back to that time, there are a few lines from the song, appropriately of that era, that come unbidden to my mind: "Once upon a time there was a tavern, where we used to raise a glass or two. Remember how we laughed away the hours, and dreamed of all the great things we would do. Those were the days my friend, we thought they'd never end..."

All things end, and the majority of the things I've done, and that have been done to me, and the vast majority of all my experiences, triumphs, failures, tragedies, laughter, fears, losses, thoughts, words written, paintings painted, and clouds in the sky observed closely, as I so much like to do, have been done after my being part of what was then, to me, a carefully yet crudely delineated activity called Fandom.

In the 1960s I was living in apartment 1208 at 35 Thorncliffe Park Drive, in Leaside, now part of Toronto. It was the first of the Thorncliffe Park high-rise apartments, was still unfinished when we moved in, our twelfth-floor apartment was at the northwest end of the building, overlooking the Don

Valley. The apartment was full of birds. I'll explain that part later. I was only able to work part-time. I lived with my mother, and, off and on, my father.

My memory for things past has never been all that great, so I may be inventing a lot of what follows. But first, I should mention that as a result of illness at age 16, I was a high school drop-out. I was not exactly unemployed, but except for one period of four years I've never held down a nine to five type of job. On the other hand, from my teens on I've always worked, and still do. And I loved reading science fiction and fantasy ... unlike now, when I read little or none, although I do read, always having at least three books on the go, usually one fiction and two or three non-fiction. I don't recall exactly how I came together with fandom, but I think it was because I read about an upcoming Worldcon to be held in Toronto, or as I would have thought of it then, a big convention, all about science fiction, and a club called the Ontario Science Fiction Club, or OSFiC, although that may have come later.

I know there was a contact person and I remember who it was, the very first fan I ever met: Peter Gill. I phoned him and he impressed me by being nice, by sounding like a normal, decent human being, and by being welcoming. Professionally, I still had many pathways ahead of me, options that I might or might not take, and professional writing of fiction, science or otherwise was an option, so I thought, what the heck. I met you, (you were yet to name yourself, Taral), and various others, but Peter was, in those very early days, my rock, no religious connotation intended. He was very professional, smart, and businesslike, and yet with a bit of a whimsical streak. He could pass for a young executive – or perhaps a social worker, accountant or teacher.<sup>2</sup>

Mike and Susan were there, the perfect fannish couple for a golden moment in time; Victoria and Bob and Phil Paine (a name he chose, sometime after we met, in honor of Thomas Paine), who I regarded as among the most fascinating people I could ever meet, plus his brother, Marc, who was not really a part of the club, but who seemed to dispense profoundness with comfortable ease. I seem to recall Victoria Vayne from the beginning. She fascinated me with the strength of her intelligence, her knowledge overall, and her devotion to being correct. Elliot and Dorothy Grassett were, I believe, Mensa members as well as members of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, who practiced each year for Handel's "Messiah," a TMC tradition, and were also into the Mythopoeic Society and creative anachronism. Elliot had a waxed moustache and pointed little beard, and both he and Dorothy were full of energy and hospitality. Bob Wilson was part of our group, and destined to become a successful pro, unfortunately, only after I had moved on to other interests, reading ever so little SF, although I have read and enjoyed some of his books and we did briefly correspond a couple of years ago ... as I did with Mike Glicksohn when he invited me to a little monthly get-together a few years ago and, to my later great regret, I didn't make it.<sup>3</sup>

One of my favourite people was Valerie Starr, who on one level seemed the perfect "mundane" middle-management type, and yet showed up at meetings with her then teen son, David, and blended in while also standing out, beautifully. A divorced single mom, she had a lovely apartment and I recall a party there when several of us used her blender to create brand new cocktails, one of which, full of cherry flavour, as within one or two of the best I ever tasted, before or after, but I have no idea, now, how we did it. She was just so damn nice, and I'm sorry to hear she's no longer with us.

For a while we met in a church basement, before eventually moving to the more formal setting of the

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<sup>2</sup> I believe Peter Gill was a clerk for City Hall, and often spoke for the city as an official witness in court. His father ran a printing business, or at least an office with a small offset that was used to print Torcon material.

<sup>3</sup> First Thursdays at the Fox's Den, perhaps?

Spaced Out Library, which housed Judith Merrill's SF collection. Judith, herself, would sometimes show up. An ex-pat American, she was fascinated by Toronto for all the reasons that prevailed in that more innocent, pre-Stephen Harper era, when we Canadians could be smug in our assurance of areas of superiority over our powerful neighbours to the south and their mastery of so much we so cherished.

I remember them and oh, so many others whose names hover just on the other side of recollection. There is context to that time that I think is vital to a better understanding all that was going on. The big social causes were very big, indeed: Viet Nam, the civil rights movement, feminism, nascent concerns about the environment and dwindling concerns about nuclear war. In the late 1950s and early '60s I expected the Big Flash might occur at any time, and that I've only seconds to duck and take cover to avoid the horrific shock wave that would char one side of me, radiate me, blow me away in one unimaginably violent microscopic fraction of a second. As a pre-teen I knew where all the ditches I could jump into were around my home, and there were disconcertingly few.

At times, in the '60s and '70s, I sort of thought the intensity of everyone, of the news of the day, of what is politely known as "social unrest," would somewhat overwhelm everyone's ability to cope. And indeed, it was an era not everyone survived. Mike Glicksohn and Susan Wood separated, and Susan, an academic in a T-shirt type of person who I deemed to be ever so cool, ever so bright and attuned to so much, moved to B.C., Vancouver, I think, where, in 1980, she killed herself. She was a feminist, an academic, a four-times-Hugo-winner<sup>4</sup> who seemed to know and be known by everyone in fandom. I was both a tad intimidated by her (although she was a few years my junior) and yet also pleased that she could be so friendly to me. I do know I was shocked by her far-too-early end; life to me was and is so to be lived, to be cherished, and there is so much more to come when one is young and healthy, assuming she was healthy. She was certainly young.

In fact, it seemed so often that the young and promising were meant to die, in a time emerging from the loss, one country to the south, of such as JFK, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Malcom X and, of course, the ever so many killed in a war whose purpose made no sense. I had, you see, this vague sense that I was destined, but for the madness there, to live in the U.S., to return to California where I had lived as a young child when my family moved there for a couple of years. As W. H. Auden wrote, "Young people, who are still uncertain of their identify, often try on a succession of masks in the hope of finding the one which suits them – the one, in fact, which is not a mask." I had time and the optimism of my age to quell niggling doubts of what was to come, but I could not immigrate to the U.S. because of a war the purpose of which I did not understand at all. I'd have been drafted in no time.

I remember snippets, but not so much chronology. So whether something happened before Torcon II, held in September, 1973, or happened after, is vague in my memory, but most happened after, in terms of my involvement with fandom.

That was a time of great longing, and intensity, in my own life, as I think would be thought normal for that age, but hard to tell since I've only ever been me. One very intense memory I have was sitting with several of my OSFiC friends (which ones I'm not certain, but Phil was certainly there) in a movie theater on Young Street. It was a very hot summer day, and we were enjoying the experience of seeing, from at or near the front row (where I had never before sat in a movie theater), the first Star Wars movie, and as, then unknown to us, a young boy named Emanuel Jacques, to be ever after

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<sup>4</sup> Also one other nomination.

eulogized as the shoeshine boy, was sexually abused and brutally murdered above a sleazy store (the sleaze being part of the attraction) also on Yonge Street, not too far away. That was in 1977, a part of Toronto history, and another of those juxtapositions between that which we seek as diversion, and the too often horror of real life that gives escapism its seductive lure.

I know the date because Google knows. Now we have Google, eh?

That group of friends, you were pivotally in the middle of it, called ourselves the Derelicts. I guess the Derelicts could be called a sub-set of OSFiC.

OSFiC had a degree of structure and formality; the Derelicts, determinedly, did not. Pizzas were the main source of sustenance. I was still years away from becoming first a vegetarian and later a vegan, was still not fit for anything approaching full-time work, and it seemed to me that most people in our group also were employed marginally, as a means to afford pizza, rent and/or TTC (public transportation) fares, not to mention books. The latter made the job of security guard attractive, I remember, to Phil, and possibly others, since one could, at least on some such jobs, read while working.

