

OPUNTIA

65.1

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

FROM: Robert Lichtman
11037 Broadway Terrace
Oakland, California 94611-1948

2008-02-27

Re: your review of **The Fossil**, in which you characterize that publication this way: "This periodical is devoted to the history of zinedom". That's true on the face of it, but what needs to be said is that this is the official organ of The Fossils Inc., non-SF amateur journalism's equivalent organization SF fandom's First Fandom group. It was founded in 1904 at a reunion dinner of an informal group called "The Amateur Journalists Of The Past".

On the cover logo of the first issue of **The Fossil**, the subtitle is "Official Journal Of The Amateur Journalists Of The Past". That issue also includes the initial draft of the bylaws for the organization. I quote them a part: "*Membership shall be restricted to such persons as were actively and honorably engaged in Amateur Journalism prior to 1890.*"

[This would amaze many modern-day zinesters who think zines were invented by punk music fans in the 1970s. Zines as we understand them today date back to the post-Civil War era, when cheap table-top printing presses became available.]

My own knowledge and experience with "ayjay" goes back to the early 1960s when, as a teenager living in Los Angeles and already active in fandom, I joined the National Amateur Press Association. I lived near a prominent amateur, Wesley Porter, who I visited on a number of occasions. He gave me a bunch of vintage publications, including a copy of John Travis Nixon's **History Of The National Amateur Press Association**, privately published in 1900. That copy's boards were warped due to, Porter told me, it having gone through the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire.

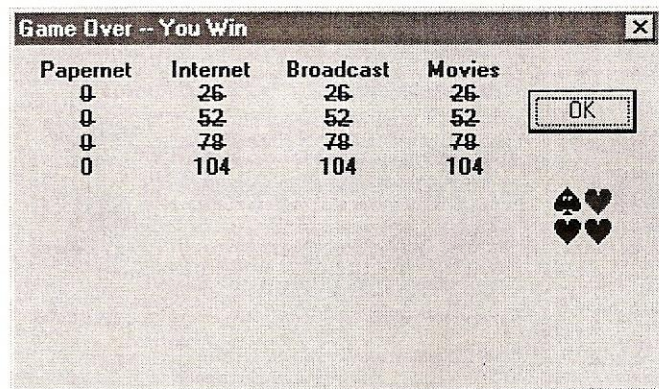
FROM: Franz Zrilich
4004 Granger Road
Medina, Ohio 44256-8602

2008-03-04

[Re: alternative history stories with time travellers] Time travellers who want to change a timeline would best be advised to leave behind a thousand copies of an Encyclopedia Of The Future, including all headlines for the next two years, then headlines about geological and meteorological events for the next ten years. This will impress the intellectuals, who will also pay attention to descriptions of attainable technology. You scatter the encyclopedias over a broad geographical scale, including enemy states.

[A book calling itself an encyclopedia would probably be ignored as fiction, and no one would pay much attention to its predictions. However, one good way of doing it would be to photocopy it in report form, label it "Top Secret", and include a paragraph on the cover threatening dire consequences from the government to anyone reading it. That would guarantee that every copy found would be closely read.] -2-

I Also Heard From: Sheryl Birkhead, John Held Jr, Murray Moore, Ross Priddle, Randy Robbins, Henry Welch, Kris Mininger, Joseph Nicholas, John Hertz



BOOK REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

At The Heart Of Events (10.78 euros from An Post, Irish Philatelic Service, Box 1991, General Post Office, Dublin 1, Ireland, or from www.irishstamps.ie. Major credit cards accepted.) is a new softcover coffee table book by Stephen Ferguson about the Dublin G.P.O. building (published 2007). Unlike any other post office building in the world, this one is iconic, for it was here that the Easter Uprising of 1916 began when rebels seized the building and proclaimed the Irish Republic. In the fighting over the next week, the building was fired by English troops, the rebels driven out and gunned down, and the rebellion crushed. While the Easter Uprising proved a failure, it started Ireland well and truly down the road to independence in 1922. The original building was burned out completely, leaving only the shell of the massive stone facade. Since rebuilt, and today the headquarters of An Post, it is a symbol of the Irish Republic.

