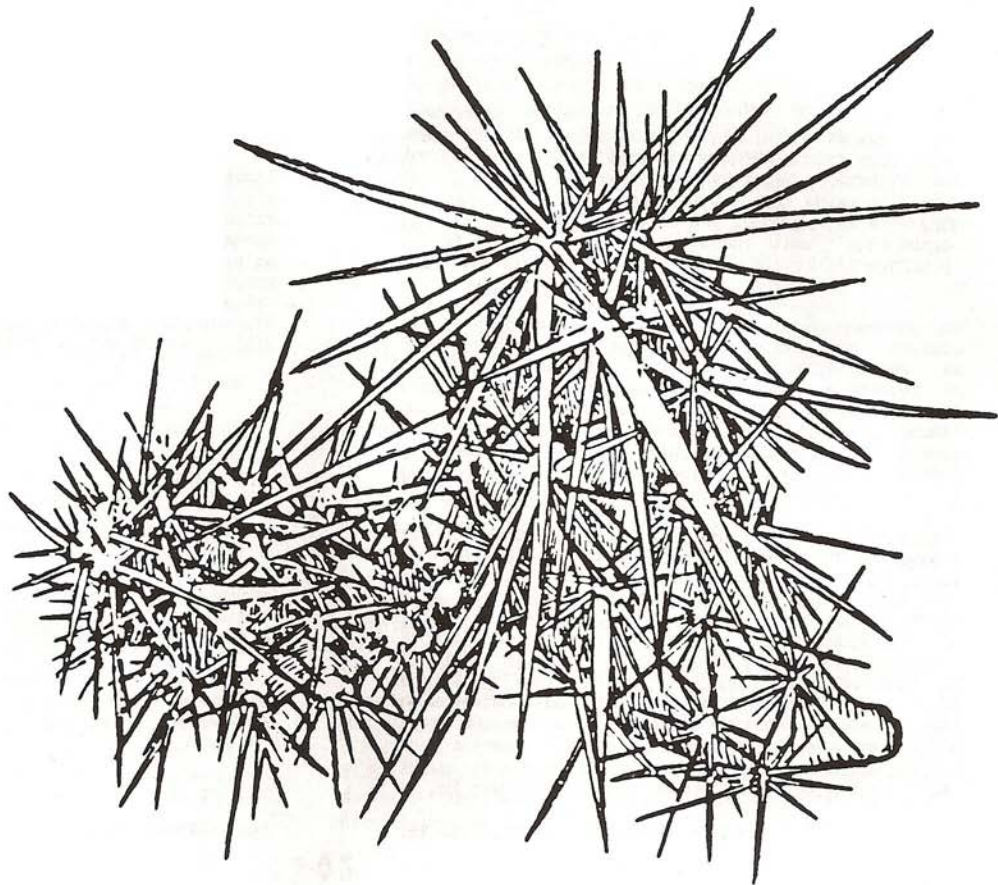


OPUNTIA

11



OPUNTIA #11

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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$1 cash, letter of comment, or trade for your zine.

ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia parishii, and is by an unknown artist from the 1920 book "The Cactaceae. Descriptions And Illustrations Of Plants Of The Cactus Family."

EDITORIAL: I have received notice of the latest TAFF ballot. Now I have no objection to people running for TAFF, DUFF, CUFF, or, for that matter, the Nobel Prize. I am well aware of the history of these contests, though I think they are a waste of fannish energy that could be better used elsewhere (such as locating obvious comment hooks such as this one). I look forward to the Trekkies discovering these contests and taking them over. More people would probably know the Trekkies than the candidates currently running.

But to come to the point of this note. Reading the rules on the 1993 TAFF ballot, it was amusing to see: "Voting is by secret ballot: only one vote per person, and you must sign your ballot." If you made your signature illegible enough, a wavy line and a loop, say, then it would be possible to sign and still keep the secret.

## THE CANADIAN LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS

It has long been a joke amongst Canadian fandom that SENARY is our equivalent of THE LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS only duller. This SF fictionzine was announced a few years ago but never seemed to arrive. The delay was embarrassing enough to the editors that in 1991 they published PREMATURE SENARY, a chapbook of extracts to appear in SENARY #1 as part of a fuller book. Finally, in late 1992, the first issue of SENARY appeared. It is rather overpriced at \$10.95 for 105 pages of large type. Ostensibly 105 pages, that is, for 6 pages are blank, 4 are a foreword, and 15 have only a few lines of text and/or a fillo. \$10.95 plus 7% G.S.T. makes a rather expensive 80 pages of poems and short stories.

This may seem a nitpicking point of view, but for a few dollars less, a Tesseracts paperback will supply 400 pages of reading. The high cost is likely to turn away potential buyers who want value for their money, and a marginal publication like SENARY needs all the help it can get. SENARY is subtitled "The Journal of Fantastic Literature", although peculiarly it has an ISBN instead of an ISSN. It can be obtained through Fallen Octopress, #105, 9650 - 20 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T6N 1G1.