My teenage illness had precluded my first choice of employment, academia, as an ornithologist spending his days in a museum and in exotic field locations, but I was still determined to be an artist/writer/naturalist, although not quite sure what form such employment might, or could, take. I was funded by odd jobs, yes, but also by working on a children's TV show, once a week – not every week, for “scale”<sup>5</sup>, which was my main source of income. My mother worked in an art gallery in Thorncliffe Mall, across the street. And sometimes I sold an article or painting, but we had little money. My dad contributed sporadically to that income.

He had been badly damaged, emotionally, by World War II, although he rarely spoke of it. Nowadays there would be talk of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, but in those days, the 1950s and '60s, there was no such pat term that I remember ... and at any rate I would, through a lot of the worst times, have been only partly informed. I know Dad was incarcerated in Sunnybrook Hospital when I was young, in the '50s, and made some objects of inlaid wood, of which a table lamp still is in use in the nightstand beside my bed. I know he had trouble keeping employed, and I know we moved from a relatively posh house in York Mills to nearly half an acre of truly wonderful wildlife habitat, in West Hill (east of Toronto, at the far edge of Scarborough, now politically part of Toronto), where we attached aviaries to the side of the house, filled with birds.

So many things happened in those pre-fannish days, both in my own life, and outside, but I think in the interest of not creating a book, I'll focus on two that helped push me toward meeting you, Peter, Phil, Victoria, Michael and the others.

One was the intensity of my desire to draw and paint birds (and other natural history subjects, but especially birds). I have not the slightest idea why this was, or is. It's become my observation that it is almost as if, upon birth, a percentage of us are given assignments, the nature of which only become known as we mature. My first indications were from age three, but the point is that for no reason that I know I loved to look at reproductions (originals not being available, for the most part) of paintings of birds, my heroes being people like T.M. Shortt, Allan Brooks, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, Walter A. Weber, Francis Lee Jaques, D.M. Reid-Henry, George M. Sutton, Donald R. Eckleberry, and Roger Tory Peterson, and others, like Chloe Talbot-Kelly, Lynn Bogue Hunt and so on.

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<sup>5</sup>The Uncle Bobby Show, hosted by a rather gay, ex-carnie was aimed at toddlers. Barry did quick sketches of wildlife.



But I was not all that skilled. When James Fenwick Lansdowne burst upon the scene as a teenager, with a show of his originals at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1956, I, a 12-year-old, was stunned by the sheer maturity of his work, and by the control he exercised in rendering detail and elegant composition, even though he didn't always achieve the level of behavioural accuracy, to be found in the work of Shortt, Fuertes, Eckleberry and others of earlier eras. And later there was Bob Bateman, a one-two punch to my own aspirations, in terms of sheer maturity and skill.

My mom and Bateman's mom, and I, helped hang what may have been his first public showing, an outdoor show at the opening of the then-new headquarters for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists at Edward's Gardens, in Toronto, and yet even though he went to the same public school as I did – me coming along a decade later – we've never met. But while I love his work, he came too late to be the influence on me that the others were, including master bird illustrator Allan Brooks, who died around the time I was born, but whose prolific output was published in so many of the books I so cherished, as well as a series of calendars I owned, and in many issues of the weekly newsmagazine that came with our newspaper, and in the educational materials I ordered from the National Audubon Society.

And there's a good likelihood that, with possibly one or two exceptions, these names are not known to you, or the readers of this letter in your zine.<sup>6</sup> I get that now ... that mine is a highly specialized interest and field of endeavour, but back then I thought we (as I wanted to be considered) bird artists and illustrators were far better known to the public than I now know us to be.

But anyway, again, the take-home point is that I daily drew, sketched, painted, struggled, trying to become like my heroes. Art was ever so important to me, and would become part of why I became, for a while, a part of fandom.

And then my dad – and this was before my beloved maternal grandmother died of a heart attack as we were talking, on December 3, 1963 – cleaned out the family bank account and went to Los Vegas to win a lot of money at roulette ... or at least that was his plan. I have to say that prior to this, Dad had filled countless scraps of paper with runs of findings derived from using a toy roulette wheel, with little "B" for "black" and "R" for "red" symbols, and analysed them, looking to test a method that he was convinced would beat the system.

I have never been adept at numbers, in fact I may have some minor form of dyslexia or some related condition, as I have always had trouble with numbers, but I helped him at times, thinking it a harmless hobby, trying to develop a sure-fire way to win, over time.

He lost it all, including the joint bank account he had wiped out without telling my mother. I'll spare the details of this horrific time in my life, except to say my mother and I had no money. Dad's boss literally sent us food to eat. She was looking after my two-year-old nephew, Corey, son of my six-years-older brother, Charles ("Chuck" to all others), and his decidedly cute but immature wife, Anita. To a lesser degree, she also cared for Corey's younger sister, Stacey. My mom was a powerfully strong-willed woman, emotionally tumultuous, and her heart had been won by Corey, to whom she was devoted with she-bear determination and utter devotion.<sup>7</sup>

Anita was somewhat weak-willed but came, I think, to realize that my mom was taking over her own maternal role. So much was going on, and all of it at a time when, suddenly and with no warning, we

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<sup>6</sup> I'm familiar with John James Audubon (1785 – 1851), Robert Bateman ... and Barry. I don't know about the readers.

<sup>7</sup> I have quite vivid memories of Barry's mother from the 1970s – she lived more than another 30 years, I think.

were utterly broke. After wiping out in Los Vegas, my dad managed to get to California, where we had lived when I was much younger, and pleaded for money to bring him home. My grandmother, his mother-in-law, may have sent it to him – that part I don't clearly recall – but my mom was shattered. Me too. We had to leave our home, a beautiful property that I had hoped to own some day.

And so, we moved to that twelfth-floor city apartment, somehow scraping together just enough money for the first and last month's rent, and a moving van, and no more. We sold all we could. The master bedroom was turned into a studio for me. It did have a north light, but looked out over rooftops and roads. We did the best we could to find homes for most of the birds we were caring for as best we could, and took a few with us. They, the individual birds who we took, are and remain so damned important to me and my life but I don't talk about them because no one would understand, and they don't directly relate to my connection to fandom. The ones we had to give away sadden me to this day, and I remember them with great fondness and regret.

I was still struggling with aftermaths of encephalitis, my grandmother's death, and then Charles and Anita broke up when Charles and a buddy of his found Anita was cheating on the marriage ... no surprise to me. But in what was, to me, an astounding move, Charles turned all care of both his children over to Anita, not even asking for the visitation rights that would easily have been granted, thus not only depriving himself of any role in raising them, but separating my mother from her beloved grandson and younger granddaughter.

Anita moved far away, address unknown; my mom, who had sacrificed so much for the two tiny children, was utterly shattered, and this led to both her, and my, estrangement from my brother. He moved to Brockville and remarried, dying young of a heart attack, roughly thirty years ago.

I don't know how we did all we did but I can tell you it included getting up at two or three or four in the morning and driving downtown to rescue the birds that were hitting the tall buildings – fewer in those days than now – saving those birds that were stunned or confused, keeping those that couldn't be released, and I preserving as specimens those that were dead. Many stories could be told, but not here.<sup>8</sup>

We also answered all calls about wild birds that filtered into the Toronto Humane Society, then on Wellesley Street, and it was overwhelming ... so much so we finally had to beg off this latter activity ... and when we did, it became a front-page story in the *Toronto Sun*, and was carried in *The Star*, who sent ace photographer Boris Spremo to take my photograph.<sup>9</sup>

This all took place against a background of my parents' marital stressors, various other family issues, and very little money, although my mom did manage to get together enough for two very important events in my 20s, an adventuresome trip to the Galapagos Islands, by way of Ecuador, and, prior to that, a visit to British Columbia, by train, over a Christmas holiday, both oriented toward my passion for birds. The Galapagos trip resulting in my illustrating a guide to the birds of the Galapagos that stayed in print for 25 years, and remains the only book I ever wrote or illustrated, so far, to go into a second printing, and thus turn a profit for the publisher (Collins) and provide me with royalties.<sup>10</sup>

When I was about six or seven my family had moved to California for a few years, and I distinctly recall a golden, halcyon period of life when I got to visit desert, seashore and mountains ... indeed for

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<sup>8</sup> I used to own a preserved set of blue jay wings that Barry gave me ... until my cat ate them and was poisoned.

