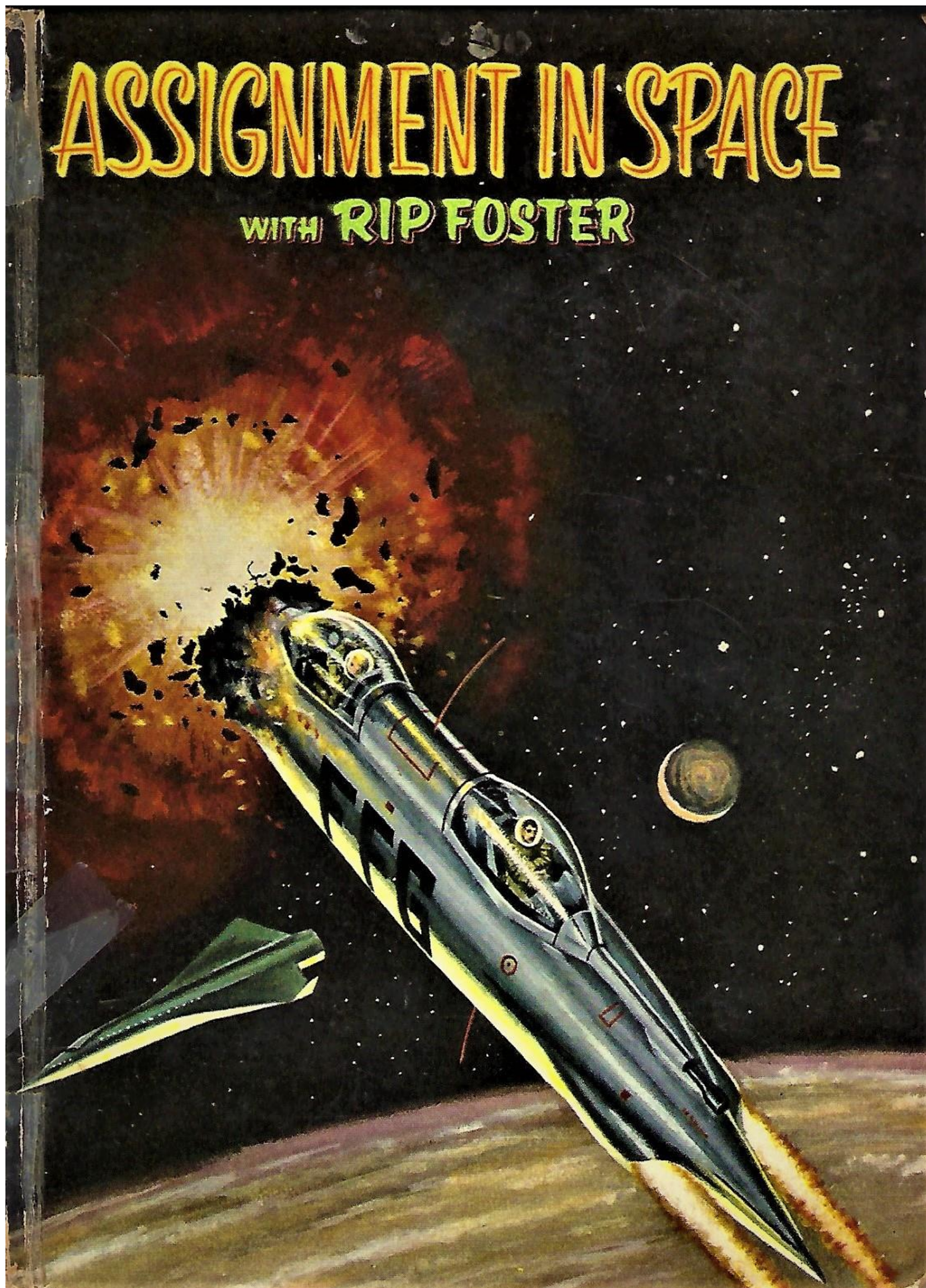


BCSFAZINE

Clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association
(Issue #539 – April, 2020)



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Dedicated to The Fellowship of The Greater BCSFA

BCSFazine is a Canadian non-profit Science Fiction online PDF Clubzine published by the British Columbia Science Fiction Association twelve times a year.

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To submit articles, art work, or letters of comment, contact God-Editor R. Graeme Cameron at: < the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

Anyone interested in tons of back issues, please go to:

< <https://efanzines.com/BCSFA/> >

CURRENT BCSFA EXECUTIVE

Chair: Position open

Vice Chair: Position open.

Treasurer: Kathleen Moore.

Secretary: Barb Dryer.

BCSFazine Editor: R. Graeme Cameron.

Keeper of the FRED Book: Ryan Hawe.

FRED Organizer: Michael Bertrand.

VCON Ambassador for Life: Steve Forty.

