

OPUNTIA

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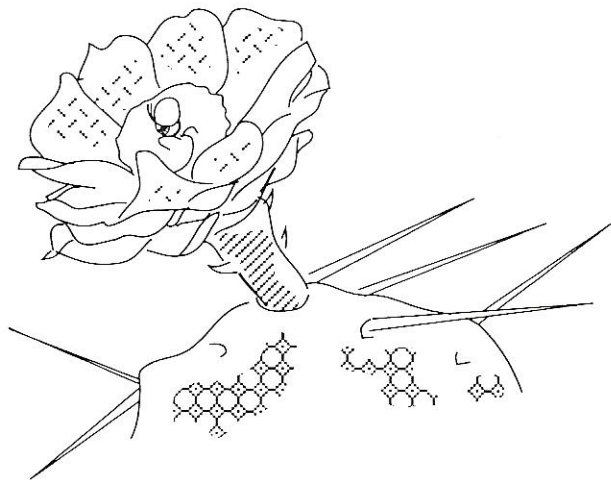
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OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered **OPUNTIA**s are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines.

Cover art by Sheryl Birkhead, 25509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882, USA.



WHAT IS FAPA?

This issue is for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. (Details from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 994611-1948) For those of you receiving this issue who do not know what an apa is, please read on.

Modern zine publishing as we know it today began in the middle 1800s as cheap, home-use printing presses became available to the general public. Zinesters developed a distro method called the amateur press association (apa) where members sent x number of copies of their zine to a central mailer (also known as the official editor). The zines are collated into bundles, and each member gets back one bundle of everyone's zines. There is an annual fee to cover postage. Apas have a minimum level of activity required, such as publishing 8 pages a year. It must be emphasized that apas are not for passive subscribers; you must commit to the minimum activity level or you will be booted out. FAPA has been going for more than 65 years; the oldest apa is the National A.P.A., founded 1876.

x.3 OPUNTIAs are for FAPA. In addition to articles, there will be mailing comments on other apazines in the last FAPA bundle. I usually quote the remark I am commenting on, so hopefully an outsider can still read the comments with interest.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

FROM: Lloyd Penney
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

2005-12-20

I found out not long ago that the World Horror Convention will be coming to Toronto from March 29 to April 1, 2007. All I know is the main guest is Michael Marshall Smith, and the chairman is Amanda Foubister. I fully expect that almost no one locally will be asked to help. Already we know that this convention is on the usual Ad Astra weekend.

[Canadian fandom is so atomized that I doubt there will be much overlap between the two. With six million people living in Metro Toronto, one would hope both conventions could each scrape up a couple of hundred attendees.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Murray Moore, Joseph Nicholas, Terry Jeeves, Chester Cuthbert, John Hertz, Gianni Simone

FAPA CLEARCUT AWARD (for most pages published in a mailing) goes to Robert Sabella for 46 pages in FAPA #274 and again in FAPA #275 for 32 pages.

MAILING COMMENTS ON FAPA #274

FAPA #274 received in Calgary on February 24.

Ben's Beat #83 *"I am surely not the patriarch in this joint. I challenge everyone to list ages."* As for me, I turned 50 last November 3. Five years left before a full pension! My father was 68 and my mother only 71 when they died, so I am not going to hang on any longer than I have to at work. One of my co-workers has child support, two alimonies, and two impaired driving offenses. He told me he will stay on until his 70s because he has to, in order to pay off all his debts and fines.

You must have a good pension if you can afford to see all those Broadway shows!

You mention a play you went to: *"It is set in Cape Breton, an island off Canada ..."* This is technically true, in the sense that

Manhattan is an island off the USA, but Cape Breton is connected to the rest of Nova Scotia by a causeway and is more like a peninsula with a narrow strait separating it from the mainland. You were wondering about the derivation of the name of August Derleth's publishing house, Mycroft and Moran, devoted to mystery stories. As you correctly surmise, Mycroft is Sherlock Holmes's smarter brother. The other name is one of Holmes's enemies, Col. Sebastian Moran, said by Holmes to be the "second most dangerous man in Europe". Professor Moriarty was, of course, Public Enemy #1. It seems to me that if I was a criminal and someone called me the second most dangerous man, I'd take that as an insult. "Whaddaya mean, second?"

