



Dpuntia 9

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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs at Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It can be had for \$1 per issue, letter of comment, or trade for your zine.

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts an Opuntia sp., probably polyacantha. It originally appeared in the Spring 1992 issue of DINNY'S DIGEST (artist unknown), published by the Calgary Zoological Society.

EDITORIAL: I generally avoid subscribing to small-press SF zines because of their high mortality rate and poor business practices (such as not answering letters). But recently an ad in LOCUS caused me to gamble a money order on a new semiprozine called FUTURES PAST. So far, two issues have been published, and very nicely done they are.

This zine is devoted to the history of SF, and goes about it in a unique style. Each issue covers one year, starting with 1926; issue #2 is 1927, and so forth. Although the history of SF in this decade is mostly the history of Hugo Gernsback, there are other aspects covered. Issue #2 covers AMAZING but there are articles on Fritz Lang and his pioneering movie METROPOLIS, lists of books and films of 1927, and an account of WEIRD TALES (with lists of contents). Some letters to the editor are reprinted from AMAZING. Just to show how little things change, the current problem with some zines today not printing loccer addresses is as old as a 1927 letter from a reader asking that addresses be printed in AMAZING.

Subscription is US\$20 to FUTURES PAST, Box 610, Convey, Ohio 45832, USA.

In one of my other lives, I edit "Calgary STAMPede", the clubzine of the Calgary Philatelic Society. I have an article coming up in that zine comparing postage rates in Canada since 1875 (the year Calgary was founded) with hourly pay rates. This gives a more accurate comparison of the true cost of postage. Unadjusted numbers are, of course, meaningless. It may have "only" cost 2¢ to mail a letter in 1900, but the average hourly wage then was 22¢ an hour. Using inflation indexes and consumer price indexes does not give an accurate comparison because the calculation of these figures is based on a basket of goods that does not apply to all consumers, and because such an increase only affects those on fixed incomes. If the price of booze goes up 10%, the inflation rate for me is zero, because I am a teetotaler. For a tavern, it could be a major hit against them.

In 1875, domestic postage was 6¢ and the hourly wage was 30¢, so it took 20% of an hour's pay to mail a letter. Interestingly, the cheapest real cost of postage was in the 1970s, a decade commonly thought of as highly inflationary. For most of that decade, it took less than 2% of an hour's pay to buy a stamp. The Great Depression, commonly thought of as a time of cheap living, had a very high cost of mailing, about 6% of hourly pay.

It is noteworthy that the real cost of postage goes up and down in cycles. In real, uninflated dollars, postage rates remained almost constant when compared to the average wage during the 1980s.

We are currently moving into the nadir of the Kondratieff economic cycle. This is a sixty-year cycle. Last time, there was a depression. Will the cycle be unbroken? Or will we just have a decade of 10% unemployment and low inflation?

And now to more accounts of life in the Dominion of Panada. Over to you, Garth ...

Garth Spencer

David New points out that the current U.B.C. club, UBCSFS, was founded in 1973 or 1974 and almost immediately started publishing a fanzine. The club immediately started accumulating books and trade fanzines.

Susan Wood (famous for *Amor de Cosmos*) first made contact with BCSFA at V-Con 3. She and Eli Cohen moved to Vancouver in 1976, after Susan was offered a teaching position in U.B.C.'s English Department. She later became assistant professor and won tenure.

Susan Wood was a Well-Known Fan by 1975, when she had won a Best Fanwriter Hugo (1974) and was FanGoH at Aussiecon I. In all she was nominated for the fan Hugo 10 times: won the fanzine Hugo for *Energumen* with Mike Glicksohn in 1973; won the Best Fanwriter Hugo in 1974, and again in 1977.

After 1975, her fanwriting and fanactivity were reduced, as she was working on a thesis on English-Canadian and French-Canadian agrarian novels, her teaching work load and, well, a tangled bureaucracy. Her writing was mostly book reviews in *Algol* (an SF magazine since survived by *SF Chronicle*), a fanzine review column in *Amazing* (in which Robert Runté discovered fandom) and the *Pacific Northwest Review of Books* (founded by John Berry and Loren MacGregor). Most of her fannish energy went to A Women's Apa, which was founded upon a suggestion of hers, and she became greatly involved in the feminist movement. She also founded "A Room of Our Own", a series of informal feminist programs at many Northwest and World SF conventions. Her personal contacts were maintained by congoing and through her personalzine, *Amor*; and more and more, her sercon material drew her toward professional SF.

The Silurian Period

V-Con 5 (1976) was held, for the first time, in May, and at U.B.C. (in the Gage Residence). Gage was not available during the term, which necessitated the date change, but it meant both lower attendance (says Ed Beauregard) and fewer expenses ("cheaper rooms, great facilities" — Robert Runté). Larry Niven was GoH and David George was chair. *A droite*, one benefit of this con was that BCSFA confans got to work with the U.B.C. conference people. *A gauche*, the con merely broke even, and led to more personal feuding.

My one-shot (*Inside from the Inside*) gives much of the background on problems with V-Con 5. For Norma and I it was the end of our unbridled enthusiasm for fandom. Everything since then has had at least a shade of grey. One rapid consequence of the V-Con 5 disaster was the disintegration of the Westercon XXX committee. ... (Ed B.)

Ed Beauregard wrote his first and only fan publication to point out what he feels went seriously wrong; and he kept being faced with less than good bookkeeping.

It is of interest to look at what *Inside from the Inside* had to say. For one thing, several real, urgent issues inherent in V-Con 5 were ignored by Tom Balabanov, by Fran Skene, and by the newsletter (at least Ed says so). For another thing, Ed pointed out his criteria for a successful con — not just profitability, but also fan enjoyment, and new BCSFA members resulting after the con. He boiled this down to a 100-point rating scale:

Profitability	up to 35 points
Fan enjoyment	up to 35 points
New members	up to 30 points

Each profit point represents about \$20, reflecting my 'ideal' profit figure of \$700 for our conventions. The enjoyment figure is purely and totally subjective. Each membership point

represents two new members signed up at or just after the convention. (Ed B.)

