

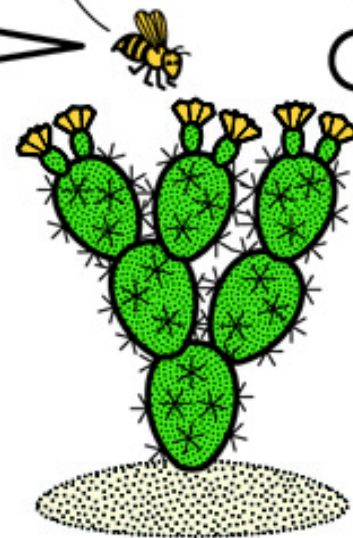
Tantalus fermented prickly pear into ambrosia, thinking a little buzz might lead to sex. It didn't.



Ah, the
nectar
of the
gods.

Bzzzzz

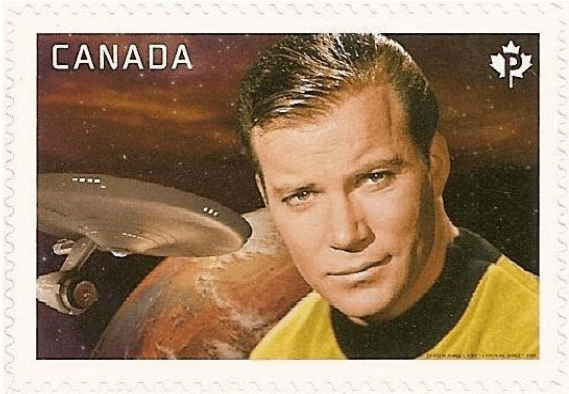
For
me, a
little
buzz
always
precedes
sex.



TEDDY
HARVIA

Victoria Day 2016

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.



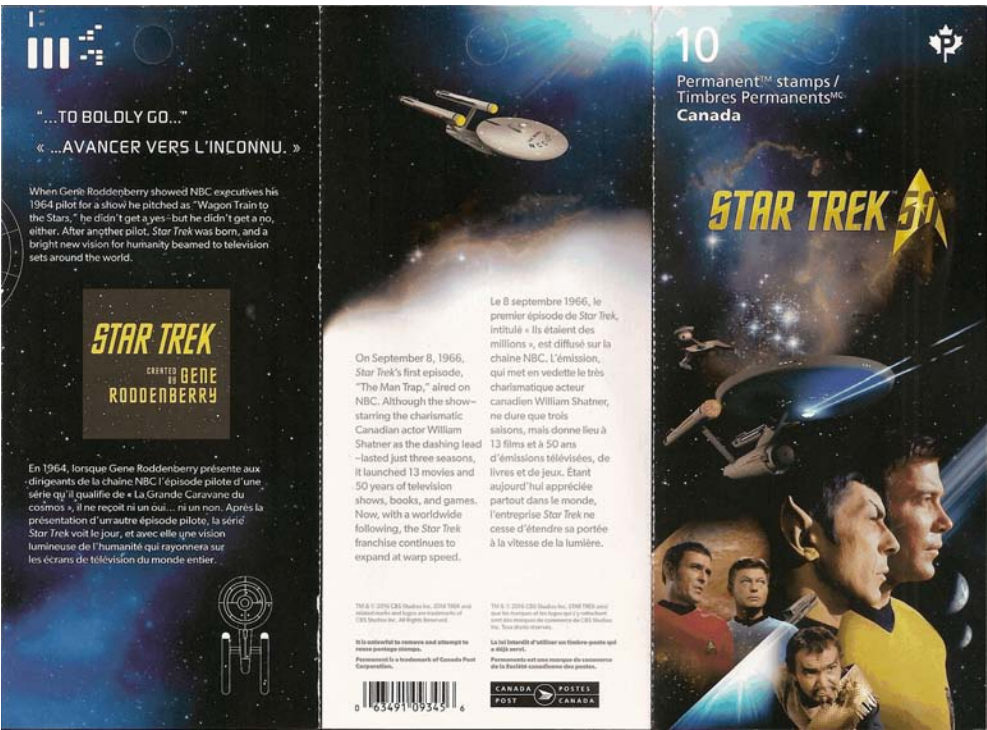
BOLDLY COLLECT WHERE NO MAN HAS COLLECTED BEFORE
by Dale Speirs

On May 5, Canada Post issued a set of Star Trek stamps on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. There was a legitimate Canadian connection. Depicted on the stamps were William Shatner (from Montreal), James Doohan (from Vancouver), and James Colicos (from Toronto, who was a Klingon commander in the original series). Spock’s connection was that he was from Vulcan, which any Albertan can tell you is a town an hour’s drive southeast of Calgary. The rest have no obvious connections but were thrown in to round out the set.

Canada Post went wild on all kinds of variations and doodads they figure, not without reason, that Trekkies will buy. Framed stamps, first-day covers, and assorted other paraphernalia. Visit www.canadapost.ca/startrek for the details.

I am the editor of the CALGARY PHILATELIST, published by the Calgary Philatelic Society. I mail each issue from a different post office each time because many CPS members collect postmarks. Calgary alone has 80 post offices and another 20 or so from outlying towns, so it will take a decade to go through the cycle. Each issue is also mailed with the latest stamp issue, so it was a foregone conclusion to send out the current one from Vulcan.