King Biscuit Time #46 Re: most poets having to teach for a living because no one can make money being a poet. I've always felt that poetry was meant to be spoken, not read, and in fact the idea of it being predominantly printed is a relatively recent innovation in human history. But you can in fact make a living from poetry if you set it to music and can convince bands or singers to perform and record it. Having said all that, I don't see why one has to be a teacher to publish poetry. There must be other jobs where one can have plenty of time to contemplate, such as a graveyard shift security guard, forest fire lookout, or some slack government job. It should be remembered that Albert Einstein came up with three of his major works while a clerk in the Swiss patent office.

Re: floppy drives becoming obsolete. In January I bought a new 100-gigabyte Toshiba laptop with wide screen, a scanner/printer, external floppy drive (because all my archived files are on floppies), and a CD/DVD drive and burner. The laptop came with Windows XP SP2, but I also bought WordPerfect 12 and Adobe Acrobat 7 (which makes pdf files). I still intend to run the now tiny screen 1998 laptop as a backup and because it will take me months to learn and configure the software on the new laptop the way I like it. OPUNTIA will still be produced on the old laptop. As a semi-Luddite, I very much resent the time wasted in constantly re-learning new software. I still do not have and refuse to get Internet access at home. Once a week (or more often, depending on how much research I am doing) I visit the University of Calgary Library and use their terminals to check my e-mail and a couple of Web sites. This saves me the constant worry and bother about spyware and viruses.

When I send articles to editors, I put them on a floppy, return not required, as well as sending the hard copy, so as I gradually move my archives over to CD-RW, I can recycle the old floppies. The new laptop has four USB ports, so hopefully any new media forms can be accommodated.

But all of this is why I still believe in the Papernet. I have in my library, books up to two centuries old, none of which require USB port devices to read, or have to be re-formatted.

Nice Distinctions #12 Re: bookstores separating fantasy from science fiction on the bookshelves. In Calgary, the Chapters/Indigo/Coles/W.H. Smith/Classic stores do this. (All of these stores are owned by Heather Reisman; there is only one national chain of bookstores in Canada.) Some are inconsistent; I've seen Terry Pratchett in one section or the other and sometimes both. It does help though, as a rough sort. As far as avoiding multi-volume epics of heroes on a quest for the Sacred Knicknack of Qwerty, there are just as many spacecraft pilots warping through the cosmos looking for plot coupons as there are farm girls seeking their rightful place on the throne. I've found that very few novel series hold up past the fourth or fifth volume, after which I quit reading them.

"Does anyone else remember Paraquat?" This herbicide was banned in Canada just before I became a pest control foreman, so I never used it myself. Even among us pesticide techies it had a bad reputation. I don't believe that it caused lung problems in marijuana smokers. Those with lung problems got it from inhaling smoke, which is a biohazard regardless of whether it is tobacco, marijuana, alfalfa, or a campfire.

The Annex #21 Your horror story about nearly dying from sepsis due to a prostate biopsy has convinced me that if I make it to 85 years of age, I shall not take such chances. No matter how low the odds are.

Alphabet Soup #49 *"The time is rapidly approaching when we must go into space, because we can't afford to live on Earth anymore."* I just got my 2006 property tax assessment (Alberta uses fair market value assessment) which calculates the value of my 1950s bungalow at \$281,000, up from \$235,000 last year. The sad part of it is that I consider the assessment probably conservative. My uncle rents a one-bedroom apartment in a good neighbourhood and his rent was just recently increased to \$800 monthly. Such is life in a boom town.