FRED Dinner – (FRED = “Forget Reality! Everybody Drink!”) A local Vancouver area meet-up founded circa 1986. Usually held every second Sunday, but **currently on hold due to the Coronavirus Pandemic**. Normally, about 6 to 10 BCSFAns tend to show up, plus any visiting fen interested in joining the lively conversation on wide-ranging topics. Convivial atmosphere. Will give details once FRED resumes.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Midnight, April 29th. My simple layout design ensures it will get into the following month’s issue to be published on May 1st. Guaranteed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03) – EDITORIAL: THE GOD EDITOR SPEAKS – “The Graeme”
- 05) – ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE – Policies and similar rubbish.
- 06) – WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH – Stuff by you!
- 06) – VOID BREATHER BOMBAST – Interesting outer space regolithism.
- 10) – ASTRONAUT AL WORDEN PASSED AWAY – He orbited the Moon 74 times.
- 11) – FAME! – An essay on the passing of a fan and a friend – by **Taral Wayne**
- 13) – STEVE STILES ART PORTFOLIO – In memory of a great fan and comic artist.
- 18) – RANDOM MUSINGS – The state of fandom – by **Robert J. Sawyer**
- 18) – LITERARY SHENANIGANS – Assorted fake news from the publishing world.
- 20) – MAGAZINES DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP – *Trouble Beyond the Stars #5*
- 21) – BOOKS TO BURDEN YOUR MIND – *Assignment in Space with Rip Foster* (by Blake Savage), and *The Scrambled Man* (by Michael Bertrand)
- 25) – TONIGHT’S MOVIE – *Spaceballs* – by **Michael Bertrand**
- 29) – MESSED-UP MOVIE MOPES – *Shin Godzilla*, plus: Ten Genre Films of the 1920s You Need in Your Collection.
- 40) – THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR AND JOLLY REVILER – by **Stan G. Hyde**
- 44) – IT IS WHAT IT IS – Mansplaining the state of fandom – by **Garth Spencer**
- 45) – OUR THIRTEEN DAYS IN THE USA TO CORFLU IN TEXAS – by **Murray Moore**
- 49) – FANNISH FAILURES AND FOLLIES – The effects of the Coronavirus on Fandom.
- 50) – FANZINE EXTINCTION EVENT – Where fannish dinosaurs live: *FAPA*, *eAPA*.
- 52) – UPCOMING EVENTS YOU SHOULD AVOID – Trumpeter Gaming Salute.
- 56) – CHRYSANTHEMUM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN – by **Ed Beauregard**
- 64) – UPCOMING CONVENTIONS TO PRETEND TO ENJOY – Assorted conventions.
- 69) – OOK, OOK, SLOBBER, DROOL! – LoCs from beyond: Garth Spencer, Robert J. Sawyer, Taral, Ed Beauregard, Lloyd Penney, John Purcell, Felicity Walker.
- 77) – AFTERWORDS – by “The God-Editor”

Cover Credit

Cover – A classic Science Fiction novel to remind fen that SF&F literature is worth reading. *Assignment in Space with Rip Foster* by Blake Savage, Whitman Publishing Company, Racine, Wisconsin, 1958. Cover art by Denny McMains. Presented to the God-Editor on the occasion of his ninth birthday in 1960.

EDITORIAL: THE GOD-EDITOR SPEAKS!

So, what the heck am I doing, anyway? Producing a clubzine for a club that has, maybe, only a dozen members and does nothing apart from meet for a dinner social every second week? No formal meetings. No parties. No club outings?

Irrelevant. I publish BCSFAzine for BCSFA.

Which raises the question, what is BCSFA, exactly?

Remember the Krell in *Forbidden Planet*? A highly advanced race determined to create a civilization of pure mentality without instrumentalities? That's sort of what BCSFA is. A mindset without physicality.

Say what? Let me put it another way.

First of all, genre fandom is not clubs or organizations, those are things that appear and disappear. The true essence of genre fandom is the lifelong genre interests of the people involved. Genre fandom is people. Collectively, those fen constitute a kind of matrix or super-organism that manifests itself, in terms of intercommunication, the electrical charges between synapses, in communication online and very rarely in person.

The vast majority of fandom has never heard of BCSFA or VCON. It's arguable that even if they did, they wouldn't be interested. This colossus is a shapeless, amorphous brain or collective mindset, responsible for billion dollar profits in film, media, comics, and books. It is a seething mass of impulses momentarily casting light and focus on this or that aspect of the genre, the latest hit anime show for instance. You can't talk to it, you can't even get its attention. It doesn't even pay attention to itself. It can't. It's not conscious. It's a subconscious entity composed of instincts, desires, and emotions best represented by myriad sparkling lights briefly illuminating the interests of the individual cells composing its enormous, inert mass. This is where "The monsters from the Id" lurk. It *is* the monster from the Id.

And BCSFA? A stray strand of fossil DNA embedded in the super-organism matrix. Remarkably self-aware, if only because it's components share common interests including a ghost memory of the way things used to be. They're scattered now, their fanac reduced pretty much to zero, but when reminded, can still recall how much fun they used to have at BCSFAzine collation parties and other club events. They were young then, inclined to drink continuously at parties where everybody did silly things, like argue over the latest books and films, participate in trivia conquests or group story writing, form competing cabals plotting to rule VCON, and mainly, drink and talk, drink and talk. It was loads of fun.