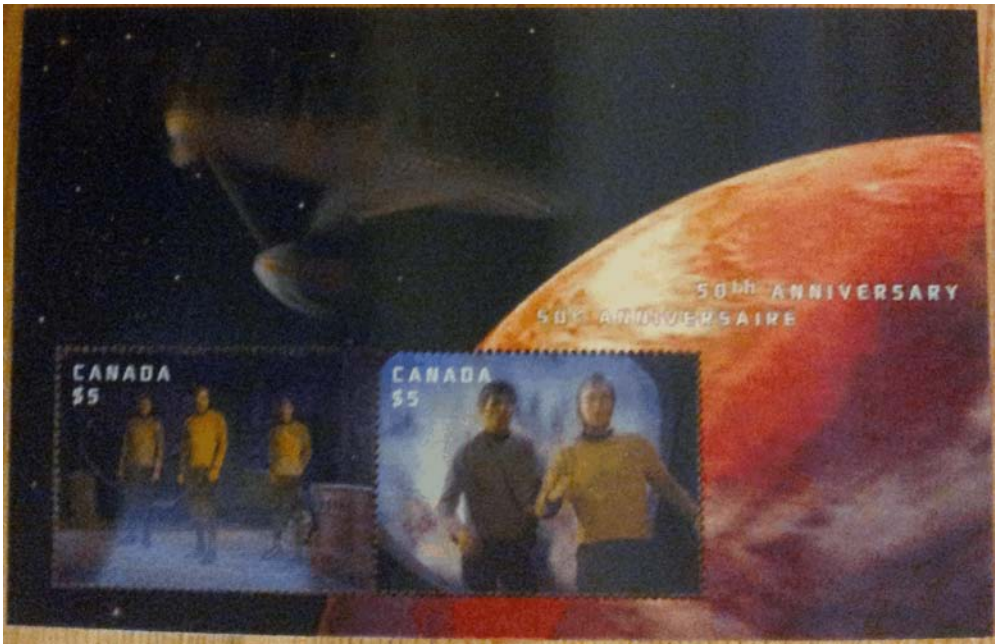
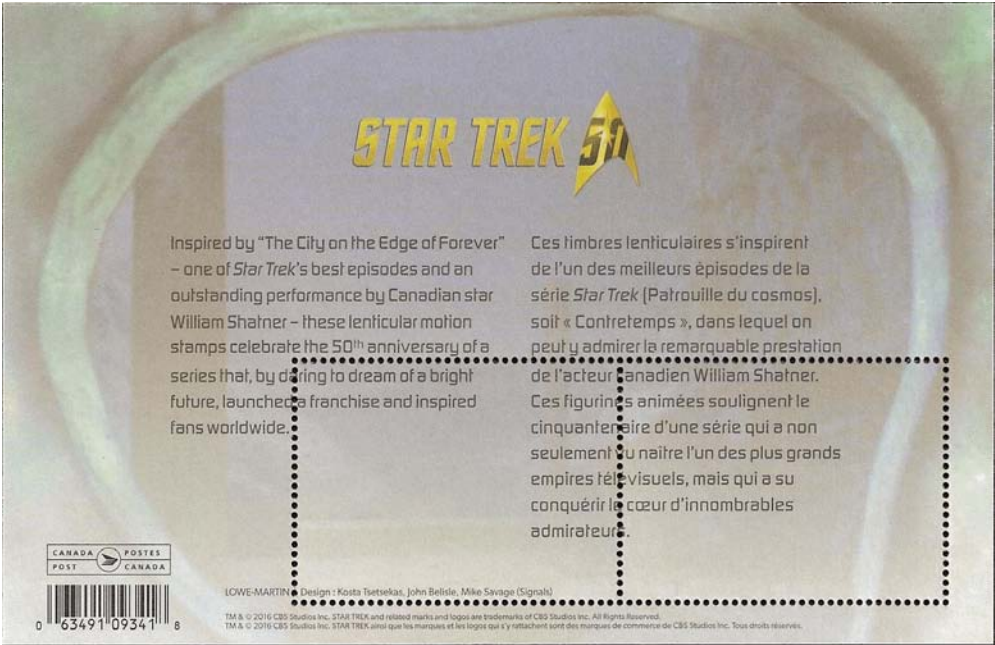
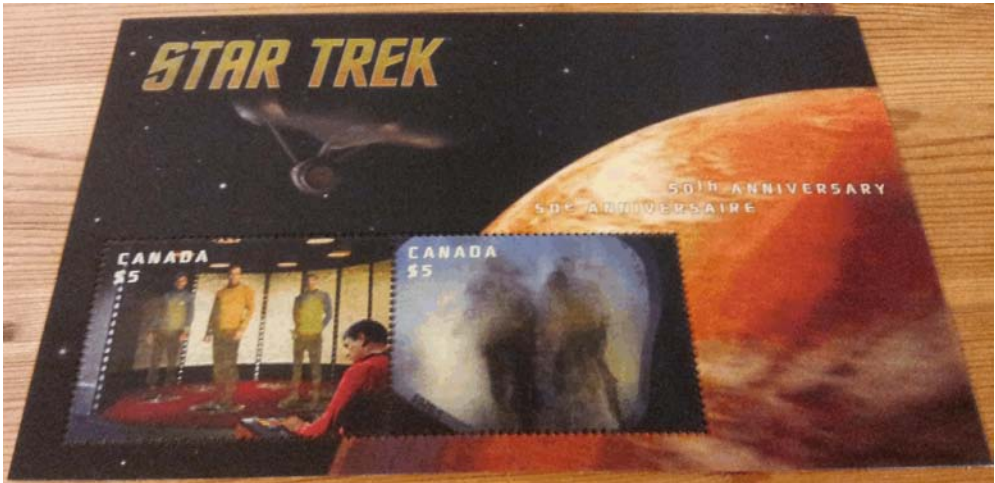
At right are the two sides of the Star Trek stamp booklet, the kind sold over the counter to the general public, the few of those left who still use real mail. First-class stamps for the first 30 grammes of letter weight are no longer denominated. They have the letter “P” inside a maple leaf to indicate they are Permanent rate stamps, always good for the price of a letter no matter how rates might increase in future years. The current rate is 85 cents for a domestic letter.