Ferguson had previously published a book about how the posties dealt with the events of the Easter Uprising, being driven out by the rebels, forced to find temporary facilities elsewhere, and trying to deliver the mail while under fire from both sides. This book concentrates on the G.P.O. building as a physical artefact. It was the latest in a series of G.P.O. edifices, each one moving to a new

location as the centre of commerce in Dublin shifted over the centuries. The final location produced a building with a magnificent stone facade and pedimented portico, one that became the heart of Dublin's commercial and social life. Construction was completed in 1818, and it underwent a major renovation of the interior in 1916, completed a couple of weeks before the Easter Uprising. It had three statues looking down from the roof: Hibernia, symbolic of Ireland, Fidelity, a cardinal virtue to be encouraged among posties, and Mercury, the winged messenger of the gods. After the Uprising was over, it stood as a vacant shell for years until the political situation stabilized. It wasn't until 1929 that rebuilding was completed.

It is now the headquarters of the Irish postal system, An Post, and still functioning as a post office. The building was recently renovated, and as the head of An Post remarks in his foreword to the book, everyone who works in it is well aware of the weight of history it carries.

2008 Speaker & Entertainer Resources (Not available to the lumpenproletariat (that's you, dear reader) from J.D. Power & Associates, Premiere Speakers Bureau) The rich live differently; for one thing their junk mail is bound in hardcovers and personalized with their names on the front cover. The Calgary Philatelic Society received this book of available speakers as a piece of direct mail advertising.

Obviously it was sent based on a mailing list that assumes stamp collectors are all wealthy (actually, 99% are middle class) and their clubs can afford monthly speakers in the \$40,000 plus range (our club pays \$0 plus a hearty round of applause). The book lists dozens of high-powered politicians, athletes, coaches, and entertainers available for a fee, usually about what most people earn in a year. Most of the listed speakers will not be in demand in Canada, such as Mike Huckabee (an Arkansas governor) or Peter Vidmar (former American Olympic athlete). However, there are names of speakers who will be greeted with interest anywhere in the world, such as Buzz Aldrin, the second astronaut to walk on the Moon. There is also Dave Barry, a Florida humourist who was popular in Canada because he kept mentioning Head-Smashed-In, Alberta, in his columns (and yes, there really is such a place). There is also a baseball player named Dave Dravecky whose photo is the same as Dave Barry's. Even high-class junk mail has its share of editorial mistakes.

Tiger's Railway (1987) by William Mayne is a humorous novel about Tiger Malik, a Soviet-era Railway Superintendent of the Bessar District, adjacent to the Romanian border. When not tangling with bureaucrats, Malik is busy stealing steam engines to supplement his rail yard fleet. He has a mild feud with the Stationmaster, one Comrade Slivon, moderated by the fact that Slivon's niece is the girlfriend of Malik's son. Slivon is keeping a full dossier on Malik, in the hopes that someday an Inspector

will visit their obscure backwater.

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A Romanian train crew is careless enough to leave their engine unattended on the Bessar side of the border, and it quickly becomes a Bessar engine with a fresh coat of paint and a new serial number. Malik doesn't have time to bask in this feat before becoming embroiled by the nomenclatura in a dispute over why the Insk-Onsk rail line isn't filing regular reports. There is no such line; the stations were built but the budget was cut before the rails were laid. The map at Headquarters shows the line, so therefore it must exist. Malik keeps the peace by advising HQ that the line is as good as it was when it was built, fakes a timetable, and otherwise keeps happy the four bureaucrats in charge of the line, who never actually stir from the offices to inspect the line. He ends up getting a Certificate of Commendation because the line is the only one in the entire Soviet Union that never gets a customer complaint.

This book has episodic chapters, ranging from the arrival of a Chinese train covered in bamboo, to iron ore shipments from miners high in the mountains who have not yet heard of the Revolution. Bessar District is thrown into a flurry by the visit of the Party Chairman, hampered by his train being burned by a forest fire upline. Bessar save the day in supplying replacement coaches, albeit ones leftover from before the Revolution. In another episode, a train goes missing on the Bessar branch line.