Because he totalled V-Con 5's score at less than 50, he considered the con a failure. Financially, as previously noted, the con only broke even; Ed attributed this to low attendance — the con was held when University was out, and on the Victoria day weekend.

David George had claimed that no-one leaves Vancouver on a long weekend. Ed concluded that V-Con 5 proved him wrong. Attendance was estimated at 700 - 800 eight months before the con (except by Mike Bailey); about 400 actually showed up. Ed felt this worked out nicely — no overcrowding. (Complaints at V-Con 4 about crowding led Ed to give it a lower enjoyment rating. At a membership of about 600, Ed observed, the con changed not only in size but in the kind of event it became.) But the low attendance was not good financially.

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MIDDLE GUARD (Mesozoic Era)

The Devonian Period

Westercon XXX was held at U.B.C.'s Totem Residence in 1977. (Apparently this took the place of V-Con that year.) Helene Flanders came to Westercon, and there discovered fandom; she quickly became active in BCSFA, and later edited *BCSFazine* from #57 - 71. She also worked on V-Cons 6 through 9, and was well-known for her flamboyant costumes.

I have yet to discover who the official GoHs were. Fran Skene was chair. Westercon XXX gained BCSFA a whole bunch of new members subsequent to the con; attendance is supposed to have been around 1000. Among other items of interest at the con were the Flying Karamazov Bros.

Another item of interest here is that this was the first-ever con for most of the Old Guard in the Edmonton SF and Comic Art Society; Westercon XXX was a major influence on Edmonton fandom, and the source of most of their ideas of what a con was. ESFCAS' Lysistrata

Corps took form at Westercon XXX, and several ESFACKians took copious notes and based their plans for NonCon 1 on them.

Robert Runté writes, "Westercon also made a huge profit, \$2,000 — first time a con made so much that they didn't know what to do with it — eventually bought an E-stencil machine and banked the rest. (Cons were NOT supposed to be profit-making; supposed to just break even, the other smacks of ripping off fans)."

On the other hand, Ed Beauregard writes:

As had happened with V-Con 3, the Westercon XXX books were dumped in my lap after the convention, when the treasurer proved unable to figure out what had happened. Despite very poor accounting practices, Westercon XXX made a very healthy profit, the best to that time. This is a point I will refer to ... later on in discussing V-Con 12.

One funny story about this con: Robert Runté and Dave Vereschagin, later luminaries of Edmonton fanzine fandom, both came from Edmonton to this V-Con, they even stayed in adjacent rooms, *but did not meet* until three months later ... Believe it, or not!

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Meanwhile, in the other corner, Vaughn Fraser published his first *Fantarama*. This was a short-lived SF and comic art magazine.

Len Wong writes that the Vancouver Comic Book Club was formed this year, "thanks to an LIP grant awarded to another community facility, the Cedar Cottage Neighborhood House. The group's original founder was Ray Mickus (sp?), who worked at Cedar Cottage and had to use up all his LIP money by the end of summer."

Len Wong seems to have been one of VCBC's earliest members; so was Vaughn Fraser, both represented in some of the earliest numbers of the *VCBC Bulletin*. By October 10 - 12 people were coming regularly to VCBC meetings (whose attendance disappointed the execs), and plans were underway for a third Cedarcon. Other members included J.H. Larmour, Elaine Mah, Abram Larmour and Peter Hackett.

Fraser pointed out in the newsletter that VCBC was started without very clearly defined objectives, but at this point, the club's scope of interests and activities was sorting itself out, and Fraser sought to spell them out for members.

Fraser kept running into the psychology that some people wanted to trade concessions (e.g. free VCBC memberships, dealer's tables) for favours to the club, or to Fraser's zines. He emphasized that VCBC was a non-profit organization; contributions were accepted gratis.

The Permian Period

V-Con 6 was held in 1978, the year that Steve Forty learned to use the Gestetner for the program book (or was it 1977?). Fran Skene was chair. What became known later as the "Surrey Contingent" joined after this con. (*SFA Digest*, #1)

Gerald Boyko suggested about this time that *BCSFazine* #100 be made a genzine with collected fanhistorical material; a suggestion which was taken up, long after a hundredth issue would have normally come out.

Meanwhile, over at Simon Fraser University, something unlooked-for was stirring ... something obscure, something almost ... fannish? The Gamesters of Triskelion were a gaming/SF club formed by four students in the fall of 1978; members of the core group included William C.S.A.A. Lowe, Ross Kerr, and Jacqueline (Stirling) Lee.

The Gamesters' Guide, their first newsletter, was published in October 1978, and was intended to be a bimonthly publication, edited by William Lowe. There were about three subsequent newsletters, until the summer of 1979.

Originally the Gamesters of Triskelion was a book-buying and discussion club. Membership varied from 10 to 23.

In 1979, members of UBCSFS included Lance Munro (later a BCSFA regular), Richard Bartrop (later an artist in Calgary, appearing at Conversions), and Offer Kuban. Bartrop, Kuban and others

founded *Horizons* in '79 as a monthly forum for the University members' fiction. In 1980, the name became *Horizons SF*.

By August of 1978, VCBC had held several Cedarcons (about eight were planned per year), and a new executive was appointed. Vaughn Fraser and Harland Ronning, as chair and treasurer, were replaced by Abram Larmour, Keith Partridge and Doug Brown. Later, a Jay O'Keeffe joined the club.

By that winter, or the spring of 1979, Len Wong was president; Keith Partridge was treasurer; and the *Bulletin* editorship was rotated among Jay O'Keeffe, Abram Larmour, and Peter Cocking.

