

OPUNTIA 419



Stampede Rodeo 2018

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.

About The Cover: Seen in the midway at the Calgary Stampede.



I started out with the bison burger from the Ag Grill, a sit-down restaurant in an air-conditioned building, one of the livestock barns.

At \$14, it was the most expensive burger I've ever eaten. It was top quality, although at that price it had better be. Bison produce lean beef, but the effect was

negated by the two slices of smoked bacon and melted cheese. Also included was fresh lettuce, red onions, and tomato. Beverage was extra.

It was difficult to walk past some of the concessions without coming out at the other end of the aisle about two kilos heavier.

DOWN AT THE RODEO GROUNDS

July 6 to 15

photos by Dale Speirs

Food.

Overpriced, but good. Each year there are gimmicks. This year I resisted the following: octopus pizza, deep-fried bacon-wrapped peanut butter chocolate cups, Kit Kat fries, sushi doughnuts, and the peanut butter and jelly stuffed hamburgers. I have no idea what the smoking charcoal in a cup was.

I did know what the prairie oysters were, having been raised on a ranch. Surplus male calves are castrated when they are a few weeks old and turned into steers. It is said that their fried testicles, popularly known as prairie oysters, are good eating. I've never eaten one and never will.

Back on the ranch when we were working the spring calves (branding, ear tagging, vaccination, blood sample, and castration), Dad tossed the testicles to our dogs and cats, who caught them in mid-air and gulped them down in one swallow. Our pets knew what the roundup signified. As soon as they heard the noise in the corral, they rushed over to the squeeze chute and formed an arc around my father, waiting patiently for their snacks. But I digress.



Notwithstanding the free Stampede breakfasts, I paid \$12 for a late-day meal at the Ag Grill, which offered breakfast all day (but never free). Four scrambled eggs, four rashers of bacon, brown toast, a heapin' helpin' of tater tots, and beverage. A good deal, enough to fill a man for an active day.



At right: If you couldn't find the prairie oysters booth, there were food guides about who could help you.





At left: The cooking demonstrations were very popular. This one was staged by a local chocolatier whose family came from Belgium. He was the fourth generation in the business. Delicious free samples after.



Below: The Wine Garden. Cowboys look upon the wine while it is red. One doesn't drink a white wine with steak.

That's Entertainment.

The zip line was \$50 per ride, which was about \$5 per second.



For decades, the rodeo had a sedate skylift that trundled visitors from one end of the grounds to the other. Last year they introduced a zip line so successful that this year there were two of them. The skylift still runs though.





Motocross performances on the midway. Do not try this at home. He is a professional.



Let Me Ride Through The Wide.

Top photos: The Stampede Showriders had a daily meet-and-greet where city kids could pet an actual horse.

Bottom: The cutting horse competition required a rider to take a steer out of the herd and keep it away for thirty seconds. It required a well-trained horse to out-manuever the steer.





Above: The miniature horse chuckwagon races are always a crowd pleaser.

At left: The Roman riding was even more popular. The 8-year-old girl was born to ride. She handled her miniature horses like she was riding a bicycle. Notice that she is riding them bareback and she has bare feet. The woman did it in the more traditional manner.

(Please excuse the fuzzy images. I was shooting moving objects in low light levels and through a telephoto lens, always difficult for cameras. I had to fiddle the images a bit on my computer.)



The team penning event was one that I could relate to, since getting an animal to go into a corral is not always the easiest job.

Top: Before the event began, cowhands rehearsed the herd by moving them around the arena and through the pen.

Middle: A team of three riders has to cut out three steers from the herd, then move them across the arena to the pen.

Bottom: Average time about 50 seconds.

Listen To The Murmur Of The Cottonwood Trees.

Gate admission includes hundreds of events free such as non-infield rodeo and music. The infield events (bull and bronco riding, barrel racing), chuckwagon races, grandstand show, and headliner musicians in the Saddledome arena are extra, although those tickets include gate admission for the day of the event.