When I bought the booklet stamps, the postie talked me into buying a limited-edition souvenir sheet of two \$5 stamps. These are lenticular stamps, as is the rest of the sheet, and the images change with the angle you hold the sheet at. The left stamp on the sheet shows the transporter bay, then the officers beaming onto the planet when you tilt it. On the righthand stamp is a blurry image of Spock and Kirk at the City on the Edge of Forever, jumping through the time gate.

The reverse side of the sheet is below. I couldn't scan the lenticular side; all it showed was a bunch of streaky horizontal lines. I photographed it with a camera from different angles but was never able to get any decent shots. What you see at right is the best I could do.

Notice how the Enterprise approaches as it orbits around the planet and the show title dissolves. The transporter beam sequence is well done. As the sheet is tilted, the men disappear into sparkles and the scene changes to the planet where the sparkles appear followed by the men.



Canada Post also issues stamps in coils of fifty, and Star Trek was no exception. A strip of four is shown here; after every tenth stamp is a printer's imprint.

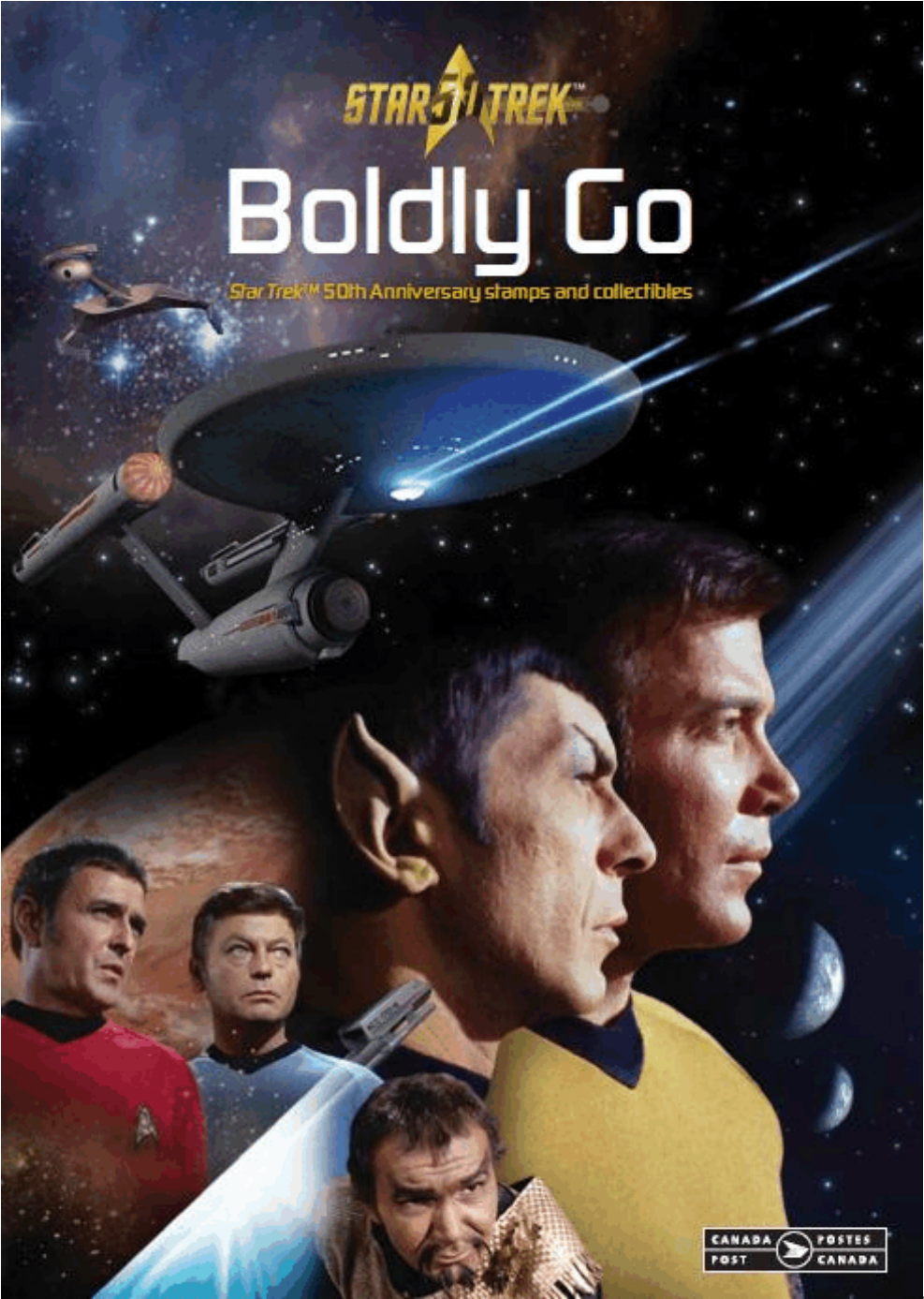


Normally the backing paper of stamps (all modern Canadian stamps are peel-and-stick) is blank. Canada Post HQ in Toronto is well aware of the fanaticism of Trekkie collectors, so they arranged to print quotes from the show on the reverse side of the backing paper.

The quotes are all unique and do not repeat, which means that a completist collector has to buy two coils; one to show the front and the other to show the quotes on the reverse. I scanned them and show them on the next page.

And no, I am not a completist Trekkie. The actor stamps were used to mail out the June issue of CALGARY PHILATELIST and the starship coils will be used for the July issue.

Canada Post publishes DETAILS, which lists forthcoming stamps and covers. The May issue is exclusively about the Star Trek stamps. I get the publication as a print copy, but you can download a free pdf copy from Canada Post at: www.canadapost.ca/cpo/mc/personal/productsservices/collect/publications.jsf



[The strips read from start of coil to end of roll. They were printed using ink jets, hence the poor print quality.]

