

Lost Toys 1

Done by Taral Wayne, around end of Feb 2014, for Arnie's "our" digital apa. I can be reached by e-mail at a new address taral@bell.net 5098 words

You don't know about me without you have read a fanzine by the name of *Broken Toys*; but that ain't no matter. That fanzine was made by Mr. Taral Wayne, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was maybe Mike Glycer, the gafiante Eric Mayer and maybe Aunt Arnie. They is all told about in that fanzine, which is mostly a true zine, with some stretchers, as I said before. – 4 Feb

Those of you who may expect an effort from me in any way proportionate to *Broken Toys* will be sorely disappointed. I have no plans for tricky logos at the top of the first page, illustrations or any layout that I can't do on the spot, using only Word Doc. It is my view that it's enough that I write and produce one reasonably elaborate and generally under-appreciated fanzine every month. Am I superhuman? Maybe I am – but I'm not crazy.

There is an additional reason for my stated policy of underachieving. It is that I am highly suspicious about this apa. In every way it smacks of another of Arnie's high-minded but poorly conceived good ideas. Let's start with the very name of this apa: "TePe," the "Trufannish Electronic Press Exchange." Alright, electronic it is, though "digital" might have been more precise. I also can't complain about "Press Exchange." It's the "Trufannish" that causes the irritable reaction known as "raising my hackles." I would have just said so, but I'm not sure what my hackles are? Anything like "dander?" Giblets? Whatever my hackles may be, they are in a taut, upright posture as I write.

I had thought we were finished with all that nonsense. Too many of our best and brightest, Arnie as well, have written too many words trying to define for all time what we mean by that provocative word, and as yet there has never been a general agreement. I think none is possible. Whatever we might have meant by "trufannish" has been rendered obsolete by the passage of time. Time waits for no fan, and fandom has changed. Who "we" have become are outsiders raining on the parade of thousands of happy, contented consumers of the genre who rightfully take umbrage at our crotchety denigrations. Umbrage. That's another word like "hackles" that I'm not entirely sure I understand the meaning of, but which clearly seems called for here.

So out with "Trufannishness." We who are gathered here can neither add nor detract from the noble intentions behind "Trufannishness." It has all been said, and we will not move the masses who have defined fandom, contrary to our wishes, to mean everything under the sun, so long as it strikes someone's fancy as fun for the moment.

We are, instead, just a group of people who are known to Arnie Katz, and – one hopes – to some measure respected by him for our fine minds, stylish writing and hearts firmly in the right place. We may have some things in common as a group – mainly the lexicon of science fiction and fantasy, perhaps also the experience of a wide-spread community that existed at one time. But, then again, maybe we don't all have even that little in common. Looking at Arnie's list, I know to

one degree or another Graeme Cameron, Steve Green, Eric Mayer, Ross Chamberlain, Andy Hooper, Lorraine Tutihasi, Jacqi Monahan, Shelby Vick and, of course, Arnie himself. I have corresponded with, written or illustrated for, traded zines with, and maybe even feuded with all of them at one time or another. The rest of you might be among Arnie's "Mass Fandom" for all I know, but I presume he would not have asked you to contribute to this, "our" apa, if that was the case. Still, I'm reminded of Corflu. Corflu is intended as a fanzine fan's convention – yet about half the attendees every year seem to have only the most tenuous connections to fanzines, as far as I can tell. Ultimately, Corflu is the convention for people who attend Corflu. I suspect in the long run, TePe will turn out to be the apa for people who are members of TePe. But we shall see.

Why else is TePe a bad idea? For one thing, what are we going to talk about that we probably haven't said or could say on FaceBook? Mind you, it's my opinion that FaceBook is gradually sucking the vital juices out of the Old School of fandom. There are almost half-a-dozen groups on FaceBook just for traditional fans, but what do they post? What I've seen mainly is the same sort of folderol I see posted anywhere else on Facebook. There was a vogue, for a time, of posting old photographs taken at conventions, but that had its own downside. If you weren't there, what is the significance of a photo of five people you never met or don't know standing in a hallway in a Cincinnati hotel in 1966? The other perennial favourite of the fannish groups is to announce your next issue, as though it wouldn't be noticed when it appeared at eFanzines or when you mailed it. I freely admit that I use the fan groups for little more than that myself, at this point.