<sup>9</sup> I have clippings of this. If you want to see them, e-mail me.

<sup>10</sup> I think Victoria has a copy of this, but I do not.

one period of time we lived in an old house on a bluff overlooking the ocean, and I never wore more than a swimsuit. But I also remember that apart from wanting to “be a scientist” and loving the out-of-doors, the La Brea tar pits, and, most of all, the Mount Wilson Planetarium, I had several age-appropriate passions: Westerns (in the era of Roy Rogers and Gene Autry), Robin Hood, Tarzan and Spacemen. The last three became subjects of cartoon strips I used to draw ... the fanartist at an early age: six.

That was then, but as Torcon II loomed on the horizon, and I met Peter and the rest of you, I was most serious about following in the footsteps of my bird-artist heroes. My diversion, apart from television (still black and white, small screen) was reading, and one of my favourite subjects was science fiction. Another was fantasy, although of a certain type (I never have been able to read Tolkien, nor pretty well any fantasy over the last few decades, but then I enjoyed it).

Taral, it would be facile for me to leave it at saying I was attracted to my relatively few years in fandom, from the mid-1960s through the 1970s, because it was escapism ... although that was, I think, what I thought at the time. I was still relatively “normal” in my approach to “the others” who are now so important to me: the animals. I was not desirous of being cruel, heaven knows, and I never hunted for sport or food, and fishing only appealed to me to the degree that I got to see the fish up close, which did not justify the process at all. But I had my shotgun and my federal “collecting” permit that allowed me to go into the field to shoot the bird specimens I needed for my art and knowledge, ironically even as, at home, my mother and I were slowly gaining skill in helping the same sorts of birds survive their mishaps with humanity. And I still ate meat and wore leather and really accepted the ruling position we take over animals. But I wasn’t exactly comfortable with it. What drove me into humane work, as much as anything, was the growing realization of just how many ways we destroy the others, the non-humans, wild and domestic, who share the planet – or try to.

And of course, most people didn’t care. But come to that, with all the great social events swirling around the globe, the ideas, the concepts, the strife of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, I was also struck not by the effort of those who rebelled, but the complacency of those who didn’t. Put simply, I was tearing myself apart with the certitude-fueled passions of youth, and the challenges to my own assumptions, my own complacency, my own unquestioning acceptances.

And then I met you lot. Fandom. A place that in a very real sense mocked society, or at least saw through society’s pretensions; a pseudo-society where fame awaited, but of a constrained sort, and where everything was open to discussion, everything was on the table, where there were no taboos or uncomfortable topics to be avoided, where there was very, very little peer denigration, and where the great issues could be trivialized and the inconsequential could be glorified and where roles could be played, and all outside the envelope of our shared experience was called “mundane.” Mundania was a place from which we came as a function of inevitability, and to which we would go of imposed necessity when not in the place we called Fandom.

And while I didn’t recognize it then, in hindsight I think the attraction was, in good part, the intellect and curiosity that I experienced. Here were a disparate group of people, some successful, some not, of various ages and with various jobs and passions and families, and yet, as reflected in the name of our subgroup, the Derelicts, outsiders in that we were, collectively, intelligent. This was not a group to follow the banal trajectory that would have appeased the establishment, the unquestioning acceptors of the status quo, the dutiful consumers, students, soldiers and workers with mates and kids and golden retrievers and TVs and backyard barbecues and golf clubs.

In a sense it was like a spread out party, and while I was, if not in on it as fully as you, or Mike Glicksohn and Susan Wood and their Hugo-winning *Energumen* or some of the others, and did not know all the key words or visit the various cons that seemed to me to be held nearly every weekend, there was still a niche, for me. Part of it was just the activity, the long, long discussions, the parties, the nights spent walking in the streets of the city, the freedom that attends being young and mobile.

But also, I was an artist, and a would-be writer, on the cusp, although I did not know it, of a career that would include 25 years as a columnist with *The Toronto Sunday Star*, and I was already appearing weekly on the Uncle Bobby Show, a children's TV show where I got to share space with, and sometimes get to know, the people professionally engaged, as well, in entertainment, escapism, illusion. That job lasted a decade and a half, gave me self-confidence that has been of value all my professional life, led to my first tragic love affair and, well, all that sort of thing. It certainly overlapped my fandom, and provided income sans steady employment or soul-crushing involvement in uninteresting or unpleasant work. I also got to see or meet a variety of "famous people," teaching me early that "fame" was not all that so many seemed to think it was. It all helped keep things interesting.

When I met the word "illo," I saw my niche. I could draw illos. Someone, maybe you, explained the concept. There was a need, among the publishers of the zines, to have what was mostly ephemeral art (I hope your work is not, but I never regarded my own illos any other way). In my chosen professional field I'm constrained by the need to mate ornithological accuracy, and a rather large knowledge of subject, with artistic ability. It's not easy.

But with illos I could let my imagination go, within the constraints imposed by the mechanical limitations of reproducing art cheaply. Put simply, the drawings mostly had to be small, in black and white, on paper that could be bent over a drum, inexpensive and quick, and original...the more original the better. Larger, fancy drawings were sometimes fine, and some publishers were able to handle stiff drawing board, but mostly this was not something that I could, or wanted to, spend a whole lot of time on.

My professional art no doubt informed my fanart, but it was a two-way street in that my fanart allowed me to often break from the constraints of my other art, and come up with ideas, especially regarding composition, that could be incorporated elsewhere. I was never going to be eligible for fannish fame, or for fan Hugos and the like, so I was free to do things both simple and complex, as whim and the boundaries imposed by simple pen, India ink and paper, allowed.

And all of this fed into the escapist function of fandom for me, because I love, with a passion, the very act of drawing. Much of the formal stuff I did and still do require a lot of fairly boring work, and the fun parts are mostly at the beginning and the end. Why it is fun relates to my Niche Theory, which I'll describe below. But with fanart, there was very little space between beginning and end ... the beginning art and the final product were often separated by less than an hour, and at times even a fraction of that time. I had other things to do and places to go, but fandom enhanced the journey.

Much fanart consisted of "insider" jokes and references, many of which I didn't understand. Since I never took my fannish interests outside of Toronto, I really never considered myself to be an insider in fandom except within the local context, but then that was fairly significant. So a few of my illos either reflected what was happening within Toronto-based fandom, or what I had seen and understood from fanzines that came from outside sources.

My fanart was, typically, simple and cartoonish. I drew upon my knowledge of comparative anatomy to create a wide range of alien beings, monsters, dragons and other fictional beings, often “cute-ish” and more or less parodying a Disneyesque anthropomorphism.

I did create a few recurring characters. My favourites were a dumpy little spaceman and spacewoman, each clad in a spacesuit, identical but for a totally and absurdly superfluous skirt on the spacewoman. Their helmets were glassy bubbles, perfect spheres I usually created by tracing the outline of a circular object, like a quarter. The bottom part was covered by a sort of collar, and that all made it easy for me to quickly draw them. The helmets were reflective, so the faces never were visible. They spoke, of course, in speech balloons.

I was so happy with these two characters that I actually developed a comic strip, doing some forty panels before giving them to my literary agent (yes, I had one of those, for my non-fiction work to present to syndicates. A major syndicate responded with the concern that you could not see the expressions because the spacepersons’ faces were not visible, and could I at least indicate eyes and mouth.

That would have ruined the whole idea, the point being that you couldn’t see the faces, and faced with the idea of having to draw a daily strip – meaning give up my other work, I dropped the whole thing. Done *my* way, though, I think I could have had a cartoon strip hit.

Or maybe not ... who knows. Anyway, another pair of characters were a knight and his lady. In this case, the knight was drawn in a complete suit of armor, visor closed, so again you could not see his facial features. But the lady was drawn with a gown and conical hat and expressive, if cartoonish, face.

My third cartoon couple were only briefly in circulation and they were a pair of what I called imps. These were small children, a boy and a girl, rather elfish with oversized eyes and pointy ears, the girl with dragonfly or sometimes butterfly wings, the boy with vaguely bat-like wings, attached, in both, to the shoulder blades. They were both naked, and, well, impish.