Visions Of Paradise #104 Re: declining readership of SF prozines. This isn't something restricted to SF, since the same thing has happened to other magazines in hobbies such as philately and aquarium keeping. TROPICAL FISH HOBBYIST had a monthly print run in the 90,000 range in the 1960s but is down to 40,000 or so. AMERICAN PHILATELIST is now under 50,000. And it isn't because of the Internet, because these declines began back in the 1980s. I suspect the future of print will be in semi-prozines run by volunteer societies. The worries that SF fans have about the future are identical to those of philatelists.

Condolences on the death of your father. We all know our parents have to die sometime but it is still a shock when it happens. The empty space never goes away but it helps to remember the good times with them.

Of Members And Zines Re: how to count pages of half-size zines (such as OPUNTIA) When I am counting pages for the Clearcut Award, I standardize everything to the 8.5 x 11 size. Thus, I count my zine as equivalent to 8 pages.

The Road Warrior Re: reliability of Wikipedia and other Web sites. When I do research for my articles, I try to cite only peer-reviewed journals and newspapers, not only because they are more reliable but because they are fixed. The problem with citing a Web page as a reference is that when to reader goes to it, it may have changed. What bothers me is that this may become the norm, and we will have no fixed points in the past save the pre-Internet era.

Re: your trip to the Glasgow Worldcon. I liked the your photo of the Klingon wearing a kilt. Wha's lak us?

Lofgeornost #82 I was particularly interested in your account of visiting the Scottish isles, and the homeland of the Macleods, because of Calgary's strong connection to them. The first commander of the Mounties (then called the North West Mounted Police) and many of his command were Scots from the isles. Col. James Macleod founded Fort Macleod, about halfway between Calgary and the American border, and the main drag into Calgary from the south is Macleod Trail.

The Colonel named our city after his ancestral home on the Isle of Mull. We were briefly known as Bow Valley Post, then Lt. Brisebois, commanding F Troop, which founded our city in 1875, named it Fort Brisebois. His C.O. over-ruled him, saying that it was improper for him to have named a town after himself. Col. Macleod sent this order up the Macleod Trail from his headquarters at Fort Macleod. Rank has its privileges.

"I wonder how many of us work in jobs that did not exist back when we were in college." I got my B.Sc. in Horticulture from the University of Alberta in 1978. But while the job still exists and always will (you can never outsource tree pruning to a Chinese factory), it amazes me how much it has been transformed. One of my university summer jobs was doing research on an experimental herbicide called glyphosate. Now, under the name of Roundup, it is the principal earner for Monsanto, not just as the herbicide itself, but through the sale of transgenic crops resistant to Roundup. Genetic engineering wasn't even mentioned in any of my university courses in the middle 1970s, not even in passing. In my daily job with parks maintenance, the most vital tool isn't a pruning hook or a ride-on mower, it is the cellphone.

Re: your watching less and less television. I haven't had a television set since I left home in 1973 and have never missed it. If Karl Marx were alive today, he would be saying that television is the opiate of the masses.

No Exit #3 I enjoyed your story about being smacked on the back of the head by a falling stack of zines. This demonstrates there is a good reason why bookshelves are horizontal. Although on the other hand, some people have been smacked up the head by a falling bookshelf.

All other zines: Read but nothing for comment.

ASK A STUPID QUESTION

[LINN'S STAMP NEWS, 2004-10-25, page 4, Letters to the Editor]

Computers and Stamps

In the Aug. 16 *Linn's*, William Sharpe's Computers and Stamps column illustrates an Excel form for entering stamp data into an Excel spreadsheet. But he fails to say how the form is created.

Gary Greenberg
Parkville, Mo.

The form is created in Excel.

MAILING COMMENTS ON FAPA #275

FAPA #275 received in Calgary on June 14.

Nice Distinctions #13 Re: your complaint about not liking the works of Honore de Balzac. There is a village called Balzac just north of Calgary, although it will probably disappear within the next decade as the big city swallows it up. It was founded in 1910 as a railway siding, and so named because Sir William Van Horne, the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, was a great fan of the French novelist.