Appearing from Beach Holme Publishers is TESSERACTS 4, edited by Lorna Toolis and Michael Skeet. This anthology is about the same size and thickness as a FULL SPECTRUM paperback. \$8.95 plus G.S.T. makes it a far better deal than SENARY, both in terms of quantity and quality. Available from Beach Holme Publ., 4252 Commerce Circle, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 4M2 or in the chain bookstores.

## ON THE BONNY, BONNY BANKS OF THE FRASER (PART IV)

Garth Spencer

### Much Ado About Nothing

We became aware only after V-Con 19.5 that there was supposed to be a feud between V-Con and "An Evening with Harlan Ellison", an event held Sunday night (May 24) at the Robson Square Media Centre:

During the course of his lecture, he launched into a digression on BCSFA and its editor, R. Graeme Cameron, saying that he had been told we were participating in a boycott on his talk, allegedly because we were angry about an article he wrote for *Asimov's* some time ago about fan geeks ...

... I would have loved to attend his lecture, but having already dropped all my spare cash on the Con, and treating the Con like a mini-vacation, I wasn't mentally prepared to go anywhere until the con was over. Had Harlan come on a different weekend I would have attended his lecture for sure. ...

... It was alleged that I 'refused' to publish information about the upcoming lecture in *BCSFazine* ... I had planned to include a little blurb, but then Stan Hyde asked if it would be all right to talk about it in his column ... at the convention itself I did tell numerous people about the upcoming lecture, but they were probably informed too late for them to change their plans ... (Cameron's editorial in *BCSFazine* 229, June 92)

Stan Hyde's article that issue uncovered a series of reactions and wrong assumptions:

At the time of Rustycon, some of the people who were helping organize the Harlan show spoke to Don DeBrandt and others from BCSFA who were organizing V-Con 19.5. Don was enthusiastic. V-Con was planned as a small convention anyway, what with the disastrous financial losses that Westercon had forced onto the club. Now here was an opportunity to offer an additional event on the Sunday evening of the convention ... something that would draw other fans from Washington State, or further away perhaps, simply because Harlan doesn't do many speaking engagements anymore.

### Sound and Fury Signifying Nothing

I chose to announce in fall 1991 that I was going to try to compile a reference book on running cons. My reasoning was, I couldn't help clean up the Westercon financial mess. What I *could* do, and *all* I could do, was compile a document. The people in Vancouver of course knew far more than I about cons.

This plan depended on a lot of participation. BCSFans were fans, therefore (I thought) they would write me far more material than I wanted or could even handle. However, I ran into the psychology that if I was going to pretend to be an expert, everyone was going to ignore me. Even though, as I *said* repeatedly, I *didn't* believe that I knew very much about conrunning, I believed that BCSFA members did; I believed that I *could compile a document*, and I was inviting them to offer contributions I could compile.



Since I *thought* I was offering to do these people a service, their lack of response was disheartening, to say the least.

The following year my roommates convinced me I should ask specific questions of specific people, one by one by one ... interviewing them with a hand-held tape recorder. This project approaches feasibility. I am transcribing my first tapes as I write this.

### Death Will Not Release You

The October 91 WCSFCCA general meeting held elections for the executive. Incumbent president was Al Betz; Vice President was Terry Fowler; Secretary was R. Graeme Cameron; and Treasurer, as usual, was the elusive Mike Bailey. Member at large, as usual, was Steve Forty. Instead of letting my membership just lapse, I paid up and stood for election as Vice President.

At the May 16th (1992) meeting, the new BCSFA executive elected was Darryl Huber (President), Doug Finnerty (Vice-President), Nico Iormetti (Treasurer), Clint Budd (Secretary), and R. Graeme Cameron (Information Officer again).

Al Betz reported at this meeting that a major portion of the Westercon debt was settled in April by negotiation with U.B.C. and the A.M.S. After this, WCSFCCA's material assets were repossessed by these parties, their suit for unpaid bills was dropped, and approximately \$2,500 remained to be paid. (A *sub rosa* requirement was that the Westercon 44 chair not be part of future committees.)

There was another *in camera* WCSFCCA meeting in June 92, but I'm not supposed to talk about it. (Which is good, because without written notes I don't know what, if anything, was decided.)

### Where Angels Fear to Tread

At some point in 91-92, Steve Forty won a lottery. He then proposed to hold V-Con 20 in 1993, on his own dime. V-Con 20 was thus announced for May 28-30, 1993 at Totem Residence, U.B.C. GoH will be Charles de Lint; TM will be Michael Coney; Art Guest will be Rob Alexander.

### Moving Right Along

Con Hiebner brought up the possibility that BCSFans might undertake activities unconnected with BCSFA meetings, and offered several suggestions (a tour of Granville Island, a train excursion to Whistler, etc.) He also brought up his ideas for Uncon, a fundraising convention that doesn't actually happen, just offers all the printed memorabilia as if it did.

I guess these activities were insufficiently promoted. At any rate few people showed up for a walking tour of Granville Island, or a train trip to Whistler. Con eventually folded his UnCon plan.

