

OPUNTIA 385



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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.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN WAY: TURQUOISE LAKES

photos by Dale Speirs

I've been making more trips into Banff National Park and have a backlog of photos. This issue starts off with a visit I made on June 20 to Moraine Lake, which fills the Valley of Ten Peaks. The valley name is an exact translation from the Nakoda tribal name. The lake is high up in the mountains, the second valley south of Lake Louise.

Like all the other high valleys, glaciers once filled them during the Ice Ages. When the glaciers receded, they left piles of material that they had ploughed out of the valley, known as moraines. These moraines blocked the flow of meltwater at the valley mouths and created lakes.

Strangely, all the other lakes in the high valleys are moraine lakes, but Moraine Lake is not. That lake was created millennia ago when the north face of Mount Babel collapsed across the mouth of the Valley of Ten Peaks and blocked the meltwater. The landslide is called, logically enough, the Rockpile. I took the cover photo from atop the Rockpile.

Below is the entrance to the valley, a narrow two-lane road with no shoulders, no guard rails, and long vertical drops along one side.





A couple of telephoto shots taken from the same turnout on the road as the previous page.



To set the stage properly so that you can better understand subsequent photos, this is a view from the north shore looking east, back towards the entrance. Mount Babel is at right, and the Rockpile dams the valley.

The Rockpile doesn't look that big but notice the full-size spruce trees on top of it to get an idea of the scale. The boulders are the size of minivans. The Rockpile only looks small because the mountain next to it is so high.



Looking down at the entrance from the north end of the Rockpile.

Moraine Creek, the outflow of the lake, is plugged with old tree trunks that fell off the mountains and then floated with the current.





Some more views from the top of the Rockpile.
 Top left: A typical boulder, the size of a 4-ton truck.
 Bottom left: A happy bride poses for the wedding photographer while the groom looks on.
 Below: A telephoto shot looking west to the far end of the lake.





The water changes colour depending on the viewing angle and depth. At left, the shallow water in the foreground is the typical lowland lake colour, while further out it becomes opaque turquoise.

Glacial lakes appear solid turquoise from a distance due to the very finely ground sediments in the meltwater. At the shoreline, looking straight down, the water is crystal clear, but looking out over the lake at an angle, it becomes an opaque turquoise colour.



Looking from the base of the Rockpile toward the southern shoreline.

Around the far corner of this mountain is Fay Glacier. I then walked along the northern shoreline until I could get a good photo of the glacier, seen on the next page.



Fay Glacier straddles the mountain tops, as seen in this telephoto shot.



From Moraine Lake, I headed north on Highway 93 to Peyto Lake. It is named after Bill Peyto, a pioneer mountain man who lived on its shores long before the parks were created. It is also a glacial outwash lake that looks like it was carved out of solid turquoise.

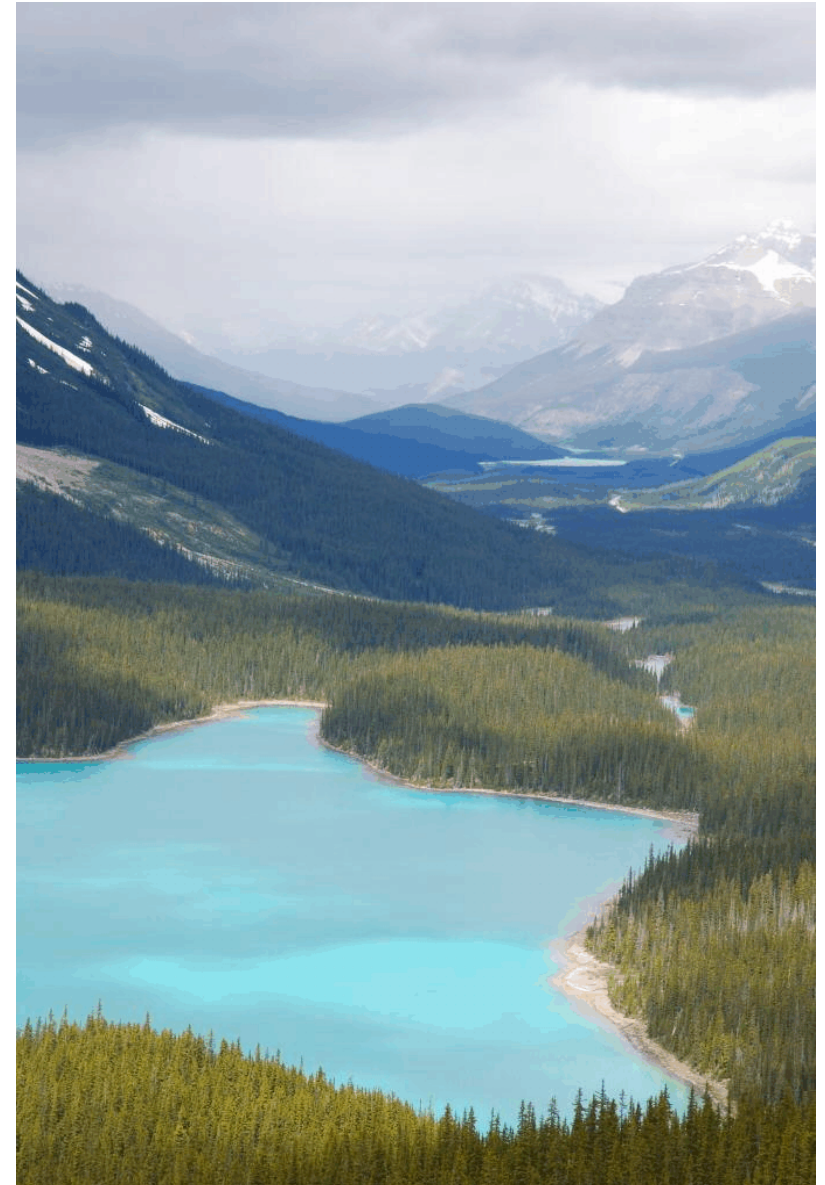
The view is looking north down a valley that leads to Jasper National Park. There is lake-level access but one has to hike for a half-hour through mosquito-infested spruce forest with no viewpoints. The cardiovascular workout up the 45° mountain trail was good exercise for me, I kept telling myself.



