

OPUNTIA

343

Middle June 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.

AROUND COWTOWN: LILAC FESTIVAL

photos by Dale Speirs

The street festival season in Calgary kicks off each year with the Lilac Festival, which takes over 4 Street SW in central Calgary just south of the downtown core. It is also the longest festival in the city in terms of distance, stretching from 26 Avenue to 12 Avenue, from the Mission district to the Beltline.

It took me three-quarters of an hour to walk that distance, stopping only occasionally to snap a photo. We were shoulder-to-shoulder, and there were times when the flow of pedestrians came to a dead stop. Hundreds of kiosks and food trucks, and at each side street there was a band performing.

When I returned home, I took the photo at right of one of the lilacs in my backyard.





Below: Looking north towards the downtown core in the far distance.





Left: How do you roast a milkshake?
Below: Some people wanted to get a better view of the event.



On a side street was this solar-powered band.

The music wasn't any better but it was politically correct.



The Brazilians dancing the samba.



Another side street. Car2Go has been very successful in Calgary.



COWTOWN THEN AND NOW



Calgary was founded on August 28, 1875, when the North West Mounted Police forded the Bow River and built a fort at the junction with the Elbow River. The view at left shows Fort Calgary in 1881. The transcontinental railroad arrived in 1883, and when the post office opened on October 1st that year, the postmaster dropped “Fort” from the name.

I went to the same hill from which the 1881 photograph was taken and took a couple of photos which I stitched together into the panorama below. As you can see, the major effect of human settlement was to plant trees. Fort Calgary is hidden behind the trees at right centre, and is now a park and museum.

The original fort vanished by 1900 after the indigenous tribes were pacified and settled on Reserves. The railway platted land west of the fort, which later became the downtown core.



WHEN SOMETIME LOFTY TOWERS I SEE: PART 2

by Dale Speirs

[Part 1 appeared in OPUNTIA #284.]

Construction.

The oldest lofty tower not a pyramid appears to have been Babel. Even then, the contractors would have had the usual problems in building such edifices. “Project Hi-Rise” by Robert F. Young (1978 November, MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF) is a humourous look at what happened when the workers on the Tower of Babel are unionized and go on strike for their first contract. It is narrated by one of the strikers, a bricklayer who is worried about how he is going to feed his family and pay the rent. Contract negotiations do not go well, and it eventually transpires that the union organizer was sent by God to prevent humans from violating His Will.

During the 1960s, SF was plagued by trendy writers who thought they were daring and innovative, reaching its height in the unlamented New Wave fiction. But the most daring and innovative SF writer preceded them by a decade. Sadly, David R. Bunch is almost entirely forgotten today and out of print. His stories, each independent of the other, were set in a bizarre future Earth called Moderan.

Which brings us to his story “They Never Come Back From Whoosh!” (1964 February, FANTASTIC) about a tower under construction, climbing up into the heavens. An advertising campaign convinces the general public that they should go see the tower, built of carbon fibres and rising up past the cloud deck as it goes ever higher. The source of the carbon comes from the furnaces at the tower’s base, where the sheeple are fed into the flames in a steady stream as they rush to see the whoosh.

Renting.

“The Tenants” by William Tenn (1954 April, MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SF) begins with young real estate agent Sydney Blake dealing with prospective tenants named Tohu and Bohu who are interested in renting the thirteenth floor of the 24-story McGowan Building. Blake informs them that, in common with many skyscrapers, there is no such floor due to superstitions, and that the floor numbering goes straight from 12 to 14. They persist though,

and go over Blake’s head to his bosses, who agree to the deal with a stipulation in the lease that they don’t guarantee the floor is there. Tohu and Bohu move in, and their customers have no trouble taking the elevator to that floor. Every time Blake tries it, he can’t get there, and the elevator skips to the fourteenth floor.