RAIN (Vancouver's February relaxicon) started in 1979 or so. There are different accounts as to how this began.

Ed Beauregard writes:

The first Rain was conceived in 1978 by some of the people who were not prepared to work on a Mike Bailey concon. It started taking on the character of a full-blown convention, until Norma in particular confronted several of the Key Rain committee members and very forcefully expressed her opinion of so dividing our efforts. Thereafter the relaxicon aspects of Rain were emphasized.

In 1982 or 83, this seemed to change. But we'll get to that.

Another account is that Rain was supposed to raise funds for a Vancouver Worldcon bid. Len Wong writes:

In the beginning, Rain took place as a relaxicon, with any profits going towards Vancouver's proposed Worldcon bid. Admission to the weekend was a mere \$5, and booze was purchased on a donation basis. ... (My) point is, you knew (then) where the bucks were going.

V-Con 7 (1979) at Gage featured Jack Vance as GoH, with Mike Bailey as chair, and made a profit.

Bailey says he kept a tight rein on things, but, as usual heretofore, he couldn't determine where the bar money went. He suggested a ticket system, so that the bar sales could be inventoried, but was vetoed. Up till then, the bar had never made more than \$200, which didn't tally with the amount of liquor served, or with the markup. (A ticket system was in use by V-Con 13.) Ed Beauregard says that "the committee was somewhat short-handed, partly because of the residue of previous feuds and the number of people who wouldn't work with Mike. ...

The most memorable result of V-Con 7 (from the convention organizing viewpoint) is that we were kicked out of Gage. This was largely due to an incident on the Saturday night of the convention. The Gage convention co-ordinator came into the bar (which was in the same room as at V-Con 13), to complain to Mike about the behaviour of some convention members.

... Mike pointed out that what these people did on their own time outside scheduled programming rooms was no concern of his. This, though technically true, was not a wise reply.

There was a Westercon bid under way at the time, for Westercon 34. Becky Bennett (now Becky Thomson) was chairing the bid, although it looked for a while like I might be shanghaied into chairing the convention (something I had previously successfully avoided). The week before we went to San Francisco to bid for the convention, our booking at U.B.C. was cancelled, and we were informed that we were no longer welcome there unless we were to book the entire Gage facility (including all accommodation rooms). I scurried around to find another hotel, eventually settling on the Holiday Inn Harbourside (where V-Con 9 would be held), but the damage to our bid was too great, and we lost by a considerable margin. Following that, I declared in BCAPA that I would oppose any further efforts to bid for Westercons or any other outside rotating conventions. When David George's Westercon bid came up in 1982, I carried through on that. (Ed B.)

It is of interest here to explain something about Westercon bidding procedure. Like Worldcons, Westercon sites are selected two years in advance of being held, and bids start promoting their site and soliciting support at least a year before *that*. Consequently, the Vancouver in '89 bid came up for site selection in 1987, and the '86 bid in 1985.

Steve Forty remarks that by about this time, *BCSFazine*, BCAPA and VANAPA had been printed on the BCSFA Gestetner machine, but the machines have always been available to other BCSFAns to print their own zines on. Steve started running into the psychology that people came to *him* to print their material, *for* them; he put a stop to that.

1979 was also the year when Susan Wood edited *Language of the Night*, collected essays on SF and writing by Ursula K. LeGuin. Jerry Kaufman writes in *The Best of Susan Wood* that, about this time, Susan may have stood on the edge of professional SF editing. She did extensive work, as well, on Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *Amazons* anthology.

Vaughn Fraser published his last *Fantarama* this year.

The Jurassic Period

V-Con 8 was held at the Delta River Inn in Richmond, B.C., on May 23 - 25, 1980. Pat Burrows indicates that this was in the nature of a joint BCSFA-VCBC production, largely because Vaughn Fraser chaired it; ProGoH was Roger Zelazny, there were comic-artist guests, and Ted White (then the editor of *Heavy Metal*) was a big help. The Delta River Inn may not have been a great choice — one of my contributors notes "this is where our years of hotel troubles start." There was much debate over the comics theme:

Vaughn Fraser wanted to run a combined comics and SF convention for V-Con 8. As many fans are hidebound reactionaries, there was a lot of opposition to that idea. Norma and I thought it should be given a chance, and we supported

Vaughn strongly. As U.B.C. was no longer available, we had to find a new location. After some looking, we settled on the Delta River Inn ... I negotiated probably the best hotel agreement I've ever managed, and we really did well because of it. The comics aspect integrated reasonably well, and certainly didn't detract from the convention.

At V-Con 8, however, we pushed ourselves too hard. In combination with a number of personal tragedies which followed over the next year and a half, it caused us to drop out of active fandom again for a while. (Ed B.)

I received a note that this was the first con at which the bar made a substantial profit; I also received a note that V-Con 8 was the first year in which V-Con proper made a substantial profit.

Ken Wong found out in June of 1980 that some BCSFAns didn't think their club had a constitution. He replied to this by printing copies of the constitution which is now in force.

The University of B.C. SF club may have started up around this time.

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In November 1980, after *Language of the Night* was in publication and Eli Cohen had returned to New York, Susan Wood was found dead in her apartment. She was pronounced dead of heart failure at a Vancouver hospital. The coroner found she died accidentally of heart congestion brought on by a reaction between anti-depressants and a common drug for menstrual cramps.

Susan had been a guest at many cons, influenced Northwest fandom, was a great help to BCSFA activities, and may have been the first to start fanhistory displays.

A scholarship in Susan's name has been established at Carleton University, her alma mater, for students of Canadian literature.

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In fall 1980 a founder of the Gamesters of Triskelion came back to SFU and reactivated the club, announcing himself Manager. Meetings, newsletters, film shows, a library, and *Vulcan Mail* transpired. *Vulcan Mail* carried on for three issues until Nov. 1981.

