OPUNTIA 379

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN WAY: GLACIERS

photos by Dale Speirs

I made my second trip into Banff National Park on May 23. My first stop was Bow Lake, still frozen over as I knew it would be, but home to two glaciers. The cover is a view from across the south shore of the lake towards Crowfoot Glacier, so named a century ago because it had three toes, the lowermost of which only survives today in vestigial form. Notice the licence plate on the car.

My first ever selfie using my smartphone. All other photos were taken with my Nikon SLR camera. The selfie was taken on the north side of Bow Lake, looking west towards Bow Glacier in the far distance. This is the source of the Bow River, upon whose bonny, bonny banks Calgary was founded.

I then turned around and used the telephoto on my Nikon for this shot of Bow Glacier.

At right: The parking lot on the north shore.

Below: Then I climbed over the snow piles and faced southwest across the lake, taking this photo of Crowfoot Mountain.

Looking due south. The peak on the southern shore of Bow Lake is, logically enough, called Bow Peak. The mountain to the left and behind is Mount Hector, named after a pioneer geologist. Lake Louise is 35 km south of Bow Lake. The Trans-Canada Highway turns west just past Lake Louise and then over Kicking Horse Pass into British Columbia and Yoho National Park. At that turn, Highway 93 begins and goes north past Bow Lake into Jasper National Park.

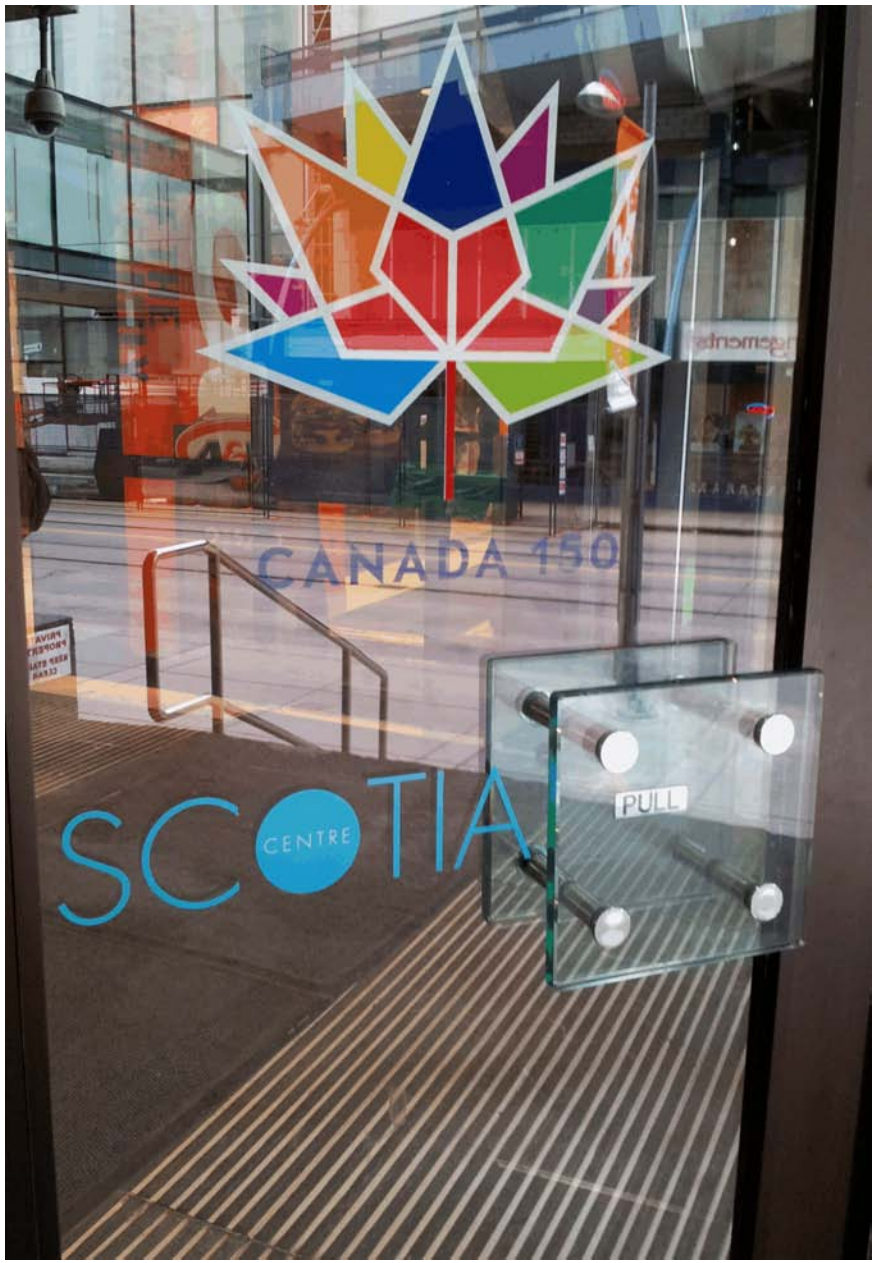
Kicking Horse Pass is so named because while the first exploration party was riding over it in 1858, Dr James Hector had trouble with his horse, which kicked him in the chest and rendered him unconscious. His companions thought he was dead and dug a grave, but he revived just in time. He later moved to New Zealand and spent the rest of his life there. He was fond of saying that he was the only man who would have had two graves dug for him.

Immediately adjacent to Highway 93, about halfway between Bow Lake and Lake Louise, is Herbert Lake. So why is it open water when the other lakes are frozen?

The other lakes are glacier fed, whereas Herbert Lake is spring fed. The water traveling underground is warmer, relatively speaking, as it flows through the strata. Warm, in this context, means just above zero, not as in what you would run in your bath.

GEARING UP FOR THE BIG DAY
photos by Dale Speirs

Canada celebrates its 150th birthday this coming July 1st, and the excitement is building in Cowtown. Calgarians will argue politics and religion as much as any place else, but we all agree on one thing: Any excuse will do for a party. The official logo of the celebrations is a stylized maple leaf, an example of which is shown below on an entrance door into the Scotia Centre food court.



Below: Downtown core, in the TD Square atrium mall.

Merchants are milking the event for what it's worth. Below: a flag pizza I saw at Safeway. At right: Indigo superbookstore.

Seen in Co-op. Makes you feel unpatriotic if you're on a low-carb diet.