### New Brooms

When October of 1992 came around, Clint Budd, Donna McMahon and Ev Beheshti stood for WCSFCCA positions, and since nobody contests these elections they won by acclamation. Clint became President; Garth Spencer remained Vice-President; Graeme Cameron

remained Secretary; Dorna McMahon become Treasurer; Ev Beheshti became Member-at-Large.

The plan at present is to reconstruct WCSFCCA (no longer a registered society) by registering a new society, the West Coast SF Association. Dorna McMahon and Clint Budd have mooted new conrunning procedures. A dialogue about these procedures has been opened with BCSFA ... just about the time that Canadian peacekeeping forces were assigned to Yugoslavia and Somalia.

## Conclusions

"I don't mean that they have weak minds ... I don't mean that they have weak hearts ... I am saying that they have weak wills. Most never push themselves: physically, mentally or morally ..."

allan brockmen, *Neology* #67 (summer 89)

What conclusions might I draw from Vancouver fanhistory?

Some members have been prone to misconceptions, such as imagining feuds where there were none. At least since 1984, some Vancouver fans have been prone to form impressions they don't try to check against reality. The absurd idea in the early 80's that an Old Guard in the membership was trying to "take control" of the club, or V-Con, through WCSFCCA, is only one in a series. The Westercon chair's and Len Wong's conflicts with BCSFAns also seem to be based on misapprehensions that could be avoided — but won't be. This is reminiscent of other fan groups.

Vancouver fans have repeatedly underestimated how much time and effort (and money) their fanactivities

require. I moved to Vancouver holding that opinion — which I gained mostly from conreports and fan news from around the world — and nothing since has changed it. Again, this is a feature common in fandom.

Some traditions may have grown up in BCSFA by 1987, especially surrounding V-Con. And they may have been unfortunate, if perhaps "fannish", traditions.

It was all very well for the BCSFA president in 1984 to say members weren't interested in business meetings — but what if there *were* business that had to be done?

Vancouver fandom suffers from an attitude which does not benefit their conventions. This may, or may not, be unusual for a fan group but *rather too many people abhor details, planning and analysis, and don't want to get overorganized ...* and consequently they resist getting organized *enough*. This doesn't have to show up in non-performance on a convention committee. It has shown up in our refusal to define what we do cons for and how to do them successfully. Up to 1987, there was *no* documentation on how Vancouver fans normally ran their conventions.

It may also be one of our traditions to just assume that V-Con enjoys at least an adequate reputation outside of Vancouver. To hear Steve Forty tell it, V-Con has a good rep in the Northwest; to hear one Kate Smith tell it, we have a reputation for a cheap, shoddy Hospitality (almost as shoddy as Norwescon's) — and she still has a bone to pick with someone about false advertising, the non-appearance of a childcare suite at one V-Con. It could appear a tradition that BCSFAns didn't want to get overorganized, and sometimes were *underorganized* for the level of activity undertaken. (I think I share that

conclusion with Al Betz and Ed Beauregard). This, again, is not very different from many other fan groups.

Ed Beauregard has claimed the closest parallel to Vancouver fandom (at least, BCSFA) is Portland fandom (at least, PorSFis/OSFCI). He sees the main issues in these communities to be a) how many technically-educated SF fans there are, b) how interconnected they are. The contrast he sees is that Portland has a cohesive, longstanding con committee/community, and Vancouver doesn't have one so cohesive. This amounts to claiming that Vancouver fandom tends to fall below some critical mass of numbers or manifest energy, therefore is not a self-sustaining fan group. But again, this sometimes characterizes just about any fan group.

Beauregard also notes that we do not have a generally agreed-upon standard of responsibility (in conrunning). Several times, individuals have gotten into positions (like convention chairmanship) who ... well, whose ways to mount an event just did not work with BCSFAns' needs or abilities. I think that is generally understood here.

To be more blunt about it, several circumstances ... including some key individuals ... created incipient fiascos that had to be prevented, and weren't.

The recent Vancouver history presented here covers a time when a very demanding con coincided with an influx of new members — including at least one difficult personality.

Do we *bother* to specify how things work, and what needs doing, and hold people to it? Are we serious about starting projects and seeing them through? I wonder, is Vancouver different in this respect from our fandom?

The recent initiatives by the new WCSFA executive seem promising. But so did the plans for Westercon 44,

on paper. If we learn nothing else from Vancouver, we learn that any amount of official measures and documented procedures, however practical, will mean *nothing* if there aren't the people willing to perform effectively. And, in a fan group, there may not be.

Rather a lot of this recent history has to do with convention-running. Why?

Since about 1970, perhaps, fandom has grown and diversified; subfandoms have proliferated and grown; and fannish, or fanzine, fandom has not kept up. Perhaps the *only* place all these tribes meet is at conventions. Maybe that is why conventions look like the be-all and end-all of fan activity. Other activities, like fanzines and apas, have simply not been as popular (excepting perhaps gaming and costuming).

Conventions have continued to grow and complicate themselves, and to demand more and more professional performance from what is, let's face it, a loose network of hobby clubs. At the same time, it seems, the people coming into SF fandom are younger, apparently demand more entertainment, are less willing to spend money and less willing to volunteer, just to see that the con goes on.

Under these conditions, it's getting tougher to hold cons at all.