One would think that a train couldn't be lost on such a short line, but Malik is frantic to find it: *"They say it's not desperately cold underground in the salt mine, but you do miss the daylight."*

The funniest episode is when an all-female work gang arrives from HQ to do any needed track repairs for the Bessar District. Good strong stout peasant women they, and the repairs are quickly finished. Casting about for other work, they take up Malik's suggestion to actually build the Insk-Onsk line. However, they only have four kilometres of rails, so as they build the line in front of the work train, they yank it out behind them.

An Inspector finally shows up but Malik gets a promotion, not an arrest, much to Slivon's disgust. In the manner of Potemkin, Malik takes the Inspector on a tour of the Insk-Onsk line, accomplished by changing the train depot signs as they go through other towns. All in all, a delightful book.

Irresponsible Freaks, Highball Guzzlers, And Unabashed Grafters, edited by James Martin (trade paperback, 2004) is a collection of epigrams, short fiction, and minor essays published by pioneer newspaperman Bob Edwards (1860-1922). He is unknown today outside Alberta, mainly because his newspapers exist today buried in dusty microfilmed files and he never published in book form. Even within Alberta he is remembered only because a biography was published about him, **Eye Opener**

Bob by Grant MacEwan. Edwards was a Scottish expatriate who drifted about exotic places such as the French Riviera, Italy, and Wyoming. He arrived in the Northwest Territories circa 1882 (Alberta was not carved out of the NWT until 1905) and initially published weekly newspapers in small rural towns such as Wetaskiwin, Okotoks, and High River, still small towns today.

Edwards finally settled in Calgary, where for two decades he published the **Calgary Eye-Opener**, a satirical political and personal newspaper that built up a reputation and sold widely throughout western Canada. An American equivalent would be Harry Golden and his **Carolina Israelite**. Officially a weekly newspaper, it came out as an irregular because Edwards was an binge alcoholic. *"Many a man driven to drink has to walk back."* Every so often he managed to get the newspaper back on a weekly schedule, mainly because the Canadian Post Office threatened to revoke his mailing privileges. *"It appears, according to legislation, that a paper which poses as a weekly must come out weekly and not semi-occasionally. ... It is a confounded nuisance but it can't be helped."*

James Martin has collected numerous epigrams and other material from the old files of all the newspapers put out by Edwards. Unfortunately Martin wrote the accompanying explanatory text in a herky-jerky circus barker style that was intended to be humourous but comes off as frenetic and forced.

However he does not include any useful commentary so it can be safely ignored.

Edwards was always campaigning against the stuffed shirts in whatever town he happened to be publishing in, and had many run-ins with the pioneer aristocracy. "*Mayor Brown, of Medicine Hat, is to attend the Industrial Research Conference next week in Edmonton. He will find that the only research which interests them up there is whiskey.*" Mostly they retaliated by refusing to advertise in his papers or harassing his distributors. He was involved in several libel suits but strangely those were the result of conflicts with other newspaper editors, not the stuffed shirts.

Edwards had a running humourous series in his newspapers about Bertie Buzzard-Cholomondeley, an fictitious English remittance man who got in and out of highly improbable scrapes. In one short story, he reported on a banquet tendered in honour of a horse thief who had just been released from jail, where telegrams of congratulation were read from various real-life dignitaries, including Lord Strathcona. Someone forwarded a copy of that issue to the manor house back in England. His Lordship, under the impression that it was a straight newspaper story, indignantly threatened legal action. It was explained to him by his Canadian barrister that the story was fiction, which only made His Lordship angrier. It took several Canadian government ministers to calm him down.

Edwards' newspapers were riddled with fake society columns mixed in with truthful reports:

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"Mrs. John T. Bugge sold her hogs last week and has purchased a sprightly new spring hat."