Below: Seen at Lake Louise village when I was out that way on May 4th.
At right: Tomkins Park on 17 Avenue SW, inner-city Calgary.

Below: The local bottler of Coke-Cola got into the act.
Bottom: Patriotic doormats at a boutique on 17 Avenue SW.

Below: A patriotic but very happy homeowner on Elbow Drive SW in the Windsor Park district.

THE OTHER INVISIBLE MEN: PART 3
by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 2 appeared in OPUNTIAs #262 and 360.]

The Power Of Invisibility.

One thing that all authors writing fiction about invisibility seem to agree on is that it will inevitably lead to delusions of grandeur and power.

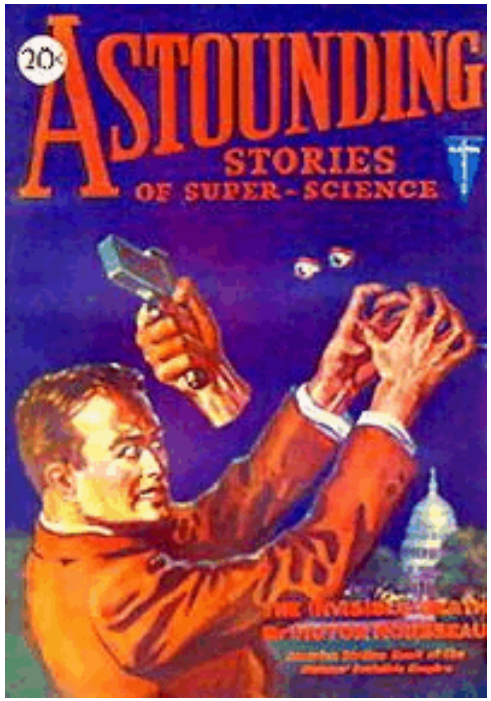
"The Invisible Death" by Victor Rousseau (1930 October, ASTOUNDING) is about a Hungarian criminal named Von Kettler who wants to rule the world (insert *bwah ha! ha!*s as needed). He escapes Death Row in a prison by turning invisible and begins building up his army to conquer the planet. The Invisible Emperor wants to establish an autocracy and do away with all the inconveniences of democracy.

[Remember that this quote was written in 1930.] "*It seemed impossible that in the year 1940 the peace of the civilized world could be threatened by an international conspiracy bent on restoring absolutism, and yet each day showed more clearly the immense ramifications of the plot. Each day, too, brought home to the investigating governments more clearly the fact that the things they had discovered were few in number in comparison with those they had not*."

"*The headquarters of the conspirators had never been discovered, and it was suspected that the powerful mind behind them was intentionally leading the investigators along false trails. The conspiracy was world-wide. It had been behind the revolution that had recreated an absolutist monarchy in Spain. It had plunged Italy into civil war. It had thrown England into the convulsions of a succession of general strikes, using the communist movement as a cloak for its activities*."

"*But nobody dreamed that America could become a fertile field for its insidious propaganda. Yet it was behind the millions of adherents of the so-called Freemen's Party, clamoring for the destruction of the constitution. Upon the anarchy that would follow the absolutist regime was to be erected*."

The hero, Capt. Dick Rennell of the U.S. Air Service, learns that the secret of invisibility was invented by Luke Evans, who was miffed that no one was interested in his secret and sold it to the Germans. "*He said that by destroying*



shadows one could produce invisibility, since visibility consists in the refraction of wave lengths by material objects." Remorseful, he is now working on a counter to his invisibility method.

The President of the USA is kidnapped from the White House by invisible agents. From there, things go from bad to worse around the country and the world, as the Invisible Empire goose-steps its way to power. The good guys learn that the invisibility is conferred by garments impregnated with a special gas.

Troubles never come singly but as an army, and the nation reels from the attacks of the Invisible Empire. Finally, Luke Evans is located. For the benefit of invisibility researchers who want to rule the world, I quote a lengthy explanation: *"Luke Evans placed the square black case upon the table. "It's simple, like all big things, sir," he answered. "The original shadow-breaking device that I invented was a heavy, inert gas, invisible, but almost as viscous as paint. Applied to textiles, to inorganic matter, to animal bodies, it adheres for hours. Its property is to render such substances invisible by absorbing all the visible light rays that fall upon it, from red to violet. Light passes through all substances that are coated with this paint as if they did not exist."*

"And this antidote of yours?" asked Colonel Stopford. "Darkness," replied Luke Evans. "A beam of darkness that means absolute invisibility. It can be shot from this apparatus", he indicated the box upon the table. "This box contains a minute portion of a gas which exists in nature in the form of a black, crystalline powder. The peculiar property of this powder is that it is the solidified form of a gas more volatile than any that is known. So volatile is it that, when the ordinary atmospheric pressure of fifteen pounds to the square inch is removed, the powder instantly changes to the gaseous condition."

"By pressing this lever", Evans pointed at the box, "a vacuum is created. Instantly the powder becomes a gas, which shoots forth through this aperture with the speed of a projectile, taking the form of a beam of absolute blackness. Or it can be discharged from cylinders in such a way as to extend over a large area within a few minutes."

"But how does this darkness make the invisible airships luminous?" asked Stopford. "Why does not your darkness destroy all light?" "In this way, sir," replied the old inventor. "The shadow-breaking gas with which the airships are painted confers invisibility because it absorbs sunlight. But it does not absorb the still more rapid waves, or oscillations which manifest themselves as radio-activity. On the contrary, it gathers and reflects these."

"Now Roentgen, the discoverer of the X-ray, observed that if X-rays are allowed to enter the eye of an observer who is in complete darkness, the retina receives a stimulus, and light is perceived, due to the fluorescent action of the X-rays upon the eyeball. Consequently, by creating a beam of complete darkness, I bring into clear visibility the fluorescent gas that coats the airships; in other words, the airships become visible."

"If a light ray is nullified upon entering the field of darkness, will it emerge at the other edge as a perfect light ray again?" asked Stopford. "It will emerge unchanged, since the black beam destroys light by slightly slowing down the vibrations to a point where they are not perceived as light by the human eye. On emerging from the beam, however, these vibrations immediately resume their natural frequency. To give you a homely parallel, the telephone changes sound waves to electric waves, and re-converts them into sound waves at the other end, without any appreciable interruption."