But those were innocent times compared to now, we – or at least I knew little about pedophiles and perverts – and as I started to learn I realized that my quite innocently intended drawings could either be misconstrued or even misused by some of the sickos out there (remember, this was pre-Internet and the term “kiddie-porn” had, so far as I know, yet to be invented), and I stopped drawing them.

I did a wide range of other things, but if I was “known” for anything, it was for rather harmless or silly-looking alien creatures.

All but a little of the art was done on paper, so it could be bent over a drum, as I was told that was, in those days, how most fanart was reproduced. Earlier it had been necessary to trace it onto stencils, thus a need to keep it very simple indeed, but I came along as that era was ending ... although I remember to my horror seeing some of my illos that had, obviously, been traced. Gack.

There’s not a whole lot more to say, Taral. I could go on a bit more about Torcon, but suffice to say it was one of my first, perhaps my first, such major conference, and three of the most joyous days of my life to that time. I recall meeting Isaac Asimov, chatting to Robert “Psycho” Block, who joked that his name always appeared with the word “Psycho” between his first and last name, of seeing Robert Silverberg casually drinking a beer while sitting on the floor talking to a fan. I remember, as a normal



young male, the bare-breasted young women running around the Royal York Hotel, a staid Edwardian edifice which ever so coolly said that it was fine with the nudity so long as it was kept to the convention floor. I recall much else, and the effort behind it, but it was just a few days for me, and the only Worldcon I was ever to attend.

I have NO idea why my life before, during and after my involvement in fandom took the trajectory it did, but I have a theory, as close to a religion as I can get, that each of us is born with latent interests and abilities. What turns one person's crank is of no value to the next. I remember hearing a musicologist interviewed on the radio explain how, as a schoolboy, he had been one of many students in an audience when an orchestra played Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," and he was utterly mesmerized, fascinated and enchanted, and made music his life's work. Why just him out of all those kids? We all have, more or less, a niche in which we live out our lives.

Why, as a child, was I so mesmerized by the art of Walter A. Weber in *National Geographic Magazine*? What is it about the sight of a Rose-breasted Grosbeak or a Blackburnian Warbler or a flock of Dunlins that I found so appealing?

No answer. It is as if we all have a role to play in some vast drama so huge and sprawling that we can be aware of but a tiny fraction of it at any one time. And that sounds horribly metaphysical. I'm happy, as happy as possible given what I know, that with each passing moment I'm that much closer to the end of everything. I have not the slightest idea of whether or not there is an "afterlife" (I think not, since life, by definition, ends), but I know that what there is, must end. That is where we are heading, all of us, but it's what we do on the way that counts, not in some grand, cosmic way, but to us, to our friends.

Fandom is part of me, and I'm part of it.

And I'm grateful for it!

Those were the days, my friend ... good days, fondly remembered.

*Amen – TW*



Art by Barry Kent MacKay



Years ago, when I was fresh out of school and taking my first baby steps as a neo in fandom, it was possible to stand at the bottom of an imposing summit and look up – way, way up – and perceive the outlines of a larger-than-life figure. It was hard to make out much in the blaze of glory, but first there was a hat, with the brim pinned up on one side. Beneath that was a heroic beard, and fleshy lips in a smile. As likely as not, a leather wineskin, dispenser of the Water of Life, hung by his side. It was, of course, Mike Glicksohn.

It wasn't really like that, naturally. He came into that first OSFiC meeting I attended clad in blue jeans and an ordinary cotton shirt, and carrying a stack of what seemed to be magazines. While the rest of us milled around, he went right to the front of the room, where the people in charge were. My intuition told me that *this* was a man of some importance in the club.

While I watched, Mike distributed his stack of publications, gorgeously printed on blue paper, one to this person, one to that person ... but not to *him*. Not to me, either. Gradually, I grew aware that this was *Energumen*, a distant relation of the rather pathetic first zine I had published in my last weeks of school.

At that moment, I knew that Mike Glicksohn was the person I wanted to be.

To be clear, *I* wanted to be the figure of universal admiration who distributed the largess of his latest, Hugo-nominated fanzine to those were deserving, and wanted *somebody else* to be the nobody standing with empty hands after judgment. The beard had no attraction for me. Nor did the bush hat or the wineskin – though in years to come I would indeed learn to appreciate pricey liqueurs, in moderation.

Through the next few years, Mike and I tried to get along, but we were very different people in every way except one – we both liked to publish fanzines. In fact, Mike showed me mimeography for the first time, explained the use of stencils, styluses, correction fluid and other utensils, and allowed me to turn the crank of the very same Model 360 or 366 Gestetner that had produced the impeccable goldenrod-and-blue issues of *Energumen*. Once. No paper, of course. There was no point in overdoing it, because the most important lessons in publishing cannot be taught. How to organize yourself, inspire contributions, arrange the contents in a sensible

fashion, edit the letter column and engage the readers with one's own, sparkling personality, are skills that come only with experience.

In every other possible way, we were different. Mike lived on beer and scotch whiskey, but I never acquired a taste for such bitter concoctions. Mike loved playing cards, but my Puritan ancestry views all such games as no more than irresponsible gambling. Mike followed professional sports, a pastime that appealed to me even less than making out my taxes. Mike read Steven King, but I read Barbara Tuchman. We could respect one another, but there was no path to true friendship that either of us could follow.

Yet our paths constantly crossed ... sometimes with amusing results. Once I was party to adding pectin to the remnant of a bottle of Mike's scotch that was kept in Victoria's refrigerator. The aim was to turn it into alcohol-laced Jell-O, but it wouldn't gel, so all that happened was that his Scotch turned bright green and became much too sweet to drink. On another occasion, when Bob Wilson was preparing an eccentric recipe for "Chinese enchiladas," we sprinkled Mike's with a large surplus of cayenne pepper.

The shoe was, as often as not, on the other foot. One evening at Victoria's, everyone chipped in on pizzas ... except I had no money at all. After I was hungry enough, Mike suggested the group allow me a slice ... *if* I would remove my pants. I don't know if he expected me to take him up on it, but this was *pizza*, dammit!

And he *never* allowed me to forget a mistake made in print! Whatever the error, Mike would point it out with great glee in the next issue of the club newsletter.

But other times it could just be frustrating when Mike and I crossed paths. Victoria and I were at Peak Fanac around 1976, along with just about everyone else in our cohort of Toronto fandom. For a few years, our little circle of fanatics produced more fanzines than the rest of the country. It only began to come apart around '78 or '79, when the allure of apa hacking led to most of our group defecting from generally available zines. An era came to an end, in the early '80s, as Victoria and I published our last issues of the newszine, *DNQ*, ending with number 34.

Mike, of course, had very much pursued his own course through this efflorescence of Toronto fandom, and was a world apart. The reader could expect to find little of Mike's world in *DNQ*, and little of my world or Victoria's in his personalzine, *Xenium*.

So it came as a considerable surprise when a prominent new book on Canadian Science Fiction appeared, containing a timeline of Canadian fan history. It was not especially detailed, as you might expect. It covered the entire period of the 1970s with a single assertion, that there had been an explosion of fan activity in Toronto led by *Mike Glicksohn*.

As you might expect, I nearly choked on it. It was accurate enough in the sense that Mike's day had been the early '70s, and along with Susan Wood he had won a Hugo for *Energumen* in 1973 – an important achievement – but it was far too much to inflate this to leading the next generation of local fanzine fans *anywhere*. If anything, I felt that I had fathered this explosion largely myself, by planting the idea of publishing fanzines in so many minds, including Victoria's. Victoria had spread the idea in directions I wouldn't have thought of, and Patrick (then just) Hayden had also

brought a packet of vital energy to local fanzine publishing. I wouldn't dispute that Mike had encouraged my interest to begin with, but his involvement afterward hardly amounted to "leadership" ... or even a major presence.

I think I spent the next couple of years in a more or less permanent snit over that. After all, fandom is not so important that there are many official records made of it, and this one, covering my period of Peak Activity, had been blown all to hell! Wallowing in my own self-pity, I cracked jokes that when the time came, my gravestone would have Mike's name on it by mistake.