Space, the Final Frontier... – Kirk | I'm a doctor, not an escalator. – McCoy | That Vulcan
Espace, frontière de l'infini... – Kirk | Je suis un docteur, pas un ascenseur. – McCoy | Ce

Coy | That Vulcan won't be satisfied 'til these panels are a puddle of lead! – Scotty | It would have been glorious. – Kor
ur. – McCoy | Ce Vulcain ne sera pas satisfait tant que le bazar ne sera pas réduit en cendres! – Scotty | Je ne serai couvert de gloire. – Kor

Scotty, beam us up. – Kirk | By go
Scotty, téléporte-nous. – Kirk | Bo

– Kirk | By golly, Jim, I'm beginning to think I can cure a rainy day. – McCoy
s. – Kirk | Bon sang, Jim! Je commence à croire que je peux guérir n'importe

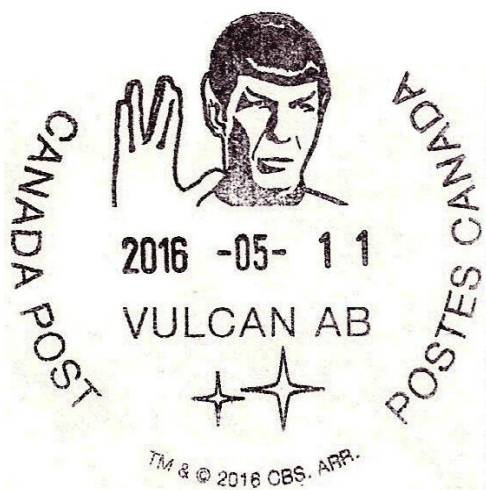
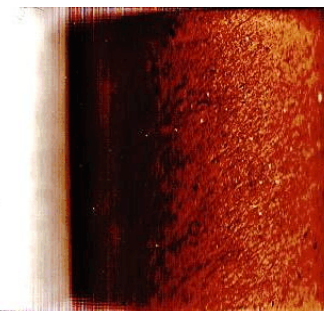
| Scotch? It was invented by a little old lady from Leningrad. – Chekov
quoi. – McCoy | Scotch? Cette boisson a été mise au point par une dame de Leningrad. – Chekov

[continued next page]

Ah, what do you mean "if both survive?" – Kirk | Live long and prosper. – Spock |
Qu'entendez-vous par « si nous survivons à ce combat »? – Kirk | Longue vie et pr

May the great bird of the Galaxy bless your planet. – Sulu |
prosperité. – Spock | Que le grand esprit de cette galaxie béni

st. – Sulu | Hailing frequencies open. – Uhura
galaxie bénisse votre planète. – Sulu | Ultrafréquence ouverte. – Uhura



I mailed the June CALGARY
PHILATELIST in Vulcan on
May 11. They had a brand-new
postmark in honour of the
stamps, and the post office
building was suitably adorned.
More about my trip to Vulcan in
the next issue of OPUNTIA.



SHAKING ALL OVER: PART 3

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 and 2 appeared in OPUNTIA's #259 and 326.]

Alternative Geology.

“Earth Shaker” by Franklin Gregory (1954 September, BEYOND FANTASY FICTION) begins with Professor Parker, a seismologist from a New York university, in Thailand setting up seismographs in an old Buddhist temple as part of a worldwide network. The local monks have no objection but are baffled by machines that only record earthquakes.

The monks know that big earthquakes are caused by a giant fish underground shaking itself and little earthquakes by little men who knock on their ceiling when they feel lonely, just to say hello. The monks know how to start or stop the earthquakes, in their philosophy.

The story later moves to Manhattan, where Parker enrolled one of his Thai assistants into geology at a university, in the hopes of convincing him to give up the foolishness of big fish and little men. The monks show up, and begin creating earthquakes, in New Jersey fortunately. They are appalled at all those highway billboards and use mini-earthquakes to destroy them. The whole lot are eventually arrested and deported as undesirables. What has Parker worried is that all those small faults that the monks created are eventually going to become big active faults as they continue to migrate.

“Inside Story” by Miriam Allen deFord (1964, GAMMA #3) is bookended by italicized vignettes about a giant but non-sentient creature drifting through galactic space. In between is the story of a spaceship landing on an unknown planet, the crew hoping it will be inhabitable for humans so they can claim a bonus. The planet’s temperature begins varying wildly and then massive earthquakes shake the surface. The crew barely manage to escape before the quakes destroy their ship.

As we learn in the final vignette, the quakes were simply the creature shaking off an irritating pinprick, the spaceship. Reasonably good reading, if not groundbreaking. The idea of a planet as a living organism goes back to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s tale of Professor Challenger drilling into Earth’s crust to make it scream.

Popcorn Fare.

10.0 EARTHQUAKE is a 2014 film that follows the standard cliches of disaster movies. The hero is squabbling with his ex-wife, their daughter has gone off with a bunch of other teenagers on a camping trip in the heart of the danger zone, and there is a man-of-the-hour scientist who has the solution to the disaster. The heroine is a young seismologist who has just started her first day on the job at the local office of the U.S. Geological Survey. Her boss is killed in a preliminary earthquake a couple of hours after she reports for duty, and she then becomes the new person in charge. Talk about promotional opportunities. She spends the rest of the movie running about Los Angeles in and out of danger zones. All the while she keeps her makeup fresh and is not at all hindered from sprinting about the countryside in a tight skirt and high heels.

The end times are the responsibility of an oil company fracking too deep in the Los Angeles basin, which triggers numerous small earthquakes that in turn trigger medium earthquakes that finally seem ready to put the San Andreas Fault into high gear. Fracking is known to cause minor subsidence earthquakes. Alberta, for example, is nowhere near any tectonic areas but in recent years the fracking operations in the northwestern part of the province have triggered minor shakes that cracked a lot of drywall.