"Hank Borden, who was hanged at Lethbridge last week for a most atrocious murder, is no relation to Sir Robert Borden, Premier of Canada. Sir Robert expects the present session to be a short one."

"The funeral of Mrs. Anne B. Palmer, of East Calgary, was held last Friday at the Union Cemetery. The casket was of finished oak with nickel-plate fixings and is said to have cost \$75. Asleep in Jesus."

An alcoholic, Edwards campaigned in favour of temperance because he knew better than most what it meant. In Calgary, dependent on the Canadian Pacific Railway, he maintained a running gun battle with the CPR over its safety, or lack of it. "*Not a life was lost or a buggy smashed at the C.P.R. crossing last week.*" He feuded with Calgary lawyer R.B. Bennett, who acted as C.P.R. solicitor, and who later had the misfortune to become Prime Minister of Canada just as the Great Depression got underway. "*The solitary figure toiling up the heights is R.B. Bennett.*"

A political animal, Edwards was briefly elected to the Alberta legislature as an independent in July 1921 but only ever made one

speech to the legislature. He took ill not long after and died in November 1922, a victim of too many binges and too much despair. Since then, Calgary's newspapers have been routine and dull, consisting only of a respectable broadsheet with respectable news, a scandal tabloid, and assorted free papers specializing in trendiness and celebrity news.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world. SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive, a genzine is a general zine]

Dwan #47 (The Usual from Donny Smith, 1105 North Union Street #119, Bloomington, Indiana 47408) Perzine with a diary of a trip to Turkey to learn the language, a few letters of comment, and some personal musings.

EOD Letter #7 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine about H.P. Lovecraft.

Probe #135 and #136 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) SF clubzine with a strong emphasis on short story fiction, a report on the recent Japanese Worldcon, and letters of comment.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V8#15 (The Usual from the Southern Fandom Confederation, c/o R.B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Drive, Madison, Alabama 35758-1064) SF clubzine with news and listings, convention reports, and letters of comment.

The Fossil #336 (US\$15 per year from The Fossils Inc, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan, Denver, Colorado 80209) This issue covers Australian zinedom, with a biography and zine extracts of James Guinane (1925-2007) and a history of zine publishing Down Under since 1890.

Gar #1 to #7 and Edm #12 to #14 (The Usual from Ross Priddle, 734 - 2 Avenue NW #402, Calgary, Alberta T2N 0E3) Single-sheet collage zines with handwritten text, mail art listings, and assorted artwork.

orga{ni}sm #3/Call And Response #3 (The Usual from Gianni Simone, 3-3-23 Nagatsuta, Midori-ka, Yokohama-shi, 226-0627 Kanagawa-ken, Japan) Two zines back-to-back like the old Ace Doubles paperbacks, one on the horrors of Japanese police procedure, the other on prisons worldwide.

BCSFazine #418 (The Usual from British Columbia Science Fiction Association, Box 74122, Vancouver, British Columbia V5V 3P0) SF clubzine with news of events and letters of comment.

Cherry Monocle (Spring '08) (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 310 Elm Avenue, Easton, Maryland 21601) Cut-and-paste collage zine.

Leeking Ink #31 (The Usual from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) Perzine with stories about her pregnancy and childbirth, her spouse's cancer, gardening, and getting tattoos.

MarkTime #84 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 1051, Orange, California 992856) Some day-tripping in the life of a transit/rail fan, a list of defunct or local fast-food outlets, and letters of comment.

Musea #162, #163, and "Four-TH" (The Usual from Tom Hendricks, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) #162 discusses what changes need to be made to the music industry. Come the Revolution, Hendricks knows exactly who should be first up against the wall. #163 is a consideration of writing a world history, although I think the main problem is quality control and point of view, not the actual process. Four-TH is actually a

CD of Hendricks' songs; he performs regularly in the box office of a local theatre.

Trap Door #25 (US\$5 or The Usual from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 94611-1948) Various articles remembering deceased SF fans, a trip report about roughing it in backwater China, and lots of letters of comment.