I conclude that Vancouver fandom has run into problems they're slow to deal with, in holding their activities; problems which compounded each other. And I think this makes Vancouver a typical fan community in the 1990's.



I talked with Bruce Pelz at Orycon and discovered that the Westercon regulars were in fact sending e-mail to the Westercon chair all the time, all the kinds of helpful advice a Westercon would need. And here I was thinking they weren't saying squat. All the good it did, apparently, was diddly ....

# REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

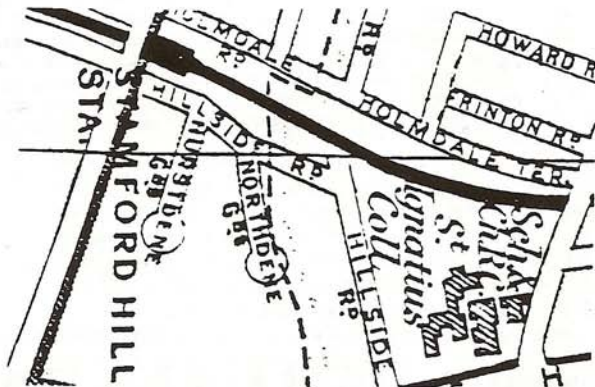
THE USUAL: In the zine reviews, mention is made that the zines are available for The Usual. For readers new to this term, it means you can get the zine by sending \$2 for a sample copy, sending your zine and offering to trade, or contributing an article, letter of comment, or artwork. Before sending a contribution though, you'd be advised to see a copy of the zine first.

## QUESTIONS THEY'LL ASK YOU IN MONTREAL

With the Autumn 1992 issue of WARP (The Usual from the Montreal SFFA, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montreal, Québec, H2W 2P4) is included a UFO questionnaire prepared by Bryan Ekers and Keith Braithwaite. It goes like this: [I only reprint a few of the questions.]

- 1) Your name is: Billy Bob  
Billy Joe  
Billy Joe Bob  
Shirley MacLaine
- 2) You are: a pilot  
an air traffic controller  
a state trooper  
a yokel
- 5) At the time of the sighting, you were driving:  
a Chevy pickup  
a Ford pickup  
a Dodge pickup  
while drunk
7. The aliens claimed to be: lost  
cross-border shoppers  
a distinct society  
Elvis love-children
- 8) The aliens said they came to Earth to:  
study humans  
take human specimens  
mate with humans  
solve the Canadian constitutional crisis

All in all, some good fun. WARP is also Trekkish and mediaish for those in the younger-at-heart generation.



LEARN AND IMPLEMENT THE HEROIC PRINCIPLES OF THE BUS PASSENGERS' CHARTER!

For those who consider FOSFAX to be an ultraconservative fanzine, there is the alternative of FTT. This English zine originally began life as FUCK THE TORIES, which will immediately advise you of the editorial slant. This title, while catchy, was not perhaps as diplomatic as could have been. The title still uses the initials FTT, but currently varies. FTT 11 was FLATULENT THUNDER TURTLES, #12 was near to my heart (coming as I do from a palaeontological family) being titled FABULOUSLY TASTY TRICERATOPS, and #13 returns to the original title in honour of the re-election of you-know-who.

Co-edited by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, the SF in it appears seldom but the politics is always. A perzine, with slice-of-life accounts in fighting the good fight against capitalists, politicians, and Fukuyama (the chap wot says history is at an end). #13 suggests a plan to

keep Prince Charles busy while waiting for Mum to die. We read about Judith's work campaigning for better public transport, and Joseph inveighs against leftover Cold War veterans who can't believe what happened any more than the communists. Not recommended for those who think things have gone downhill since Reagan left.

Available for trade, letter of comment, or £1 in coin or mint stamps from the above-named J.H. and J.N. who reside at 5A Printon Road, Stamford Hill, London N15 6NH, England.

As an aside, and this has nothing to do with FTT, I have always been irritated by the fact that the typewriters sold here do not have a key for the sterling currency or an umlaut, but are cluttered up with Spanish accent marks that I'll never use. Thus the closest I can get to a pound sterling symbol is to type a dash overtop a capital L.

#### THE ASPARAGUS ZONE

From the honeymoon capital of North America, albeit on the American side of Niagara Falls, comes ASTROMANCER QUARTERLY. Without a doubt, the production values of this zine are the finest quality, being well printed and illustrated throughout. Issue #3, dated August 1992 is at hand. In it are stereo photos by Jay Kay Klein of the 1974 Discon, with some nice beauties displaying their charms. Three accounts of Midwestcon, one from 1952, another from 1992, and a faan fiction version of the 1939 Shruvention. Lots of reviews of fanzines, small press items, and art. Two circus items; Boris Sidyk will be pleased with the elephants in this zine. For the likes of con-runners, a few remarks about running an art show, which remind me irresistibly of my experiences with aquarium shows.

[continued next page]



A.Q. mentions shrews and asparagus from time to time with lots of bad poetry on the latter. If you're into that sort of thing ... I've always been prejudiced against a vegetable that I had to handweed hectares of when I worked for the Brooks Horticultural Experimental Farm back in the mid-1970s. There's nothing wrong with asparagus that 50 kg/ha of soil sterilant can't solve. I wonder if shrews eat the stuff?