Eventually Tohu and Bohu give notice they are vacating. Suddenly Blake can access the floor because the contract says the landlord can enter the premises for the final moving-out inspection. The floor seems perfectly normal to Blake. When he sticks his head out the window, he counts twelve floors below and twelve above, yet the thirteenth floor was never visible before. He tells Tohu and Bohu he wants to stay behind and look around a bit more. They shrug, remind him that they are now clear of the contract, and leave. Blake goes back to the window but can’t put his head out of it and sees only grey nothingness. The elevator shaft and stairwell are gone. He is trapped in nothingness.

The Fall Of The Twin Towers.

The most famous skyscrapers of modern times were the Twin Towers, not so much during their lifetime but in the manner of their leaving. See OPUNTIA #48.5B and 62 for previous articles about them.

Stephen King published a novella “The Things They Left Behind” (2005, in the original anthology TRANSGRESSIONS, edited by Ed McBain). It takes place in August 2002 when Scott Staley discovers objects appearing in his Manhattan past as if by magic. Some of them are from his childhood past that only he would know about, while others he recognizes as having been the property of his co-workers who died in the fall of the Twin Towers. Staley worked for an insurance company in one of the fallen towers. On that fateful day, he heard interior voices telling him to stay away, so he booked off and went to a park, from where he saw the towers collapse.

Naturally he is perturbed at the objects and takes them out to a street trash can while running an errand. When he returns home, the objects are back inside. They haunt him with voices and images of the last moments of their owners. He gives one to a neighbour, who is also haunted by it. She sees a vision of his co-worker burning alive, someone she never knew existed. Staley begins distributing the objects to the widows of his dead co-workers, and this time they stay distributed. It becomes obvious to Staley that he has been fated to be a messenger for the dead of the Twin Towers. On that point, the story fades out.

The plot is average, but the one character brought to life is a victim of the attacks, crouched under his desk, his hair on fire, and slowly burning to death. He is crying, not so much from the pain, but from the thought that he will never again see his wife and child, or do something as ordinary as mow the lawn.

King knows how to delineate vivid characters, and this is one of his best. All of us who watched the Twin Towers burn and crumble had thoughts, I'm sure, of what it must be like to go off to work on an ordinary day in an regular job and end up in that situation. Suddenly one realizes death is imminent and there is no escape or hope. No superhero in a brightly-coloured spandex costume will come to the rescue. That was the true horror of the fallen towers.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE TOWERS (2015) is an anthology edited by Douglas Lain. In his introduction, he notes that when viewing the television videos of the fall of the Twin Towers, they bear a remarkable resemblance to Hollywood disaster films, especially the scenes of panicked crowds fleeing the thick clouds of dust billowing through the streets of Lower Manhattan. I won't review all the stories, since some of them are peripheral and seem included only because they have a passing mention of 9/11. Some are excerpts from novels, again for which 9/11 was incidental.

Leading off the anthology is "There's A Hole In The City" by Richard Bowes, set in the days immediately following the fall. Ghosts have been liberated, such as the young women who died in the 1919 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, or the thousand children who died during a 1904 excursion when the steamship General Slocum caught fire. The narrator calmly discusses the visitations, all the while trying to contact his girlfriend. Not until the end of the story when he finally sees her does he realize she is among the dead and is one of the ghosts.

"Beyond The Flags" by Kris Saknussemm makes a 180-degree turn in the story. Paul is a Wall Street trader who decides to spend the morning of September 11 with his mistress in Westchester County instead of at work in the Twin Towers. His wife frantically calls him and when he says, ignorant of what happened, that he's at work, his secret is exposed. He then drives home to placate her but finds the house lived in by strangers. The narrative yanks the reader around because Paul did go to work that day. His ghost is in denial and wandering about lost.

"Retribution" by Tim Marquitz is a story of revenge by a man who lost his pregnant wife in the fallen towers. He has pyrokinetic powers and in the years following, he visits Central Asian countries on September 11 anniversary dates,

where he carries out mass killings by fire. A wish fulfillment story that belongs on some amateur fiction Website.