Things change so much in thirty years. Here it is 2016, and Mike is gone. All the evidence suggests that modern fandom is forgetting Mike Glicksohn, *Energumen* and The Hat faster than the Americans are forgetting what it was like to live in a free, safe and affluent nation. It gives me less pleasure than you might expect to point out that I'm still here, and in no danger of being overshadowed by anyone. History is written by the survivors, but I prefer not to be vengeful with my pen, and can't help feeling a certain wonderment at how events have fallen out. While I still don't like whiskey or cards, what's this on my head? If I remove the hat and examine it from all sides, to my surprise it looks suspiciously like a bush hat. Have I somehow arrived at the summit where I saw, at a long-forgotten club meeting so many years ago, Mike soaring over me in the glare of all his glory? Gosh. Maybe so. Funny how it seems pretty much the same up here as down there in *la boue* ... but perhaps realizing that is the better part of wisdom.

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Why these reflections, now? A while ago, Charlie McKee came across an old contribution for his *Bakka Catalog* that he had solicited and never published. Charlie was the founder of Bakka, the Toronto SF specialty store that is still open ... though several times relocated since its first opening in 1972. At one point, Charlie's ambitions grew to publishing his own magazines, with the aid of a huge offset press that he bought and operated from the back room of the store. The venture only lasted two or three years, I guess, before costs and the workload overcame Charlie's ambition to be a publisher, and among the casualties was a second installment of a column about fandom, written by Mike Glicksohn.

"The View From the Top" has languished in a virtual shoebox ever since. Charlie publicized the discovery a few months ago on FaceBook, but I felt that a FaceBook post was not enough, and asked if I could find a more suitable home for "The View From the Top." I didn't at that time want to run it myself, because it was highly unusual for me to run *any* other writer in *Broken Toys*. To be honest, Glicksohn's piece was aimed at readers - who made up most of Bakka's customers - rather than fans, and he explained the difference in very basic terms. The piece was not Mike at his best, nor does it make the most interesting reading if you were an old hand in fandom. I had in mind one or two other Canadian fanzine editors who might be happier with this piece of Canadian fan history than I was.

Since then, I've thought and re-thought this over and over, and for several reasons decided to run "The View From the Top" in *Broken Toys* anyway.

For one thing, it was an excuse to write a long, rambling, self-indulgent introduction ... a task which I excel at. For another, I think that whatever its merits, what is likely to be Mike Glicksohn's final word to fandom deserve the best setting I can arrange for it. Maybe that's not *Broken Toys* ... but who am I to say it isn't?





# VIEW FROM THE TOP

## A (VERY) OCCASIONAL, (VERY) IMMODEST COLUMN

*(An unpublished column for Bakka's catalog-magazine, circa 1979)*

"I know you've missed your last five deadlines," Charlie said to me, "but here at Bakka International we're trusting, kind-hearted, understanding and just a little bit thick, so we'll give you another chance. How about another column for our next catalog?"

"You know I always have the best intentions, Charlie, but I never know what to write for you. The stuff I do for fanzines just doesn't seem suitable for the readers of your catalog."

"Well, you're heavily into fandom, so how about an article on the social side of things?"

"You mean like which editors I've smoked dope with, and what famous writers I've slept with, and stuff like that?"

"No, no, no! This is a *family* publication. Besides, if our readers want that sort of thing they can read the various pro autobiographies that are coming out nowadays. Just explain the social aspects of science fiction fandom, how you participate, what you get out of it, what fandom's all about for you."

"Okay; I'll give it a try, Charlie. But don't hold your breath, okay? You never looked good in blue."

The chances are that, if you're reading this catalog, you consider yourself a science fiction fan. And you've every right to. But while a rose by any other name, etcetera, etcetera, there are those who might deny you that title. To some you could be a "Reader." Not that this is in any way a derogatory title, I hasten to add. Even the most sponge-brained member of hard-core fandom (and Kimball Kinnison knows there are hordes of them) realizes that without the vastly greater number of science fiction readers there would be no science fiction, and hence no science fiction fandom, and no Fans. But even while acknowledging that, there are those who reserve the name of Fan *only* for their brethren active in that strange and wonderful microcosm known as Fandom.

There was a time, no more than a decade or so ago, when it was quite possible to be a life-time reader of science fiction and never have the slightest idea that there was such a thing as fandom. Today, it is unlikely that anyone who reads or enjoys science fiction to any degree whatsoever is unaware at least of the existence of an organized subculture devoted to the genre. Mass media coverage of conventions and specialized sub-fandoms, such as Star Trek fandom and Star Wars fandom, has dragged the dedicated fans out of the closet and into the spotlight. And yet it remains true that for every fan who happily impoverishes him- or herself by total immersion in the social side of science fiction fandom, there are fifty or a hundred readers who remain content



to buy and read their books, but are not interested in getting any more deeply involved with other fans. And who's to say that they aren't the sensible ones?

How much of your hard-earned money do you spend on science fiction every year? Or have you ever thought about it? If you're a typical reader, you probably subscribe to one or two of the magazines; you might pick up the occasional copy of a new magazine such as *Omni*, just to see if a subscription is justified; perhaps you belong to the Science Fiction Book Club, book prices being what they are nowadays; you'll regularly buy paperbacks, just to feed your habit; and if you're working you might buy the occasional hardcover by a favourite author, or for a special volume; if you're like me, and happen to love good books, you might indulge yourself in some of the small publishing house limited-edition boxed volumes at anywhere from fifteen to thirty dollars each. In fact, according to the *Locus* survey, if you're a average reader you'll spend about \$285 annually on science fiction. So: are you average?

But consider the average Fan. In addition to his or her reading requirements, there are conventions to attend. You've all heard of conventions, I'm sure. You probably wouldn't be reading the *Bakka* catalog if you'd never heard of conventions. On just about every weekend of the year, there is a gathering of science fiction fans *somewhere* in the world. And with the probable exception of the annual World Convention (held in Phoenix last year, and scheduled for Brighton, England this August) a large percentage of those in attendance – in fact, a majority in most cases – are there for the social aspects of science fiction fandom. And these conclaves can get somewhat expensive for a hard-core Fan!

Let us be a little flexible in our use of terminology, and accept that money spent on transportation to and from a con, and for accommodation at a con, can be considered to be money spent on “science fiction” as far as the fan involved in fandom is concerned. (We won't count food or drink, since it is probably that the fan would have needed these whether at the con or not. Although, with some of the types I've seen at conventions, this is a dubious supposition!) So what sort of additional annual expenses are we looking at?

Oddly enough, I've never seen any sort of survey done on this, so there are no figures to rely on. And I can hardly consider my own situation to be “average,” since I'm much more deeply into fandom than all but a handful of other active fans. But to have an upper limit, let's look at the extent of my commitment to the social aspects of science fiction. Last year, 1978, I went to eighteen conventions. I flew to ten of them, two were local gatherings, and in six cases I either drove or took a train. A conservative estimate of transportation costs would run about fifteen hundred dollars. At all but three of those cons I needed a hotel room, usually for two nights, once or twice for three. Since I prefer not to share a convention room, I normally take a single, averaging perhaps \$25 US a night. Estimated accommodation costs, perhaps nine hundred dollars in the US, over a thousand in Canada. And if there's one other legitimate expense that can be considered directly related to science fiction and conventions, by being at some of those cons I was offered, and accepted, albeit voluntarily, the chance to purchase science fictional and fantasy artwork, to the tune of about seven hundred dollars. So what does that give? Well, being a math teacher ~~I can afford such indulgences~~ I can quickly work out that we're talking somewhere in the region of thirty-two hundred Canadian dollars. And I also buy books, you know.

Now, even if we consider the artwork as an investment, that's still twenty-five hundred dollars spent for the pleasure of partying with my friends. There are those who'd say that was a mite extravagant. Luckily, I wouldn't be one of them. Of course, I've already said that few fans would spend quite that much in a year. Many fans go only to the Worldcon: last year that might have entailed four hundred dollars in transportation and accommodation expenses. Other fans,

primarily young, non-working fans, restrict themselves to several local regional conventions, car-pool there and back, crash five people in a single room and probably don't spend more than a couple-of-hundred dollars for quite a few conventions spread across the year. And then there is the well-known Australian fan, Eric Lindsay, who took six months off work to travel around America last year, attending a dozen or so conventions, and spending somewhere in the neighborhood of six thousand dollars to visit his friends. I guess it all depends on how important your friends are, right?