The Underground Press (Christmas 2007) (Available for donation from Ron Meek, who sells them on the southeast corner of 7 Avenue and 6 Street SE, Calgary, next to the LRT station.) Ron, a semi-street person, is a zinester I know in Calgary, and I buy his latest zine whenever I get off the train at that station. He rants about the dark side of Alberta's oil economy. (If you want to start a fight in a Calgary tavern, just shout "Royalties should go up!") Various other mentions of local politics, and the lack of planning by the provincial Tories to cope with the oil boom.

Banana Wings #33 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Musings about the state of SF fandom, some personal essays, and letters of comment.

Warp #69 (The Usual from Montréal SF and Fantasy Association, c/o Sylvain St-Pierre, 4456 Boul. Ste-Rose, Laval, Québec H7R 1Y6) SF clubzine with lots of news, convention reports including the recent Japanese World SF Convention,

essays and articles, and letters of comment. Montréal will be hosting the 2009 Worldcon.

Chunga #14 (The Usual from Randy Byers, 1013 North 36 Street, Seattle, Washington 98103) SF genzine, with a memorial to recently deceased fan Bob Tucker, an account of endless waiting in a warehouse for a truck delivering a supercomputer, shopping malls in Japan, fanzine reviews, and letters of comment.

Banana Rag #37 (Mail art Usual from Anna Banana, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Single-sheet emergency issue urging readers to support the proposal by the Melita (Manitoba) Tourist Bureau to build a giant banana as a town attraction, with a banana museum as an adjunct.

Door Knob #95 to #98 (The Usual from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 94611-1948) Apazine with comments on a wide variety of subjects.

Who Is The Star-Spangled Torquemada? (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with commentary on various topics.

Outlaw Mutation Boogie #65 (The Usual from Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Perzine with thoughts on old predictions, what to do when the contractor

tells you to move 3,000 books out of his way so he can repair your house, SF conventions, book reading, and letters of comment.

Statement #355 to #358 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) SF clubzine with news about the local club, goings-on in science and astronomy, and letters of comment.

Alexiad V7#2 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, convention reports, and letters of comment.

Lamplighter #17 (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Obituary issue of several zinesters who have passed on to that great collating room above the sky.

No Sin But Ignorance #48 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Perzine with musings about best-of book lists, shoes, SF fandom, and letters of comment.

Vanamonde #728 to #747 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street, #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Single-sheet weekly apazine with learned comments on a wide range of topics.

The Knarley Knews #128 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Personal accounts of changing jobs from engineering to lawyering, essays and trip reports, life in the WW2 RAF, and many letters of comment.

The New Port News #239 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with remarks on a wide variety of items, like a blog on paper.

Ethel The Aardvark #134 and #135 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 8005) SF clubzine with news and letters of comment. #134 has an interesting report of a conference on utopias in literature and reality. #135 is an overview of modern British SF.

Xploited Zine #2 (The Usual from Kathleen Neves, 2600 - 18 Street, Suite 9, San Francisco, California 94110) This issue is a thematic one on the subject of public restrooms, with essays and photos about public necessities.

The Ken Chronicles #7 (The Usual from Ken Bausert, 2140 Erma Drive, East Meadow, New York 11554-1120) Perzine, with advice on what car to buy (Ken was in the auto repair industry), a vacation trip involving run-ins with car rental agencies and timeshare salesmen, and Long Island buildings.

File 770 #152 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glyer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) SF newszine with obituaries, news, convention reports, movie reviews, and letters of comment.

For The Clerisy #71 and #72 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068-0404) Reviewzine of books, looking at mostly older books that deserve another look.

Historians Anonymous #7 (The Usual from Garinger Wegener, 4319 Redwood Avenue #8, Marina Del Rey, California 90292-7644) Thick cut-and-paste zine with lots of clippings from a wide variety of subjects, some of which are Internet urban legends.