"Unexpected Outcomes" by Tim Pratt has the second passenger jet suddenly freezing in midair just before the impact. The world is informed that their universe is a computer simulation. Due to budget problems, the simulation will be simplified so as to use less computer processing power. Unnecessary people and locations will be deleted, and the weather simplified. This is basically a rewrite of "The Tunnel Under The World", a 1955 story by Frederik Pohl.

"Out Of My Sight, Out Of My Mind" by David W. Friedman is about a telepathic poker player who becomes really nervous when flying after 9/11. He enters a tournament and follows his usual winning practices of reading opposing players' minds. It works until he runs into a player who escaped from one of the burning towers, and is thinking about it because someone casually mentioned September 11th during the game.



This stamp was part of a set issued by Bulgaria in 1990, showing different types of passenger jets flying over various cities. Perfectly innocent at the time.

LANDSCAPES MAKE US WHAT WE ARE

by Dale Speirs

I am fortunate enough to live on the edge of some of the most spectacular scenery in the world, the Rocky Mountains. From my driveway I can be in the eastern slopes in a half-hour, the Kananaskis mountains or Canmore in 45 minutes (depending on which turn I take), Banff National Park in an hour, and Yoho National Park, British Columbia, in 75 minutes. I don't do anything other than day hikes on established trails, as I prefer to admire the scenery and take photos rather than dangle from ropes on a cliff.

If there is one thing that Alberta has, it is plenty of landscapes. The mountains form its western border, the southern half is endless semi-desert flatlands where you can see forever to the horizon, badlands along the Red Deer River, and the northern half is endless spruce forests shrouded in darkness and cold.

I've never been in the northern half, which are a two-day drive from Calgary, but I know the flatlands and the big sky, having grown up on a cattle ranch. I moved to Calgary in 1978, which straddles the contact between the prairies and the mountains, and soon learned to love the vertical landscapes as well. When you spend time within it, your mind can't help but be awed by the glory of it all.

The endless flatlands of the Canadian prairies are why, as a teenager, I never took seriously SF stories about overpopulation being the doom of humanity. The authors seemed to be big-city dwellers from New York City or London, England, who never drove the Trans-Canada Highway from Calgary to Winnipeg and saw all that empty land.

The Earth Abides.

That was a prelude by way of introducing a book SACRED GEOGRAPHY (2010) by Paul Devereux. I saw a review of this book in CHRISTIAN NEW AGE QUARTERLY ** that intrigued me enough to find a copy at the Calgary Public Library. It is almost a coffee-table book but does contain substantive text, and is a good introduction to the subject of the influence of landscapes on the spiritual mindset of humans.

** A sample copy of CNAQ is available for US\$5 from Catherine Groves, Box 276, Clifton, New Jersey 07015-0276.

Devereux discusses the habit of humans to invest their landscapes with a spiritual sense, and then over time embellish them with temples or markings carved into the land. Pilgrimage routes often follow the land not strictly in topographical terms but to mark spiritual locales along the way. Ancient peoples knew a great deal about practical astronomy so they could predict when to sow crops and when to reap, and built structures to mark the passage of time. Acoustic phenomena such as singing sands and echoes couldn't help but create the idea of ghosts and spirits.

From the beginning of civilization, spectacular landscapes have bred spectacular gods. Whether Glastonbury Tor or Mount Fuji, one can't help feeling that there is something more to a landscape, something that is unseen but a definite presence. Mountains are the home of the gods. Caves and crevasses are the entrances to the next life in the underworld. The oracle priestesses of Delphi made their prophecies after breathing gases released from fissures.

Trees are venerated in many cultures around the world. Archaeological evidence is scarcer because wood decays, but the antiquity of tree worship is undoubted. Waterfalls and springs have long been used as sources of holy water, and in India the Ganges River itself became a shrine.