Daily gate admission is \$18 for adults, but I used the \$40 SuperPass, good for all ten days of the rodeo. This is a barcode-style ticket available only on smartphones.

Here are just a few of the free music stages. The Coca Cola Stage is outdoors. Notice that the audience stayed in the shade of the cottonwood trees, while the blazing sun in front of the stage made it a desert. I had trouble getting a decent photo because of the contrast between the bright sun and the deep shade.

Window On The West is a stage used by established local groups you never heard of and neither did I. They play the rodeo and folk circuits. There are also small popup stages such as seen at lower right, in the lobby of the Nutrien Arena. (The Stampede grounds have two hockey arenas and two rodeo arenas.)



You can't listen to the murmur of the cottonwood trees because they are drowned out by the noise from the stage and the adjacent midway.



The Trade And Craft Shows.

Marijuana and its derivatives for recreational use become legal in Canada on October 17 by federal law. No samples at this booth.



About one-third of the quilts competition in the Arts and Crafts building.



And so we bid adieu for another year. The final paid attendance was 1,271,241 through the gates. Last year was 1.21 million, which had more rain days. This year it only rained on one day, so I got in nine days on my SuperPass.

The all-time record was 1.4 million people in 2012, which was the centennial of the Stampede rodeo, with lots of extra big attractions to yahoo about.



OUT WHERE THE WEST COMMENCES: PART 4

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 3 appeared in OPUNTIA's #68.1D, 356, and 418.]

The Vicissitudes Of Farming.

Being a farm boy, I always laugh when people tell me they want to escape the rat race of the city and enjoy the simple life on the farm. I was quite happy to become a city slicker and enjoy the simple urban life, where I don't have to drive an hour for a doctor appointment or fix a furnace myself because the HVAC technician won't come out when the country roads are blocked by snow.

GRANBY'S GREEN ACRES was a short-lived old-time radio series that was broadcast in the summer of 1950. (This and hundreds of other OTR shows are available as free downloads at www.otrrlibrary.org) Its significance is that the writer-producer-director was Jay Sommers, who revived it more than a decade later as the television series GREEN ACRES, recycling some of the characters and plots. The show will be funnier to farm folk.



The radio series was about John and Martha Granby. John threw over his career at a bank to buy a potato farm, even though he knew nothing about the business.

As an example, the episode "Granby Plants A Crop" pokes fun at his inability to decide what to plant.

He originally wanted to go into wheat, but waffled and decided to buy corn seed because all the experienced farmers around him were planting it. Then he hears the farm bureau report on the radio say that corn prices have dropped, so he takes the seed back to the dealer and trades it in for wheat. At a loss of course, since seed sales are normally final.

The next report he hears says wheat prices are dropping but corn is up. At this point, he figures out what most farmers knew centuries ago, to diversify their

crops. He only returns half his wheat seed and takes back half the corn seed, again at a loss. Both corn and wheat drop, but soybeans are up. Worse yet, potatoes hit a ten-year high on the market.

The local yokels were obviously having fun with him. No one took him aside to explain how commodity futures work. Most farmers sell part of their crop in advance to get a guaranteed price. As the season progresses, they may stand pat or sell more of their crop on the futures market, depending on how prices trend.

My father never bothered about futures because his income as a livestock veterinarian was far in excess of the ranch. I suspect he operated the ranch as a hobby because he had grown up on a Saskatchewan homestead. He would not have sold crop futures anyway because the only grain we grew was feed barley to overwinter the herd. There are cattle futures though.

I do remember sitting in coffee shops and listening to other farmers discussing the futures market, talking about which of their neighbours were "all in" on a particular crop, and who was betting on the turn of the last card by holding off.

Cozy Mysteries.

Which brings me to a cozy mystery series about Dana Lewis, who moves to Blossom Valley, California, to work at an organic farm and health spa. Not very healthy for the valley folk or visiting outlanders, for her arrival brings a plague of murders, as Miss Marples always do.