Plokta #38 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG) Jolly good English fun, what with a trip to Japan for the World SF Convention, working as a call centre operator (much like being a tax auditor in popularity and stress levels), the types of mud, and letters of comment.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

noticed by Dale Speirs

Stout, D., et al (2008) **Neural correlates of Early Stone Age toolmaking: technology, language and cognition in human evolution.** PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON 363B:1939-1949

“Archaeological and palaeontological evidence from the Early Stone Age (ESA) documents parallel trends of brain expansion and technological elaboration in human evolution over a period of more than 2Myr. Here, we present results from a positron emission tomography study of functional brain activation during experimental ESA (Oldowan and Acheulean) toolmaking by expert subjects. Together with a previous study of Oldowan toolmaking by novices, these results document increased demands for effective visuomotor coordination and hierarchical action organization in more advanced toolmaking. This includes an increased activation of ventral premotor and inferior parietal elements of the parietofrontal praxis circuits in both the hemispheres and of the right hemisphere homologue of Broca's area. The observed patterns of activation and of overlap with language circuits suggest that toolmaking and language share a basis in more general human capacities for complex, goal-directed action. The results are consistent with coevolutionary hypotheses linking the

emergence of language, toolmaking, population-level functional lateralization and association cortex expansion in human evolution.”

Dillehay, T.D., et al (2008) **Monte Verde: seaweed, food, medicine, and the peopling of South America.** SCIENCE 320:784-786

"The identification of human artifacts at the early archaeological site of Monte Verde in southern Chile has raised questions of when and how people reached the tip of South America without leaving much other evidence in the New World. Remains of nine species of marine algae were recovered from hearths and other features at Monte Verde II, an upper occupational layer, and were directly dated between 14,220 and 13,980 calendar years before the present (12,310 and 12,290 carbon-14 years ago). These findings support the archaeological interpretation of the site and indicate that the site's inhabitants used seaweed from distant beaches and estuarine environments for food and medicine. These data are consistent with the ideas that an early settlement of South America was along the Pacific coast and that seaweeds were important to the diet and health of early humans in the Americas."

Lentz, D.L., et al (2008) **Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus* L.) as a pre-Columbian domesticate in Mexico.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 105:6232-6237

*"Mexico has long been recognized as one of the world's cradles of domestication with evidence for squash (*Cucurbita pepo*) cultivation appearing as early as 8,000 cal B.C. followed by many other plants, such as maize (*Zea mays*), peppers (*Capsicum annuum*), common beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), and cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*). We present archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic, and ethnohistoric data demonstrating that sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) had entered the repertoire of Mexican domesticates by ca. 2600 cal B.C., that its cultivation was widespread in Mexico and extended as far south as El Salvador by the first millennium B.C., that it was well known to the Aztecs, and that it is still in use by traditional Mesoamerican cultures today. The sunflower's association with indigenous solar religion and warfare in Mexico may have led to its suppression after the Spanish Conquest."*

Gill, R.B., et al (2008) **Drought and the Maya collapse.** ANCIENT MESOAMERICA 18:283-302

"Between A.D. 760 and 930, millions of Maya disappeared from

the Earth. The ice-core evidence from Greenland indicates that around the time of the Maya Collapse, a minimum in solar insolation and a low in solar activity occurred, accompanied by severe cold and dryness over Greenland, indicating hemispheric climatic conditions propitious for drought in the Maya Lowlands. In the northeastern Caribbean, sea-surface salinity was lowered. The most severe drought of the past 7,000 years devastated the Yucatan Peninsula. Large Maya cities collapsed in four phases of abandonment spaced about fifty years apart around A.D. 760, 810, 860, and 910. A new core taken from Lake Chichancanab in Quintana Roo shows three peak episodes of brutal drought within a 150- to 200-year drought. A marine core from the Cariaco Basin off Venezuela precisely dates four severe drought episodes to 760, 810, 860, and 910, coincident with the four phases of abandonment of cities. The long-term drought appears to have lasted from 760 to 930 in the Cariaco Basin. The climatic changes were the most drastic the Maya had faced in the preceding 1,500 years and the most severe of the preceding 7,000 years."