Apparently, when William C.S.A.A. Lowe left SFU, this club discontinued publishing; what remained was simply a gaming club.

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The Cretaceous Period

V-Con 9 (1981), at the Holiday Inn Harbourside, hosted the recently-founded Canadian SF & Fantasy Award, for the first time on the West Coast.

I have notes that more experienced concommers were rather tired, and this year's committee was somewhat inexperienced; plus, the concomm was given rather little briefing on whatever CSFFA procedure was. Also, Pat Burrows indicates that the chair, Fran Skene, wanted to put on a relaxicon, and some people fought her on that.

Ed Beauregard writes:

I stayed peripherally involved through WCSFCCA, which I helped set up. There was a lot of discussion about how WCSFCCA should work, and how closely involved it should be in the running of conventions. Among most of those who had been or were likely to be convention chairs, *the feeling was that WCSFCCA should just provide seed money, and should have little to do with the actual running of the convention.* Therefore, the subsequent comments about WCSFCCA's "abandoning" (V-Con 12) leave me unmoved. (Ed B.) (*My emphasis — G.S.*)

Many years later Al Betz expanded on Ed's remarks. Apparently there was a feeling going around that the WCSFCCA organizers were trying to "take over" V-Cons, and the organizers bent over backwards to avoid that appearance. How did this policy work out, you may ask?

V-Con 9 gave Susan Wood the 1981 CSFFA posthumously, for lifetime contributions to the field of Canadian SF. The trophy was given in the form of a calligraphic scroll.

I briefly attended V-Con 9, dropped in one evening on V-Con 10, and so cannot comment on them. It seems, however, that our hard-won knowledge of the disastrous nature of the Canadian long weekend on attendance was lost by V-Con 10. That is another use of WCSFCCA: to pass on knowledge of what *doesn't* work. (Ed B.)

(As touches on the CSFFA: In 1985, Fran Skene wrote that the first she ever heard of the award was when Bob Atkinson wrote her a long letter, telling her, as it were out of the blue, that V-Con 9 had the honour to host the CSFFA. Fran wasn't impressed with what amounted to an edict directing V-Con to spend \$500 on a trophy, for a little-publicized award, to give to an author chosen on mostly geographical grounds. But she had heard Robert Runté's arguments for the CSFFA, and the choice of a deserving winner, bluntly, was made easy and obvious by Susan Wood's death. Fran recognized that V-Con 9 did nothing to help define the award, by designating the recipient "by executive fiat.")

One odd note about V-Con 9 appeared in *SF Chronicle* and *New Canadian Fandom* #2/3: Someone signing herself "Corwin Amber", if you please, ripped off V-Con for \$575 by passing rubber cheques for art. The woman actually produced a driver's license in this name, which is taken from a Roger Zelazny character. (Apparently nobody took the number down.) Attempts to trace her were hampered by the postal strike, which lasted from the end of June to Aug. 11. The artists were paid, anyway. Even though V-Con 9 absorbed the financial loss, Tim Bolton reported the con was in the black.

On July 10 - 12, 1981, VCBC tried to hold a full-scale comics convention, Great White North Con, at the West End Community Centre. GoHs were Roy Thomas, Chris Claremont, Victoria Poyser, Trina Robbins, Steve Leialoha, Mike Friedrich, George Metzger, and Marv Newland.

Len Wong's account of this affair in *New Canadian Fandom* 4 was fascinating, in a horrible sort of way:

What happened was, the West End Community Centre pulled out thumbscrews at the last minute and tripled their rate. We refused to give in and moved totally to (a) hotel (which actually cost more, but we didn't really trust the Community Centre after that). Problem was, the hotel decided to screw us around a bit too, and we became the musical account, i.e., one man set things up with us in advance, then another changed it all at the con itself. Then the hotel shut down the dance and various programming rooms, as well as room parties. Con members were also chased out of the hotel lobby all day. Oh yeah — the hotel also took possession of some pinball machines and video games which we had a company put in the lobby area (with hotel permission) for the con. For those of us on the concom, it was a Nazi Germany-esque atmosphere, with the hotel constantly threatening to shut us down for one thing or another. I think our major problem was that almost all the concom was in their teens or early twenties, and the adults we dealt with figured they could push us around and get a bit more out of us. ...

As cons go, the GWNC was not a bad con. Then again, it wasn't a great con. Most of the problems were external matters beyond the committee's control. To their credit they did a competent job with what they had.

The GWNC loses brownie points for:

ART SHOW, or lack of same. There weren't more than a dozen pieces displayed. This was the result of various committee members agreeing to run the artshow, then doing no work to promote it.

NO CONSUITE. Hey, I wanted one. I even bought the con 8 flats of beer (Canadian, eh) with money out of my pocket. We did have a consuite until the Tuesday before the con when students of the Alexander Haig School of Takeover ("Pick a

country ... any country") cancelled the room in an attempt to "save" the con. Thanks guys.

NO PARTIES. Result of above. There were a couple of attempts in my room but they never really worked out. A pity. As a result, I didn't get to meet any of the other con members in a less stressful atmosphere.

DANCE. I wanted a rock band but was talked into a punk band because they were friends of members of the concom, and 'could bring in added revenue and exposure to the con.' Sure guys, tell me another funny one. ...

The Great White North Con dropped about three grand. Or so I've been told. (Mr. Haig's students have this thing about not letting me see papers.) ...

So we're just sitting back and waiting for the lawsuits, at which point we can let our side of the story be heard. Legally, we do owe the hotel (and possibly the Community Centre) money. Ethically is another matter. I think I'm beginning to understand why V-Con has a new site every year ... (L.W.)

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That September, the Worldcon posthumously gave Susan Wood her fourth Hugo for best fanwriter.