The first novel in this series by Staci McLaughlin is GOING ORGANIC CAN KILL YOU (2012). Esther O'Connell, the owner of the farm and Lewis's boss, has just opened the spa. She rented some rooms to Hollywood producer Maxwell Mendelsohn and his entourage. He doesn't make it past Chapter 2.

News reporters descend on the farm, spa guests check out, police tramp around, and Lewis worries she will be out of a job if the spa goes under. Her snooping develops the usual complications. She is cautioned by a police detective understandably offended by her contaminating evidence and putting suspects on guard by interrogating them.

For comic relief, Wilbur the pig, one of five on the farm, keeps getting loose. This allows for a few slapstick scenes of him being chased hither and yon.

Lewis doubles down on the corpses. Having found the first body, she later stumbles over the second victim. As she learns in the denouement, the killer was a spa employee with a criminal record. Mendelsohn had recognized him from somewhere else and tried a form of blackmail.

The killer having been caught, all is well. The bank doesn't call in its loan to the spa, and customers return. The farm, and the book series, are secured and well positioned for the near future.

GREEN LIVING CAN BE DEADLY (2013) is a later installment about life on the O'Connell Organic Farm and Spa. Lewis, ever a glutton for punishment, has organized the Green Living Festival, a celebration of free-range fauna, tofu, and murder. Okay, not a celebration of the latter, but inevitable.

Wendy Hartford, an old classmate of Lewis, has a booth for green energy, but doesn't survive to the end of the Festival. Therefore, on we go to the investigations, both police and Lewis.

One thing I've noticed in recent cozy series, say since 2010, and particularly in this novel, is that everyone has cellphones but never handy when needed. They left it in the car, back home on the kitchen table, lost it at the town square or murder scene, or turned it off and consequently miss a message that could solve the case in two pages. Listen people, what's the point of having a cellphone if you don't carry it with you? It does allow for more idiot plots in cozies though.

After the second murder, as there usually is, the investigation focuses on missing funds from Hartford's business. In between snooping, Lewis is stationed at the farm's booth in the festival. She offers free samples of a soup with cabbage, broccoli, tofu, and calamari, although customers seem reluctant to try it out. I don't blame them, as I doubt even Wilbur the pig would eat it.

The embezzler qua murderer traps Lewis during her sleuthing, but with a single bound she was free and all that. A fair to middling read.

Rode Eee Oh, Not Row Day Oh.

"The Brookdale Orphanage", written by Polly Hopkins, was a 1946 episode of the old-time radio series LET GEORGE DO IT. George Valentine was a private detective whose cases were not always crime scenes. Often he just helped clients solve personal problems. This was one of the earliest episodes, which

were recorded in front of a live audience. Disconcerting for drama, when the audience laughs at the occasional quip but remains silent the rest of the time.

The case at hand deals with Jimmy Jones, cowboy movie star. He had been raised in the Brookdale Orphanage. Each year he did a benefit for them, riding his horse as part of his act. The problem was that a few months earlier he had been thrown by a horse and seriously injured. He had recovered physically but was now afraid to ride a horse. That seems like something for a psychologist to handle, but instead Valentine was hired.

The only thing Valentine can think of is to hire a double to ride the horse. Not so easy. Someone points out that Valentine looks similar, so he volunteers, forgetting that he has never been on a horse in his life. His basic training is on a carousel horse. Reluctantly he trains on a real live horse but doesn't take to it. Instead he comes up with another plan.

The idea is that Jones will come out into the arena on foot, then call the horse to him. A ringer in the audience will shout that he wants to ride, so Jones would let him do it. Unfortunately the ringer doesn't appear, and Valentine is roped in. He panics and runs, so Jones is forced to confront his fears and ride the horse. Jones is so happy that instead of paying a cash fee to Valentine, he gives him a horse. Just what every city slicker needs.