In any event, A.Q. is put out by the Niagara Falls S. F. Association, the ones that are bidding for a Worldcon in 1998. \$2 will get you a sample copy via N.F.S.F.A., Box 500, Niagara Falls, New York 14305.



#### THE ANTI-ASPARAGUS ZONE

Nevermind professional printing in a digest size as used by A.Q., here is SPENT BRASS, mimeo on fuzzy paper. The 92-6-24 issue was received 92-8-26. Ted White discusses a fan feud started by a hoax letter published by an editor who didn't edit. Perhaps there is a place in hell

reserved for zine editors who piously claim that to edit is to impose a single point of view. Aquarium zine editors who adhere to this belief are known as stenographers, and not as a compliment to any ability with shorthand. In the lettercol, Harry Warner wonders about berms.



SPENT BRASS will wend its way to you for The Usual via Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, 4228 Francis Ave. N. #103 in the beautiful city of Seattle, Washington 98103.

#### FROM THE LAND OF COCA-COLA ...

... comes PERIPHERAL VISIONS, a product of D.T.P. out of Atlanta, Georgia, about four times a year. For the faithful few who still believe in fanfiction, here is a home for it. The loc column has been growing steadily, although it does not threaten to become yet another FOSFAX. Issue #10, dated July 1992, has a con

report that neglects to tell us where and when DragonCon 92 took place. There is, however, an hilarious account of a role-playing game in which " ... the idea was to kill characters as quickly as possible, no dice, no segment-round-turn time structure, just rapid-fire action:

DM: "What do you do?"

Player 1: "I open the door."

DM: "Ten thousand amps surge through your body and you're dead. What do you do?"

Player 2: "I leap through the open doorway."

DM: "You leap through and into the mouth of a dragon. You're dead. What do you do?"

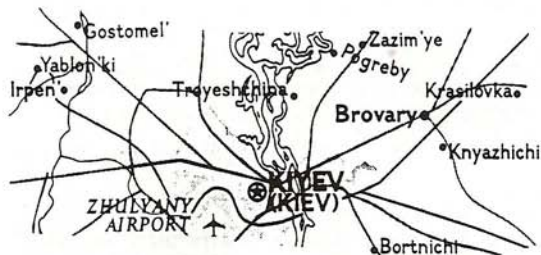
etc.

Once more for The Usual from Rob Sommers, 926-C Waverly Way NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30307-2551.



#### WHAT NEWS FROM KIEVAN RUS?

One of the most interesting (and important) zines must be CHERNOBYLIZATION, published at Kiev, Ukraine. It provides an important window into Slavic SF, with information that is hard to find for anglophones. Issue #4/5 is



dated January to June 1992, and arrived here in August containing articles on the history of Ukrainian SF, bibliographies and reviews of Slavic books, etc. There is an account on SF in the time of Stalin, when SF had to be 'close aim', not farseeing. Some interesting con reports, including a report by Boris Sidyuk on the Chumatsky Shlyah '91 event: "I also called it a billiard con because I spent a lot of time playing billiard with other attendees. Playing with Yuri Semetsky, a bookseller from Moscow, I lost the Crimea. Then Boris Shtern won the Crimea back and Krasnodar region in addition.". Okay Canadian congoers, here is an idea for a con program. Let's see if Québec can keep Ungava or re-open the Manitoba-Ontario border claims with a table-hockey game or poker. ("I'll raise you twenty dollars and the Peace River district." "I'll see your raise and add in Vancouver Island.")

The cover of CHERNOBYLIZATION is refreshingly different than the usual artwork one sees on North American zines. No wizards or alien females. Issue #4/5 has a map of Ukraine with military ships trying to tow away Crimea, a Russian lasso around a missile silo, and an anthropomorphic banknote sitting on a throne. The text is hard to read due to lack of spacing between lines. To get a copy of CHERNOBYLIZATION, send two SF paperbacks to Alexander Vasilkovsky, poste restante, General P.O., 252001 Kiev-1, Ukraine. Well recommended.



## A NEW NEWSZINE

In the beginning was MAPLE LEAF RAG, which begat MLR and thence XENOFIL and now UNDER THE OZONE HOLE, which takes up from failing hands the responsibility of being a Canadian newszine. U.T.O.H. #1 is dated August 1992. Its news contents are fairly old, but for a first issue this is forgivable; we learn that Asimov is dead and a whole lot of media stuff. There is a con report, book reviews, and an account of a camping trip. Excellent DTP quality. The Usual will get it for you from Karl Johanson, 4129 Carey Road, Victoria, B.C., V8Z 4G5.



## LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

Arthur Hlavaty and family recently moved from North Carolina to New York City, or Yonkers to be more precise. The new house overlooks beautiful Cross County Parkway, and is convenient to a seminary and a racetrack. If you've ever moved house, including a large library, then you'll know the story. Also included in the account are various small mammals, such as gerbils and rabbits. There is a Worldcon report and assorted reviews of assorted things.