Because when you get down to it, the social side of science fiction fandom just means having the chance to be with, talk with, party with, eat and drink with your friends, whether they be award-winning science fiction writers like Joe Haldeman or Gordie Dickson, or unknown science fiction readers like Roger Reynolds or Bill Cavin. And to me (as long as I'm not broke), money means nothing compared to people. For better or worse, the very best people I've met have been connected in one way or another with science fiction and its fandom, and that's why I'm not at all reluctant to involve myself in it to the extent that I do.

(Just because many of the most admirable individuals I know are in fandom, however, in no way means that *all* the individuals in fandom are admirable! Sturgeon's Law applies to fandom just as it applies elsewhere. Perhaps not ninety percent of fans are misfits, socially maladroit, boorish and obnoxious, but a noticeable percentage do fit that description. One has to be selective in fandom, as in most aspects of living.)

It seems self-evident that only a small percentage of the population enjoys science fiction. I happen to have little interest in and no qualifications for attempting a sociological analysis of science fiction readers, but there's considerable empirical evidence toward the conclusion that they share something in common. (Many fans like to claim that SF readers are more intelligent than the average, but I've seen little evidence for this in my thirteen years of close association with thousands of science fiction readers.) It is therefore quite understandable that, when a group of science fiction enthusiasts gets together close, friendships are quite likely to develop. If that group then spreads itself all across Canada and the United States – with an occasional member returning to England or Australia – its members are faced with a dilemma. They can either allow a warm relationship to wither away, or they can accept the fact that it's going to be expensive to maintain those relationships. I guess ya pays ya money, and ya makes ya choice. I know how I chose; and I don't regret a single dollar it may have cost me to stay in contact with many of the people I care most about in this world.

That's what fandom's all about to me, Charlie. People. Friends. Lovers. It happens they live in places like Ormond Beach, Florida, and Cincinnati, Ohio, and Stockport, England, and Torrance, California and even Faulconbridge, Australia, so I can't just grab the subway and drop over to see how their lives are going whenever I feel like it. Someone thinks I spent a lot of money just to see my friends last year? They're absolutely wrong. I *saved* a lot of money when I saw my friends last year. Because, if I hadn't gone to all those conventions, I might have had to fly to Sydney, and to Los Angeles, and to London, and to Daytona Beach, and to Minneapolis and half-a-hundred other cities so I could see them all. Being a hard-core convention fan is the only way I can afford to have so many friends in such widely scattered places, and still keep in close personal touch with them. Personally, I wouldn't have it any other way.

Of course, one does what one can to earn those expenses back, if possible. Now let's see, at ten cents a word, Charlie, I figure you owe me...

[... \$185.00 – TW]

[A few notes are **absolutely** in order here. To begin with, LEBCON was a real event, that took place in the summer of 1978 at Linda Bushyager's suburban Philadelphia home. This is a factual report in almost every way. The people mentioned were all present ... except for one obviously fictional Extee. Moreover, the oneshot published by Moshe Feder is quite real, and can probably still be found in many fanzine collections. Maybe even in mine, if I could figure out where it was filed. First published in DNQ 7, in 1978, this "report" was originally footnoted, "This is a real trip report. Every word is the plain, unvarnished truth. **Epecially** the stuff about Saara Mar!" – TWJ]



Six or seven hundred miles is a long way to drive in a primitive vehicle just for a party – especially when there are better means of travel available than on wheels. But for whatever arcane reason, July 4<sup>th</sup> was a “long weekend,” and Linda and Ron Bushyager had invited their friends to a party. Victoria and Taral wanted to go, on the theory that talking with people could be practiced far more successfully at a private party than at a convention with hundreds or even thousands of attendees. On further reflection, I thought they might be on to something. I asked to go along, having heard about the “Pghlangeoween” they had driven to the previous October.

*Naturally* we had to drive instead of fly. Taral insisted on teaching me how to drive Victoria's Dodge Swinger. But, I must admit, driving is fun in its own way, and is actually a more intimate way to enjoy the Appalachian beauty and the small towns lazing in the Autumn sun than flying over it all at 3,000 feet, going approximately Mach 12. Besides, said Victoria, having enough money to fly isn't faanish.

And what about *apporting* or using the *HomeLink*, I ask? But that's too much like Science Fiction, according to Taral. And Science Fiction is by definition *definitely* not faanish.

Well, what's a 16-hour drive, anyway?

You'll have to excuse whatever lapses in correct English style or usage I've committed – this is, after all, the first time I've written for a fanzine.

We arrived early in the afternoon, before preparations were completed, so Victoria crashed-out upstairs to renew her energies. Taral and Ron struggled with the badminton net in the front yard, while I carried some of the tables and chairs out back.

Somehow, the badminton net escaped use, but the croquet set was in almost constant use by the guests until the moment when the chow was ready. People with food were trickling out into the backyard, while Ron barbecued hamburgers (to his credit with hot coals rather than blistering language), wieners and the occasional stray mosquito. Besides the burgers and hotdogs, Linda had made traditional fannish blog, and had set out chips, dip, watermelon slices and plenty of canned soda pop.

At some point in the meal, Linda and Ron managed to sneak a bite to eat themselves. Taral, as usual, turned into a ham. No, wait... that's made a *pig of himself*, isn't it? I love human expressions! Especially the ones people use when surprised, as Ron was when I turned the burgers on the grill with my fingers. I promised him to use the tongs next time.

Then began the arduous task of carting the debris of bottles, paper cups, crumpled potato chips bags, sticky cheese wrappings, melon rings, soiled tablecloths, congealed liver dip, grubby knives, forks and spoons, empty sugar and saccharin sachets, soggy paper plates with unwanted slices of pickle, twist-off caps that had lost their homes, mustard jars with brown rims and soiled napkins, back into the house. Most of the guests just milled around, swapped the latest fan gossip and polished off the remaining munchies with idle hands. A few diehards resumed their interrupted game of croquet.

"Redrum!" quoth Taral.

"Where?" I asked. "That's just the trash barrel."

"Read *The Shining*, and also, that's not Croquet they're playing. It's *Roque*, an American variant usually played on a hard surface of clay or sand, but in this case grass. Redrum!"

He was still in phase, trying to spread fannish catchphrases that, so far, had never caught on.

Even if this was Roque instead of Croquet, it was hard to believe they were observing the proper rules. The players – one in particular, who I won't name – repeatedly imperiled the lives of his fellow fans by slamming the wooden balls through the air at speeds best measured in Mach numbers. When one of those cannon shots is made from a lie under your own very chair... I resisted the impulse to toss the blinking Roque set, piece by piece, a couple of blocks away. Or I could defend myself by joining the game. For once, I would enjoy having an unfair advantage in competition, and make the other players scatter for their lives!

The rest of the evening was spent in board games, chatter and puttering on what I assume were Ron's primitive computers. I must not comment, I reminded myself, because our host made a living programming devices probably not much more advanced.

The day after was spent mainly in rest.

That evening, though, several local fans returned to join the stay-overs for dinner, and a one-shot was begun. Other than Victoria, Taral and myself, the out-of-town guests were Moshe Feder and Lise Eisenberg, Joyce Scrivner, Stu Shiffman, Sue-Rae Rosenfeld, Guy Harris, Hope Leibowitz and Larry Carmody. No one was excepted from contributing to the one-shot, not even me, though I only typed a single interlino – in *Siroihin*, to confuse everyone, of course. Stu suggested a cover collaboration, and lightly sketched what looked like a London Bobby. Taral worked on it a while, adding detail and a few words as a punch line, then handed the drawing back to Stu to do his half of the inking. Then Taral inked the rest. The finished product was electrostenciled on Linda's machine upstairs. Unfortunately, the one-shot wasn't printed in time for people to take home with them. It was handed out later at Autoclave, and a few remaining copies mailed. Moshe sweated over the title all the while people typed. It had to be the right title. One that was pithy, fannish and appropriate. At last he named the collected stencils *In Prospect*, in honour of Linda and Ron's home in Prospect Park.

Only Moshe and Lise stayed over with us on the second night. The rest drove home to New York, while we stayed up very late, investigating one box after another of Linda's vast fanzine collection. She was thinking of selling it. Maybe. She didn't know.