"Then," said Stopford, "the logical application of your method is to plunge every city in the land into darkness by means of this gas?" "That is so, sir, and then we shall have the advantage of invisibility, and the enemy ships will be in fluorescence." "Damned impracticable!" muttered Stopford. "You seriously propose to darken the greater part of eastern North America?" asked the Secretary for War.

"The gas can be produced in large quantities from coal tar besides existing in crystalline deposits," replied Luke Evans. "It is so volatile that I estimate that a single ton will darken all eastern North America for five days. Whereas the concentration would be made only in specific areas liable to attack. The gas is distilled with great facility from one of the tri-phenyl-carbinol coal-tar derivatives."

And so to war. Poison gas, magnetic deflector shields, war crimes against civilians, and atrocities to numerous to mention. The Invisible Emperor runs amok for a while but eventually Evan's antidote begins to take its toll. Daring Dick is in the heart of the battles, and pulls off a victory by reversing the polarity of something or other. You knew he would succeed in the end, but half the novel still had to be padded out with action and adventure.

Alternative Invisibilities.

One may suppose several different methods of becoming invisible. A popular one among fiction writers is to speed up, and move so fast as to be invisible. The most obvious objection is that the air friction would cause clothing to burst into flame. Other problems are often overlooked. One would have to wear goggles to protect the eyes, and one's lungs would burn trying to breathe in air at hyper-accelerated rates. The sonic booms at close range would leave a trail of devastation behind.

H.G. Wells, as so often with such themes, led the way for others with his 1901 story "The New Accelerator". In that story, an elixir has been invented to speed up metabolism. Anyone drinking it would be able to move so fast as to be invisible.

The story became the first episode in a 2001 miniseries of Wells' stories THE INFINITE WORLDS OF H.G. WELLS, available on the Mill Creek DVD collection SCI-FI FEVER. The miniseries is very well done with top quality production values and excellent SFX. Various short stories are related under the common theme of Wells himself investigating strange happenings. His girlfriend Jane Robbins accompanies him as they moving on the cutting edge of science in the 1890s, more cutting edge than in our timeline.

"The New Accelerator" takes place on a sunny afternoon at the Imperial College of Science, where strange events are taking place. Wells, Robbins, and Prof. Gibbons eventually discover that the miscreant is Dr Mark Radcliffe who has succeeded in inventing a nerve tonic that speeds up reaction times enormously and enables him to move so fast as to be invisible.

Skipping over the implausibilities, Wells and Gibbons try a very small sample of the elixir in order to track down Radcliffe. They have the usual fun in zipping around campus invisible to others, then track Radcliffe to his lair. They are shocked to find that he has aged fifty years in a few hours. He had used the elxir too many times.

Too late he discovered that if the dose was repeated excessively, as he did, it altered the body cells permanently and he could not slow back down. He aged decades all alone without human companionship as he tried to find the antidote, all in one afternoon, living among frozen statues of humans in real time. He dies in his 80s, having been in his late 20s but two hours ago in real time. A very well done episode, excepting of course, the nitpicks.

"The Fast One", written by Arch Oboler, was a 1943 episode of the old-time radio (OTR) series LIGHTS OUT. (This and thousands of other OTR shows are available as free downloads at www.archive.org) Oboler simply rewrote the Wells story, just changing the locations and characters. It was a blatant ripoff, and no credit was given to Wells. The story begins with a police detective investigating a rash of jewelry thefts, dozens within a half-hour. It seems impossible but they all appear the work of one man, yet no one saw anything.

The detective meets up with the mad scientist pulling off the heists. The doctor, like most megalomaniacs, can't resist bragging about his elixir that speeds up metabolism and allows him to run so fast that no one can see him. The detective gives in to the dark side and joins the doctor. They carry off numerous robberies to accumulate cash to carry out their real plan, to rule the world, bwah ha!ha! No one can see them. The police are baffled, as well they might be.

The doctor invents a newer version of his elixir, one that speeds up metabolism hundreds of times faster than the first version. He and the detective try it out. They run into a serious problem. It not only speeds up their metabolism, it speeds up their aging. Too late they discover they are aging at the rate of a year per second. Justice is served the hard way.

The original series of STAR TREK repeated the theme in the Season 3 episode "Wink Of An Eye" (1968), written by Gene L. Coon under the pseudonym Lee Cronin. The Enterprise has responded to a distress call at planet Scalos, but the away crew find nothing, although they are annoyed by a weird buzzing like invisible mosquitos.

Back on the starship, things begin to go wrong, and Engineering has no idea why the systems are anomalous. The buzzing sound is heard around the ship. Captain Kirk finds out though, when he drinks a cup of coffee that has been spiked with radiation-contaminated water. He then finds himself speeding up and meets the humanoids who are zipping around. The buzzing sound is their voices. They are hyper-accelerated, and thus invisible.

They are also sterile, and need human genes to breed with. Naturally their queen is gorgeous, and expects Kirk to do his manly duty. There are the usual logic holes with invisibility at hyperspeed, plus new ones such as how does the transporter beam transmit them if they are moving so fast.

COZY MYSTERIES: PART 2

by Dale Speirs

[Part 1 appeared in OPUNTIA #361.]

A popular subgenre of cozy mysteries is to use an historical character as an amateur detective. There are series where British royalty, Roman senators, Hollywood actors, and various literary figures play the Miss Marple part, just to name but a few.

Samuel Johnson.

Samuel Johnson dominated English literature of the 1700s, although he is not read nowadays outside of academia. His major accomplishment was to compile the first dictionary of the English language in the form that we understand dictionaries today. Not just word lists, as his predecessors did, but definitions given based on etymological principles.

His sycophant James Boswell made him famous as a character about town in an excellent biography. Johnson was considered to be the best conversationalist of his time in London. He earned his living as a freelance writer and publisher, doing a considerable amount of ghostwriting for politicians needing speeches and clergymen wanting sermons.

In later years, the breadth of his knowledge was such that he was considered almost an oracle. He didn't confine himself to literature, and was known to do chemical experiments in an era when chemistry had not yet completely separated from its origins in alchemy. Johnson took a practical view of life, and contested a number of literary frauds and haunted house stories.

Johnson was a hulking man who was frequently compared to a bear because of his size and shambling walk. He was short-sighted and had poor hearing. This led to an anecdote about the time when he was accosted in the street by four footpads who ordered him to stand and deliver. He couldn't make out what they were saying, so he shuffled closer, going "What? What? What?". On seeing the big man coming at them with no fear, the muggers panicked and ran away.

