

OPUNTIA

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Stampede Rodeo 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.

I LOVE A STAMPEDE PARADE

photos by Dale Speirs

200,000 people crammed into downtown Calgary to watch the parade Friday morning that officially opens the ten-day event, myself included. Then over to the Stampede grounds, about which more later.

2016-07-08



Fort Calgary was founded on August 28, 1875, by the North West Mounted Police, as the Mounties were then known.



For some reason, the white cowboy hat became the symbol of Calgary.



Even the Calgary militia wear white hats.



Pioneers used horses, but there's always someone who has to be different.



Southwest Calgary has a contiguous border with the Tsuu T’ina (Dene) Reserve. The other aboriginal tribes of southern Alberta are the Nakoda (Sioux), Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai, the last three of which are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy.



Every Cowtownner knows before the Stampede begins that any diets are blown out of the water. All those who go down to the grounds will come out several kilogrammes heavier. See why on the next few pages.



Is there nothing that cannot be deep fried?



The barbecue booths take themselves very seriously and list their wins in competitions on their marquees. Some of them displayed their trophies on tables out front as further proof to customers of their credentials.

PORK

Grand Champion, Richmond Cork and Pork, Whistler B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Pork, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Pork, Vancouver B.C.
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 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Pork, Vancouver B.C.

SMOKE & BONES

CANADIAN CHAMPIONS

1st place
 Rib Champions
 PNE Ribfest



SMOKE & BONES

AMERICAN CHAMPIONS



First Place
 Ribs Best of the Best
 Douglas, Georgia

BRISKET

1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Brisket, Vancouver B.C.

CHICKEN

2nd Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Chicken, Vancouver B.C.



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Grand Champion
 Ravenswood Cork
 and Pork Whistler B.C.

Winning Ribs,
 Rotary Ribfest,
 Kamloops B.C.

Jack Daniels Invitational
 World Championship BBQ Team,
 Lynchburg Tennessee

We cater weddings, private and corporate events!

Brisket Champions,
 Illinois State BBQ Championship,
 Metropolis Illinois

Winning Brisket,
 Alabama \$50,000
 BBQ Championship,
 Talladega, Alabama

Award Winning Pork,
 Pike Place Market
 BBQ Championships,
 Seattle Washington

www.smokeandbones.ca

RIBS

1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.
 1st Place, 2000 World's Best Ribs, Vancouver B.C.



SANDWICHES

pulled Pork - \$4.99
 Beef - \$5.99



WHOLE RIBS

1/2 Rack - \$4.99
 1/4 Rack - \$2.99
 Full Rack - \$9.99

COMBOS

BBQ and Bacon Tm
 (Ribs - Pork & Brisket)
 Chicken & Pork Tm
 (Ribs - Pork & Brisket)

SIDES

Creamy Apple Cabbage - \$3.99
 BBQ Pot Roast - \$3.99
 Southern Cornbread - \$3.99



JACK DANIEL'S

Smoke And Bones BBQ
 Canada





The peanut butter popsicle was overpriced at \$5. I didn't try it.



The sci-fi item at right was in the Stampede home baking competition. It is made entirely of crystallized sugar. I had trouble photographing it because it was inside a glass case in a dimly-lit room. The flash reflected off the glass if I aimed it directly at the eye, but if I kept it to one side, as in this photo, the image was blurry.

Since the first Stampede rodeo in 1912, the native tribes have been granted the right to camp at the show. Because they actually live in these teepees during the rodeo, their village is on the opposite bank of the Elbow River where they can have a quieter environment.



The five tribes also use the village as their own annual convention, since their Reserves are hundreds of kilometres apart. The Nakoda Reserve is an hour's drive upstream along the Bow River, and the Siksika Reserve is two hours east on the Trans-Canada Highway. The Piikani and Kainai Reserves are about three hours south of Calgary. The Tsuu T'ina are next door to Calgary and I suspect that many of them just commute to the rodeo to their teepees.



These are the Tsuu T'ina teepees.



And so to the midway acts. When this high diver jumped from the 25-metre tower, I held the camera shutter down and got this sequence of photos.

Back home, I stitched the sequence together on my computer.



I took this photo because if I told you there was an exhibit called “Wally’s World Of Wheat”, you’d think I was making it up. And yes, the Alberta Wheat Commission’s mascot really is named Wally.



Awww, aren't they so cute?



The Stampede Show Riders.



The mini-chuckwagon races were hilarious. The miniature horses can really move. It was obvious they like to run because after each race, the drivers had to put their full weight on the reins trying to slow them down.



THE DAYS OF TWO-FISTED FICTION

by Dale Speirs

The pulp magazines of the 1920s to 1950s were garish and filled with bad fiction, yet the field survived decades. There are many causes claimed for the demise of pulp, from comic books to television to the shutdown of major news agent distributors. Basically it was a combination of all of these coming together.