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NEW GUARD (Cenozoic Era)

The Paleocene Epoch

Len Wong writes:

... It was either at Rain 5 (1982) or 6 (1983) that the "profits for Worldcon" bit was dropped off the flyers and PR. (I assume BCSFA took the money). Also, memberships were in the \$10 - \$15 range — same as for a V-Con membership. And, the shuck or jive for every cent one had in one's pockets continued. The feeling was not unlike running into a few dozen Moonies or

Hare Krishnas in the airport. At the last Rain, I was there for all of an hour on Friday to drop off some flyers for an upcoming VCBC con, and (was) made to purchase a membership. I only paid half-price, I think, 'cuz that was all the money I had on me. I know what a relaxicon is — I've been to a few in Bellingham [*VikingCons?* -GS.] and had a !@#\$ of a good time. I had a good time at the early Rains (I went to all six ... in the belief that it is Good to support local events). ... But every step you took, there seemed to be somebody trying to convince you to give them another few bucks to help the con. (L.W.)

The only other information available on 1982 is from Robert Runté. V-Con 10 was forced to move at the last minute from the Sheraton Villa Inn ("CROOKS!" says a note from one contributor) to the Best Western Hotel, which meant a rather smaller space. Robert Runté noted in *New Canadian Fandom* that a number of cons around North America had been forced to change digs at the last minute, like Great White North Con.

ProGoH at V-Con 10 was Ben Bova; FanGoH was Robert Runté; TM was Michael Walsh. Jim Welch and Stuart Cooper were the chairs. Since the con already had the normal number of pre-registered and out-of-town fans, they seem to have accomplished the necessary reduction by the simple expedient of not advertising locally. Thus, 95% of those attending were either from out-of-town or long-time fans. All of which added up to this being the most 'faannish' V-Con ever. (R.R.)

There were problems with the artshow; and some people made a rule NEVER to book the Sheraton again; but the pocketbook-sized program book was convenient, and the reading by William Gibson was much appreciated, and people kept congratulating the co-con-chairs on such a 'faannish' con. This may have been a sly dig, inasmuch as the two had campaigned on the platform of *halting* the creeping fannishness in V-Cons ...

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In August of 1982, 'Hen' Flanders was found brutally murdered in her apartment. She had reduced her fanatic by then to take night courses and pursue her career in life insurance. Her family requested that there be no service, and that donations in her name be sent to the Canadian Cancer Society instead.

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The Oligocene Epoch

By the winter of 1982 - 83, a Surrey Contingent had grown up in Lower Mainland fandom, which began to put out *SFA Digest* (Jim Welch & Marg Galbraith-Hamilton, eds.). Jim Welch expressed the view that BCSFA was carried away with bureaucracy, having hiked up the membership fees, and having profited by V-Con 8 and 9 — but still talking as though financial collapse were imminent. Welch suggested cutting publication costs through photoreduction and, in April 1982, moved that fees be lowered. The motion was defeated. But later, the club went to photoreduction for some purposes, and kept the high fees anyway.

(These were, at any rate, the overt issues raised. There may have been a general dissatisfaction with BCSFA's activities, or with the interest groups actually satisfied; this comes through in editorial remarks in *SFA Digest*, and in the *VCBC Bulletin*.)

As Welch put it in some spring 1983 *BCSFazines*, he disagreed with the manner of the exec's promotion of BCSFA and of SF. He took issue with such items as the BCSFA SF scholarship fund (was this a dead letter, or a spent provision of the constitution?); but the real issue seems to have been capital vs. interest. Without expressing it clearly, the exec. seems to have decided to save all their accumulated capital (about \$2000 in two term-deposit accounts) and let the accrued interest pay for *BCSFazine's* expenses during the course of the year.

Welch saw \$2000 the club could be using, just lying in BCSFA's accounts; the exec. saw them as capital. The principal was supposed to be saved. Yet somehow the reason, or its importance, never got across.

Discussion was somehow not enough to get each party's views across. (Evidently it would take direct experience.)

February 1983 was the last time Rain was held. By this time, Vancouver fans had become aware of the Constellation Affair in Victoria. (Two or three clubs in Victoria had gotten together to hold minicons in 1981 and 1982, and each time, their con was uncomfortably close to Rain [February was almost the only time open to them]. The second time this happened, the two fan communities made an agreement not to schedule against each other again like this. But in 1982, a mad ignorant collection of mediafen emerged who wanted to hold this enormous mediacon in Victoria — again in February.)

Perhaps in response, Pat Burrows started to organize the Pacific Northwest SF Convention Coordination Calendar, with the object of providing a clearinghouse for convention committees, so as to compare convention dates and (hopefully) avoid conflicts. But nothing was done to further this idea beyond taking a P.O. Box number. The organizer(s) encountered personal problems and let this project go, like a Westercon bid around this time.

In 1983, V-Con 11 was held at the Richmond Inn on the Victoria Day weekend. GoH was Frank Herbert; ArtGoH was William Warren; FanGoH was Elisabeth Warren, and TM was Georges Giguere. The chair was Gay Maddin. Attendance was about 375 - 400. The con lost about \$2200. More instructive information would be appreciated — I gather the hotel was too big, or distant. Donna McMahon writes: "It was held on the Victoria Day weekend, and the main problems were hotel trouble and a low attendance, with a high break-even (figure)."

Ed Beauregard writes:

As WCSFCCA was operating by V-Con 11, I assisted in the initial hotel negotiations. This was an object lesson in how you can't take on half a responsibility. I initially negotiated a fairly good agreement with the hotel, for the U.S. long weekend, and then dropped out of the scene. The details were not put into writing soon enough, and after the inevitable change of

personnel at the hotel, the terms of the original agreement were rejected. The committee simply accepted this, and I was unaware of the change. To that extent, I feel some small responsibility for the result.