What is there to say about fandom, most of the time? If one attends a great many conventions, or is lucky enough to live in a center where there are frequent fannish get-togethers, parties or formal meetings of one sort or another, you might enlighten the rest of us what it's like. Myself, I live in Toronto, where most of the fandom we'd recognize as fandom is obsessed with running the local convention. Most of the local fans have little or no interest in "my" fandom, so have almost no exposure to anything I do in fandom. So, while I have dropped in on their monthly "pub" nights from time to time, I've derived mixed benefits from the practice. And now that getting about has crossed a threshold to become too difficult for me to attempt lightly, I have stopped going to "First Thursdays" at the Fox's Den entirely. Cut off from local roots, all I have to say about fandom is what anyone can discover for themselves by frequenting eFanzines.com, *Ansible* and the *File 770* blog site.

Alright, I've aired my skepticism: I am satisfied for the moment. I have nothing more to say about Trufannishness, Hugos, Corflus, fanzines or fans socializing. Everything I had to say is already on record, and seems tiresome even to me. Perhaps I ought to say, "especially to me." Whatever I will write about in the end is likely to be whatever pops into my mind, very likely on an on-going basis as it occurs to me. Be prepared for the worst. – 4 Feb.

The Glass Eye Blinks For the first time in I don't know how many years, I have television again. And what television! Way over 100 channels, wi-fi, hi-res, wide-screen, and all at a very reasonable cost. And you know what? By the end of the first day, I had reacquainted myself with that old joke: 100 channels to choose from and nothing to watch.

By far the majority of the channels were sports networks. Why a sports fan in Memphis has to have his own channel and a sports fan in Seattle has to have another, I just don't know. It's the same sports. Even in 24 hours, there must be more air time available than major sports to fill it. Nevertheless, there are a dozen or two dozen sports channels.

There are a similar number of music video channels. That's a little more reasonable, I suppose. One is for heavy metal, a second for hard rock, a third for soft rock, a fourth for jazz, a fifth for country, a sixth for Motown, a seventh for orchestral, an eighth for folk, a ninth for rap, a tenth for Latin American, an eleventh for polkas, a twelfth for Arabic pop songs, a thirteenth for the Hindi hit parade, a fourteenth for Polynesian war chants ... and finally six or seven more for movie sound tracks, national anthems and religious music. I can certainly see wanting to avoid what you don't like, but this degree of specialization amazes me. Doesn't it boggle *your* mind to picture someone who listens exclusively to Korean street-dance-rap for hours on end? Yet Gangnam Style went viral.

Then there are numerous iterations of NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, CBC, Global, City and other network stations. Each has minor program variations from its affiliates in Montreal, Vancouver, Washington or Atlanta. The same multiplicity of similar programming exists among the specialty news channels.

As well, there are the channels for home shopping, fly-fishing, home decoration, cooking, recycling, martial arts, motorcycle restoration, antique auctions, high fashion, game shows and, of course, 24-hour Bingo.

I found it a little disconcerting to notice that there were a nearly endless list of channels not only in French (this is Canada, after all), but also in Chinese, Arabic, Hindi, Punjabi, and Filipino. Is English in Canada on its way to becoming another minority language? It appears so, though we probably have nothing to worry about it in my lifetime. I'm taking lessons in Klingon and Sindarin Elvish, though, just in case.

But of all those channels, the one ones that really matter to me are CBC, TLC, History, Discovery, Comedy, Teletoon, Nickelodeon and YTV. The rest are useless dross or redundant variations.