Simulacra, landscapes that look like some object or human, are common in spiritual beliefs. The Anishinabe tribe of Manitoba venerates a large boulder in Whiteshell Provincial Park that is the size and shape of a bison. Everywhere in the world there are cliffs and ridges that look like a face or recumbent human.

Modern society is not entirely exempt from the need to spiritualize the landscape. As Devereux remarks, “... *we forget that there are no maps of the world, only maps of worldviews.*” Human brains evolved to see patterns in the landscape because it is a survival trait. A hunter who sees the pattern of a predator in tall grass is more likely to pass his genes to posterity than one who is oblivious of one of those patterns slowly stalking him. By extension, humans see patterns in landscapes.

In today's society, the concept of a world centre or navel has pretty much died out. With religions though, it still exists. Jerusalem for Christianity, Mecca for Islam, and so forth. Devereux then considers pilgrimage routes. Such routes seldom go in a straight line to the ultimate destination, but stop along the way at various shrines. Fantasy novelists follow this method. The young boy or girl who is the true successor to the kingdom's throne does not go directly to the castle and demand admittance. There is always a quest to find the Sacred Knick

Knack of Qwerty, with many side tracks along the way. If the novels make good sales, the pilgrimage will be done repeatedly, with different names and places, but as often as possible before the books stop selling.

Hinduism to this day draws 20 million pilgrims a year along ancient routes. The Muslim Haji brings 3 million Muslims a year from around the world to Mecca, to circumambulate around the Ka'ba, a meteorite in the centre of the Grand Mosque that is the actual physical centre of Islam.

Lines and images are carved into the surface of the ground everywhere. Usually they point to something or traverse the distance between two holy sites. They can be the image of an animal or human. Commonly they are done on a heroic scale, a giant figure stretching across a plain or on a hillside. Mounds were an alternative to expressing an image.

Before electric lights, our ancestors knew the stars much better than most people today. They navigated by them, and measured the seasons with their slow progressions across the night sky. Before the telescope, they aligned stones and slabs to make it easier to note the important passages.

We Cannot Stay In The Cradle Forever.

SCATTER, ADAPT, AND REMEMBER (2013) by Annalee Newitz is subtitled “How Humans Will Survive A Mass Extinction”. She begins by pointing out that there have been seven mass extinctions since the origin of life, defined as the kill-off of at least 75% of all species. Yet life carried on. The eighth mass extinction, caused by humans, has been in progress for several millennia and still continues.

Newitz starts off with a brief look at geological history. Cyanobacteria, often called blue-green algae, were the first microbes to evolve photosynthesis, about 2,500 megayears ago. A waste product of photosynthesis is pure oxygen, which happened to be highly toxic to the methane-using microbes of that era, known as anaerobes. Photosynthesis wiped out the anaerobic ecosystem and replaced it with oxygen generators. We exist today because of that first mass extinction.

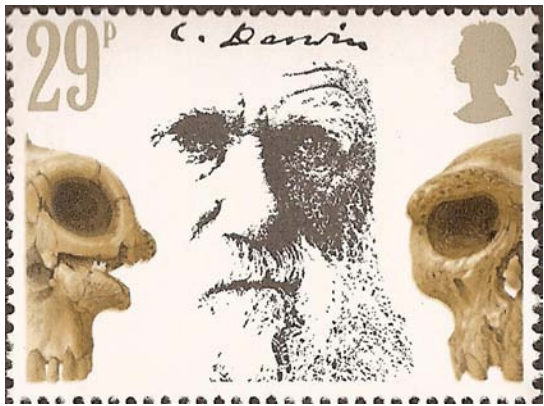
200 megayears later, all that free oxygen triggered Snowball Earth, a planet-wide glaciation, except for a thin band of open water around the equator, the refuge of cyanobacteria. (And if we're not careful, all those carbon taxes and alternative energy sources will trigger a mini-Ice Age.)