Lillian de la Torre wrote many short stories about Johnson as a detective, as narrated by Boswell. They interact with real-life people and often real events, the only difference being that our timeline did not record Johnson's detecting. The premise is not unreasonable. Johnson really did investigate one haunting, the Cock Lane Ghost, and helped prove it to be a fraud. He also denounced the Ossian poems published by James Macpherson in 1760, which purported to be based on a Gaelic manuscript. Johnson pointed out that Gaelic was not a written language, and that Macpherson had simply collected oral history and poems. He then wrote them up as a supposed translation from an original manuscript which Macpherson subsequently conveniently lost.

I have a 1946 collection of some of de la Torre's stories, titled DR. SAM: JOHNSON, DETECTOR. The book leads off with "The Wax-Work Cadaver". Boswell talks Johnson into visiting a waxworks museum. The proprietor is Dr Clarke, a surgeon who says he has a new method of making very realistic faces on his wax mannequins.

The reader of this story instantly develops suspicions as to how the plot will go, but will then be surprised by the murder of Clarke and an accusation against his apprentice. The plot twists a couple more times. Johnson and Boswell discover the hands of a waxwork figure has real human bones inside. Johnson identifies the murderer because the culprit forgot that humans and articulated waxworks move differently.

"The Second Sight Of Dr Sam: Johnson" takes place during the famous tour of the Scottish highlands and outer islands by Johnson and Boswell. On the Isle of Raasay, they get into a conversation with islanders about second sight, which is the ability to predict a specific event in the near future from a vision. Murder has been done, supposedly by ghosts and kelpies. An old widow scatters omens about like sand.

Johnson doesn't believe her warnings, nor that the dead man was killed by a supernatural being. He sets up a trap to smoke out the murderer from his hiding place and bring him to justice. He explains to Boswell the logical deductions he used, based on visible evidence, not second sight.

"The Flying Highwayman" has Boswell determined to take his landlord to court, so Johnson brings him to the Bow Street Court, Sir John Fielding presiding. The blind magistrate quickly settles the case. He then invites the two men to Stamford Hill with him to investigate a highwayman. There are suspects aplenty but the culprit seems to vanish into thin air. The highwayman is tripped up when someone else robs him while he is waylaying a traveler.

"The Monboddo Ape Boy" brings Johnson and Boswell to the manor of Lord Monboddo, who in our timeline was a natural philosopher who almost discovered the concept of natural selection. He was quite eccentric, wealthy, and gullible, which made him a target for fraud. Among his interests was that of feral children, those raised in the wild by animals, a la Tarzan.

In this story, a pair of ne'er-do-wells bring in a wild boy for his inspection. Monboddo buys the boy from them with the idea of taming him and teaching him to speak. Johnson is suspicious. By casual talk with Boswell about cutting out the boy's tongue he gets the lad to admit he is a chimney sweep. The boy was planted by the two men who sold him in order to open up the house at a later date so his controllers could burgle the manor.

"The Manifestations In Mincing Lane" at first seems to be a rewrite of the Cock Lane Ghost, but it turns in a different direction. A sexton's daughter is seeing apparitions in her bedroom. The house has a long and bloody history, secret passages, and hidden treasure.

The ghost is a ruse to frighten the inhabitants out of the house so that a ruffian can steal gold hidden in the bedroom, about which the family knows nothing. Johnson sets a trap and nails the culprit inside a priest's hole. Not figuratively but actually; he has the secret door nailed shut and boarded over after they see the ghost vanish through it.

"Prince Charlie's Ruby" is a chase for a MacGuffin on the Isle of Skye. Johnson and Boswell, on their tour of Scotland, are guests at the home of Flora Macdonald, she who sheltered Bonnie Prince Charlie during his escape. The prince has returned, and is searching for a ruby he had left behind when fleeing the country. Johnson figures out where the ruby is, and the game is indeed worth the candle. The story dwells on Prince Charlie's flight during the troubles, when he had to dress as a woman to get past the English troops.

"The Conveyance Of Emelina Grange" is about a miserly Scot named Jamie Grange who marries an heiress with intent to steal her fortune. He uses Boswell, who was a lawyer in his day job, to witness a document that Boswell and Johnson subsequently realize was a trick to cheat her. Grange would inherit and Emelina would conveniently die. Johnson, who knew something of the law, and Boswell draw up a new document for Emelina's signature that stymies Grange. He will not murder her if he cannot get the money. A neat trick of paperwork.

"The Stolen Christmas Box" was, as Boswell reports, the prelude to a greater crime, the theft of a diamond. Forebodings litter the opening pages of the story. Johnson and Boswell are spending Christmas at the Thrale's estate. A cipher message is found in the Thrale house, and almost simultaneously a diamond is stolen. The message is shown below.

aabab abbab baaaa baaba
abbaa' abbab baaba aabaa baaab
aabbb aaaaa ababa ababa aabaa
abbab baabb abaaa
abaaa baaaa aabaa
aabba aaaaa baaaa aaabb aabaa
aaaaa abaaa ababa ababa aabaa
baaab aaaaa ababa ababa aabaa

ababb abbab baaaa baaba
baaba aabaa
ababa' aabaa aaaaa baabb
ababa' aaaaa baabb abbaa aabaa
baaba aabaa
aabbb aaaaa abaaa abbaa aabaa
aabab abaaa baaaa aabaa abbaa baaba
ababa abaaa baaba

Johnson breaks the code, first into French words. It turns out to be a double cipher. The French words on paper are random, but when spoken, sound out English words. Yet another encrypted message is found, this time apparently in Ogam (Irish runes). The diamond thief is exposed, but there are several twists and turns that tie together all the forebodings.

"The Great Seal Of England" 'twas stolen from the Lord Chancellor's house on March 23, 1784, a true fact. This story is a secret history of how Johnson and Boswell were asked to help search for the seal, used to notarize legal documents in the name of the King. The suspects are intertwined with a dashing young man who was to have been hanged at Tyburn but received a last-minute reprieve, forged with the help of the genuine seal.

Johnson solves the case without leaving his house, a la Nero Wolfe. One of the principals in the case was seen by Boswell at an all-night gambling session, but the man claimed to Johnson he was elsewhere. It was an inside job, but all the family helped in the cover-up.