To be had for The Usual from Arthur Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, New York 10704-1814.



## LAUGH AND THE WORLD WONDERS WHAT YOU ARE UP TO

I knew I had finally arrived on the zine scene when I recently began to get zines I hadn't heard of instead of having to write first. One such is AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOSCAMOLOGY, which apparently specializes in fannish humour. The August 1992 issue is devoted to "Interpretation of Fannish Hieroglyphs". While the basic idea is interesting, the humour relies too much on funny names (which quickly become tiresome) rather than the concept or situation. This zine is put out by Elst Weinstein, who also included a flyer advertising the revival of APA-H. This apa is about hoaxes and humour. Details on both from Weinstein at 11850 Mt. Harvard Ct., Alta Loma, California 91737.

OOPS!

I just noticed that I forgot to mention the title of Hlavaty's zine. It is DEROGATORY REFERENCE. It should be mentioned that as I am typing this, a plumber is doing major work in my house, with loud and alarming noises and vibrations shaking the foundations. So it is not always easy to concentrate on the typewriter.



NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE USUAL

I belong to a hobby club that is required to produce an annual audited financial statement for the provincial government in order to keep its status as a society. The club does so whenever the flow of letters from the Registrar of Corporations get to the this-time-we-mean-it stage. As a result, the Treasurer's report is two or three years old when finally sent in. If the club went bankrupt, it would take several years before we found out we were bust.

And so it is that FANTHOLOGY 1988 has just slipped from the printing press. Four years in fandom is almost ancient history, given the turnover of zines and concons.

Edited by Mike Glycer, some might disagree with selections in this anthology, but such is strictly a matter of personal preference. Anyone severely upset could edit their own version. Not available for The Usual; if you want a copy send \$5 (cheques payable to SCIFI) to Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Avenue #2, Van Nuys, California.

The format fluctuates between photocopying the original article and retyping into the computer. The computer had some kind of glitch in the program, as many words were hyphenated in the middle of the line, not just breaks at the end of a line. FOSFAX seems to dominate the selections, no surprise really in view of its impact on the hobby. But a bit of everything, many from zines I've not seen, so it was fresh to me. Actually the stuff I have seen was fresh to me as well; after four years who remembers all those FOSFAX articles?

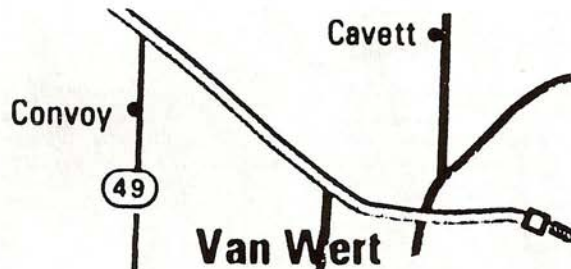
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Noted for the record but not reviewed is a new anthology of Canuck SF, mostly Maritimer, called ARK OF ICE, edited by Lesley Choyce. Trade paperback, listing at \$14.95 and probably 7% GST from Pottersfield Press, Lawrencetown

Beach, RR 2, Porters Lake, Nova Scotia BOJ 2S0. The stories are about half reprints and half originals. Most of the reprints appeared in obscure zines that you've probably never seen. Authors include Andrew Weiner, Phyllis Gotlieb, H.A. Hargreaves, Candace Jane Dorsey, John Bell, etc.; in short, the usual gang of Canadian SF authors. Afterword by Judith Merril.

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The third issue of FUTURES PAST is now at hand, covering the year 1928. This semiprozine proposes to document the history of SF at the rate of one year in each issue, beginning with the Gernsbackian genesis. A good project, and I hope they can keep it up. It should be noted that this history is not confined to magazines; there were a surprising number of SF movies back then. Issue #3 discusses the first SF artist Frank R. Paul, carries interviews and biographies on E.R. Burroughs and Jack Williamson, with all kinds of bibliographies. Well recommended. Sample copy is US\$5, six issues are \$20 in USA, \$28 elsewhere, from Futures Past, Box 610, Convoys, Ohio 45832, USA.



I bought at a library sale a 1984 hardcover from Granada called ARDABIOLA, written by Yevgeny Yevtushenko and translated by Armorer Wason.

This novel opens with a young woman riding on a tram. She senses someone watching her from a car following behind the tram. As she gets off the tram, Ardabiev, driving the car, invites her to come with him. She does, not knowing why she accepted. Ardabiev has just had his thesis "The Use of Music in Growing Vegetables" published, but his heart is with a different study he is doing. He tells her of a plant he has synthesized, which he calls Ardabiola. He created it by fusing cells of the fedyunnik (which grows in his native Siberia and is believed by folklore to have anticancer properties) with a gene isolated from tsetse flies, a gene also having anticarcinogenic properties. He fed fruit of Ardabiola to a cancerous rat; the rat recovered fully. He told his colleague Mishechkin, who laughed at him. Ardabiev later used the plant to cure his father of cancer.