592617
JAN 24 1986
BALZAC, AB
TOM OEO

Postmark of Balzac, Alberta

Snickersnee #Munch *"Electricity: that's an American-made good."* Some of which comes from them thar socialists in Canada. Alberta exports coal-generated electricity to the Pacific Northwest. Not to mention the oil from the Athabasca Tar Sands becomes gasoline in eastern USA refineries in Illinois.

Re: you publishing your collected works. Has anyone been brave enough to attempt the collected works of Isaac Asimov? (Even if only as a 100-disk set of DVDs.)

No Exit #4 Re: your FAPA publicity on Live Journal with only one prospect who never followed through. I used to do this at Calgary conventions (for zines in general, not FAPA) but gave it up. Each year I would get several enthusiastic responses, give them my zine, and explain how to get more issues by loccing. And that would be the last I ever heard of them. I still put surplus trade zines on the freebie table at conventions, and they all go, but I suspect they are being taken by collectors, not active participants.

To put it in perspective, philately and aquarium keeping (my other hobbies) are also having the same problem. No one knows what is to be done, despite all manner of efforts. We are faced with trying to convert a new generation who would rather go bowling alone.

The Annex #22 I enjoyed your account of your boyhood life in New Hampshire during the Great Depression and found it an interesting comparison to my reminiscences of a rural boyhood in central Alberta in the 1960s. You mentioned how everyone grew their own food and kept chickens. Large gardens were still the rule when I was a boy, although in the village it was illegal to keep chickens or other livestock.

Sweet Jane #47 Re: people telling you they own SUVs so they can see over the traffic. This, of course, sets off an escalation in SUV size, since if you can't see over the SUV in front of you because your own SUV is too small, you go out and buy a Hummer with monster-truck tires. If it weren't for rising fuel costs, people would by now be upgrading to semi-trailer tractors.

Re: your friend who scandalized his 9th grade class by doing a book review on *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER*. Gadzooks, I wish I'd thought of that! My book reviews were all of Asimov, Clarke, and other SF writers because I was on a mission to convert my fellow students to SF. So much so that one teacher took me aside and told me I shouldn't use such a polemical style. She said she wanted book reviews, not a revival meeting. I don't recall that I ever made any converts either. However, I always got good marks because I was among the few students who could write well. Most students of that rural place and time were suspicious of them that read books voluntarily.

Visions Of Paradise #105: Passing Scene

-8-

Re: your parents raising you as an American with little connection to your Italian heritage, and you worrying if your visit to Italy will have problems with the locals. My maternal great-grandparents came from Finland and all their Canadian-born children spoke *Suomalais* to them. One of those children, my grandaunt Lempi, visited Finland after her retirement and had trouble communicating with the locals because she spoke obsolete *Suomalais* that hadn't been heard since WW1. So if you had learned the culture in America, it would have been the culture of your ancestor's date, not the current culture. But it shouldn't matter anyway. Lempi had a great time in Finland and the locals were thrilled to host descendants who had come back to the Old Country. I'm sure Italy will be the same.

Visions Of Paradise #105: Wondrous Stories Re: why you read SF. Another reason I would suggest, which appeals to me, is that SF is an optimistic literature. I don't want to read depressing stories about drug addicts who get squashed by life, or a New England housewife in an unhappy adulterous affair, or a young homosexual, black, blind, double-amputee with bad breath who accomplishes nothing in 300 pages before committing suicide. SF is generally an optimistic literature in the sense that its characters accomplish things despite their handicaps. That is not to say that all forms of SF are equal. I never had any patience with cyberpunk because it is too near future. That created two

problems. One is that underground rebels busily hacking computer nets are not cool dudes, but in real life are overweight techies still living at home and never been with a woman. The other is that cyberpunk SF had a bad habit of predicting details which soon became obsolete, such as the hero hacking into a world-spanning master computer with a massive 10 megabyte database. (Although to be fair, the Apollo spacecraft launch control computer was 30 kilobytes.)