A key provision, which was in the V-Con 8 agreement, was *a function space credit per room night booked*. This was initially worked out for V-Con 11, but then the hotel reneged and only offered a bulk discount if a certain number of room nights were reached. This is never an acceptable method, because the hotel does the accounting. Sure enough, V-Con 11 came up a few room-nights short, and was stuck with a couple thousand dollars extra in function space costs. Vaughn, who was V-Con 11 treasurer, had seen that provision in the V-Con 8 agreement, knew why it was there, but did not fight the elimination of those provisions in the V-Con 11 agreement. The date was also changed to the Canadian long weekend, and this turned out to be fatal.

I think it is very important to note that there has been no suggestion of financial irregularities with respect to V-Con 11. Even though \$2200 was lost, it is clear ... that this was the result of inadequate experience and poor planning. (Ed B.)

*

In September of 1983, the Vancouver Comic Book Club had a leadership tussle involving misappropriated funds.

After several months of internal conflict (Len Wong wrote in *Maple Leaf Rag* #3), Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Partridge and Convention Co-ordinator Jay O'Keeffe resigned from the club (in Sept. '83). Acting Chair Peter Cocking also stepped down, for personal reasons. This left Doug J. Brown and Leonard S Wong as the only remaining Executive Members. ...

A nine-person collection of active members had, months earlier, (around Aug. 2) issued a "list of demands", designed to end the duo's stranglehold on club decisions.

While verbally agreeing to the "demands" in late August, work on their resolution was postponed until September, due to the fact that the majority of the members involved were already participating in the annual display at the PNE. At the Sept. '83 business meeting, O'Keeffe and Partridge decided to resign, and demanded \$1000 which they claimed was owed to them by the club for purchases which they made "on the club's behalf." To wit:

- \$300 for a roll of broadcloth, with which to make 30 (unauthorized) broadcloths
- \$290 to the ComicShop for various books and comics ordered and chosen by O'Keeffe
- \$268 for printing of "Comix & Comics" flyers – the balance in various miscellaneous and personal expenses

(All of this, despite the fact that the club was still paying off outstanding debts from Great White North Con.)

The demand for \$1000 was denied by the remaining executive members. It appears that the duo then took money from the tills to ensure that they would be paid. Additionally, Partridge had several hundred dollars in uncashed cheques, dating back to the PNE. After realizing what was going on, Wong & Brown began emptying the tills they had access to, getting approximately \$350.

Quaternary Period

By 1984 or so, Lari Davidson, of Roberts Creek, was publishing *Potboiler* (a small-press fiction magazine) about this time, while one Bruce Kalnins (one of his contributors) occasionally published *Nocturnal Emissions*; Bruce Kalnins and Lari Davidson used to show up at V-Con. Apart from a few fans at any one time (Fran Skene and *Love Makes the World Go Awry*; Jim Welch and *SFA Digest*), there has not been a whole lot of fanpubbing going on.

V-Con 12 was held in May 1984 at the Gage Residence, U.B.C. This V-Con was staffed by a rather small and inexperienced convention committee. The Chair, JoAnne McBride, had recently come back from

Toronto, but she had been a previous member and executive of BCSFA.

From the attendance and social point of view, at least, this was an effective, good con. But it came out (in the following autumn) that V-Con 12 had lost over \$2000.

The WCSFCCA minutes of Dec. 4, 1984 (BCSFazine #140) tell us that Mike Bailey's calculation of V-Con 12 figures "var(ied) considerably from the financial report (Joanne) had previously provided." The recorded revenues were \$11,842.83 (and US\$807.62), and the recorded expenses were C\$13,798.26 (and US\$208.53), which should have yielded a \$1200 debt — but WCSFCCA and BCSFA had had to cover con debts amounting to \$2800.

The WCSFCCA meeting discussed in some detail what were called "convention benefits" — not only expenses McBride ran up at Rain, Norwescon and V-Con, but food orders delivered to her home address months before the con, hotel rooms for other committee members, and \$140 paid to someone for services rendered in Child Care. The meeting agreed that strict guidelines should be drawn up for the use of con funds. Mike Bailey suggested, and it was agreed, that a permanent WCSFCCA audit committee be formed to examine the books of all cons; Ed Beauregard suggested that this committee must include the WCSFCCA treasurer.

JoAnne admitted later (to some Victoria fans) that she got in over her head — did not handle funds and receipts or assign expenditures very well. When V-Con 12's losses were added up, and the news came out in the fall, more experienced fans in Vancouver (who had largely stayed out of the concom) jumped all over JoAnne McBride for her handling of funds.

The question then was, how was it that her bid to hold V-Con was accepted?

To hear Robert Runté tell it, JoAnne tended to take on projects and fail to follow through on them; but at the same time, the experienced conrunners were too burned out and/or lazy to do this con themselves, and they got what they asked for. To hear JoAnne tell it, she was screaming for help and didn't get it. But to hear Ed Beauregard or other members of BCSFA tell the story, some members

asked her periodically how things were going, didn't she need a treasurer, and she kept reassuring them that everything was fine.

One of the disadvantages of being a fan journalist by mail, or doing research on such voluntary groups as fan communities, is that you get utterly conflicting, unresolvable 'facts'; at the same time, you can't get enough supporting information to straighten matters out in your mind.

The two facts I can state are that WCSFCCA gave JoAnne's committee the imprimatur to hold V-Con 12; and JoAnne did not handle Other People's Money very well.

Here's the kind of mail I got from Ed Beauregard:

... I have, on more than one occasion, taken a box full of receipts and scraps of paper, and turned them into a financial report. I can tell the difference between simple confusion or poor record-keeping, and outright malfeasance. Norma is a professional accountant, and so knows a little about the business too. What happened with V-Con 12 is not just simple confusion.