That concludes the collection. de la Torre continued publishing Johnson and Boswell stories over the decades. She wrote all of them in the style of Boswell, as if narrated by him.

I have one other such story, in the 1973 June issue of ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, titled "The Virtuosi Venus". Johnson and Boswell are invited to a drinking club devoted to the appreciation of Roman antiquities. That's their story and they're sticking to it, although the real purpose is liquid conviviality.

The clubs owns a bronze statue of Venus recovered from Pompeii, which it uses for its rituals. Johnson notices that a forgery has been substituted for the original, and the hunt begins. One fake after another is discovered, for as Johnson demonstrates, there never was a genuine original.

There are two clues. The first is that all the fakes were produced by modern means. The second is that the maker's hallmark stamped on the underside said it was made in A.D. 51, a calendar no Roman used at the time. Johnson determines who pulled off the job but lets him go because the club members deserved to be fleeced. Antiquity collecting in those days was nothing more than grave-robbing and looting. As Johnson notes, justice can be served in other ways than in a court.

LITERA SCRIPTA MANET AND MAGAZINES OF YORE: PART 7

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 6 appeared in OPUNTIAs #365, 366, 368, 371, 373, and 375.]

School Days.

Back in the 1980s, I found a stack of digest-sized magazines of an English school in the Co-op Book Exchange (take a book, leave a book). THE RAMPANT was the student magazine of Kent College, Canterbury. It was professionally printed, not mimeographed. I checked the Internet recently and the college is still going, having been founded in 1885 as a Methodist boarding school for boys. It went co-ed in 1973.

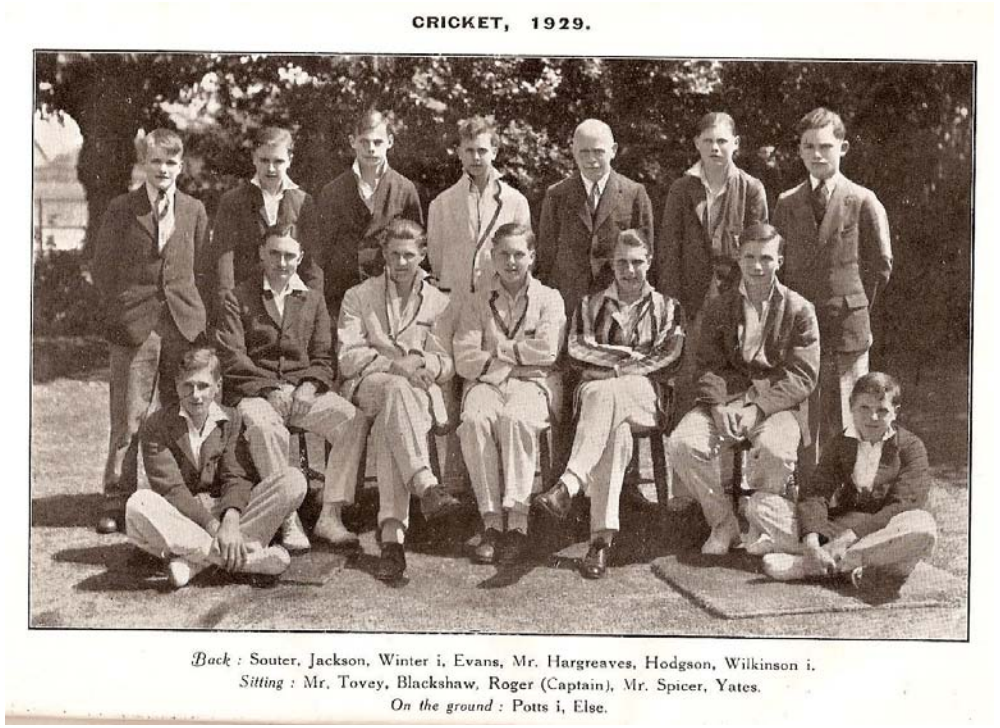
The magazine run was from 1924 April to 1929 December, and was obviously brought to Canada by an Old Boy. By the 1980s, he would have died of old age. No doubt his heirs put the magazines in the book exchange, as the print quality was such that they would have felt guilty consigning them to the trash. (No blue bins then.) On each copy, the name Souter was written in ink. As I read through the issues, I kept an eye out for Souter's name.

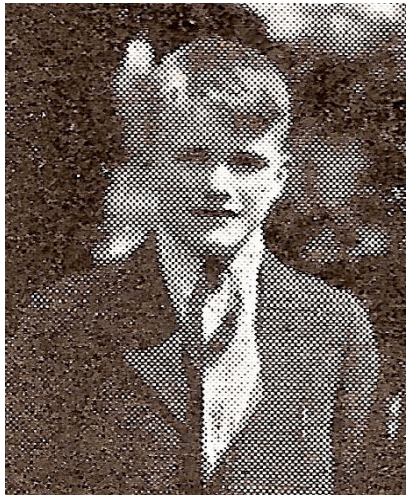
Souter As A Schoolboy.

The earliest issue, 1924 April, was whole number #101. It listed the new boys coming into the school, one of whom was L.S. Souter. He was assigned to the Red House (there were also Blue and White). He was in the Second Form, which, if I understand the British school system correctly, would be equivalent to Grade 8.

A Google search of his name was hopeless so I have no details of his life in Canada. The students in Souter's time were teenagers, which means they would have served in the war. I suspect Souter was in uniform and then emigrated to Canada afterwards.

It appears that Souter wasn't much of a student. His name is only mentioned a handful of times in all the sports and academic prize lists over the years. In 1925, he was on the winning team in the Relay Race (Under 14s). The 1929 July issue had a photo of the cricket team with him in it. That seems to have been his moment of crowning glory.





The students were ranked on a point scale for their work in the classroom and sports activity. The 1929 December issue lists the results for each House. In the Red House list, Blackshaw led with 210 points, someone named Dale was in the middle with 38 points, and Souter was fourth from the bottom with 10 points. Not an academic star.

School Activities.

Taking the April 1924 issue as an example, it is a mixture of schoolboy writings and messages from the schoolmasters. The Kent College Dramatic Society put on "The Taming Of The Shrew", there was a mock court trial, and the Scouts held a dance. Much in the way of news about the Old Boys Club.