Rossel, S., et al (2008) **Domestication of the donkey: Timing, processes, and indicators.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 105:3715-3720

"Genetic research suggests an African origin for the donkey, but

pinpointing the timing and location of domestication has been challenging because donkeys are uncommon in the archaeological record and markers for early phases of animal domestication are hard to determine. Findings are based on skeletal data from 10 5,000-year-old ass skeletons recently discovered entombed in an early pharaonic mortuary complex at Abydos, Middle Egypt, and a concurrent study of 53 modern donkey and African wild ass skeletons. Morphometric studies showed that Abydos metacarpals were similar in overall proportions to those of wild ass, but individual measurements varied. Despite this, all of the Abydos skeletons exhibited a range of osteopathologies consistent with load carrying. Morphological similarities to wild ass show that, despite their use as beasts of burden, donkeys were still undergoing considerable phenotypic change during the early Dynastic period in Egypt. This pattern is consistent with recent studies of other domestic animals that suggest that the process of domestication is slower and less linear than previously thought."

Yu, E., and J. Liu (2007) **Environmental impacts of divorce.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 104:20629-20634

Divorced people used 42% to 61% more resources per person than married people because they maintained separate households for what used to be one family. Remarriage reduced resource use

back to previous levels. In the USA, had divorced couples remained married, there would have been a net saving of 38 million rooms of housing, 73 terawatt-hours of electricity, and 2.8 trillion litres of water.

Tasali, E., et al (2008) **Slow-wave sleep and the risk of type 2 diabetes in humans.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 105:1044-1049

"Deep non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep, also known as slow-wave sleep (SWS), is thought to be the most "restorative" sleep stage, but beneficial effects of SWS for physical well being have not been demonstrated. The initiation of SWS coincides with hormonal changes that affect glucose regulation, suggesting that SWS may be important for normal glucose tolerance. If this were so, selective suppression of SWS should adversely affect glucose homeostasis and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. Here we show that, in young healthy adults, all-night selective suppression of SWS, without any change in total sleep time, results in marked decreases in insulin sensitivity without adequate compensatory increase in insulin release, leading to reduced glucose tolerance and increased diabetes risk. SWS suppression reduced delta spectral power, the dominant EEG frequency range in SWS, and left other EEG frequency bands unchanged. Importantly, the magnitude of the decrease in insulin sensitivity

was strongly correlated with the magnitude of the reduction in SWS. These findings demonstrate a clear role for SWS in the maintenance of normal glucose homeostasis. Furthermore, our data suggest that reduced sleep quality with low levels of SWS, as occurs in aging and in many obese individuals, may contribute to increase the risk of type 2 diabetes."

Duda, J.J., and R.J. Camp (2008) Ecology in the information age: patterns of use and attrition rates of Internet-based citations in ESA journals, 1997-2005. FRONTIERS IN ECOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT 6:145-151

"We searched all papers in four Ecological Society of America journals from 1997 to 2005 for articles containing a citation to material on the Internet. We then tested the links to determine whether the information cited in the paper was still accessible. We identified 877 articles that contained at least one link to information on the Internet and a total of 2100 unique links. The majority of these citations were based on an object's location (Uniform Resource Locator; 77%), whereas the rest were based on an object's identity (eg Digital Object Identifier, GenBank Accession number). We found that 19-30% of the location-based links were unavailable and that there was a positive relationship between the age of an article and the probability of the link being inactive. Using an Internet search engine, we recovered 72-84%

of the lost information, leaving a total of 6.2% of the total citations unavailable."

McCafferty, P. (2008) Bloody rain again! Red rain and meteors in history and myth. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ASTROBIOLOGY 7:9-15

"In July 2001, red rain fell over Kerala in India shortly after reports of a meteor. When analysed, this red rain appeared to contain red cells, apparently demonstrating that such cells must exist in space and that the theory of panspermia is correct. However, doubts have been expressed about whether reports of a meteor were merely a coincidence. It has shown that the phenomenon has been reported from many different locations and across many centuries. The phenomenon is also much more complex than one might have expected, and not to be dismissed easily by obvious terrestrial explanations such as Saharan dust or pollution. Although historical reports provide insufficient details to prove that red rain has an extraterrestrial origin, there appears to be a strong link between some reported events and meteoritic activity. The reported airburst just before the fall of red rain in Kerala fits a familiar pattern, and cannot be dismissed so easily as an unrelated coincidence. With that in mind, the Kerala samples, and any others that might occur in the future, should be investigated with every scientific resource at our disposal."