Above left: Looking west up the lake. The large gravel bar is glacial outwash, and centuries from now will have filled up the existing lake.

Below left: Telephoto shot of Peyto Glacier.

Below: Looking north down the valley. Highway 93 is hidden in the spruce forest. It takes travelers to Jasper townsite, 250 km away. The distant view is fuzzy because a rain shower was sweeping eastwards across the valley, just missing Peyto Lake.



The subalpine forest just above the viewpoint. I took the photo because it reminded me of Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road Not Taken".

I did not take either path. The rain showers were threatening, so I hiked back down the mountain to my car.



On the slopes were boulders the size of trucks, left behind by glaciers that scraped them off the valley sides.

Anemone occidentalis had long finished flowering down on the bottomlands, but up here on the mountain slopes the plants were just at the peak of bloom.



CONVENTIONAL FICTION: PART 6

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 5 appeared in OPUNTIA's #70.1A, 270, 285, 313, and 364.]

And The Name Of The Murderer Is ...

A popular type of gathering among mystery fans is a weekend at a manor house or resort where the audience becomes part of the performance. Actors mingle among the guests and supply background information and clues, either when asked by guests or in staged interactions with other actors. The guests may only wander about trying to solve the mystery, or they may be assigned roles themselves and given character scripts or cards to go by. The murder victims are one or more of the actors, and an “Inspector” guides the dialogue and keeps everyone on track.

“Hostess To Murder” (1998), written by Pam Brady, is an episode of the comedy television series JUST SHOOT ME. Maya Gallo, who works for her father at his fashion publishing firm, decides to host a murder mystery at her apartment one evening. Everyone is to dress in Victorian-era style.

Maya is notorious among her co-workers and friends for giving bad parties. She is oblivious of her colleagues’ preference for fashion premieres instead of her untrendy apartment. As she cheerfully bumbles: “*Everyone from Accounts Payable will be there!*” Since Daddy signs their paycheques, Maya’s colleagues reluctantly agree to attend.

Before the guests begin arriving, she has a tiff with her elderly neighbour across the hallway, with whom she has been feuding for some time. The party gets going, with an actor dressed up as Sherlock Holmes to lead the way as master of ceremonies. He sets up a timer that rings a bell every so often, at which point the guests are to read their cue cards and take an action. They are soon thoroughly conditioned to turn to the next card every time the bell rings.

The plot goes astray when the actor is called to the telephone and tells the guests to keep going each time the bell rings. Maya’s unfriendly neighbour causes more problems, at which point she scolds him so angrily that the stress causes him to drop dead on the spot. The guests, however, think he is part of the mystery play, and keep going on the assumption he was just an actor playing the part of murder victim #1.

Maya can’t get anyone to believe that it is a real death. She goes off in disgust to telephone the police from the dead man’s apartment, since the actor is still monopolizing her phone. (This was before cellphones.) A Homicide detective arrives but is totally confused by the guests, who give him all sorts of responses that suggest some sort of conspiracy is being enacted, or, in the alternative, they’re crazy.

When the actor finally returns from the telephone to resume his part, he doesn’t know what happened during his absence. He pulls out a prop handgun in front of the detective, who reacts as he has been trained to do and takes him down the hard way. The guests are thrilled at the verisimilitude of the play and congratulate Maya on finally pulling off a decent party. All in all, a funny episode.