At the end of the second day, I noticed that I hadn't turned on the television. I wonder if I haven't made a mistake? – 5 Feb

Listen Up! I can't say that switching to Bell has been trouble-free. A glitch developed almost immediately on the first attempt to send mail. The browser would not. It would ask me for my password over and over and over, but it would not send my mail. Several sessions with Bell technical support were unproductive, even though we went through all my settings several times, and even changed my password twice – my account just wasn't working as it should.

Finally, a senior Bell techie called me, and we went through the numbers again. This time, she discovered the glitch. It was a wrong setting at *their* end. So it appeared that my problems were over.

Were they? Nearly so. Actually, next day I encountered an entirely *new* problem. When I batch-mailed my new issue of *Broken Toys*, it was seen by Bell as spam, and my account was frozen. I had to start a whole new fight to get it activated again. Will this happen every time I mail my zine, I asked tech support? Maybe. If I send it in small batches of, say, 25, will *that* avoid the problem? They couldn't say. Life is full of uncertainties.

In the meantime, my new address is: taral@bell.net

Please make a note of it. – Feb 8

Freedom of Repression Last night I got a call from an artist I know in California. Let's call him "Marvin." He's a misanthrope who makes his living selling fetish art to furies. Although not one of his opinions is remotely intelligent, I usually found him amusing on these occasions when we shared a convention artist's table back in the '90s. As a source, he is peccable. I can't deny it. Yet, I think I have to take the news seriously, since I've now heard it from a second source.

"Marvin" and I have a mutual acquaintance who I'll call "Webb." He has been arrested and charged with possession of kiddie porn. This is bad *ju-ju!* Although a photograph is nothing but some developed emulsion on a paper backing, or a digital facsimile thereof, the law treats those found guilty like serial killers. Those merely *accused* of it are treated as though their guilt is a foregone conclusion. From my sources, it appears this artist had been part of a P2P group – a Peer to Peer connection with other computers that allow members to access open areas on your hard drive at will. Some idiot stored a number of files on "Webb's" hard drive that he had no business uploading. "Webb" discovered the files and deleted them immediately.

It was too late, however. The Feds saw the files and had a list of the members of the P2P group, and came down on them like a ton of bricks that had been strategically placed there for the specific purpose of falling on them. It probably had.

At this point I enter conjecture. When files are deleted, usually all that happens is that the header the hard drive uses to locate them is stripped away. But the file is not really gone until that sector is written over. Hence, deleted files are usually on your drive long after you think they're gone. (In fact, that was the crucial point in Sharyn McCrumb's "Bimbos of the Death Sun.") The police use software that recovers such files easily. There are programs that will shred deleted files so that they cannot be recovered, but few ordinary people think about installing it. Being innocent, they have nothing to hide, right? Unless they belong to a P2P group, that is.

Federal officers not only arrested "Webb," they seized the poor bugger's computer and other property, including a sizable collection of ancient coins. What have ancient coins to do with the supposed crime? Nothing at all. But thanks to easily corrupted RICO Laws, police have only to claim that property was bought with illegal profits, and they can take it. The property is promptly sold at auction, and the money pocketed by the Police Department or City treasury. Even if charges are later dropped, or the accused found innocent, his property is gone. At best he can sue for its book value, and write off any sentimental value it had. I corresponded with "Webb" about his collection of coins, and, money aside, know that he will miss it as much as I would miss mine.

So now "Webb" faces a ten year stretch. Without much money, and almost everything he owned of value seized by the cops, he will have to depend on the skills and zeal of an overworked and possibly disillusioned public defender. I wish him luck.

Unfortunately, among the property seized was "Webb's" considerable collection of vintage firearms. Kiddie porn *and* a gun nut. Even if the arrest was in Arizona, they'll eat him alive.

This is hardly an isolated incident in furry fandom. Just last year, another artist I knew slightly, “Bick,” was caught in a sting operation, and charged with molesting children. I’ve heard he confessed to the police and is ashamed of what he’s done. I’ve been told he was set up and badgered into a false confession. He won’t talk with any of his old friends, so we may not know the full story behind all this for a long time, if ever. Truthfully, I don’t know what to think. “Bick” didn’t seem like a bad sort – gentle, good humored – but I didn’t really know him well. People’s private lives can sometimes be far stranger than we imagine.