THERE IS NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN

"No one has the time anymore to bother with life's slower pursuits, and amateur journalism is one of them."

James Guinane (Tasmania, Australia), writing in the May 1947 issue of his zine **Churinga**

SCREW YOUR COURAGE TO THE STICKING POINT

by Dale Speirs

I've noticed in one of the clubzines I trade for that the editor has spent much time agonizing over lack of response from the club members about what they want to see in a zine. For a privately published zine, this is not a difficulty because the editor pays the bills and therefore gets to decide what the zine will be about. For a clubzine, where someone else pays the printing bills, this can be problematic for some editors.

It happens that I also edit a clubzine, the **Calgary Philatelist**, bimonthly of the Calgary Philatelic Society (about 200 members).

I took over the bulletin editor's job in 1983, almost a decade before I began publishing my own zine. I do solicit articles from club members but have learned not to rely on them or beg too much as many clubzine editors do. Most of the articles over the years have been written by me, and because I write on a wide variety of subjects, there have been no complaints about monotony.

What has to be understood about clubzines, particularly among SF fans, is that it is not the editor who should be getting direction from them, but the editor who is leading them. If I may borrow a comparison from my childhood on the farm, cattle are to be driven to fresh pastures by drovers, not left to mill around and slowly starve for lack of new grass. SF fans are a particularly passive group of mundane consumers, content to chew their cuds in front of the television set. They will not stir from the homestead of their own accord; they have to be driven out and forced onto new pastures.

It is a clubzine editor's duty to lead the club to new pastures. If the membership will not write articles, then the editor can't become a simple stenographer printing only Internet downloads and letters of comment. It is the editor's duty to write articles about new pastures the club members may not be aware of or claim they have no interest in. The editor must make them interested enough to go look for themselves.

It is the editor who must have the time to write the substantive pieces in the absence of anyone else. The club president is too busy running the meeting or fussing about constitutional amendments changing the meeting date from third Wednesdays to second Tuesdays. The show chairman is obviously tied down by his activities, and the treasurer is too busy counting beans. A lucky editor will have one or two regular writers from the club who are willing to jump the fence and go exploring, but this is rare. Thus the onus falls on the editor.

An editor who constantly bleats to the membership "But what do you want to do?" is repeating an unsuccessful action despite knowing that it will not work. Better to leave such dull cows and find a better pasture than to be committed for insanity. It is the editor, not the membership, who must do something.

It is the editor who must provide the intellectual spark for the club and stimulate the debate among members. The club members will either follow or mutiny. If they follow, and allow themselves to be led to new pastures, then the club will be invigorated. If they mutiny, the editor is better off letting them starve and go off somewhere else where there are better pastures. Not all clubs deserve to live, and some, like a downer cow, need to be put humanely out of their misery.

THE STATE OF ZINEDOM

by Dale Speirs

Below are the updated statistics on the number of zines I receive. What matters is not the absolute numbers but the relative trend. For every zine I get, there are hundreds more that I don't know about or have no interest in. Every zinester is on a different node of the Papernet, and receives different numbers and types of zines. The trend seems to be leveling off; those who abandoned the Papernet for the Internet have already done so, and there are still incomers who value the tangible over the ephemeral.

Year	Australia	Canada	Britain	USA	Others	Totals
1998	23	31	39	244	7	344
1999	14	51	67	213	19	364
2000	7	55	55	161	29	307
2001	9	42	35	172	25	283
2002	10	40	42	184	31	307
2003	4	72	27	171	26	300
2004	1	33	19	172	34	259
2005	8	34	14	148	27	231
2006	5	10	32	130	18	195
2007	5	32	12	139	10	198