A major point which seems to have been overlooked is that there is \$1600 of receipts completely unaccounted for. What happened to that money? I can understand losing a few hundred dollars of receipts, but all major receipts you would expect from a convention are present and there is still this tremendous amount of money simply missing. I won't even go in (again) on the large amount of money JoAnne spent for her own purposes under the guise of advertising (such as hotel rooms at several major conventions). It also stinks that several major cheques are missing, with no record of why they were written or who they were written to. If JoAnne had merely observed the normal procedures one follows in one's own life (i.e. recording all cheques and what they are for) it would have settled the question of improper behaviour one way or the other.

Nor do I think we even know the true income figure for V-Con 12 ...

I furthermore categorically reject this "JoAnne as abandoned victim" nonsense that is being peddled. In various *BCSFAzines* before V-Con 12, JoAnne reported rosily on how well things were going, and how no more major committee positions were open. ... (Ed B.)

At the same time as Ed B. was writing these remarks, Robert Runté wrote to me: "These losses are *trivial* compared to (the) losses of (the Puget Sound) ST con in Seattle — I've heard figures as high as U.S.\$30,000. It destroyed ST fandom in the Northwest ...

They (BCSFA) knew damn well how reliable JoAnne is and were too lazy (burnt out) to help, so got what they deserved. In the end, ... she was sloppy, violated some fannish principles, but was honest and, to my thinking, *them that does the work get to set the rules*; so if the club didn't like her ways, they could have offered to help. (*My emphasis — GS*)

Jim Welch had become BCSFA president about this time, on a platform of spending club monies, not stockpiling them. As it worked out, now, the club ended up paying out their monies to defray V-Con 12's outstanding bills, with the assistance of \$500 from L.A. Con II (Worldcon 42).

Welch wrote in *BCSFAzine* #140:

Some people want to find someone to blame more than they are interested in doing something to improve the situation ... my job as president is to stop the controversy and get people looking to the future. I will say this, though. The blame for V-Con 12's losses does not lie with one person or one group of persons, but rather, all of BCSFA and WCSFCCA ... I could have said they were buying too many T-shirts. But I didn't. Michael Bailey, at a WCSFCCA meeting, suggested off the wall that any committee member of a con that loses money not be allowed on another con committee. But where was Mike or the rest of the WCSFCCA executive? How many showed up at V-Con 12 meetings and shared their experience? (J.W.)

The Pleistocene Epoch (Deep Glacial)

Dave New informs me that one Simon J. Hui was publishing a Dr. Who zine from 1985 through 1987; this may still be in print, or succeeded by *TMOVzine*.

In 1985, the BCSFA executive consisted of Jim Welch (pres), Marg Galbraith-Hamilton (sec.), Chris Bell (treasurer), Barbara Przeklasa (Information Officer), and John MacLean (VP). I think.

V-Con 13 was held at Gage Residence in May 1985. The GoH was Robert Bloch, and the FanGoH was John Berry. The chair was Donna McMahon. Donna managed to talk many of the Old Guard back (the Beauregards were in the treasurer position, and Vaughn Fraser was also on the concom), which meant (I am told) that "the participation pattern had been reversed". (??) In view of the number, V-Con 13's theme was dark fantasy and horror, and a "dead authors come back" gag was pulled (people posed as their favourite dead authors of SF, horror and fantasy, and gave readings).

The pressure was on this V-Con to perform successfully on both the goodwill and financial scores. They did this by sticking to an announced budget and limiting expenditures. The fact that the budget was announced in print in *BCSFAzine*, in advance, may have helped by making it hard to back out of.

Donna McMahon told me (when she had a moment to sit still in one place) that WCSFCCA was going to take a more active role in overseeing V-Cons, and in addition, she took to WCSFCCA the idea of printing up a guidebook of conrunning tips for future V-Con committees. (This idea seems to have evaporated later.)

The Holocene Epoch

Dave New informs me that from 1986 through 1989, one John C.H. Wong edited *C-space* for UBCSFS.

V-Con 14/Canvention 6 was held in May of 1986 in Totem Residence. Guest of Honour was Frederik Pohl; TM was Randy Reichardt; Fan Guests were Mike and Beth Finkbiner; Special Guest

was Eileen Kernaghan; Artist Guest was Katherine Howes, who prepared the stained-glass frames for this year's Casper Awards.

The con faced several problems at first. For one thing, this was the year when the B.C. government's determined effort to hold a big world's fair, a transportation and communication exposition, was inflicted on hosted by Vancouver. This meant a) limited available convention and accommodation space, at U.B.C. as elsewhere, and b) any tie-in to Expo '86 would probably mean some increase in attendance. For another thing, the Gage Towers was booked immediately after V-Con 14 for the World SF professional writer's conference – and it looked for a while as if they might shift their dates. (For the sake of coordination, it was convenient that Fran was also Vancouver's contact for World SF.) Perhaps the clincher was the fact that V-Con 14 was due to host the Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards again.

Garth Spencer had spent two years and a lot of postage to find out what had become of these awards. Fran Skene, the chair of V-Con 14, now started a small apa to quiz people in various cities and find out what to do with the wretched thing. She did the smart thing, I guess, which was to get Garth (famous *The Maple Leaf Rag*) Spencer to coordinate balloting since he had bugged everybody so long about it in the first place.

The winners of the 1986 Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards (or "Caspers") were Judith Merrill, for lifetime achievement in editing; Daniel Serrine, for his short story "Yadjine et la mort" (in *Dix Nouvelles de Science Fiction Québécoise*, Quinze, 1985); and Garth Spencer, for his editing of *The Maple Leaf Rag*, and "his dedication to Canadian fandom". Runners-up were: Rhea Rose, for her short story "Chronos' Christmas" in *Tesseracts* (Press Porcupic, 1985); Elisabeth Vonarburg, for "La Maison au Bord de la Mer" (*Dix Nouvelles*); and Elisabeth Vonarburg (again) for her various fan activities, including editing *Solaris*, organizing writing workshops, and participating in Boreal, the annual francophone convention in Quebec.