Ben's Beat #84 *"About the Big Apple, around here, when people are going in, they say that they are going into "the city" or "into town". I imagine they do that in Calgary too, no?"* Actually, no, we don't. Calgary (pop. 1,000,000) is not a metropolis like New York. It is a single city government with no form of independence or self-government among its suburbs like Brooklyn or other boroughs might have. The downtown core dominates the rest of the city totally.

The Devil's Work #134 Re: Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. *"This was long after the fact, just ask the Chinese and/or Koreans."* What the Orientals had was basically rubber stamping, where a text was carved onto wood and then used to stamp out multiple copies.. Gutenberg was the first to use movable type, whereby the individual letters could be re-used. Even in Europe, stamping images was long known but Gutenberg was the first to set type.

Re: the origin of SF. It may have been written prior to Gernsback, but the reason it is dated to him is because that is when it became a self-aware genre with its own fandom. Prior to him, there were mostly isolated readers who might have corresponded but never developed the panoply of zines, conventions, and clubs.

Edgar's Journal #5 Impressive cover of handmade paper.

"Among the types of life on Earth that are cryptobiotic in early stages of development are the seeds of higher plants (wheat grains from the tombs of ancient Egyptian Kings have sprouted after being sealed in urns for more than 2,000 years." All such claims for ancient wheat have been discredited and are nothing more than folklore. I published an extensive article about this in OPUNTIA #57. Most wheat will not germinate after 10 years, little after 25 years, and few seeds of any species after 50 years.

Life after death is a fascinating aspect of wishful thinking. It appears to have some evolutionary value since such a belief tends to make people more civilized ("Behave yourself, or you'll burn in Hell!"). It also spurs people on to improve things.

You ask what software my Subject Index to Canadian Zines is in. I use WordPerfect 8 (old laptop) and 12 (new laptop). I'm discontinuing the index because it is too much work and I'm trying to cut back my workload.

I may convert it to pdf and send it to efanazines.com, and henceforth only keep an index to OPUNTIA. There doesn't seem to be any interest or use for zine indexes beyond a handful of people.

A Propos De Rien (2006 May) Re: computers translating human languages. The only reasonable successes so far seem to be for specific technical fields, where the vocabulary is constrained and context is not such a problem. As you say, a general translator is some time coming yet. I'd like to see an American computer try to translate a Canadian sentence such as: "At the Timmie's, I reached for a serviette, knocked some poutine into my boss's lap, and now I'm on the pogeys without a toonie."

The Road Warrior (2006 April) *"Larry McMurty coauthored the screenplay [of BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN], and he certainly knows something about the American West."* And which movie was filmed in the foothills (not the real mountains) of Alberta, southwest of Calgary, standing in for Wyoming. Much indignation here in this province about the movie because it showed them herding sheep in the heart of cattle country.

Lofgeornost #83 Re: where to live in retirement. Like you, I don't intend to move away when I retire five years from now. In Alberta, it is common for people to retire to Vancouver Island or the interior of British Columbia, and then move back to Alberta a

few years later since their kids and grandchildren won't come over the mountains for Christmas because of fear of bad winter weather or the crush of holiday flying. Those who retire to some remote area will require good health, because they will be severely inconvenienced every time they need a doctor. As for filling in the hours of retirement, every retiree I've talked to agrees that if you have hobbies and volunteer, then you will wonder how you'll ever find the time to get everything done.

"Convenience will always trump quality." Bill Gates built a fortune on this epigram, and his enemies still don't understand that people don't want state-of-the-art software just to send an e-mail to Aunt Emma.