3RD ROCK FROM THE SUN was a comedy television series about a group of aliens who came to Earth to study the planet. They disguise themselves as humans and set about learning the ways of the inhabitants, at least those in small-town Ohio where they landed. Their naive and ignorant behaviour sets the stage for all sorts of misunderstandings and culture clashes with the natives.

“Dial M For Dick” (1999), written by Christine Zander, is about what happens when the aliens are invited to a murder mystery weekend at a resort, the kind where the audience mingles with actors and try to solve the crime by Sunday afternoon. The aliens don’t understand that it is a play; they think it and the characters portrayed by the actors are real.

It confuses them why the actors keep telling them and everyone else their biographies in great detail, and offering up information about the other characters. When the first murder is committed, the aliens are baffled by everyone else’s casual attitude to it, as if it were a puzzle to be solved and not a horrifying event. The aliens decide to call in the local police since no one else is taking the matter seriously. Events escalate from there as pure farce.

None Dare Call It.

CONSPIRACIES (2000) by F. Paul Wilson is part of the Repairman Jack series of novels. This particular installment has Jack being hired by a UFO nut to trace his missing wife. She was, and not incidentally, supposed to be attending the Conference of the Society for the Exposure of Secret Organizations and Unacknowledged Phenomena (SESOU) as a keynote speaker.

The attendees are faced with the problem of reconciling their diverse beliefs, but Jack is more interested in finding the woman. As the novel progresses, the Cthulhu Mythos becomes more real and less fictive. It appears that Lovecraft hadn't been making up stories but instead documenting actual things and events. Those who lurk on the other side are about to break through. Even Tesla gets a look-in, as his old house on Long Island was part of the focus of the Elder Gods. Some of the fans attending the convention have deformities that suggest failed cross-breeding between aliens and humans really happened.

The conspiracy theorists gathered together have the problem that they can't all be right, and cannot reconcile their multitudinous ideas into a single Grand Unified Conspiracy Theory. Some of them must be wrong. They have to be polite to each other's face, but make snippy remarks behind each other's back. It reminded me of the book THE THREE CHRISTS OF YPSILANTI (reviewed in OPUNTIA #27.1), a true story of what happened when three men who each thought they were Christ were forced to meet together in a sanitarium. One can see the same sort of thing at conventions.

Getting back to the novel, it fluctuates between conspiracy fans and the development of eldritch Lovecraftian horrors. It captures a good view of the former before veering off into the Mythos.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Althoff, T., et al (2017) **Large-scale physical activity data reveal worldwide activity inequality.** NATURE 547:336-339

Authors' abstract: *To be able to curb the global pandemic of physical inactivity, and the associated 5.3 million deaths per year, we need to understand the basic principles that govern physical activity. However, there is a lack of large-scale measurements of physical activity patterns across free-living populations worldwide.*

Here we leverage the wide usage of smartphones with built-in accelerometry to measure physical activity at the global scale. We study a dataset consisting of 68 million days of physical activity for 717,527 people, giving us a window into activity in 111 countries across the globe. We find inequality in how activity is distributed within countries and that this inequality is a better predictor of obesity prevalence in the population than average activity volume.

Reduced activity in females contributes to a large portion of the observed activity inequality. Aspects of the built environment, such as the walkability of a city, are associated with a smaller gender gap in activity and lower activity inequality. In more walkable cities, activity is greater throughout the day and throughout the week, across age, gender, and body mass index (BMI) groups, with the greatest increases in activity found for females.

Shan, M., et al (2017) **A preliminary investigation of underground residential buildings: Advantages, disadvantages, and critical risks.** TUNNELLING AND UNDERGROUND SPACE TECHNOLOGY 70:19-29

Authors' abstract: *Owing to the dramatically increased population in metropolises recently, the problem of lacking space has become more critical. To address this issue, most metropolises choose promoting underground space development. Lately, a new idea of constructing underground residential buildings emerges and has attracted considerable attention from authorities. The aims of this study are to investigate the possible advantages and disadvantages of underground residential buildings, and to investigate the critical risks in the constructions of underground residential building projects.*

To achieve these goals, an empirical questionnaire survey was administered to 30 Singapore-based construction companies. Results showed that "space saving" was the most significant advantage of underground residential buildings, followed by "improved indoor thermal comfort," "more resistant to external noises," and "increased level of privacy." Also, results revealed that "limited access to natural light" was the most severe disadvantage, followed by "high construction cost," "climate isolation," "psychological resistance from residents," "environmental issues," and "safety concerns." Additionally, this study disclosed and discussed the top five critical risks of underground residential building projects, including "labor restrictions," "cost overruns," "local contractors' competence in underground construction," "material restrictions," and "economic fluctuations."

CANADA 150

The celebration continues all year, not just Canada Day. The knitted bear was entered in the Arts and Crafts competition of the Calgary Stampede.