"Rodeo Star" is a 1952 episode of the OTR comedy series BRIGHT STAR, no writer credit given. Susan Armstrong is editor of the HILLSDALE MORNING STAR, and George Harvey is her journalist, it being a small newspaper. The episode begins with an hilarious argument about the correct pronunciation of the word 'rodeo', whether 'rode-eee-oh' or 'row-day-oh'.

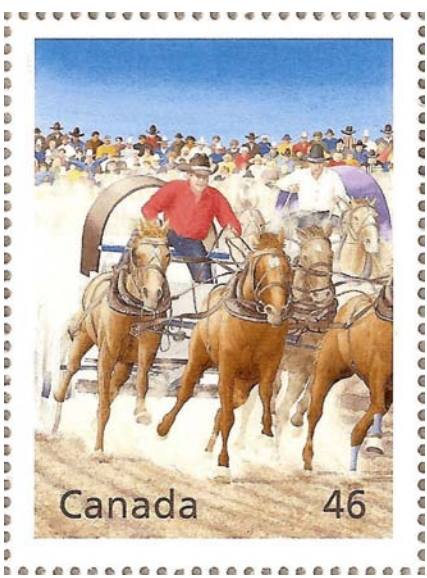
(The former is the correct one. There is no accent mark over the 'e'. Certainly in Canada, and definitely in Calgary, home of the world's largest rodeo, we use the former pronunciation.)

Armstrong goes out to interview rodeo competitor Bobbie Brundage, who turns out to be a masher and a wolf who makes some very heavy moves on her. What she didn't know was that he was a reporter from a rival newspaper waiting to meet up with the real Brundage and who decided to take advantage of her.

Back at the office, Armstrong writes a scorcher of a story about what happened and condemns the rodeo. Harvey, somewhat in love with her, goes back out to

the hotel to straighten out Brundage. He learns that Brundage is a cowgirl, not a cowboy, Bobbie as in Roberta. Too late, as the STAR has printed the story, as a result of which Brundage is suing for \$100,000 in libel claims. Call it \$1 million in today's inflated currency.

Harvey gets in trouble with Brundage because he pretended to be a cowboy to get in the door. She is smitten with him and doesn't know he is a reporter with the enemy. The plot tangles up with all sorts of misinterpretations and complications. If anything can be misunderstood, it is. After the variations are played out, everything is sorted into a semblance of order. A mildly amusing show, worth listening to once.



“The Case Of The Texas Cowgirl”, written by Charles and Joseph Early, is a 1954 episode from a Sherlock Holmes television series produced and directed by Sheldon Reynolds. To save costs, the shows were filmed in France. Holmes was played by Ronald Howard and Watson by Howard Marion Crawford.

The episodes were pastiches or very loose adaptations of canon stories, sometimes just using a similar title but different plot. The series is in the public domain and popular with boxed DVD set purveyors. I have it

on the Ultimate Sherlock Holmes TV set, but it is missing a few episodes which, however, are covered by some other boxed sets. The video quality is fairly good although some scenes are poorly lit.

The Texas cowgirl is Minnie O'Malley, who was with the Bison Jack Wild West Rodeo, come over from the USA to perform in London. She visits Holmes and Watson with a problem. On returning to her hotel room, she found a dead body in her room. She has no idea who he is but he was killed with repeated blows from a tomahawk.

Holmes notices heel drag marks from the room across the hall. The occupant being out at the moment, he drags the body back whence it came. The

chambermaid has quite a turn on finding the body. The police, with Inspector Lestrade in charge, identify the dead man as a known burglar. The occupant is a meek salesman who knows nothing.

Lestrade goes after anyone in the Wild West show who admits owning a tomahawk, starting with Chief Running Water, said to be a Blackfoot. The Chief no savvy English, which stymies Lestrade until Police Sgt Wilkins arrives and acts as a translator. Why a London bobbie should be fluent in the Blackfoot language is never explained. None of the characters ask, nor do they show any amazement at the conversation.