I used to do commissions for a minor Australian writer who I’ll call “Kent.” I know him better than either “Webb” or “Bick,” and his arrest a few years ago for possessing kiddy porn came as a real shock. No one who knew “Kent” thought he could be guilty, and it was a *cause celebre* in furry fandom. Dozens wrote to the Australian consulate protesting. For a special reason, I was among them.

The charges had been brought against “Kent” on the basis of the proverbial nude photograph of his newborn son on a bear-skin rug. “Kent” left the film with the equivalent of “Blacks,” who promptly turned the roll over the cops! Next thing “Kent” knew he was thrown to the floor in his own house by a gang of armed thugs in black body armour, who screamed “POLICE” at the wife and children while cuffing the father, then dragged him off.

The prosecution’s list of charges described “Kent” as the head of pornographic ring, and presented as “evidence” a large amount of perfectly ordinary furry artwork found on “Kent’s” computer. To the prosecutor, big eyes and big heads meant “children.” Never mind the big tits or adult situations. Furry fandom itself was described as a well-organized community of sexual deviants.

Well, to be honest, there’s *some* truth to that. Furies, like anime fans, get into some pretty weird shit. But a criminal organization it is not. I’ve seen more thousands of furry drawings than I like to remember, and damn few have ever strayed over the line into pederasty. Those artists who do stray thus tend to be regarded by others with a carefully cultivated wariness, if not shunned outright. But even then, one thing should not be forgotten. We are not talking about *photographs*. We are talking about works of art – drawings, paintings or digital rendering – which are based on no real person. A drawing is merely a symbol, not a totem that injures a living child if black magic is performed over it. Pedophilia is no more tolerated by the vast majority of furies than it is by other, more-or-less normal groups of people, such as science fiction fans.

Yet “Kent” was thoroughly railroaded for material that amounted to nothing more than a collection of racy cartoons. He was denied the right to show character references, or any evidence that the prosecutor’s case was based on figments of the imagination. In fact, “Kent” was pretty much forced to stand before the court defenseless while the prosecution demanded an outrageous sentence. (It might have been 15 or 20 years.) Despite the obviously unfair nature of the trial, “Kent” was convicted. It was a politically motivated conviction, obviously. The judge no more believed “Kent” was guilty of anything than the prosecutor did. But the officers of the court looked good for delivering a conviction against a fashionable villain. If anyone believed one mote of the charges, “Kent’s” sentence wouldn’t have been suspended ... as it was. Within one or two years, he even had his passport back. By then, however, he had been bankrupted, missed business opportunities, his marriage torn apart and his kids put into the custody of his sister-in-law.

I had a much more personal involvement in this case. Ironically, *my* art was part of the evidence used to convict “Kent.” Specifically, the prosecutor exhibited a drawing of a nekkid bunny

leaning over a huge birthday cake, showing her butt. That she was fully adult was impossible to overlook. She had jugs like coconuts. (I knew my customers.) But the prosecutor actually took the time to count the *candles on the cake*, and counting only 13 he came to the conclusion that she was therefore a minor. Had anyone bothered to ask me, I would have explained that there was a perfectly innocent reason for this – *I ran out of room on the cake*.

Will “Webb,” go to jail over art he did not even have in his possession, but once unknowingly had? Is he even innocent, or is his story simply a collection of alibis? I don’t know “Webb” well enough to be absolutely certain, but my feeling is that he’s innocent, and the little more I’ve learned in the meantime makes me more sure of it. “Webb” has been released on his own recognizance –without bail. Isn’t *that* curious? It would almost give you the impression the court doesn’t really think he’s guilty. I’ve also found that there is a unexpected link between “Webb’s” case and “Brick’s.” It turns out that both fans both belonged to the same Tucson furry group. Because of “Bick’s” arrest, the cops must have been spying on the rest of the group.