Snice To Snow You #? Re: your son's trouble getting SAT tests. The sad part is that SAT scores do not necessarily correlate with college success. I was fortunate that my alma mater, the University of Alberta, did not require SATs from Alberta high school students. The U of A had the only teacher's college at the time, and the vast majority of its graduates taught in the Alberta school system. The folklore was that asking for SATs of Alberta students would therefore be an admission by the U of A that they weren't doing a good job in producing teachers. Out-of-province students had to supply SATs; the U of A wasn't about to trust the educational systems of Saskatchewan or Ontario.

Synapse (2006 May) Re: the ATLANTIC MONTHLY article suggesting the USA would collapse if Venezuela refused to sell oil to it. This doesn't seem plausible since the USA has so many different sources of supply that it is actually better placed than many countries that get oil only from the Middle East or other single source. Alberta is happy to sell oil from the Athabasca Tar Sands to the USA and use the money for our benefit.

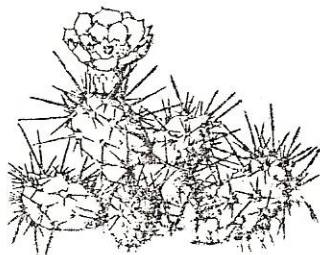
Re: why gasoline prices are higher in Canada than the USA. This is because both the federal and provincial governments levy higher taxes on fuel, partly as a user-pay for road construction and repairs, and partly to encourage conservation.

"Boxing Day coincides with the synthetic holiday Kwanzaa. Which do Canadians of that persuasion observe?" Kwanzaa is an American holiday. Boxing Day is the Canadian holiday, inherited from Britain. The majority of American Negroes are descended from slaves and had to invent a synthetic holiday. The majority of Canadian Negroes are Caribbean or African immigrants who have their own holidays from the Old Country.

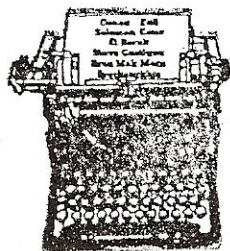
Re: hectographs using gelatin sheets. I was referring to the commercial hectographs used by businesses, none of whom would have bothered with pouring melted gelatin into a pan as did zine fans. There was a steady market for gelatin sheets and rolls ready-to-use.

"I'd imagine the townships in Alberta have to be adjusted pretty often for curvature of the Earth" Western Canada was surveyed into square mile sections in the late 1800s and early 1900s for land titles, with a 6 by 6 group of sections (36 sections) making one township. Yes, they did have to adjust for the Earth's curvature, using what are called correction lines. This was done by making some sections odd-shaped like an orange peel to allow the others to stay square. Correction lines are easy to spot in rural areas because the grid roads suddenly offset notably instead of meeting at a four-way crossroads.

All Other Zines: Read, but nothing to comment on.



by Dale Speirs

*Robert E. Howard*

STATION June -9- 2006

Cross Plains, TX 76443

1906-2006 REH Centennial

I like to send off for commemorative postmarks from both Canada Post and the USPS. Howard's books are unreadable to me but he does fit the topic of SF and fantasy, so I sent off for the postmark honouring him. The sheet of paper has names typed on it that are too blurred to make out but the first one appears to be Conan, and the others are almost certainly other names taken from his two-fisted pulp action stories. This is not only an SF topic, but also one for typewriter fandom as well.

Flin Flon, Manitoba, is the only town in the world to be named for an SF character. The prospectors who founded the town named it for him because of a trashy novel they were reading at the time.



Canada has a couple of UFO postmarks from Moonbeam, Ontario, and Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia, but UFOs are a branch of abnormal psychology, not SF, so I won't include them here. The USPS has had some for SF conventions and Star Trek. I don't collect stamps per se, just covers and postmarks, but there are a number of stamps that fit the topic as well.