The young woman is developed as an interesting character, but is only used as a sounding board to allow Ardabiev to explain his ideas to the reader. A lot of work has been put into making her a fleshed-out character, but then she vanishes from the story after the first chapter. Indeed, as one reads through this novel, the same thing happens with other characters. They are introduced, developed well (as many SF authors neglect or are unable to do) but disappear after a brief time upon the stage.

The plot is thin; characterization saves the book. There is a detailed study of Ardabiev's father, an engine driver on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. He is approaching retirement reluctantly. His sudden death upsets Ardabiev, who thinks the Ardabiola extract may have failed, but his brother, a surgeon, attended the autopsy and assures Ardabiev there were no tumours in the corpse.

Ardabiev's mother is revealed at the wake that follows the funeral. His wife is a peripheral figure who comes and goes briefly in the story. Their interactions reveal little about her but reflect a bit more of Ardabiev's personality.

Ardabiev comes out to Siberia for the funeral. There is another sidelight in the story which appears, although this time it is needed to advance the plot. Three young hooligans, peer pressure rebounding between them, yearn for Western jeans. They mug Ardabiev for the jeans he is wearing, a senseless exercise, as he is wearing Yugoslavian imitations. But he is slugged hard and left unconscious on the ground.

The story then skips forward a year. Ardabiev has become a conformist and settled into the academic grind. He still has a plant of Ardabiola but has forgotten why he had it in the first place, because of his head injury. In fact, he is disgusted with the plant. As he leaves on a vacation, he tells the housesitter to let it die from lack of water.

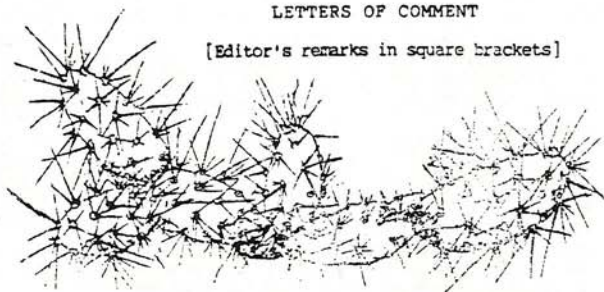
Only now do we learn that the Ardabiola is sentient, and thinks of itself as a daughter of Ardabiev. Hearing the death sentence passed on it, she becomes desperate; how can she communicate with her creator? In a scene of pathos, she manages to pull herself out of her pot. She throws herself out the window onto the car below, just as Ardabiev leaves. She scrabbles frantically at the windscreen, trying to communicate with Ardabiev. It is an attempt that must succeed or she will die.

And she does. " "We're not going anywhere", said Ardabiev to his wife. "I've remembered everything. It's all come back to me. This bush is Ardabiola." "

A simple ending to the novel, but the well-developed characters make it a powerful ending, far more than the isolated quote above would suggest.

## LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Ben Schilling  
Box 548  
Minocqua, Wisconsin 54548-0548

1992-11-13

Your alternate-history story ideas seem very interesting, even if I don't know enough about all of them to comment intelligently. Do you think that Canada could have financed an Apollo program? It wasn't cheap for the USA, and the Soviet Union, with its command economy, dropped out of the race mainly because they couldn't gain enough for what they would have had to spend.

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

1992-11-12

Garth Spencer continues to provide historical information of immense current and future value, and your correspondents give worthwhile suggestions which may improve the conduct of conventions and the prompt recording of events. One problem besetting the last suggestion is that small groups meeting at first informally do not realize that

anything worthy of record has transpired. Only later, if the group attracts noteworthy personalities or is involved in important events, does it occur to someone to write a letter or otherwise explain the significance to an outside recipient. I am reasonably sure that few meetings of the weekly for twenty-five years Winnipeg SF Society were described in writing by any attendee.

There were some. Dave Williamson, a book reviewer for the WINNIPEG FREE PRESS and the author of short stories and three novels, attended a couple of our meetings, and devoted a chapter to a humorous description of one in his first novel THE BAD LIFE. I wrote letters to Alastair Cameron, author of FANTASY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM, which we published. But I am not aware that information to anyone outside the group was conveyed by members, apart from one Newsletter issued on behalf of the Canadian SF Association. This lack of recording, of course, is what necessitates later research by historians and biographers, and makes their tasks so difficult. By then, faulty memory of informants may lead to errors difficult to rectify.

FROM: Harry Andruschak  
Box 5309  
Torrance, California 90510-5309

1992-11-15

Alternate history for Canadian SF ... my own idea. We go to the period after WW2. The USA once again makes its grab for nuclear power and weapons. As before, the U.K. decides to build its own atomic bombs, and so do France, the U.S.S.R., and China. As before, Canada decides to pursue the development of nuclear energy, concentrating on heavy-water reactors.

NEW BREAK #1: In 1957, the Windscale Pile #1 fire is

[continued next page]



not stopped in time. The pile burns all the way, releasing huge amounts of radioactivity that causes hundreds of thousands of deaths and illness all over southern England including London, which proves to be impossible to evacuate in time. (Yes, this almost happened.) The U.K. nuclear program ends immediately.