Eventually oxygen-using life, ie animals, evolved, and Earth's climate settled down somewhat, although it continued to alternate between fire and ice. It oscillated a bit too much 440 megayears ago, causing another glaciation known as the Ordovician-Silurian mass extinction. Things settled down until the Devonian mass extinction 400 megayears ago, the cause of which is still unknown but may have been due to the development of land plants.

The worst mass extinction was the End Permian, 251 megayears ago, when 95% of all species were wiped out by flood lavas and supervolcanoes. They not only heated the planet to steam bath levels, they released petatonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The Triassic mass extinction took place 200 megayears ago, probably an aftershock of the End Permian, when new-born ecosystems collapsed from too much simplicity.

The K-Tec event at the end of the Cretaceous 65.5 megayears ago is the one the general public thinks of when they talk of mass extinctions, even though it wasn't as bad as the previous ones. It did, however, kill off the dinosaurs, which were more spectacular than previous extinctions killing off dog-sized amphibians or reptiles.

Hominids began evolving about 2 megayears ago, and spread from eastern Africa by walking into Europe and Asia. Walking is actually a rapid method of spread for an ambulatory species such as *Homo sapiens*. If a tribe of humans only walked a kilometre a day, that is still 365 km in a year, and within a century humans could reach the far ends of the Eurasian continent. And so we spread.



Newitz having set the stage, she then gets to the survival of humans over the long run in the future. She is Jewish and uses the story of her people as an illustrative example of how to survive by scattering. The Jewish diaspora kept the faith no matter how far they fled, mainly by insisting that no one is truly Jewish unless their mother was.

Adaptation is something that humans are very good at because we are a generalist species. Humans are found from the Arctic to tropical jungles, a climatic range that few other species can tolerate year-round. We are not tied to a specific habitat or way of life, and will change if forced to. I was a farm boy on the Canadian prairies descended from small-time shopkeepers in Scotland. Isaac Asimov was an SF author who loved living in Manhattan, but was descended from farmers in Belarus. (His name means “grain dealer”)

The greatest tactic of survival for humans is memory and writing. We are the only species that can transmit information to generations yet to be born. Many animal species teach their young how to hunt, but none can teach their descendants born centuries later. Because we can pass knowledge down through centuries, we are able to plan for disasters based on the memories of previous ones.

Humans can take active measures that animals cannot. Newitz lives in San Francisco and cites the example of earthquake preparedness, keeping large jugs of water, preserved food, and first-aid kits at hand.

Pandemics and other medical crises are now quickly traced to their sources and remedies applied. SARS and Ebola viruses would have killed off most of the human population even a century ago, but now they are contained before becoming a new Black Death. For all the hysteria during recent outbreaks, the fact remains that they were stopped before they could sweep the planet clean.

Newitz notes that ultimately the human race will have to spread out into space to survive. Earth will not abide forever. As we do so, evolution will separate humans into different subspecies but they will carry a common history with them in libraries and memories.

Cyborgs will be another method of adaptation. Eventually it will become possible to download human minds into electronic chips and assure immortality. Humans will scatter out into space, adapt to the new environments they find, and remember their history.

WE'LL ALL GO TOGETHER WHEN WE GO: PART 7

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 6 appeared in OPUNTIA's #249, 276, 283, 301, 312, and 327.]

I spent the last decade of my career in the Calgary Parks Dept. as a Trouble Calls Supervisor, handling everything from leaky irrigation systems to boulevard trees with broken branches hanging to park vandalism. As a consequence, I quite enjoy disaster movies and have built up a fair collection of them. It's nice to sit back and let someone else worry about cleaning up messes.

These movies are to be viewed not as soul-searing gripping dramas but an unintentional comedy. One does not need a PhD in Astronomy to spot the errors. If you are watching the movie with friends, you can make it into a drinking game. Score one point each time a character takes off on a road trip instead of staying put and doing useful work. Bonus points if you can predict at least fifteen minutes in advance which character will be the next to die suddenly from a harbinger impact. No points if nukes are used or the polarity of something is reversed because those are so obvious as to be a given.