Digression: Calgary is on Treaty 7 land, which includes the Tsuu T'ina (Dene), Nakoda (Sioux), and three Blackfoot tribes, the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai. The Blackfoot Confederacy extends across the border into Montana, where they are called Blackfeet by Americans. This suggests that Wilkins may have served in the North West Mounted Police in his younger days in what is now southern Alberta, since that is the only possible place one could learn Blackfoot.

Returning to the episode, Bison Jack denies he used the tomahawk. At this point, Holmes identifies the salesman as the dead man's partner in crime. They were working the hotel and got into an argument in his room. He killed the man, dragged the body over to O'Malley's room, and pounded his head with a her tomahawk to confuse the issue.

Justice is served and O'Malley can continue whooping it up in London with Bison Jack and the Chief. The episode uses standard Hollywood cliches about cowboys and Injuns. O'Malley does some lassoing, including Watson. Cringe worthy.

RED VELVET REVENGE (2012) by Jenn McKinlay is a novel in a food cozy series about Melanie Cooper and Angie DeLaura, who own Fairy Tale Cupcakes in Scottsdale, Arizona. It is summer, and in the furnace heat, customers would rather patronize the ice cream shop. With no business in the bakery, the women accept an opportunity offered by Slim Hazard for a booth at the Juniper Pass Rodeo. The rodeo is north a ways and at a higher altitude, so presumably cooler.

Off they go in a rather decrepit food truck. Juniper Pass is a hick town with buildings that haven't been modernized since the mines closed. The rodeo expects 25,000 visitors, not too shabby. The cupcake truck is placed next to

Billy Bob's BBQ, run by two men named Billy and Bob. They make a silly bet with the women over who will sell the most during the rodeo.

There has to be a murder or it wouldn't be a cozy. The usual cliches are applied. The victim is bullrider Ty Stokes, an obnoxious goon who had it coming, all the locals agreed. Spicing up the rodeo are some animal rights activists. Someone else is sabotaging the cupcake food truck. A bull gets loose and causes a panic.

Okay, that last one isn't a typical cozy event. I once saw it happen as a teenager at the Red Deer rodeo, when a bull went through solid plank fences like they were tissue paper. Several dozen people in the infield simultaneously broke Olympic records in the 100-metre sprint.

Cooper and DeLaura manage to get in some sleuthing, although it was pointless because the denouement came out of the far end of the pasture. There was an illegitimate child in the Hazard family who was acting out. Stokes had his own scheme to ruin the rodeo. The problem with being a psychopath was that he ran into an even more dangerous psychopath. The ending is bloody, for the Hazard women were trained well by their daddies on how to shoot a gun. An interesting novel.

"The Apotheosis Of A Rodeo Clown" by Brett J. Talley is a short story in the anthology THE GODS OF H.P. LOVECRAFT (2015), edited by Aaron J. French. The story takes place in the California mountains where a rodeo clown has been hired for a private little rodeo run by a bike gang. Events veer off course when the bikers rouse a shoggoth from a nearby abandoned mine. The rodeo clown uses the techniques of his trade, not far removed from bullfighting, to survive against the shoggoth. Ole!

The Mysterious West.

YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR was an OTR series about an insurance investigator named Johnny Dollar. It first aired 1949 and was the last OTR show in existence when it signed off in 1962. Each episode opened with Dollar getting a telephone call from an insurance company, wanting him to look into a suspicious claim.

"The Doubtful Dairy Matter" was a 1957 episode written by Jack Johnstone. Dollar goes out west to investigate a prosperous dairy farmer whose silo burns down every second year. Needless to say, this is waving a red flag at the

insurance adjusters. Dollar finds evidence of arson and blames the farmer, but needs further proof to deny the claim.

Digression: I was puzzled that the farmer was using silos built of wood, as even in my childhood they had been concrete and steel for many decades. The episode provides an infodump on how silage is made for the benefit of city slickers who don't know what it is.