The Cadet Corps staged maneuvers near Chatman Stream, using rattles to simulate machine guns. The night maneuvers involved one group attacking and the other defending a bridge:

Accordingly, the whole attacking force opened out across the two hill sides and moved slowly up towards the second bridge from Keir's Lane. Halting about sixty or seventy yards from the spot, several Verey lights were sent up, accompanied by a tremendous fire from machine gun rattles. ... It was demonstrated how easily the slightest sound might be heard at a fair distance in the stillness of the night.

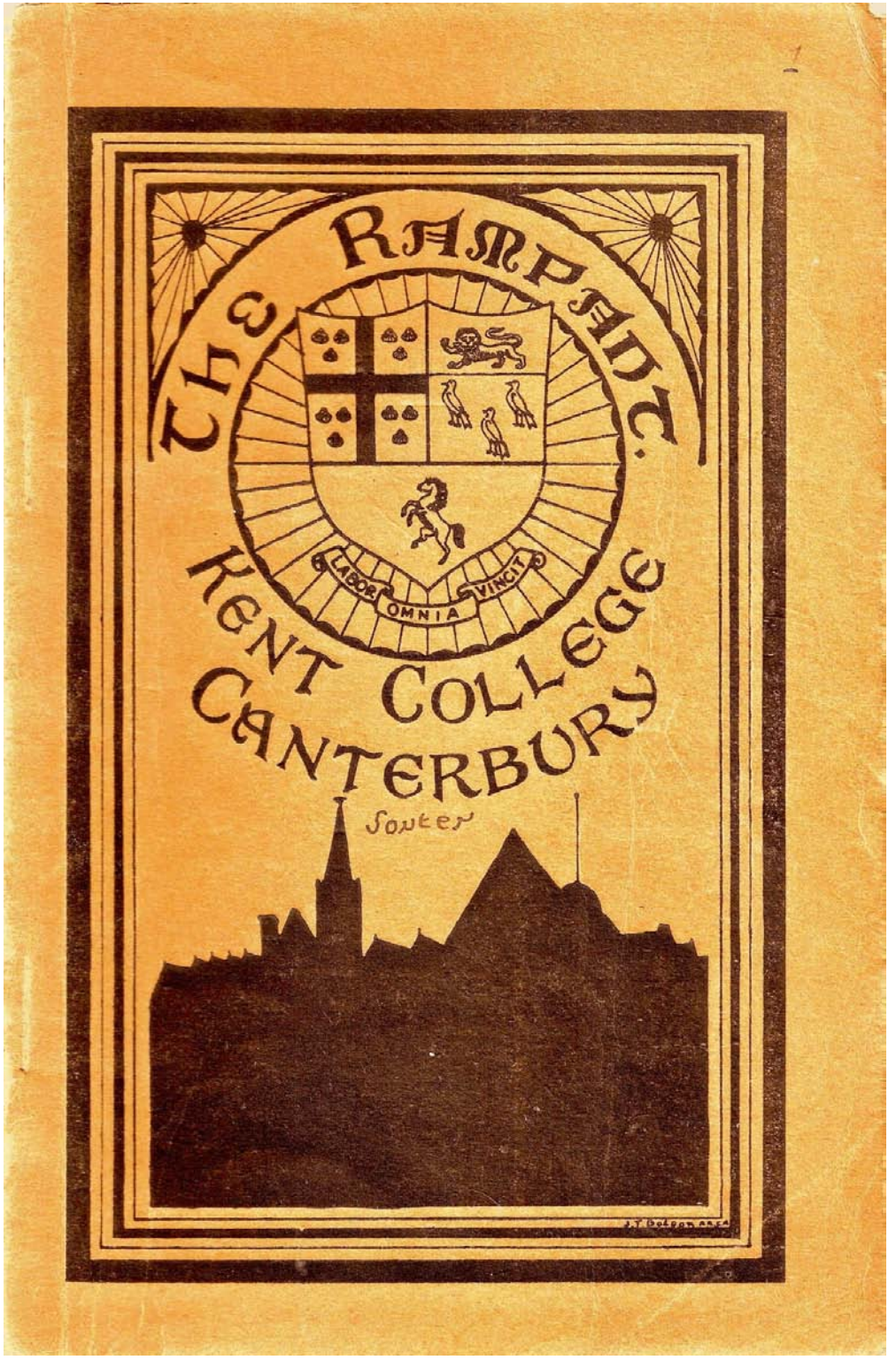
Nothing was said about the response of local residents to the racket and bright lights. Presumably they were used to the kids; boys will be boys.

The Literary and Debating Society had several meetings reported. At the January 30 meeting, the debate was: *That in the opinion of this House, strikes are justifiable.* After the speakers were heard, the motion carried 36 to 24. The following month, the audience heard a talk on Rudyard Kipling, more contemporary then than he is now.

Despite having been founded in 1885, Kent College had no school song. In the 1927 issues this deficiency was mentioned several times but nothing further seems to have happened.

The college was a Methodist institution, and one of its stated purposes was to turn out Christian gentlemen to help rule the British Empire. From the 1927 July issue is this paragraph from the Editorial section:

Referring to a hole in the roof of his church in the parish of Blean, the Vicar (Rev. G. Robinson Lees) remarked at a recent fete that money was necessary for repair work. "Some people", he said, "have complained of a draught which comes from either the roof, the pulpit, or the choir." If any doubts exist as to the precise origin of the alleged draught, it is pretty certain that K.C. boys who attend morning service at Blean are well outside the boundary of suspicion, for they open not their mouths to sing.



At right: Cover of April 1924 issue, the first one in Souter's collection.

In 1929, the big excitement was the opening of the school's first swimming pool, strangely referred to as the swimming bath. The July issue reported: *Immediately after the Athletic Sports the Swimming Bath was officially opened by the Headmaster. Viewing the ceremony over the weeks of term that have slipped by, we can get a better perspective of Mr Brownscombe standing there beside the diving board and precariously near the edge of the bath.*

We hear him addressing the School in his bright, inimitable way and notice a disappointed face here and there among the boys when he announces that he has been unable to find his swimming costume.

"But I am not going to be outdone!" With these words he brings his arms together and, attired in cricket flannels, makes a perfect dive, to the accompaniment of thunderous applause from the delighted spectators.

"Good!" he exclaims, climbing out of the bath after a couple of lengths. "Decidedly good!" Thus was the Kent College Swimming Bath well and truly opened.