The USGS scientists charge around the landscape. One of their area managers finds out the oil company is responsible for all the shakes and arrests the owner, putting him in handcuffs. That sends this movie into an alternative timeline, because in ours, USGS personnel are not sworn officers who can waltz into a drilling rig and take someone into custody.

The SFX are reasonably good, except, as usual in such movies, explosions are the el cheapo gasoline fires. The movie’s plot and plausibility are average for the genre, but I was pleased to see that there was some thought put into the use of the SFX. I don’t mean the actual SFX themselves, which are the usual for low-budget films, but the realization of the director that letting the audience imagine some things for themselves is better than trying to show an effect.

This was illustrated by a scene in the backyard of a house on the edge of the hills overlooking Los Angeles. A group of beautiful people are relaxing in a backyard hot tub built into the top of a steep slope. The champagne runs out, so a perky young thing in a bikini goes into the house to get another bottle. There is a minor rumble and shake as she reaches for a new bottle, but she

shrugs it off. Stepping back outside, she finds herself on the edge of a high cliff that wasn't there a few seconds ago, her friends and the hot tub gone from sight, far, far below. Jump cut to the next scene as her realization of a narrow escape from death sinks in. A mediocre director would have shown the actual fall of the hot tub, with actors screaming and splashing around, and a long shot of the side of the hill sinking into the ocean. It wouldn't have worked as well because there are things better left to the imagination.

The mad scientist has a plan that works with seconds to spare. The villain of the piece, the oil company owner, redeems his sins by sacrificing himself to hold open a control valve while the others scramble to the safety of the end credits. There is a cute dog but fortunately it only has a few scenes. Judging this movie by the standards of its genre, it was average.

Saint Andrew.

A much better movie is SAN ANDREAS, released in 2015 with big Hollywood studio money behind it, so the SFX are better than average. The plot, however, is the standard #1 script, with an estranged couple in search of their daughter during the big earthquake, and the man-of-the-hour seismologist at UCLA who predicted it all. The movie alternates between the usual subplots, such as the Bickersons, a burgeoning romance of a young couple, and the scientists trying to save California.

In the obligatory ominous forebodings scene, seismologists detect a cluster of micro-earthquakes near Falco, Nevada. "*Where the hell is Falco?*", asks one of them, along with the audience. The answer is: not that far from the Hoover Dam, where a preliminary 7.1 shake crumbles it into dust. It's goodbye to Yuma as the reservoir empties down the river, but we never see that because it was all a sideshow, the overture if you will, to The Big One.

Then things get serious, as the San Andreas Fault moves simultaneously from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The SFX are very realistic and not just green screen. There are some long tracking shots where the camera moves seamlessly in from outside a crumbling skyscraper into its interior and follows the panicked denizens (live actors) as they try to escape. It's done with no jump shots. Skyscrapers sway back and forth, some topple, and all of them shed their curtain walls down on the streets filled with fleeing humanity, none of whom will make it to the end credits.

The Bickerson saga continues as they travel from Los Angeles to San Francisco to find their daughter, surviving a helicopter crash, looters, and other excursions before they arrive. The daughter is on her own trek across the city as she tries to make the rendezvous point with her parents. The star seismologist gets on the television airwaves and tells everyone there is going to be another Big One in San Francisco, worse than the first one.

Then the tsunami arrives, taking out the Golden Gate Bridge and flooding the bay area up to the height of Nob Hill. Lots of dramatic water rescue scenes, and the parents are reunited with their daughter. The movie ends with the traditional group hug and big smiles all around for the leading cast, although tough luck on all those extras who got squashed by falling buildings.

The plot is clichéd and predictable but the SFX more than make up for it. A very good portrayal of what a 9.6 earthquake will look like. The SFX are spectacular and very detailed, so much so that I frequently paused the DVD player in order to take it all in.

SAN ANDREAS QUAKE, also a 2015 movie, was put out by a studio that specializes in copycat movies. The plot is slightly different however. No Bickersons; the lead couple are happily married, although they do have a bratty teenaged daughter. You can tell the kid is trouble because although she wears an outfit that wouldn't be out of place in church, she has dark eye shadow. Indeed, she bears a striking resemblance to a certain Canadian pop singer.

Mom is the scientist of the hour, a seismologist obsessed with earthquakes. She works at a community college and has just installed a network of 19 sensors which apparently outclasses anything the U.S. Geological Survey or the University of California might have. Her system can predict the next Big One, but no one believes her until too late.

There is the usual odyssey across a ruined landscape. Lots of actors explain the plot to each other via cellphones, which saves money on camera setups. Also helpful are the frequent television newscasts keeping people advised, the ones who still have electricity. The characters make much ado about losing cellphone calls because the cell towers are shaken down, but everyone seems to have a working television set.

The State Governor orders the evacuation of the greater Los Angeles area. Yeah, sure. Eighteen million people cramming into five freeways. The fact that

the surrounding areas wouldn't have the ability to accept that many refugees isn't mentioned, but since the freeways are immediately grid-locked it doesn't really matter. Nobody gets out of here alive, as the song goes.

Assorted subplots are trotted out. People trapped in an elevator, one of whom is the bratty daughter and another is an elderly man having a heart attack. The funniest subplot is when the seismologist finds out that her daughter's new boyfriend is black, and has to make the cross-county odyssey with him. Her political correctness suddenly is tested to the extreme, and she is obviously uncomfortable with him. Her husband, meanwhile, is making a separate journey in his helicopter with a mixed-race couple (he's Chinese, she's black). How's that for daring social relevancy?

The SFX were cutting-edge in 1995. A string of progressively bigger earthquakes finally works up to the Big One at 12.7 magnitude. Each SFX only last a couple of seconds before a jump cut, apparently to save money and prevent the audience from noticing the poor quality. Not just buildings shaking themselves down. Mom and her daughter's boyfriend take a short cut through the Zoo and have a run-in with an angry hippo. The animal is also a 1995 SFX.