Silage is green feed such as hay or green corn which is compressed in a pit or silo and sealed to prevent oxygen getting in. The crop ferments, and is basically the equivalent of pickling home food, except in this case it is meant for cattle. Farmers who make silage mostly use linear pits but those who can afford it have vertical silos, which allow fresh material to be dumped on top and ready-to-eat material to be taken out at the bottom of the tower. We never had silage on our ranch because it is labour intensive, and my father was too busy with his veterinary practice.

Meanwhile, Dollar does his investigating. A banker tells him the farmer has no debts, and all appearances are that he is a hard-working man, not the type for sharp practice. Dollar notices that there is only one contractor in the county who rebuilds all the burned silos and barns. That contractor has trouble keeping his business in the black. Putting deductions together identifies the contractor as a man who torched buildings when he needed business.

BEEF STOLEN-OFF (2012) by Liz Lipperman is a novel in a food cozy mystery series about Jordan McAllister. She wants to be a sports writer but the best she can do is food columnist for a newspaper in Rancho, Texas. She knows little about cooking or reviewing restaurants, but ignorance never stopped anyone in the news media before.

Local cattle baron Lucas Santana hosts the annual Cattleman's Ball. He invites McAllister, hoping for publicity, and sets her up with a date, his ranch foreman Rusty Morales. He's a good-looking cowpoke but alas, doesn't make it past the second chapter. Someone poisoned him.

There are a variety of subplots to choose from insofar as motive goes. Cattle rustling has become a serious problem lately, and both thieves and ranchers are playing rough. Marital fidelity among the ranchers is scarcer than vegetarians at a steakhouse. There's bad blood between certain cowboys who agree that the county isn't big enough for both of them.

McAllister is the rural Miss Marple, sorting through all the soap operas out on the range and in the village. The murderer was both a jealous sort and a rustler. There is no honour among thieves or adulterers. McAllister is thrown into a hunting pit with rattlesnakes, but with a single bound escapes to bring the killer to justice.

It all ends in chocolate cake. Seriously. This is, after all, a food cozy, with recipes at the back for salads and beef dishes that will make any barbecue a success. The final scene has McAllister working off the stress of her life by chowing down on chocolate cake. We can all relate to that.

Don't Fence Me In.

The wide open rangelands of Canada and the USA began to be closed off in the last two decades of the 1800s and were almost entirely fenced off for homestead land by World War One. I have written that I grew up on a cattle ranch and that I was descended from homesteaders, which seems contradictory but isn't.

Modern ranches such as ours are not endless tracts but fenced off into quarter-sections, and the cattle rotated from one pasture to another for best grass management. (A section is a square mile; the Canadian prairies were surveyed before the homesteaders arrived.)

Nothing like the old days, where a ranch might be a hundred miles on a side with no fences. Those ranches were wasteful of pasture, as the herds would drift along, eat out the bottomlands and ignore the slopes, leading to both overgrazing and underutilization. Fencing pastures means they are forced to graze all the land evenly.

THE PHANTOM HERD (1916) by B.M. Bower takes place after the land was all fenced and the cowboys of old were mostly gone. (This novel is available from www.gutenberg.org) Luck Lindsay is the protagonist, an old cowhand who works for a Poverty Row Hollywood studio churning out western movies.

The novel opens with him escorting a group of aboriginals back to their reserve. They had been working as extras in the movies, but the studio decided to save money by using Caucasian extras who could do double duty as both white folk and, with a quick rub of makeup, as Injuns. Not surprising, as Hollywood was more racist than the South, which is why the Englishman Boris Karloff played Detective Wong and a Hungarian named Peter Lorre was Mr Moto.

Lindsay did convince his superiors that if they were only going to hire white extras, then they should at least get genuine cowboys who could ride a horse and lasso a cow. Since the wage bill would be the same, the studio executives agreed. After escorting the natives back to their home, he then goes on an odyssey to find working cowboys.

The problem is that they are now scarce on the ground. Many became dirt farmers with wives and children, others drifted into the city and took what work they could find, and some just up and died. The novel moseys along the scenic route as it describes the old and the new West.