The stories were purpled with adjectives and never worried too much about logic or consistency, but they kept the readers' interest precisely because they did tell a story. Those who complain about the lack of characterization or emotive settings are missing the idea. The plot was the thing, with fast-paced action that hustled the reader along from point to point.

THE SHUDDER PULPS (1975) by Robert Kenneth Jones is a history of the weird menace magazines of the 1930s. This book awkwardly straddles halfway between being an introduction to the genre and an encyclopedic treatment. It flits about from publishers to writers to the garish covers, starting off with detailed looks at a subject, then rushing past the rest of it and moving on to the next chapter.

Weird menace fiction is a blend of horror, terror, and sadistic elements. (Horror is watching it happen to someone else; terror is when you realize you're next.) The story usually revolved around evil villains torturing nubile young women. A supernatural cause seemed apparent until the last few pages, when an ordinary cause was revealed, such as a villain disguised as a ghost, trying to frighten an heiress to death so he could get her inheritance. Mostly the tortures were only hinted at, but many stories were explicit about branding irons, needles, amputations, and flogging.

Pulp writers were poorly paid in general, usually one cent per word. In order to maintain a volume of sales to live on and raise families, they didn't rewrite. In the time it took to revise the first draft, a pulp writer could hammer out another story. The only editing was by the magazine editor to make the stories fit the pages. The plot was what readers wanted, not characterization or setting.

The genre began in October 1933 when Popular Publications revamped a failing pulp DIME MYSTERY MAGAZINE and replaced the stories of detection and mystery with sadistic tales of horror. The other pulp publishers quickly copied

the format. The cover art was always important and much the same everywhere. One or more semi-clad or nude young women were in a dungeon being tortured or ravished by leering Igors brandishing whips. The stories for the most part were a bit tamer but not by much.

Pulp publishers sold display ads per group of magazines. For example, an advertiser would take a full page in four different pulps, each with a circulation of 50,000. The same ad was used in all four, which were printed simultaneously in what is known as gang printing. The advertiser would pay for the ad as if the four pulps were a single magazine selling 200,000 copies. The four pulps might be related, such as science fiction, or could be four different genres, such as SF, mystery, weird menace, or western.

Writers had to be fast, not good. Many used pseudonyms for good reasons. Publishers often preferred house names they controlled. If anyone got uppity about payment and wanted a raise past one cent a word, the editor would remind him that there were plenty of writers willing to work for a half-cent per word in order to break into the market.

Writers were the least important element of pulps. Covers mattered the most because they had to sell the issue to the casual buyer. One wonders though, about the kind of men who read such stories. (There weren't many female readers.) Distributors were the gods to whom the publishers kowtowed. Poor distribution meant poor sales. Printers were often backdoor partners in the business, especially if they gave credit against later sales.

After jumping about the weird menace field, Jones then looks at the decline and fall. The weird menace genre began dying during World War Two as reading tastes changed and paper was rationed. Comic books were the main culprit in killing off pulps, because they were easier to read and in many categories just as bloody and horrifying as the pulps. They also sold in the millions, instead of the hundreds of thousands. The weird menace pulps died out, and nude young women everywhere breathed a sigh of relief.

Jones dips into the history of weird menace pulps in a seemingly random manner, writing about a particular pulp or publisher, then jumping to the next chapter. It is not a definitive reference, but is more of a random walk, picking off the major players in the pulp game and then some of the supporting cast.

THEY SHALL MOVE OUT OF THEIR HOLES LIKE WORMS OF THE EARTH: PART 4

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 3 appeared in OPUNTIA's #307, 308, and 331.]

In Parts 1 and 2, I reviewed the four movies and a television series under the TREMORS banner, about giant worms called graboids that munched on people, then gave birth to heat-seeking bipeds called shriekers, which in turn pupated into flying carnivores that used gastric juices to make their intestinal systems into rocket engines, and were thus called ass blasters. They then laid eggs that hatched into graboids and re-started the cycle.

The movies and television series were largely centered in the Nevada desert, with side trips to Mexico and Argentina. The continuing cast member from one to the next movie and most of the television series was Burt Gummer, a stereotyped survivalist who ekes out a living as a professional graboid hunter (who ya gonna call?) and producer of survival videos (making prickypear cacti into barbecue sauce, goes great with rattlesnake steaks).

What made the TREMORS series a cut above most monster shows was a good sense of humour throughout, not too dry nor any mugging or slapstick. The writers also put effort into maintaining continuity and rational explanations for the critters. Those movies and the series are well recommended.

Alas, all things must pass. TREMORS 5: BLOODLINES was released in 2015 with new writers. Burt Gummer is still the lead, but the movie takes place in South Africa. There are graboids in Africa, which doesn't make sense because they were stated to be a New World species. The African graboids look and behave differently.

The worst part of this movie is that there is no humour. It is unleavened "I'm gonna get the bitch!" shouting, with plenty of blood splattered about. At one time, splattering a character with blood from an off-camera beheading or goring made the audience jump in their seats. It's been done so often now in other movies and in news videos from Syria that the shock is gone. In this movie, it is made worse by almost every character being splattered several times, to the point of monotony.