Orbital Dynamics.

“Day Of The Comet” by Ivar Jorgensen (1956 October, IMAGINATION) alternates between the viewpoints of a bickering married couple on the verge of divorce, and the President of the USA versus the Premier of the USSR. An extinction-level comet has been confirmed to be en route to Earth. The couple decide to make up and start fresh. The two leaders agree to stand down from their confrontation in the interests of world peace before the End Times. Almost believable, but it soon falls apart when astronomers say they made a terrible mistake and the comet will miss. The couple renew their divorce action, and the two superpowers return to yellow alert. Human behaviour is more predictable than the stars in their courses.

A bolide doesn't necessarily have to be a planet smasher to make a story. “Loss Of Signal” by Mark McGarry (1978, GALILEO #7) is set in space where two contesting federations are battling it out. Space is big and empty, and contrary to the Star Wars universe, there would be no giant fleets blazing away while fighter craft duck and weave like Spitfires dueling with Me109s. The story at hand begins with a routine observation of a small bolide in the asteroid belt of Barnard's Star. The officer of the watch lets it bounce off the ship's deflector

screen. It's not his job to track it, so the rock disappears somewhere behind the ship. Unbeknownst to the ship's crew, it tags along in a following orbit. This saves them when an enemy ship closing in from behind for the kill doesn't see the rock in time. The bolide is two metres in diameter and has no trouble converting the enemy ship into scrap metal.

Standard Plot #1.

In the Big Ugly Rock sub-genre, the latest I have at hand is a 2015 movie EARTHFALL. It uses standard plot #1, beginning with the harbinger meteorites that target only prominent landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty, while neglecting the post office building in Ten Sleep, Wyoming, or the cenotaph in Red Deer, Alberta.

The usual subplots are trotted out. The divorced parents, one of whom is the only scientist who knows how to save the world. Their daughter is with a group of teenagers on a camping trip, who then journey across a barren landscape, not unlike southern California, during the disaster. Half the population runs south to what they think is safety, while the other half of the extras run north. The SFX are the standard fair-to-middling type, done on a tight budget.

An unknown extra-solar planet, undetected by astronomers, has zoomed through the Solar System and has dragged Earth out of orbit with magnetism. No magnetic field is that strong, but the errant planet has only a walk-on part, so it doesn't really matter. It is never seen, a good way of saving on the SFX budget. One would think that the gravitational stresses would turn Earth's crust into a sea of lava, but not so. The worst that happens is bad weather and, of course, all those pesky meteorites blowing apart national monuments.

One of the characters states that Earth is no longer rotating, hence the bad storms as the atmosphere attempts to re-balance the cold air on the dark side with the hot air on the Sun side. The screenwriter forgot to tell the SFX boys, because the shots of Earth from space clearly show it rotating. Earth is also stated to have flipped its rotation 90 degrees and is now sideways in its orbit, yet the daytime shots in the movie show the usual movement of the Sun from east to west.

Piling it on further, in two weeks Earth has moved out of its orbit past Mars and is brushing up against the asteroid belt, hence all those continuous swarms of meteorites. The asteroid belt is shown as it always is in Hollywood movies, a

thick swarm of rocks with a sharp edge to the swarm, whereas in real life it is mostly empty space.

Whenever the emoting of the actors can't be extended any further in a scene, more meteorites show up. For variety, unexplained atmospheric firestorms occasionally sweep the desert despite a lack of fuel. Notwithstanding Earth being so far out in the Solar System, the Sun is the same size and brightness as before.

Most of the lead characters, male or female, are emotional ninnies given to hysteria and just plain brainless behaviour. If there was any justice, they would have been eliminated from the gene pool instead of the supporting characters. All the usual alarums and excursions are there that one expects in this type of movie, with various rescues at the last second.