From there the odyssey continues. They had stolen the car they were driving. In some scenes it has no licence plate, while in others it does, alternating as the movie progresses. They have their car stolen from them in turn by another mom and her daughter, heading in the opposite direction. Eventually the whole family converges together and go inside a century-old hotel in time for the next earthquake, either 10 or 12 magnitude (I lost track).

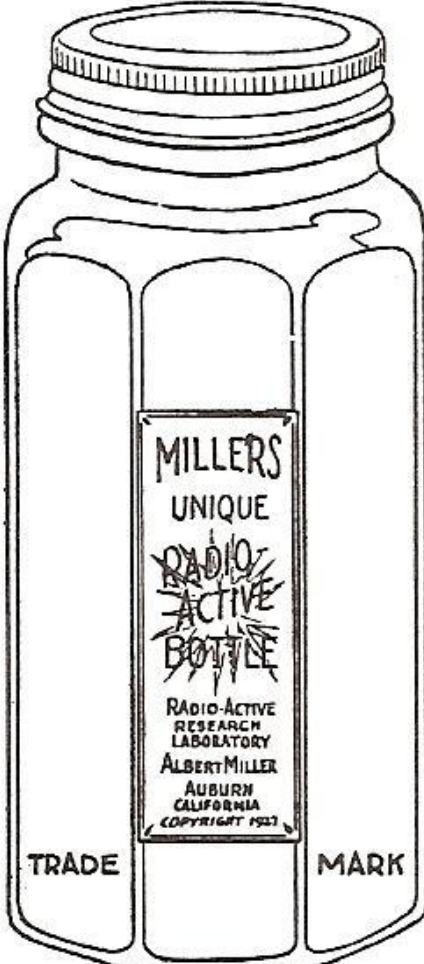
But a happy ending as the main characters and a few supporting actors are rescued just in time by helicopter, seconds before the 12.7 magnitude quake finally hits. For once, the black guy makes it to the end of the movie.

As the helicopter flutters over the rubble, there is a quick glimpse of the western side of the San Andreas Fault sinking vertically down into the ocean. The San Andreas Fault is actually a strike-slip fault moving sideways to the north, so such a thing wouldn't happen. It doesn't matter though, as the end credits suddenly come up and the story ends abruptly.

NOT SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Circa 1919, from a stamp catalogue issued by Albert Miller, who was also in the alternative health business. I have no idea how it worked.

**WHAT EVERYBODY NEEDS TO KEEP
HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY IN
BEST HEALTH IS:
MILLER'S UNIQUE RADIO-ACTIVE BOTTLE**



**Heavens
Most
Wonderful
Gift
To
Mankind**

A Beautifier
A Health and Beauty Restorer
Will Relieve Liver and Kidney Troubles
High Blood Pressure
Will Make You Enjoy Life Like Never Before.
Will Last Over a Life Time.

**Radio-Active
Research
Laboratory
ALBERT MILLER
Auburn, Calif.**

3 Sizes—\$25.00—\$15.00—\$8.00
—LASTS INDEFINITELY—
Write for our interesting free pamphlet. The bottle has performed wonderful work.

TRANSIT FANNING IN CALGARY: PART 12
by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 11 appeared in OPUNTIA's #256, 258, 260, 264, 269, 275, 283, 298, 302, 327 and 333.]

Wha's Lak Us?

I got on the #7 bus to go downtown. At a subsequent stop along the way, a young man came aboard. He was dressed casual but wearing a bearskin hat and carrying bagpipes and a ceremonial mace.



The bus driver thought he was amusing and asked him to play a tune. Bagpipes in a confined space are extremely loud but fortunately he only played a brief extract. God gave us cameras on our smartphones for a reason, so I took a couple of photos. The one from my seat behind him shows him playing. Note his mace lying on the seat in front of him.



SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Speirs: For all that I enjoy reading science fiction, there is nothing in it as wonderful as can be found in science fact. See below.

Briggs, D.E.G., et al (2016) **Tiny individuals attached to a new Silurian arthropod suggest a unique mode of brood care.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 113:4410–4415

Authors’ abstract: “*The paper reports a remarkable arthropod from the Silurian Herefordshire Lagerstätte of England. The fossil reveals a unique association in an early Paleozoic arthropod involving tethering of 10 tiny individuals each by a single thread to the tergites [upper side of body segments] so that their appearance is reminiscent of kites. The evidence suggests that these are juveniles and that the specimen records a unique brooding strategy. This is part of a diversity of complex brooding behaviors in early arthropods heralding the variety that occurs today. The possibility that the small individuals represent a different arthropod, possibly parasitic, which colonized the larger individual, seems less likely.*”



“The head of the host, which is covered by a shield that projects anteriorly, bears a long stout uniramous antenna and a chelate limb followed by two biramous appendages. The trunk comprises 11 segments, all bearing limbs and covered by tergites with long slender lateral spines. A short telson [final body segment at tail end] bears long parallel cerci [paired appendages]. Our phylogenetic analysis resolves the new arthropod as a stem-group mandibulate. The evidence suggests that the tethered individuals are juveniles and the association represents a complex brooding behavior.”

Speirs: Mama carried her brood around with her to protect them and increase their survival chances. The false-colour scan shows the babies hanging on to her by threads.