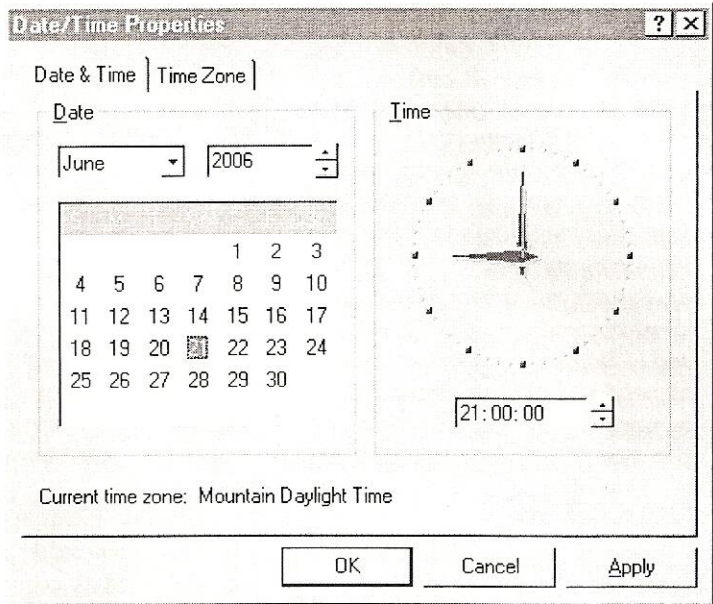
WORLD WIDE PARTY #13

Founded by Benoit Girard (Québec) and Franz Miklis (Austria), the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the globe.

I celebrated in my traditional custom by raising a glass four times. Firstly, I faced to the east and saluted those ahead of me in earlier time zones. Then I faced south and toasted those in the same time zone, after which I faced north and toasted again. Finally, I faced to the west and toasted those who would be celebrating in an hour's time.

I did all this in my kitchen. The first year that I celebrated the WWP, I went out into my back yard, but I got some strange looks from pedestrians passing by. No doubt some of them wondered if I was having a conversation with an imaginary rabbit named Harvey. In subsequent years I played it safer inside the house.

The celebration of the WWP is to remind us that we are part of the Papernet, part of an Eternal Network where people come and go but zinedom and mail art live on.



Mark your calendar now for next year's World Wide Party!

by Dale Speirs

In 1971, when Canada converted from Imperial to metric measurements, there was a considerable amount of moaning from those who didn't like the change. My observation was that those who complained loudest about metric speed limit signs never paid attention to the Imperial speed limits, so what were they on about? But it could have been a lot worse, such as what happened with pre-Confederation Nova Scotia when there were multiple currencies and buying a postage stamp was like buying derivatives on today's stock market. The trouble started with the Act to Establish the Decimal System of Accounting, which was passed into law on April, 15, 1859, and set to come into force on January 1 of the following year. The problem was that there was no clean-cut transition from one currency to another because both continued to circulate. Paragraph 2 of the Act read as follows:

"2. All accounts to be rendered to the Provincial Government, or to any public officer or department by any officer or functionary, or by any party receiving aid from this province or otherwise accountable to the government or legislature thereof, shall be so rendered in dollars and cents; but any such accounts may have a second column containing sums in pounds, shillings, and pence, equivalent to the sums so stated in dollars and cents, if the accountant shall prefer to render his account in that form."

Paragraph 3 set out conversion rates as follow:

Gold sovereign = \$5

Silver crown = \$1.25

Silver half-crown = 62.5 cents

Silver florin = 50 cents

Silver shilling = 25 cents

Silver sixpence = 12.5 cents

Copper penny = 2 cents

Halfpenny = 1 cent

Complaints appeared about the post offices playing loose and fancy with the conversion rates. An 1860-03-08 newspaper article (YARMOUTH HERALD, page 3) complained that: *"A postage stamp is supposed to represent three pence, but according to our Decimal Currency Act, five cents (half-pence) will purchase one. If, however, one hands a seven pence halfpenny (6d sterling) in payment for a stamp, he receives in return with the stamp but seven cents (3 ½ d), by which means he pays fourpence instead of three pence, the true value. If, however, he presents a fifteen pence (1s sterling) he receives but twenty cents (10d), consequently he pays five pence for what is valued at five cents or 2 ½ d."*

Clear as mud, isn't it?