NEW BREAK #2: And four years later, the USA loses Detroit, as Enrico Fermi has a core melt, and the world's first commercial breeder reactor explodes. (Yes, this almost happened. In the real world, of course, a cover-up went into effect and several years later we had the Clinch River Breeder Reactor, which was also billed as the world's first commercial breeder reactor.) Nuclear power in the USA comes to a screeching halt.

Result: The CANDU reactor becomes the international standard, and Canada becomes the #1 economic power in the west.

FROM: Buck Coulson 1992-11-16  
2677W-500N  
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

I agree pretty much with Panchyk. I did my stint as a fanzine fan, and my major interest these days is conventions. The balkanization Dave refers to is also slowed by the number of people who have a foot in more than one camp. The SCA 'Dark Horde' came into SF fandom as the Dorsai, and into ST fandom as the Klingons, and were for a time fairly active in all three areas.

FROM: Joseph Major 1992-11-18  
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8  
Louisville, Kentucky 40215-2343

"Suppose the English had lost the Battle of the Plains of

Abraham?", the editor asks as a diversion from the usual sorts of alternative histories. There is one attempt to answer that question, PRINCE CHARLIE'S BLUFF, by David Thomas, which came out in the mid-Seventies. However it focuses mainly on southern issues, having as the aftermath of the French victory at Québec, the Young Pretender revealing that all that historical guff about him being a boozier was merely Hanoverian propaganda, leading the Virginians and the remainder of the southern colonies in a successful war of independence, defeating his old enemy the Duke of Cumberland in revenge for Culloden.

[And speaking of other alternative histories, suppose the Battle of Culloden had gone the other way? There must be a few novels on a restored Scottish kingdom.]

I found Dave Panchyk's tribute to diversity in fandom interesting and useful. Especially after finishing the discussion in STET about how diversity in fandom, or the Worldcon anyway, is ruinous and less than positive. It takes many kinds, I guess.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr. 1992-11-16  
423 Summit Avenue  
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

It's probably not important if the balkanization of fandom that Dave Panchyk writes about is good or bad. It exists and there's no apparent way of changing fandom to eliminate it. I suppose it derives mainly from the fact that it's no longer possible for a fan to keep up with F&SF completely. There are too many new books appearing on the stands for anyone to be a completist reader, too many offerings on television and in movie theatres to watch, too many miscellaneous things like audiotape, semi-prozines, non-fiction books about SF, and so on. Fan A and Fan B may try to have

conversations about F&SF and fail because they've read, seen, and heard only perhaps 10% of the available stuff in common, and 90% of their exposure will be unknown to one another. Up to the late 1950s or early 1960s, it was possible for a fan to keep up with all the important material. Since then, the supply has become greater and greater, so Fan A seeks out fans who happen to have the same special preferences as Fan A has for conversations, club-joining, and convention clique purposes.

The letter from Sam Moskowitz was fascinating for its revelations about virtually unknown early manifestations of fanzine fandom and little-known pioneering fans. However, I might point out that a fan other than Albert H. Hirschmeller knew about or remembered THE METEOR and THE SCIENTIFIC MAGAZINE. Both are listed in the FANZINE INDEX, so either R.D. Swisher, who compiled the reaily versions of that publication, or Bill Evans and Bob Pavlat, who published its later revision and updating, knew about those 1931 publications. The FANZINE INDEX indicates that Forry Ackerman apparently had some sort of role in creation of THE METEOR.

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1992-11-25  
412 - 4 Lisa Street  
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

Vancouver is lucky in that BCSFA had an opposite yet complementary club in UBCSFS from which to draw assistance and resources, and vice versa. In the years that OSFiC, the Ontario SF Club, existed as the central SF club in Toronto, I don't recall if there were any associated SF clubs at any of the universities, polytechnics, or community colleges in the greater Toronto area. The only place where a club might have been was the Mississauga/Erindale campus of the University of Toronto, where Erincon (my very first con was Erincon 3 in 1978) was held for a number of years, with little success. Now that

OSFiC is gone, there remain only two small SF clubs in Toronto, the Space Time Continuum SF discussion group, and Tleilaxu, the gay/lesbian SF club and support group. A central club is once again under discussion though. I hope that Garth's fanhistory won't start up the fighting in Vancouver fandom again. I am rereading Harry Warner's ALL OUR YESTERDAYS so I can properly read A WEALTH OF FABLE, which I bought at Magicon. I must agree with Buck Coulson that good and bad must be reported in fanhistories to give a total dimension to what is being recorded.

The Balkanization of fandom as Dave Panchyk describes it is a fact, but whether it is good or bad depends on the age of the person looking at it, and the kind of fandom they remember. Older fans remember when fanac consisted of fanzines and pulps, locs to all SF publications, and the odd con. Today, human ingenuity has created for fandom a wide variety of activities, and understandably no three-day con could ever hope to cater to all of them. I believe that the expansion of fannish activities and the Balkanization of fandom is a natural progression. The continuation of general cons and the presentation of opportunity for new fans to meet various interests head-on and experienced fans to get together to share the central interest, SF, may be the factor that at least tries to bind all of these fannish interests into a semi-cohesive whole.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Rodney Leighton, Par Nilsson, Dick Lynch, Henry Welch