Lindsay has in mind to produce a movie that would show a genuine cattle drive. His daydreams as to how it would be filmed take up many pages. No stagecoach holdups, Injun attacks, or gunslingers fighting it out on the street. Quite frankly it seems like a boring movie.

I say that as someone who herded cattle many times as a boy. (See OPUNTIA #60.5 for an illustrated account of one of our cattle drives.) A genuine cattle drive is a dull chore that consists of watching the north ends of hundreds of southbound cattle. No yippy-ki-yaying, just endless mooing. I wouldn't pay to watch a movie about cattle droving, and I was there.

Eventually Lindsay finds some genuine cowboys and brings them in to the studio. Alas, the executives won't produce his script. They want stagecoach robberies, Injuns being shot off horses, and gunslingers pairing off against each other on a dusty street in a dusty frontier town.

Lindsay gets even by filming a studio script as a comedy, using his cowboys who whooped it up with or without an actual saloon. Bently Brown, the screenwriter, was used to having his scripts produced as melodrama. He is furious, as writers often are when someone reinterprets their work. Push comes to shove, and Lindsay parts company with the studio.

Lindsay decides to strike out on his own and film his script his way. The little details in producing his own movie are more obstructive than any major disasters. There is no money for assistants and makeup artists, so he has to teach the cowboys how to apply their own makeup. The other ranch folk he hires as actors are self-conscious and stiff in front of the camera, so he has to teach them how to be natural and hit their camera marks. He is the cameraman.

No end of troubles. I'll not mention the herd of cattle who can't act and the blizzard. Finally the movie is done. Lindsay knows better than trying to premiere it in Hollywood. He takes it to the Texas Cattlemen's Convention. It is a success. Making a movie is one thing, but marketing it is another. Lindsay has to find a bankroll to publicize it and get the general audience into the theatres.

It all ends well, though. Perhaps too abruptly. One gets the sense that after the author wrote Lindsay out of his financial difficulties, he couldn't think of anything else to add, and so cut off the novel. An interesting read, but be aware that the narrative takes the winding trail.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Leathlobhair, M.N., et al (2018) **The evolutionary history of dogs in the Americas.** SCIENCE 361:81-85

Authors' abstract: *Dogs were present in the Americas before the arrival of European colonists, but the origin and fate of these pre-contact dogs are largely unknown. We sequenced 71 mitochondrial and 7 nuclear genomes from ancient North American and Siberian dogs from time frames spanning ~9000 years.*

Our analysis indicates that American dogs were not derived from North American wolves. Instead, American dogs form a monophyletic lineage that likely originated in Siberia and dispersed into the Americas alongside people. After the arrival of Europeans, native American dogs almost completely disappeared, leaving a minimal genetic legacy in modern dog populations.

The closest detectable extant lineage to pre-contact American dogs is the canine transmissible venereal tumor, a contagious cancer clone derived from an individual dog that lived up to 8000 years ago.

Thronton, D., et al (2018) **Hunting associations of American badgers (Taxidea taxus) and coyotes (Canis latrans) revealed by camera trapping.** CANADIAN JOURNAL OF ZOOLOGY 96:769-773

Authors' abstract: *Interspecies foraging associations occur in a wide variety of vertebrate taxa and are maintained through gains in foraging efficiency and (or) predator avoidance. Despite their advantages, foraging associations often are variable in space and time and benefits may not accrue equally to all participants.*

In mammals, interspecies associations between solitary mammalian carnivores are rare. Coyotes (Canis latrans Say, 1823) and American badgers (Taxidea taxus (Schreber, 1777)) occasionally form hunting associations in pursuit of ground squirrels (Spermophilus armatus Kennicott, 1863), yet spatiotemporal variation in this association may be substantial. Better documentation of coyote-badger interactions across space and time will improve our understanding of the environmental drivers of this relationship and its benefit to both species.

We used a broad-scale camera trapping array to document coyote-badger hunting associations. Out of 46 detections of badgers, we found five instances of hunting associations with coyotes, all of which occurred in mid- to late summer when ground squirrels were most active. Given our high rate of detection, these interactions are likely common on our study area. Habitat characteristics of the regions where we document coyote-badger interactions may have increased the likelihood of hunting associations.