In light of the long drive we faced the next day, Victoria finally insisted on sleep. Not even half the boxes had been opened that night. But before poor Linda was permitted to go to bed, a tentative bargain had been driven. The terms were set out last issue. To remind the reader, 20 boxes of fanzines rode back to Toronto with us the next day, in exchange for \$400 and 50% from whatever was resold, a minimum of another \$100. It was the steal of a lifetime... what's that? Sorry, the *deal* of a lifetime. Personally, I still think it was a steal.

Next day, neither bright nor early – it had begun to rain the previous night and was still at it as noon arrived – we set off. We bid Ron and Linda farewell at the front door, shouted goodbye outside the window where Moshe and Lise were still struggling to get up, and threw a few more farewells out the car windows for good measure. We took a spare watermelon, turkey sandwiches and a large plastic bottle of Pepsi as souvenirs. (Moshe had forcefully declined the latter, the previous night.) We also carried 20 heavy boxes in the trunk, instead of apportioning them home, as I suggested. I made *them* load the boxes, since they were being so stubborn about it. Fun, hey? Because there was no room in the back seat, I had sit in the middle of the front seat, the drive selector poking me in the thigh all the way back to Toronto.

It rained most of the way, as well. The guard at the border was, of course, suspicious of a car full of cardboard boxes, but it has been ages since anybody was foolhardy enough to give an inDalmirinla any trouble, so we were through and in Canada with a minimum of face-saving delay – much to Taral's disappointment, the sadistic bastard.

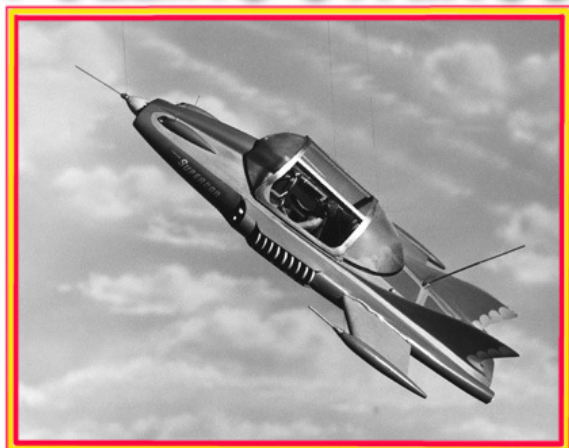
"I was only wondering if he could swim." In the Niagara River...

Ah, but it was all great fun. If not every moment, at least on the whole. So I go wholeheartedly along with Taral's and Victoria's theory that parties are better than cons. And perhaps driving *is* more fun than flying. When's the next, by the way?

– *Saara Mar*



# PULLING STRINGS



A while ago I made use of YouTube to watch 22 consecutive episodes of *Supercar*. There had been 39 episodes made, but 22 was how many YouTube had to show, and those were more than adequate for my needs.

Prior to that, I had been a huge fan of *Fireball XL-5* ... so much so that even as I was running up a credit card debt that I knew I'd never service, I had to buy the boxed set of *Fireball* at over \$100. But reliving my youth was just more important than some damn bank's money! What would *they* do with it? Gold-plate the CEO's desk pens as a bonus, or something like that. But the point I'm making is that I watched Gerry Anderson's "supermarionation" shows' first run on TV as a kid, and I never got over my fondness for them. Along with *Fireball* there was also *Stingray*, about a sort of jet-powered submarine that was almost as fast and agile underwater as fighter plane was in the air. I watched those episodes as avidly as I watched *XL-5*. *Thunderbirds*, on the other hand, not so much. They had their moments, but somehow a rescue service didn't seem as exciting as the exploration of space, or of the seafloor. And those uniforms worn by the Tracy brothers ... surely they were designed for effeminate gas-station attendants?

Beyond those three early Gerry Anderson shows, I was *aware* of a few others. The first of any note was *Four Feather Falls*, a western that illustrated Anderson's early fascination with the Wild West – almost every one of his series for the next few years had at least one Wild West episode. It was distinguished by a cowpoke who had magic guns that would he could aim and shoot even when he didn't hold them. *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterions* followed *Thunderbirds*. Its darker, more realistic atmosphere was equally popular. But the next show after that, *Joe 90*, was not at all a success.

It was no wonder. In thrall to the runaway popularity of spy shows on TV in the late 1960s, *Joe 90* only managed to be boring. For no good reason the inventor of a knowledge-transfer machine allows British Intelligence to use his nine-year-old son as a super-spy! Unfortunately, little happens except that the kid sneaks into military bases, intelligence headquarters or criminal lairs, knowing all the passwords and traps, and steals secret information. On one occasion he stole an advanced MiG fighter plane about as easily as you'd steal a parked car with the keys in the ignition ... but that was too fantastic, so it turned out to be just a "suppose" episode that illustrated what Joe *might* do in the line of duty ... someday.

Thereafter, Anderson produced mostly live-action shows, using various degrees of puppet technology for special effects – flying saucers, submersibles, high-speed vehicles and the like. They were much like the puppet shows in other ways – gimmicks, lots of explosions, melodrama and wooden acting. What worked with marionettes, though, was unmitigated crap when produced for an adult audience. Strangely, there are

people today who fondly remember *UFO* and *Space: 1999*. I don't, because I was already more than ten years old when these shows came on the air, and judged them by the more elevated standards of *Star Trek*.

Strangely enough, though I was familiar with *Supercar*, I had never seen any complete episodes. Recently, it entered my mind to see if there were episodes on YouTube, and I was happy to discover there were over twenty! Over the next three nights I watched them all.

While the premise is fairly subdued, I found that *Supercar* had much the same fascination for me that *XL-5* and *Stingray* had. The *Supercar* was a new scientific breakthrough – a vehicle capable of high-speed flight as well as diving to extreme depths. Many of the episodes revolved around testing the equipment or dealing with equipment failure. The love of technology shone through not just in ever-more-complicated gizmos – as Anderson productions increasingly used from *Thunderbirds* on – but in attention to detail and texture. *This* is how a rocket-blast has to be deflected, and what could go wrong even with simple solutions. After a certain point, unfortunately, Anderson seemed to be looking for the most gadget-obsessed ways to launch rockets from undersea bases, or drive a high-speed vehicle into another moving vehicle. And when, finally, his shows graduated from marionettes to actors, they lost the simplicity and charm they once had ... becoming hackneyed television schlock in comparison to other higher-grade offerings like *The Prisoner*, *Mission Impossible*, *All in the Family*, *Happy Days*, *Falwty Towers*, *Colombo*, etc. etc. etc.

I very much doubt I'll buy the boxed set of *Supercar* any time soon... or *Stingray*. Although I do like them almost as much as *Fireball XL-5*, *Fireball* has an edge on both shows that can't be beat. *Fireball* is about space – a very odd sort of space, where explosions that are lightyears away can be seen at Space City, and it takes *XL-5* weeks of travel to investigate – but space of a sort, nevertheless – vast, empty, lonely, mysterious ... opening its secrets to mankind as we penetrate it with aggressive looking, phallic spaceships! Hovercraft and submarines just can't beat that!

All the same, I thank YouTube for making it possible to see those 22 *Supercar* episodes for the first time. That's ten hours of my life I'll never get back again, but far from being the ten hours I most regret spending.

(Those wasted hours would have been at various Worldcons, watching interminable Hugo ceremonies pass me by.)



## JOYCE KATZ, 1939-2016

The place to go for the full story is at Mike Glycer's ***File 770***, (<http://file770.com/?p=30337>). All I want to do here is make note of Joyce's passing, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, just over two weeks ago. The number of fans from the old days, whom I used to know, has been diminishing with alarming speed over the last couple of years. I don't think Joyce's death can be said to be unexpected, as she had a stroke in May, and there were complications from which she never fully recovered. I knew Arnie, her husband of 45 years, well through e-mail, and it's Arnie I'm thinking of now. He must be feeling very alone and vulnerable. This is the time when a man realizes how much he needs friends and family to be with him, if he is to go forward.

# To Breathe, or Not to Breathe?



Back in June, I had an early appointment with my respirologist to discover the results of my sleep study. I was hoping for the best, but this doctor seemed to be rather an eager-beaver – he had almost leapt on my when I had been brought in during the winter with respiratory problems, and I suspected that he was going to find something wrong for his specialty to fix, even if it killed me. It turned out my respiratory problem was due to collected fluid in my lung and around my heart, and once drained they caused me no further problems with breathing. But the eager-beaver *had* to have his sleep study.