McCoy, V.E., et al (2016) **The ‘Tully monster’ is a vertebrate.** NATURE 532:496-499

Authors’ abstract: “*Problematic fossils, extinct taxa of enigmatic morphology that cannot be assigned to a known major group, were once a major issue in palaeontology. A long-favoured solution to the ‘problem of the problematica’, particularly the ‘weird wonders’ of the Cambrian Burgess Shale, was to consider them representatives of extinct phyla. A combination of new evidence and modern approaches to phylogenetic analysis has now resolved the affinities of most of these forms.*”

“Perhaps the most notable exception is Tullimonstrum gregarium, popularly known as the Tully monster, a large soft-bodied organism from the late Carboniferous Mazon Creek biota (approximately 309–307 million years ago) of Illinois, USA, which was designated the official state fossil of Illinois in 1989. Its phylogenetic position has remained uncertain and it has been compared with nemerteans, polychaetes, gastropods, conodonts, and the stem arthropod Opabinia. Here we review the morphology of Tullimonstrum based on an analysis of more than 1,200 specimens. We find that the anterior proboscis ends in a buccal apparatus containing teeth, the eyes project laterally on a long rigid bar, and the elongate segmented body bears a caudal fin with dorsal and ventral lobes. We describe new evidence for a notochord, cartilaginous arcualia, gill pouches, articulations within the proboscis, and multiple tooth rows adjacent to the mouth. This combination of characters, supported by phylogenetic analysis, identifies Tullimonstrum as a vertebrate, and places it on the stem lineage to lampreys (Petromyzontida).”

“The eyes of Tullimonstrum are set on a rigid horizontal bar, a configuration rare in chordates but present in hammerhead sharks and larval dragon fish. The eye position is too poorly resolved to reconstruct the visual field of Tullimonstrum, but may reflect the position of the prey-capturing buccal apparatus at the end of a long anterior extension of the head.”

Speirs: The eyes of the Tully monster were at the ends of a bone so as to provide binocular vision to enable the critter to use its mouthpiece to snag prey. The bone kept the eyes rigid at a fixed distance so the brain could triangulate properly, and also protected the optic nerves.



Sakamotoa, M., M.J. Bentonb, and C. Vendittia (2016) **Dinosaurs in decline tens of millions of years before their final extinction.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 113:5036–5040

Authors’ abstract: “Whether dinosaurs were in a long-term decline or whether they were reigning strong right up to their final disappearance at the Cretaceous–Paleogene (K-Pg) mass extinction event 66 Mya has been debated for decades with no clear resolution. The dispute has continued unresolved because of a lack of statistical rigor and appropriate evolutionary framework. Here, for the first time to our knowledge, we apply a Bayesian phylogenetic approach to model the evolutionary dynamics of speciation and extinction through time in Mesozoic dinosaurs, properly taking account of previously ignored statistical violations.”

“We find overwhelming support for a long-term decline across all dinosaurs and within all three dinosaurian subclades (Ornithischia, Sauropodomorpha,

and Theropoda), where speciation rate slowed down through time and was ultimately exceeded by extinction rate tens of millions of years before the K-Pg boundary. The only exceptions to this general pattern are the morphologically specialized herbivores, the Hadrosauriformes and Ceratopsidae, which show rapid species proliferations throughout the Late Cretaceous instead. Our results highlight that, despite some heterogeneity in speciation dynamics, dinosaurs showed a marked reduction in their ability to replace extinct species with new ones, making them vulnerable to extinction and unable to respond quickly to and recover from the final catastrophic event.”

Bright, J., et al (2016) **Did a catastrophic lake spillover integrate the Late Miocene-Early Pliocene Colorado River and the Gulf of California?: Microfaunal and stable isotope evidence from Blythe Basin, California-Arizona, USA.** PALAIOS 31:81–91

Authors’ abstract: “The southern Bouse Formation (late Miocene–early Pliocene) in Blythe basin, CA-AZ, contains a controversial record of the events that preceded the integration of the developing Colorado River with the Gulf of California. High resolution microfaunal and stable isotope data from a key outcrop of marl and claystone record an abrupt change in water chemistry that we interpret to be the result of a catastrophic sill breach. ... The abruptness of this transition is best explained by catastrophic failure of a paleodam that rapidly altered the isotopic composition and salinity of a lake in Blythe basin. A marine or estuarine environment is unlikely. Our interpretation is consistent with other evidence for catastrophic breaching of another lacustrine Bouse Formation-bearing basin to the north.”

“Prior to the late Miocene, drainages in the Grand Canyon region flowed dominantly to the northeast. By roughly 6 Ma, exotic Colorado River gravels appear west of the Grand Canyon for the first time. Downstream from Grand Canyon, along what is now the lower Colorado River corridor, a southward developing Colorado River integrated several topographically closed extensional basins before making its final descent to the Gulf of California by about 5 Ma. The record of the processes that integrated these basins is preserved as the Bouse Formation.”

Speirs: Until 5 megayears ago, the Colorado River flowed northeast, until erosion collapsed a natural dam and it began flowing south.

Jass, C.N., and T.E. Allan (2016) **Camel fossils from gravel pits near Edmonton and Vauxhall, and a review of the Quaternary camelid record of Alberta.** CANADIAN JOURNAL OF EARTH SCIENCES 53:485–493

Authors’ abstract: “*Camelid remains are known from several Quaternary palaeontological localities in Alberta, yet most specimens are undescribed in the literature. Specimens reported here comprise a large sample of the known camelid record from the province and provide further insight into the record of Quaternary megafauna of western Canada. Remains from the Edmonton area include specimens pre- and post-dating the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), whereas remains from the Vauxhall area are post-LGM. A metapodial fragment of a giant camel originally described as Titanotylopus from the Edmonton area is likely from earlier in the Pleistocene or late Pliocene. Camelid remains are not overly abundant in Alberta, but are widely distributed, having been recovered from several sites across the province. A new radiocarbon date of $11\,280 \pm 40$ 14C years BP on a radioulna of Camelops cf. C. hesternus represents only the fourth direct age assessment of a Quaternary camelid from Alberta. Radiocarbon data may suggest linkages to patterns of extirpation observed in camelid populations from northern Canada, followed by recolonization following deglaciation.*”

Speirs: Yes, once upon a time there were camels in Alberta, along with many other large species. They were wiped out by the arrival of aboriginal humans about 8,000 to 10,000 years ago.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2016

Calgary’s annual readercon will be held this year on the weekend of August 12 to 14, returning to the Delta Hotel at Southland Drive SE and Bonaventure Drive. The membership cap is 650; last year the convention sold out two months in advance. Details from: www.whenwordscollide.org

When Words Collide covers many genres of literature such as science fiction, fantasy, mystery, romance, westerns, and historical fiction. You can read my account of the 2015 event in OPUNTIA #318 to get an idea of the seminars and events. There will be a steampunk banquet this year, followed by the Aurora Awards.

WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. 2016 will be the 23rd year of the WWP.

At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe.

At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour. Raise a glass, publish a one-shot, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

ZINE LISTINGS

THE FOSSIL #367 (US\$10 per year from The Fossils Inc, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan Street, Denver, Colorado 80209) This society covers the history of zinedom. The issue at hand has an article on August Derleth and his apa connections, as well as various news and notes.

CHUNGA #24 (US\$5 from Randy Byers, 1013 North 36 Street, Seattle, Washington 98103) This SF genzine opens with news that Byers has terminal brain cancer, which puts a damper on anything that follows. Various authors follow with various articles, such as a trip report to the 2014 Worldcon in England, several tributes to several deceased fans, a biography of old-time movie star Acquafetta, Star Trek fan videos, and letters of comment.

FLAG #17 (The Usual from Andy Hooper, 11032 - 30 Avenue NE, Seattle, Washington 98125) The main article is about the 2015 Worldcon in Spokane, and letters of comment.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor’s remarks in square brackets. Please include your name and town when sending a comment. Email to opuntia57@hotmail.com]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 2016-05-15
Etobicoke, Ontario

OPUNTIA #338: You’ve had some very warm, if not hot, weather lately, but you’ve cooled down again. That’s benefitted Fort McMurray in its horrible misfortunes. Meanwhile in Ontario, Hamilton to the southwest and Bradford to the north have snow and hail today. Spring can be a harsh mistress, especially when you can hardly wait to go out to the park, and maybe have a picnic.

My letter of comment: Yvonne is making more costume pieces, so my job, in between sending out resumes, is to make meals and do the dishes, and do anything else around the apartment so that Yvonne will have the maximum amount of time to make vests and other costume pieces. I thought at my last loc that winter would be finally done here. Current temperature outside is about 5C.

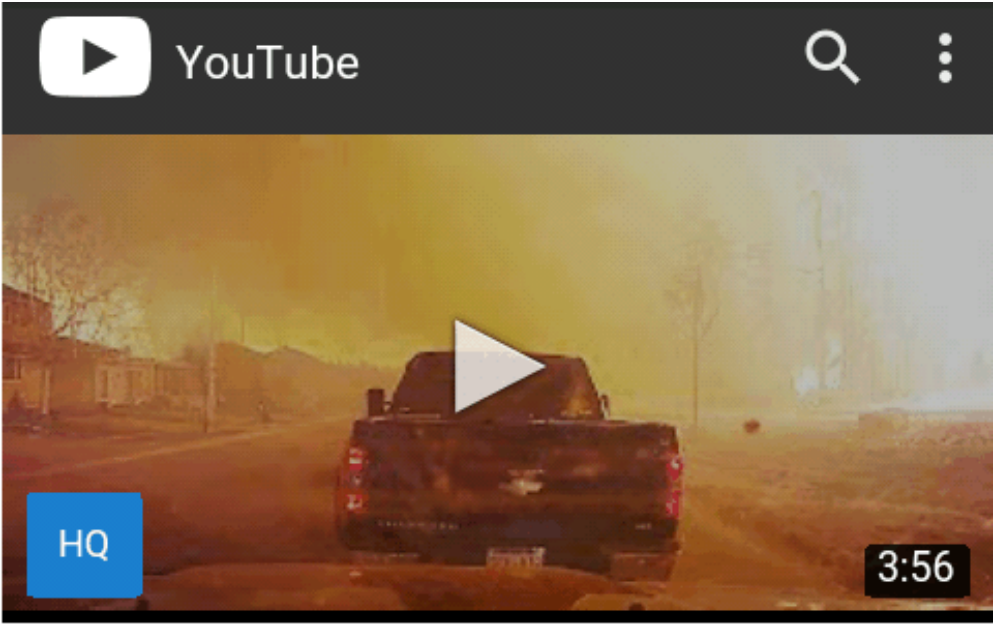
OPUNTIA #339: I am glad that Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi is still visible and audible, and still offering opinions, or setting standards. Former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford died from his cancer not long ago, and is quickly forgotten, given his surfeit of bluster and lack of actually getting anything done. John Tory has made sure that Toronto is represented at Mayors’ meetings, something Ford refused to do.

OPUNTIA #340: Ah, the return of Teddy Harvia. Good to see your work again, David.

I can only imagine what all the spectators of the costumers’ parade thought of those in costume, and I can come up with a good guess. The big pro cons in Toronto don’t do that, mostly because traffic wouldn’t stand for it, and I would expect that reaction of the public towards what they’d call the nerds’ parade would range from a smirk to laughter, to outright physical attacks on people they see as less than human. Besides the cup of coffee, most costumers would do well to remember that their shoes should match their costumes. Colonial warriors probably don’t wear Nikes. I’ve done some costuming like that in the past, but I always wore costumes with facemasks or helmets.

I have seen many pictures of Fort McMurray and area, and the desolation is simply amazing. 200,000 hectares burned at last report. Much of Fort McMurray was saved, and I gather that the fire will soon be under control. Yet, about 100,000 were evacuated. I hope repairs can be made soon, but for many this fire will leave permanent scars.

[At www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieTQvIdG-Vo is a good video showing a dashcam view of Fort McMurray citizens driving through the flames. Well worth watching. The city residential neighbourhoods were built out into the boreal forest and had no fireguards, as you will see in the video.]



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