I don’t know about you, but I find all this deeply unsettling. “Brick” may be guilty as hell, but “Kent” and “Webb” appear to be the victims of cynical witch-hunts. Don’t tell me we live in a free country. I don’t believe it. Not as long as we face serious punishment on such flimsy evidence and for the crime of merely having seen forbidden pictures. – Feb 11

Kneecapping the FAANs I think I may not be able to vote on the FAAn Awards this year. For the past several years, I’ve made the effort, but with an increasing sense of misgiving when the results were released.

It was around 2005 or 2006 that I began to show more interest in fanzines than I had the previous decade or so. Within a couple more years, I was flooding fanzines with more and more articles. Then I started to publish again. Two years ago, I began *Broken Toys* and published monthly, all while continuing to write for fanzines. As I’ve noted before, the strain was becoming noticeable.

Moreover, I was not feeling the thrill I used to feel in seeing my name in print. More and more often I was skimming fanzines that came in the mail or that I downloaded, looking for egoboo or comment hooks, but only occasionally reading a piece to savor it. It was clear that my enthusiasm was wearing thin.

One of the things I did during this period was to vote for the FAAns. My enthusiasm for the “fannish” alternative to the Hugos has also worn thin, however. In the last few years, it seems that mostly the same people are nominated again and again in every category, and an even smaller circle wins. You can get even money by guessing that on a random year either Dan Steffan or Steve Stiles will win as best fanartist, with slightly longer odds on D. West or Brad Foster. The rest of the nominees are almost equally certain, since there really aren’t that many of us. It’s the same with Best Fanwriter. Odds were once heavily in favour of Mike Glycer and Dave Langford. Now they’re in favour of Andrew Hooper, Claire Briarley and Robert Lichtman. The choice of runners-up is a little larger than the choice of fanartists, but is still quite predictable. Best fanzine will likely be *Banana Wings*, *Trapdoor* or *Chunga*. Best letter hack will be Robert Lichtman or Lloyd Penney, almost without question. Best fanzine cover might surprise us by picking Alan White this time, but I suspect it will be one by Stiles, Steffan or West.

Now, does this seem wrong to anyone? Shouldn't there be more of an element of surprise than this? Either the 75 or 100 voters are not taking a wide enough view of the fanzine field, or the fanzine field is dangerously small.

I don't claim to be an enlightened voter myself. Faced with another blank ballot this year, I realized that I could practically just copy down how I voted last year. Not only have my tastes not changed since this time in 2013, if anything they've narrowed as I pay less and less attention to material at the periphery of my interests. It's gotten to the point where I just don't want to vote and see the same fans win as did last time, even though I had mainly voted for them.

You could argue that for several years now, the same six or eight fans have been the absolute best fanzine fandom has to offer. But I don't believe it could possibly be that clear-cut.

Instead, I think there is a visible pattern to who wins who doesn't, and ultimately the determining factor may be your sociability. Do you go to Corflu? Do you have friends who go to Corflu?

Do the FAAns tend to be merely the Award for Fanzine Fans who go to Corflu? And isn't that the reason we abandoned the Hugos, because they were going mainly to fans who were highly visible at the Worldcon?

You have no idea how much it pains me to write a sentence that Nailini Haynes might agree with.

Whether or not I'm reading too much into this, it remains so that the awards are too predictable for their own good, and that I'm not very motivated to go through the motions again.

Why is it that I have trouble sleeping at night? I used to sleep like a log. My only complaint in the years before I was 60 was that I sometimes fell asleep before I could rescue Spock and Kirk from Darth Vader, or that I wouldn't have time to explain to Sherlock Holmes how The Joker got away.