THE CANADA POST E-MAIL TAX HOAX

by Dale Speirs

For a number of years, the more naive Internet users have been panicking over a supposed tax on e-mail. The original version came from Canada but was soon adapted to the U.S. Postal Service. The basic premise of the hoax chain letter is that Canada Post is losing so much money it wants to tax e-mails to make up the difference. Actually it earns a profit; letters may be declining but parcel post is soaring as all those online dot.coms still have to ship their products by real mail. The hoax letter authoritatively cites newspaper articles, MPs, and quotes from impending legislation. It relies on the fact that the majority of people who forward the hoax letter do not know that the newspaper articles are non-existent, as is the legislation. The hoax letter was circulating in Canada in early 1999, in the USA in 2000, and an Australian version in 2001.

The supposed tax bill is called Bill 602P. Setting aside the fact that the House of Commons would never be dealing with 602 bills in one session, the giveaway is that in Canada all real federal legislation begins with the letter 'C' if introduced in the Commons, and the letter 'S' if in the Senate.

The provinces have no authority over telecommunications, so if you see a provincial version then immediately you know it is a

hoax. The same Bill 602P appears in the American version of the hoax, but all federal legislation there begins with 'H.R.' or 'S'. The names cited in the hoax letter are Tony Schnell (a legislator) and Richard Stepp (a selfless lawyer trying to stop the bill), neither of whom exist in Canada, USA, or Australia.

How do you identify a hoax e-mail? The major clue is that it urges you in the most strenuous and urgent terms to forward it to everyone you know. The idea of the hoaxer is to plug up user e-mail boxes with such junk. The letter is written in an authoritative but hysterical tone of voice, with emotional language designed to panic the recipients and stampede them into spamming the letter to their friends. Other hallmarks of a hoax letter include FREQUENT USE OF ALL CAPS, and lots of exclamation marks !!!!!!! If you are not certain the letter is a hoax, go to the Website www.urbanlegends.com, which keeps track of hoaxes.

Actually I would support an Internet Service provider fee of 1 to 5 cents per e-mail. This wouldn't affect the average user who only sends a few e-mails per day, but would reduce the spammers who send millions of e-mails per day per spammer. Daily e-mail fees of \$20,000 and up for the spammers would quickly run most of them out of business. The postal system originally operated with mail sent postage due, which led to the same sort of abuses. It wasn't until Sir Rowland Hill introduced prepaid postage in 1840 that paper spam stopped.

PRINT IT YOURSELF!

The adverts shown here are from the 1872-06-01 issue of HARPER'S WEEKLY (page 439). The manufacturers had it in mind that the buyers would print business cards or flyers.

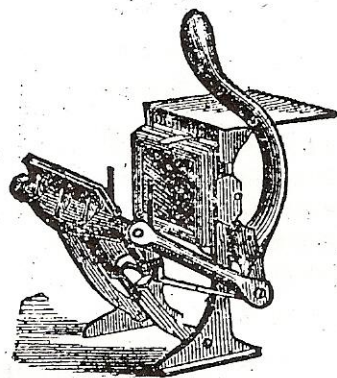
DO YOUR OWN PRINTING.

Cheapest and Best Portable Presses.

MEN AND BOYS MAKING MONEY.

Price of Presses, \$8, \$12, \$16; Offices, \$15, \$20, \$30.
Send for a circular to **LOWE PRESS CO.,**
15 Spring Lane, Boston, Mass.

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IF YOU WANT

To do your own printing, and the best job press in the world to do it with, then you will get **THE YOUNG AMERICA PRINTING PRESS.** A descriptive Circular, with Specimen Book of Type, &c., sent to any address by **JOSEPH WATSON, 85 Water St., Boston, and 53 Murray St., New York.**

But very quickly, young boys and girls began using these cheap home presses to produce zines. Thus our hobby began.