The Sporting Life.

The hockey team sounded interesting, until I realized the British play it differently, on grass. The report mentions that playing was difficult for during the term because the field was mostly under water. A typical English season, apparently.

Browsing through the issues, I found many of them had completely incomprehensible detailed reports of cricket matches. The 1925 July issue has a three-page account of games against other schools and village teams. North Americans such as myself will be baffled by paragraphs like this, about a game against St. Edmund's School:

Raiswell bowled finely and took 7 for 35. His first five overs were maidens. Our boys were dismissed for 89. Vaulkhard ii batted in good style for 22 and Lee ii hit hard in making 20.

Some things, however, are universal. On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, getting away from a stadium after a game is always a problem, such as what happened after a 1924 professional cricket game that a group of Kent College boys attended. *At the conclusion of play we returned to our char-a-banc, and after waiting for some hundreds of vehicles to pass, we passed down the long avenue leading from the ground, and so out through Maidstone.*

Much like Calgary after a hockey or football game.

In late 1925, all activities were curtailed because of a mumps epidemic. The school was sequestered and sports events were canceled. The teams could not play away games, nor could visitors enter. By early 1926, the worst was over, but Kent College teams failed to do well in sports leagues that year because their players had little or no practice.

There are football reports, but these seem to be rugby games, not soccer. Mention is made of players tackling, so it wouldn't be soccer. There is a saying that rugby is a game played by hooligans and watched by gentlemen, while soccer is a game played by gentlemen and watched by hooligans. On both sides of the Atlantic, football was still evolving at that time, and the term came to mean different things in different places.

For The Times, They Are A Changing.

The second half of the 1920s in England has its familiar notes, but much of it is a vanished world. Just how alien that world was can be judged from comments by a schoolmaster in the 1924 April issue about a dance held by the boys. They were their own musicians and played a strange new form of music. The schoolmaster allowed it but did not entirely approve:

Looking on the lighter side of school life we offer our congratulations to those young musicians who, by means of self-tuition and strenuous work at odd moments, have successfully reduced a number of heart-rending noises produced on weird-looking instruments to something approaching rhythm. The most primitive music is not melody but simply noise reduced to time, and when music is produced by a concatenation of symbols, any one of which in itself would be unpleasing to the ear, then we have that music which is the characteristic art of the modern savage. Some people call it 'jazz' for want of a better name.

The 1927 July issue discussed the solar eclipse that swept across Britain that year. Like the 1999 Cornwall eclipse, the skies were clouded.

In order that the Editor of THE RAMPANT, in the year 1999, may compare notes with the present issue, we make reference here to the total eclipse of 1927.

Kent College happened to be, with many other places, in the belt of total invisibility. Even London, which commands a view (to the exclusion of other places) of most of the things really worth seeing, was no more fortunate than Canterbury.

We shake hands across the years which separate us from the next eclipse, with the new generations of Kent College and wish them better luck. With the advancement of science it is just possible that by that time some ingenious person will have discovered a cloud-penetrating telescope complete with smoked glass. Astronomers, too, may simplify matters by arranging the eclipse at a reasonable hour, preferably after breakfast!

I leave it to my British readers to advise if Canterbury had a good view of the 1999 eclipse.

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: Milt Stevens 2017-05-28
Simi Valley, California

OPUNTIA #372: You bring up the subject of murder on campus. Of course, there is crime everywhere there are people. The greater density of people the more crime you have. I only recall one murder that involved a college campus. A young woman was grabbed by a couple of torture murderers while she was jogging at the north end of the UCLA campus. UCLA is a huge campus with something like 40-50,000 total students. The campus is so large that students have to use bicycles to get between classes. This makes it the bicycle theft capital of the entire city.

UCLA is in the middle of a good area where there is generally little crime. Things are much different at USC over on the other side of town. USC isn't in the worst area in Los Angeles, but it isn't in the best either. The college and the college residences surrounding it are prime targets for bad guys from the surrounding areas. There are robberies, rapes, burglaries, and all classes of theft. UCLA and USC are both the size of small towns, and both have their own police departments. In most ways, they function as if they were LAPD divisions. The LAPD provide staff support with things like the crime lab and the bomb squad.

OPUNTIA #373: Onward to the psychology of collecting. If you had asked my father while I was growing up about the sanity of my collecting, he would undoubtedly have made some negative comments, and I'd barely gotten started. My father should have realized that in comparison with joining a street gang and stealing hubcaps, collecting was a fairly minor vice.

At the time, it was still possible to be a completist collector. The great collectors of the dawn age, Ackerman, Moskowitz, and Wollheim, still walked the earth. Somewhere along the line, completism crossed the line from being ill advised to being downright crazy. You would have to be a billionaire with a permanent staff of twenty to be a completist these days. It may be a function of age, but I really don't remember why I wanted to own all the science fiction in the English speaking world . Maybe I wanted to make all the other fans envious. That's almost reasonable.

OPUNTIA #354: The cover [of a woman of a certain age wearing a Wonder Woman costume] reminds me of Bill Rotsler's advice that you should consider your body type before doing a costume. The woman on the cover could do either of two things to make this costume work better. She could lose 10 to 20 lbs, but that wouldn't be the best solution. She really should hit the gym and develop some muscles. Wonder Woman is nothing if not physically capable. I can imagine Esther Williams as Wonder Woman. Esther was a top athlete, and her movies certainly indicate she was physically capable. She had a husky build that is out of fashion at the moment, but still looked quite good.

[I think it should be illegal as a misdemeanor for obese people to wear Spandex, and a felony charge for the morbidly obese. Where's Arthur Ellis when you really need him?]