There were occasions when sleep *wouldn't* come that easily. The first night of any camping trip typically left me wide awake in a hot, sweaty sleeping bag, lying on uncomfortably stony ground for 7 or 8 hours, now and then peeling the bag off me to slip out of the tent for a piss while Victoria snored in the other bag. Mind you, I experienced some epiphanies in such moments. I was literally gobsmacked when I stepped out of the tent and stared right at the face of the Devil's Tower, silvered by the full moon as the Pleiades rose over its summit. The scale and majesty of the sight was breathtaking. *Close Encounters* isn't a patch on it. On a different trip, I stepped out of the tent into the desert, the Badlands of South Dakota all around me, and the silver arch of the Milky Way overhead. But most of the time, crawling out of a sleeping bag like a moth emerging from its chrysalis with a full bladder is merely irksome. Outside is only darkness, and the ground is dirty and stony under your bare feet, then next morning you have to brush bits of leaf and bark out of your sleeping gear.

As I got older, sleep became gradually more of an unpredictable prize. I slept long, irregular hours that left me wide awake for the next day and a half. As long as sleep was inevitable, though, I didn't mind very much.

I began to become alarmed about my sleep a couple of years ago, when I caught a flu or cold and couldn't sleep a wink for three or four days. It wasn't because my head was stuffed up or my nose ran incessantly – though it was and it did. I simply *could not sleep*. As soon as I came anywhere near sleep, my breathing would grow heavily, my heart start pumping as though to put out a fire somewhere and my body would demand I get up. Twenty minutes later, I'd start to nod off in the middle of a book, and lie down again for another try at sleeping. The same thing would happen. My thoughts would grow disorganized as I drifted off to sleep ... then bam, bam, bam, my heart would slug as if at baseballs, and I'd be breathing as though I'd just finished 25 push-ups. My body just wouldn't let me sleep.

It went for four days like that, with one or two periods in which I caught perhaps 3 or 4 hours of slumber. I looked into everything as a possible cause – including the stimulants in an inhaler I used briefly to overcome wheezing. Nothing seemed plausible. But I got over the cold eventually, and began to sleep normally again. It was just an unusual symptom of that strain of virus, I reasoned. Hopefully, I'd never get that strain again.

Vain hope; I caught it again that very winter. In fact, I've had it two or three times more since then, if it even *is* the strain of cold or flu that's responsible. All I know is that the new paradigm for me is that if I come down with the sniffles, I can expect to give up sleep for the next three or four days. Strangely, I can drop off into a deep, profound sleep in mere seconds while trying to work at the computer keyboard. No matter how hard I try to resist nodding off, I'm apt to find myself unexpectedly impacting the display monitor with my nose before I even realize I'm at risk.

Now I have lost all confidence in my ability to sleep. Most nights I lay my head down on the pillow and fuss about my position. I have to favour my sore leg, and keep the ball of the other foot off the mattress because it gets painful after a few minutes if I don't, and I seem to focus on my chest going up and down, up and down with every breath. I can no longer abide any weight at all on my chest, and since I sleep on my side, that leaves me with the awkward problem of what to do with my upper arm. If it isn't forward of my center of gravity, it drags me over onto my back. But my sore leg won't let me lie in *that* position. Sleeping has become a nightmare.

Nor do I have a Devil's Tower to enthrall me in my sleepless torments. Instead, I sit on the side of the bed, rocking gently back and forth in an effort to relax and perhaps feel ready for another crack at the pillow. More often than not, that's when I fall asleep. Usually I catch myself falling over, but more than once I've ended up on the floor, grateful I hadn't cracked my skull. But lay my head on the pillow, and it's wake-up time again! I wish I knew what the fuck was going on.

Lately, I have been adjusting. When I begin to nod off at the computer, I just lean back and sleep. I can snore away a good hour or more and wake up fresh as newly opened Champagne. In bed, I've found I can sleep if I'm propped up into some degree of a sitting position, or, oddly, leaning on one elbow, with a small pillow between my shoulder and jaw. After a little more practice, I think I may again be welcome to the restorative bosom of sleep on a regular basis. But not before I have warned Steve Zodiac not to trust the scheming robot, Bender, of course! – 13 Feb 2014

Here I was worried that I had no ideas to write up for the next issue of *Broken Toys*. I think I *just wrote most of it*.