Jones, M.R., et al (2018) **Adaptive introgression underlies polymorphic seasonal camouflage in snowshoe hares.** SCIENCE 360:1355-1358

Authors' abstract: *Snowshoe hares (Lepus americanus) maintain seasonal camouflage by molting to a white winter coat, but some hares remain brown during the winter in regions with low snow cover.*

We show that cisregulatory variation controlling seasonal expression of the Agouti gene underlies this adaptive winter camouflage polymorphism. Genetic variation at Agouti clustered by winter coat color across multiple hare and jackrabbit species, revealing a history of recurrent interspecific gene flow.

Brown winter coats in snowshoe hares likely originated from an introgressed black-tailed jackrabbit allele that has swept to high frequency in mild winter environments. These discoveries show that introgression of genetic variants that underlie key ecological traits can seed past and ongoing adaptation to rapidly changing environments.

Janssens, L.A.A., et al (2018) **Shoulder osteoarthritis in a European sabertoothed cat (*Homotherium latidens*) from the Lower Palaeolithic site of Schöningen (Germany).** INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PALEOPATHOLOGY doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpp.2018.06.002

Authors' abstract: *Evaluation of a right ventral scapula fragment from a mature Homotherium latidens from Schöningen, Germany (337 to 300 kiloyears before present - MIS 9) revealed lesions consisting of an osteophyte at the caudal border of the glenoid cavity, and a large, multilobular, cystic feature in the medio-caudal glenoid cavity.*

Based on the type of lesions, their localization, their severity, and exclusion of several nutritional and other etiologies such as immune mediated disease, joint infection (septic arthritis), and joint tumors, we conclude that the lesion was caused by trauma or age-related shoulder osteoarthritis (or possibly both).

We cannot speculate whether the condition was symptomatic, but if it was, the animal must have functioned well enough to hunt or scavenge, since it survived a significant period of lesion development.

Galway-Witham, J., et al (2018) **How did Homo sapiens evolve?** SCIENCE 360:1296-1298

Authors' abstract: *Most research has supported the theory that modern humans had originated in Africa by about 200,000 years ago, but the latest findings reveal more complexity than anticipated. They confirm interbreeding between H. sapiens and other hominin species, provide evidence for H. sapiens in Morocco as early as 300,000 years ago, and reveal a seemingly incremental evolution of H. sapiens cranial shape.*

Although the cumulative evidence still suggests that all modern humans are descended from African H. sapiens populations that replaced local populations

of archaic humans, models of modern human origins must now include substantial interactions with those populations before they went extinct.

Liran Einav, L., et al (2018) **Predictive modeling of U.S. health care spending in late life.** SCIENCE 360:462-1465

Authors' abstract: *That one-quarter of Medicare spending in the United States occurs in the last year of life is commonly interpreted as waste. But this interpretation presumes knowledge of who will die and when. Here we analyze how spending is distributed by predicted mortality, based on a machine-learning model of annual mortality risk built using Medicare claims.*

Death is highly unpredictable. Less than 5% of spending is accounted for by individuals with predicted mortality above 50%. The simple fact that we spend more on the sick, both on those who recover and those who die, accounts for 30 to 50% of the concentration of spending on the dead. Our results suggest that spending on the ex post dead does not necessarily mean that we spend on the ex ante hopeless.

Speirs: It would be interesting to know what the Canadian statistics are. I suspect they would be about the same. I have read that the majority of universal health care costs in Canada are incurred on patients 80 years or older, but I've seen no real proof.

SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE A SIGN: STAMPEDE 2018
photos by Dale Speirs

These signs were at the draft horse exhibit in the Stampede livestock barns.



I did the math several times but it still doesn't seem right. The horses should be starving to death if they're excreting 4 kilos more daily than they consume.





Advertising sign at Westbrook LRT station.

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