The gory scenes are spaced out with clichéd sub-plots such as a romance, corrupt characters who we know will get what they deserve, shots of wildlife roaming the veldt, and tribal dances. The latter two items probably made South African viewers grimace the same way that Canucks wince when American movies represent hunting lodges in the boreal forest as the Canadian way of life and have Mounties on patrol wearing scarlet coats. (Canada is more urbanized than the USA, and Mounties on duty look like police officers everywhere else; scarlet dress is only used for ceremonial occasions.)

The movie suffers from major illogic. The South African ass blasters are said to fly only at night because the daytime heat confuses their thermal vision. Yet in the previous movies and series, ass blasters had no trouble in the Nevada or Mexico deserts, which are just as hot. The worms track their prey by vibrations, picking off humans one by one, but completely ignore the vast herds of domestic cattle, wildebeest, zebras, and antelopes roaming about. Likewise the shriekers and ass blasters, which hunt by thermal vision, also ignore the big game animals in favour of scrawny humans.

Something I noticed were the scenes where a fossil graboid was being excavated from sedimentary strata which didn't look like the proper kind of rocks. My mother was a palaeontological field collector for the University of Alberta, and I collected lots of fossils as a young man, so I know a bit about this from personal experience.

After assorted alarums and excursions, with lots of long-lens shots of vehicles bouncing across the veldt, the constant attacks by the critters become boring. The final standoff is set up by running a chain-link fence around a village and then waiting for lightning from a passing thunderstorm to electrify the fence just as the graboid touches it.

Gummer is saddled with an idiot helper who attaches himself to the expedition. Near the end of the movie, the young man reveals himself to be the illegitimate son that Gummer never knew he had. Understandably, Gummer wants a DNA test. This seems to be an attempt to introduce a younger actor to take over the series, assuming there is a TREMORS 6.

I hope not. The first four movies and television series were done with care. The fifth movie shows little concern for acting and writing, and just cranks out more splatter and gore, making it into a routine monster movie. I bought the DVD from the bargain bin but for value received, I overpaid.

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
Etobicoke, Ontario

2016-07-15

OPUNTIA #345: [Re: Cardston park for local gal made good] I wonder if Fay Wray's descendants know of this tribute to their most famous relative.

[I'm sure they would. Anyone in the next few generations of the Wray family must have seen KING KONG dozens of times.]

For Canada Day, I put up six 3x6' maple leaf flags on the pigeon netting of our balcony, and they fit perfectly. I don't know if anyone on Highway 427 noticed this, but I am sure the tenants of the buildings next door did.

[I neglected to get a photo, but on the bus route downtown I saw a house completely draped in a giant Canadian flag. Something that size wouldn't be cheap, so the owner must be very patriotic indeed. I'll stick with paper flags in my hatband or on the sun visor of my car.]

I yearn for those days when radio still had drama, and vocal entertainment. Even the CBC used to have radio drama not long ago, but it was shut down from lack of listeners.

[I wonder why it couldn't be done as a ten- or fifteen- minute episode on the morning drive time shows. There should be lots of actors willing to work for minimum wage on radio just to build an audience.]

The book you comment on, THE STEAMPUNK GAZETTE (2012) by Thaddeus Tinker, is one book I have. Thaddeus Tinker is actually John Naylor, a retired BBC executive who got heavily into steampunk, and has chaired the annual The Asylum steampunk festival in Lincoln, England since it started. This year is its eighth year.

The reason I know this is that Yvonne and I, during our upcoming trip to England, will be attending The Asylum. We've been in touch with John

Naylor/Major Tinker for over a year now. I quite enjoyed the book, and should weight in our bag allow for it, I will bring my copy along for an autograph. I quite like the artwork, but what got us into it is the costuming.

OPUNTIA #346: I don't know what 99 out of every 100 anime costumes are from, but sometimes, I do recognize them. The end of May saw our own Anime North, which pulled in about 30,000 people. We had a crafters' table there, and our sales were extremely good. I found the anime masks to be a little creepy. The CBC is usually a pretty good guest, and I have read that with more money coming from the government, the CBC ratings are rising. (As Calgary's, Toronto's Radio One is at 99.1 MHz.)

[Otafest 2016 in Calgary subsequently announced they had 8,000 paid members. This is a local convention, with no pretensions to greater glory. The SF Worldcon is lucky to get that many in a good year, yet it puffs itself up as a big show.]

[Re: biography of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker] Some American readers who remember a character named Walter Diefenbaker in one of Sharon McCrumb's books will have their question answered, where did she get the name Diefenbaker?

[That always ruined her book for me. For Americans, it would be like reading THE LORD OF THE RINGS, and finding out one of the characters is named Shirley Clinton.]

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. As of July 7, they are sold out; with no at-the-door admissions. The Steampunk Banquet is also completely sold out. Details from: www.whenwordscollide.org The Aurora Awards will follow after the banquet.

When Words Collide covers 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.