Afterward, as soon as I took a seat in his office, the doctor beamed at me and asked, “Do you think you slept?”

I started to explain that I didn’t at first, but I recognized that I must have dropped off later, woke up and dropped off again, perhaps several times ... but he wasn’t listening. Before I could really state my case, he broke in and said, “You did, but you woke up eleventy-eleven times. You have *sleep apnea!*” He sounded absolutely delighted, which annoyed me because I knew then that he was going to carry this farce farther.

The fact is, I had *not* had a good night’s sleep during that study, and knew it. But what did he have any right to expect? I was told to arrive at 8 in the evening, and, once I was all checked out and wired up, I was told to get to sleep as soon as I was sleepy. The problem was that I normally go to bed at dawn! Although I had done what I could to bring my bedtime closer to normal nocturnal hours, the fact that I got to sleep at all before 2 a.m. was a miracle! Furthermore, I was not having what I considered trouble sleeping most nights, so I didn’t agree that I needed to be treated for anything.

Yet, on the basis of this one sleep study, the eager-beaver wrote me a prescription on the spot for a CPAP device.

That’s Continuous Pressure Airway Pressure, if you aren’t one of the approximately 35% of the public over the age of 40 who hasn’t had one of these infernal devices pushed on him yet.

I was told to phone ahead to book an appointment at any of the licensed distributors of these devices. There were two or three in the west end, I noted. In fact, one of them was just up Roncesvalles Ave., and only a bit more than a mile away. That was well within Traveling Matt’s range, so I just went there directly after leaving the doctor.

It turned out to be a well-timed move, since there had been a cancelled appointment, and the distributor could see me immediately.

The interview was amazingly simple. I handed the secretary the doctor's prescription, then filled out a couple of sheets of basic information. I hadn't expected to need my case number and one or two other details from Ontario Disability, so the secretary got on the phone and had the information in five minutes. Next, the CPAP was demonstrated to me and we were done! The province pays for 60% of these devices, and OD pays the rest. In effect, I had taken a slip of paper that had been given to me only an hour before, and exchanged it for an \$850 device that was essentially a compact humidifier with gas mask attachment!

Given the cost, it's no wonder everyone was so eager to see I got one.

To tell the truth, I don't know whether I *want* to sleep perfectly. Getting up three or four times in the night to toddle to the washroom wakes me during dreams, giving me a chance to remember them. A "perfect" night's sleep would consist of blacking out the instant my head touched the pillow and being as good as dead for the next eight hours, then jumping out of bed, ready for another day of productive labour ... with no perceptible dream time at all.

Screw that. My life is too dull to forgo dreaming.

Not that sleeping too well ever became an issue. The CPAP carried the seed of its own failure, so it has never proven its worth to me. The harness that goes around your head for a full facial mask is not as uncomfortable as you might think. The tight seal around your nose and mouth is rather uncomfortable, however. And if you should drool during the night, it has nowhere to go, and will just pool up in the mask under your mouth. I might have learned to stand all that, but the real problem is that the positive air pressure really *is* continuous. It makes breathing in really easy. But it also makes breathing *out* difficult. I had to push the air in my lungs out with a conscious effort. It was not only hard, but my outgoing breath would stall and condense in the mask. Moreover, once or twice I seemed to miss my timing, or something, and practically choked on the incoming air, which was going to be inhaled, like it or not. While the breath-in seemed poised to choke me, exhaling was like trying to breathe through a wool muffler. How in the world was *this* supposed to make my sleeping easier and better? I was half afraid that if I ever fell asleep with that infernal contraption around my face, it might accidentally asphyxiate me!

I had a follow-up appointment a couple of weeks later, when I shamefacedly explained how I was unable to sleep with the CPAP. They gave me a different face mask. I didn't see what help that would be, since it was essentially identical, except for details such as straps and snaps. Sure enough, it was no more use than the first.

I took a great deal of time on the second and last follow-up, a couple of weeks later, to explain why this wasn't working, and that, if anything *was* going to work, perhaps it was what is called a nasal pillow. Other people had told me that it had worked for them, and I knew for a fact I could sleep with oxygen tubes.

A nasal pillow didn't turn out to be like oxygen tubes, however. To my surprise, it's just a miniature copy of a full face mask, that only fits over the nose. Still, it is much simpler, and

though apparently the big fear is that I might open my mouth and lose all the precious advantage of that positive airflow pressure, it should be possible to breathe out through my mouth if I must.

I admit I have not had the courage or interest to even try it.

I have been sleeping just fine of late ... at least as far as I know, and feel as good as I'm likely to, considering my underlying problems with myasthenia gravis. Sure, I heard the warnings about the grave danger to my heart and cardiovascular system that sleep apnea poses – but the last endocardiogram I had gave me a clean bill of health! I feel as guilty as hell about just tossing the confounded torture device that the public paid \$850 for in the closet, but it wasn't *my* idea that I needed it. And if it doesn't help me sleep, how much *do* I need it?

Huge numbers of people prescribed CPAP machines never succeed in being able to use them. The percentage is usually given as 20% ... but I've heard it may be far higher ... in the neighborhood of 60%.

I've always known I sleep lightly, and in recent years I've had bouts of something worse. A few years ago I clearly suffered from apnea because I could sense my tongue closing my throat, and would wake up short of breath. Somehow I got over it – I found ways to position my head to keep my tongue out of the way, and may even have trained myself to keep my tongue to the front of the mouth as well. Whatever really went on, the problem passed, and I stopped waking up from dreams of drowning or being crushed by weights.

Then last year the problem returned. Worse, in a way, I could not even fall asleep to be woken up from sleep. I was only able to catch necessary zees by sitting in a chair, or upright on my bed, with pillows to prevent me falling over backward onto the floor (which I did, two or three times, much to my shock).

But that wasn't sleep apnea! Tests showed I had one lung full of fluids, and more fluid around my heart, squeezing it! A course of diuretics that jeopardized my bedsheets and underwear for a month cleaned all that out, and I started sleeping properly again. Heart and lungs were fine.

The process of clearing the excess fluids *fully* out of my body took months, in fact. I have had occasional relapses where sleep comes more difficultly than it should. But it has never been so bad that I didn't get the sleep I needed, or ever felt starved for air.

Basically, I'm skeptical that I've been properly diagnosed – that obvious physical causes have been overlooked in order to satisfy an intervention-happy respirologist and sell an outrageously expensive machine. Still, I have to consider that I may have more need of it someday, and when that day comes, it'll be there in the back of my closet, waiting like a squat, face-sucking little demon to sit on my face and “help” me sleep...



# VISITATION RIGHTS

*An attempt to describe "visions" earlier tonight, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August*

Something very rare and precious happened earlier this evening. I wasn't especially tired today, but I had been up very early, so around dinnertime I decided to take a nap, or at least rest quietly and let my mind wander, as I sometimes do. I fell into a light sleep, I think, with vivid REM activity, because I seem to recall the whole time was full of absorbing imagery. I've forgotten most of it, but at least two bits stand out -- for one thing, they involved Saara Mar. Surprisingly, though she has often been in my thoughts over the years, I have rarely seen her in my dreams. When I do, I treasure the experience.

In one part of the dream, we were standing in my kitchen, and I asked her for a dirty cup and saucer in her hand, thinking to put it in the sink for washing. She said, "Why bother?" and dropped it ... but before it could strike the ground and shatter, it just vanished. Which, of course, is a somewhat more dramatic version of what she *would* do. She would never clean things as long as they can be unmade, and made new when needed.

The second part was less prosaic. Standing on my balcony over Parkdale, we were annoyed by an immense, oversized satellite dish one of my neighbors had put on the side of the building, blocking some of the view. We hopped over the balcony rail and began to walk on the side of the building, which had become a level plain to us! After removing the huge dish (which simply vanished) and replacing it with a much more efficient unit about the size of a cigarette box, we strolled around the side of the building, even slid back and forth for the fun of it, as though the brick wall was an icy pond ... then sort of jumped into the air and glided down to the street.

Appearances of Saara in my dreams are pretty rare, sometimes bittersweet, but always a sort of epiphany ... and why she should appear tonight, for no obvious reason, I don't know. Do you think maybe that 100-gram bar of 74% cocoa chocolate that I ate just before taking my break had something to do with it?

I'll have to have dark chocolate before sleep more often.

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