The plan is, wait for it, to bring out the nukes. You knew that was coming, although surprisingly nothing is said about reversing any polarities. The nuclear powers are going to drop 500 kilotons of ballistic missiles on a giant natural gas reservoir in southern California to create a rocket engine that will send Earth back to its original orbit. The screenwriter evidently knew little about the metric system, since 500 kilotons, as impressively as it may be intoned by the actors, isn't much by today's standard of missiles with megaton throwweights.

I don't know the total megatonnage of the world's nuclear weapons but 500 kilotons, that is, 0.5 megatons, is a tiny amount, not sufficient to crack open the crust of a deep reservoir. Earth has had some very big natural gas blowouts in our time, none of which affected its orbit. (No, not that blowout at Porter Ranch, California, in January 2016.)

We get a look-down view of the detonation, which is the usual gasoline explosion style. I would have thought that by now even the cheapest SFX studio would have scanned the Bikini Atoll hydrogen bomb into their computers to make a more realistic nuclear explosion.

Within minutes, Earth's rotation straightens back up, the storms disappear, the Sun shines gaily on the mountain top, and the divorced couple reconcile. No tectonic shivers cracking the crust open as the planet hustles back to its home orbit. And so to the closing credits.

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: David Thayer, aka Teddy Harvia
Dallas, Texas

2016-06-02

I enjoyed your philatelic article on the Star Trek stamps. The series would not have been the same without the Canadians.

Lloyd Penney’s belated welcome to my cartoons was welcome. Today I have to draw an appropriate birthday cartoon for his Facebook page.

FROM: Lloyd Penney
Etobicoke, Ontario

2016-06-05

OPUNTIA #341: Re: the Teddy Harvia cover. There’s nothing like a little buzz. It means the honeybees are there, healthy and working to fertilize our crops. Why, what did you think I meant?

The Star Trek stamps and coins are out, thanks to Canada Post and the Canadian Mint. Decades ago, I might have gone to Post and Mint offices to get my own. Not these days. I think I am slowly getting out of my collector’s phase, for I know that in future years, I will probably have to divest myself of a lot of my collection, which is not a bad thing. I guess. The Canadian content of the show (Shatner, Doohan, Colicos) made the whole thing possible. I hope the families of Doohan and Colicos have been honoured by these efforts.

The ad for Miller’s Unique Radio-Active Bottle reminds me of the various old containers and bottles for old pharmaceuticals and snake-oil products often seen. My doctor’s office has a large display of such bottles embedded in a case in one office wall, and the display shows how many of the preparations, often in brown or blue bottles, were produced somewhere in the Toronto area, or in what is now the Greater Toronto Area.

OPUNTIA #342: Nope, nothing is sacred any more. And, society is the lesser for it, IMHO. I am sure the town of Vulcan, Alberta has reaped the benefits of

sharing the name of that major Federation planet. I wonder how the town council likes dressing up in ST movie or Next Generation costumes from time to time? A sacrifice they’re willing to make, I imagine. It is good to see that there is lots of pre-Trek Vulcan history to remember and celebrate.

[The pre-Trek history doesn’t draw tourists though. Vulcan, Alberta, is otherwise a boring rural village where nothing ever happens. I say that as a farm boy who has personal experience of boring rural villages. My birthplace of Eckville, alas, has nothing to catch the tourists. Any SF television or movie producers reading this please note; name a planet or even just a starship after Eckville, Alberta.]

World Wide Party is on our calendar, and we will relay to you any and all celebrations. I did hear from Benoît Girard some years ago, but Franz Miklis has disappeared from my own radar. He might be on social media somewhere.

[And for those of you who haven’t been paying attention to the blurbs, that would be 21h00 on June 21st. 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. 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

[I only list zines I receive from the Papernet. If the zine is posted on www.efanzines.com or www.fanac.org, then I don’t mention it since you can read it directly.]

BANANA WINGS #62 (The Usual from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Some thoughts about name-checking convention reports, several personal essays, and lots of letters of comment.