The 1986 Caspers were given at the awards banquet at V-Con 14/Convention 6. Two of the winners were present, as Judith Merrill

and Elisabeth Vonarburg were to give readings of their work at the Canada Pavilion at Expo '86.

The 1987 Convention was chosen at the first Convention Business Meeting, almost immediately following the banquet and awards presentation. Mike Wallis of Toronto entered the only bid, for Ad Astra (Toronto).

The meeting was attended by Garth Spencer (Victoria), Fran Skene & William C.S.A.A. Lowe (Vancouver), Mike Wallis (Toronto), Lexie Pakulak and Steve Pikov (Calgary), Con Hiebner (Vancouver), and Arthur Turner (Calgary). Fran Skene opened the meeting by remarking that early Westercon business meetings were about this size, but grew as interest spread. Mike Wallis's bid for Convention 7 passed unanimously. Wallis immediately announced that his Convention intended to revive CUFF, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, and Wallis proposed that the CUFF winner each year should come to the Convention.

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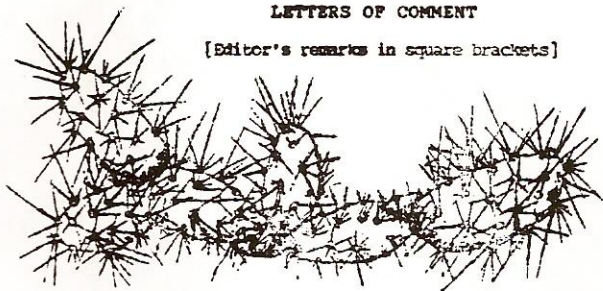
It wasn't until after the con that I heard of any friction between V-Con's concom (at least Fran Skene) and the mediafans participating in V-Con programming. Apparently, on the one hand, some mediafan felt they were being treated as pariahs (and Pat Burrows for one was pretty pissed about it); on the other hand, it seemed that if not for the continuous media programming at V-Con, some people would only have been roaming around, making trouble.

The way Pat Burrows tells it, the mediafan, especially Dark Shadows/Dr. Whovians, felt hacked off. The way she saw it, she learned to be a fan by looking at how to meet *other* people's interests as well as her own, and some concom members were just not doing that.

(to be continued)

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Steve George
642 Ingersoll Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 2J4

1992-5-22

I guess I just never figured the value of fan histories, at least not the kind that try to be objective, and especially not the kind that try to teach fans by pointing out the errors of the past. Part of the fun of fandom is the idea that what you're doing now is being done for the first time. Making your own mistakes, even if they've been made a thousand times before by countless other neo-fans, is part of the appeal.

[Not much fun for an Ottawa fan who got stuck with a debt of \$10,000 from a con. Not much appeal to a B.C. club that is \$14,000 in the hole and had to cut back on zine trades, etc. Not much appeal for congoers who paid out money expecting a well-run con that provides a pleasant experience but instead got poor organization that ruined their weekend.]

FROM: Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1992-5-24

Once again I was fascinated by Spencer's history, in addition to being chagrined to discover how many Canadian fans and clubs existed without having impinged on my consciousness. The Norman Browne whom he mentions was a quite prominent fan for several years. His most notable achievement was publication of FILLER, a big compendium of the one-liners that fanzines used to use to separate articles or fill up a bit of empty space at the bottom of a page.

Garth's letter inspires me to warn him that it's unsafe for fan historians to rely on what they're told today by letter or in conversation by veteran fans about the past. Memories fade even in the superior intellects of BNFs. I've encountered some dillies during preparation of the new edition of A WEALTH OF FABLE. One well-meaning fan advised me that I was wrong to write that Feghoots end with a pun, another claimed that Bill Danner has now outdistanced me as publisher of the longest lived fanzine with uninterrupted publication while acknowledging that I was ahead of him for a while, and I've even been told that I was once married, a condition I'm pretty sure I would recall if I'd ever suffered it.

As far as objectivity is concerned, as Lloyd Penney suggests, it needn't be perfect as long as it isn't absent. I've always tried to keep my dislike of certain fans out of my fan history writings but I may have scanted them while refraining from slurring them. Objectivity is difficult even when no prejudices are involved.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert
1104 Mulvey Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 1J5

1992-5-27

How you and other fanzine publishers manage to keep up such an industrious schedule and still find time for living is a mystery to me.

[I can't answer for other publishers, but in my case I attribute it to the fact that I don't have a television set. It's amazing how much writing can be done in the time it takes to watch an hour of TV.]

Garth Spencer's history of B.C. fandom leaves me in the dark about people like Daniel Say and Mike Bailey who used to correspond with me. Whether they are still active or not, they have not kept in touch with me.

FROM: Lloyd Penney
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

1992-6-13

For Garth Spencer and Harry Andruschak: In the Toronto phone book I found a D.M. Vereschagin on 50 Alexander St. in Toronto. A quick look at MONTHLY MONTHLY #8 confirms that Dave's middle initial was M., so I suspect this is him.

FROM: Boris Sidyuk
poste restante, General P.O.
252001, Kiev-1, Ukraine

1992-6-10

I think to write fanhistory of Kiev fandom for a while. But I'm afraid the fanhistory I can write wouldn't be completely described because I personally joined fandom in 1979 when I was 14, and I don't know what was going on

before. Nevertheless, I may proudly consider myself as a father-founder of Kiev SF fandom.

[You should still write what you know, even if earlier times are unknown. This is what Garth Spencer does (and any good historian, for that matter). The gaps can be filled in later, as new information comes to light.]

Paula Johanson: Before perestroika there was a group of young and new writers here in Kiev called Literary Terrorists. They were in opposition against the official writers' union. That ambitious group tried to write by a new way. They tried to create literature without ideological impression. One of them, Raphael Levchin, now lives in Chicago. Now creative people here don't even think of art sabotage and poetic strikes. They feel themselves too free at all.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Buck Coulson, Henry Welch, Tom Fuloppa