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

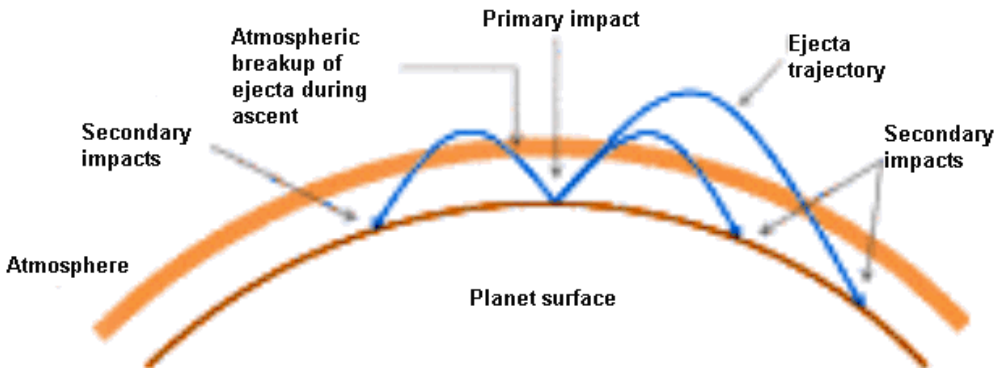
Laura, J., et al (2017) **Large crater clustering tool.** COMPUTERS AND GEOSCIENCES 105:81-90

Authors' abstract: *The identification of primary impact craters directly supports planetary geologic mapping and topical science studies where the chronostratigraphic age of some geologic units may be known, but more distant features have questionable geologic ages. Previous works have shown that the source of secondary impact craters can be estimated from secondary impact craters. This work adapts those methods into a statistically robust tool set.*

We describe the four individual tools within the LCC tool set to support:
(1) processing individually digitized point observations (craters),
(2) estimating the directional distribution of a clustered set of craters, back projecting the potential flight paths (crater clusters or linearly approximated catenae or lineaments),
(3) intersecting projected paths, and
(4) intersecting back-projected trajectories to approximate the local of potential source primary craters.

We present two case studies using secondary impact features mapped in two regions of Mars. We demonstrate that the tool is able to quantitatively identify primary impacts and supports the improved qualitative interpretation of potential secondary crater flight trajectories.

[image is from this paper]



Speirs: Large meteorite impacts on a planet or moon do not produce just a single crater, but a big initial impact crater and numerous smaller craters downrange from debris thrown forward or lofted into sub-ballistic orbits. On Earth it is very difficult to date secondary impacts to the same time as the primary crater, but it can be attempted using radionuclide and stratigraphic methods. For the Moon, Mars, and other planets, other methods must be used, now becoming easier with high-speed computers to calculate how the debris would have been splashed around.

Ernst, R.E., et al (2017) **How Large Igneous Provinces affect global climate, sometimes cause mass extinctions, and represent natural markers in the geological record.** PALAEOGEOGRAPHY, PALAEOCLIMATOLOGY, PALAEOECOLOGY 478:30-52

Authors' abstract: *Large Igneous Provinces (LIPs) can have a significant global climatic effect as monitored by sedimentary trace and isotopic compositions that record paleo-seawater/atmosphere variations. Improved U-Pb dating (with better than 0.1 Myr resolution) for several LIPs is confirming a long-proposed mass extinction-LIP link. The most dramatic climatic effect is global warming due to greenhouse-gases from LIPs. Subsequent cooling (and even global glaciations) can be caused by CO_2 drawdown through weathering of LIP-related basalts, and/or by sulphate aerosols. Additional kill mechanisms that can be associated with LIPs include oceanic anoxia, ocean acidification, sea level changes, toxic metal input, essential nutrient decrease, producing a complex web of catastrophic environmental effects.*

Notably, the size of a LIP is not the only important factor in contributing to environmental impact. Of particular significance are the rate of effusion, and the abundance of LIP-produced pyroclastic material and volatile fluxes that reach the stratosphere. While flood basalt degassing (CO_2, SO_2, halogens) is important (and is also from associated silicic volcanism), a significant amount of these gases are released from volatile-rich sedimentary rocks (e.g. evaporites and coal horizons) heated by the intrusive component of LIPs. Feedbacks are important, such as global warming leading to destabilization of clathrates, consequent release of further greenhouse gases, and greater global warming.

In the broadest sense LIPs can affect (or even induce) shifts between Icehouse, Greenhouse and Hothouse climatic states. However, the specific effects, their severity, and their time sequencing is specific to each LIP. Based on the robust

array of environmental effects due to LIPs, as demonstrated in the Phanerozoic record, it is suggested that LIP events represent useful time markers in the Precambrian Era as proxies for some significant global environmental changes that are preserved in the sedimentary record.

Schoennagel, T., et al (2017) **Adapt to more wildfire in western North American forests as climate changes.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 114:4582-4590

Authors' abstract: *Wildfires across western North America have increased in number and size over the past three decades, and this trend will continue in response to further warming. As a consequence, the wildland-urban interface is projected to experience substantially higher risk of climate driven fires in the coming decades. Although many plants, animals, and ecosystem services benefit from fire, it is unknown how ecosystems will respond to increased burning and warming.*

Policy and management have focused primarily on specified resilience approaches aimed at resistance to wildfire and restoration of areas burned by wildfire through fire suppression and fuels management. These strategies are inadequate to address a new era of western wildfires. In contrast, policies that promote adaptive resilience to wildfire, by which people and ecosystems adjust and reorganize in response to changing fire regimes to reduce future vulnerability, are needed.

Key aspects of an adaptive resilience approach are
(i) recognizing that fuels reduction cannot alter regional wildfire trends;
(ii) targeting fuels reduction to increase adaptation by some ecosystems and residential communities to more frequent fire;
(iii) actively managing more wild and prescribed fires with a range of severities; and
(iv) incentivizing and planning residential development to withstand inevitable wildfire.

These strategies represent a shift in policy and management from restoring ecosystems based on historical baselines to adapting to changing fire regimes and from unsustainable defense of the wildland-urban interface to developing fire-adapted communities. We propose an approach that accepts wildfire as an inevitable catalyst of change and that promotes adaptive responses by ecosystems and residential communities to more warming and wildfire.

Speirs: The problem with most wildfires is that humans have built towns into forests with little or nothing in the way of fireguards or emergency planning. The classic example was the great fire of 2016 May in northern Alberta when 100,000 people had to be evacuated in one day from the city of Fort McMurray, the capital of the Athabasca Tar Sands. About half of the city burned down. There is only a single two-lane highway connecting the area to the south. You can imagine everyone squeezing onto the highway. See OPUNTIA #340 for photos of people driving through a tunnel of flames. The blame wasn't climate change, since forest fires are nothing new. The cause was politicians allowing developers to build suburbs into the boreal forest with zero clearance between the spruce trees and house lots.

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. 2017 will be the 24th 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 zine, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.

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.

I saw this mural on 2 Avenue NW in the Sunnyside district of central Calgary.