Now? Aging former BCSFAans prefer to spend sober evenings at home where they can relax and avoid stress.

And consider the following:

It used to be, in order to see a movie, you had to go to a theatre. Lining up in order to get in used to be quite the big deal, all part of the social aspect of the event if you went as a group. Now, just wait a while, and you'll be able to watch just about any film at home.

It used to be, in order to talk to people, you had to meet them in person (more fun than tying up your landline), usually in a pub or a restaurant, or at a party thrown by someone in their home. Now? Go online. Anybody can do that. Any time of day. Very convenient.

It used to be, in order to insult someone in person, you had to plot to "accidentally" run into them. Now you can do it online (which is what passes for personal communication these days.)

Point is what people used to do as a routine exercise in order to socialise with like-minded people is now much more easily, and less expensively, done at home. In other words, unlike the past within living memory, there is no demand for people to get together in a club thinking "thank ghod I've found somebody who likes the same things I do," because now you can find fellow travelers just by turning on your laptop. Definitely more convenient. This is the anti-social aspect of the web, or perhaps I should say, the alternate social nature of the web, such that old-fashioned clubs are largely obsolete except for a small number of die-hards.

On the other hand, merging with the web is the salvation of people who've left the BCSFA club, including those who've moved elsewhere. They still have the same interests even if their pursuit of them is now purely personal. They still remember the fen they used to party with (with great fondness, one hopes.) They're still willing to touch base with one another providing the experience be pleasant, nostalgic, and entertaining. The greater BCSFA cloud-crowd Mentat is alive and well on the web. I call it *The fellowship of the Greater BCSFA*.

And it is this entity I regard as the primary target readership of BCSFAzine.

To illustrate what I'm talking about, let me describe:

THE MANY READERSHIPS OF BCSFA

First, **Earth's tiny second moon, asteroid 52768 (1998 OR2)** – Represents the BCSFA local group of 12 or so fen. Easily accessible, always open to observation, capable of astonishing surprises, easy to get to, etc.

Second, **the asteroid belt lying between Mars and Jupiter** – Comprises over a hundred fen previously active as BCSFAns. Relatively accessible, rich in resources, the exploitation of which could be very profitable (intellectually speaking) and exciting.

Third, **the Kuiper Belt objects beyond the orbit of Pluto** – These be massive planetoids (Big Name fen and acolytes) swimming in distant orbit, some of them retaining fond memories of interacting with BCSFA in the glory days, others potentially capable of receiving and responding to stimuli like *BCSFAzine* despite it being currently unknown to them. Long journey to get there, prolonged effort, expensive in time, but capable of producing delightful discoveries. Well worth it.

Fourth and last, **the inconceivably far-flung Oort cloud** – unknown objects (mundane fen) impossible to get to with current technology, impossible to relate to or explore, yet, surprisingly, capable of producing a blazing comet to briefly graze our orbit before disappearing back into the void.

PRIMARY TARGET AUDIENCE?

The *Asteroid Belt*, of course, which happens to include Asteroid 52768 (1998 OR2) which is, after all, an asteroid in its own right. Readership among the Kuiper Belt or

the Oort cloud would just be icing on the cake.

That's what I mean when I say I'm targeting BCSFA. The asteroid belt BCSFA. Greater BCSFA.

Not, mind you, in order to rebuild the club by resurrecting the past. That be impossible. Though hopefully the club will stir, grow larger, and become more active.

Truth is my intent is to provide a focus for the Krell-BCSFans, something they'll enjoy reading, something which will motivate them to contribute the occasional comment or article. That would be real cool. That is my goal.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION?

I'm not in it for the politics (thank Ghu organized BCSFA is too small to have any) nor for the controversy. I'd rather just write stuff without worrying what the response will be. Seeking to amuse with chuckle-worthy ephemera, not debate, let alone battle like a Troll.

Fact is I'm in it to close a gap in my personal life.

My sercon interests are served by writing reviews of Canadian Speculative fiction for my Clubhouse column in the online version of *Amazing Stories Magazine*, and by publishing my semi-professional SF fiction magazine *Polar Borealis*.

My traditional fanac is pretty-well served by my participation in FAPA and eAPA, but those reach a very small number of people.

But there is a gap or void in my life, brought about because I stopped doing what I once did in blogs for *Amazing*, namely write about anything SF&F that came to mind. Deciding to focus on book and magazine reviews put an end to that.

However, now that I'm doing *BCSFazine* again, once more utilizing my God-Editor persona, I can pick whatever genre-related topic I want to kibbitz about while hoping to intrigue and entertain several hundred like-minded fen in The Fellowship of the Greater BCSFA. As a result I'm having a whale of a time and a good deal of fun.

That's my personal motivation, to have fun. Isn't that what being a science fiction fan is all about? I think so.

Cheers! *The Graeme*

Send your letters of comment, submissions, ideas, etc. to:

< the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

P.S. Hope you are coping with the Coronavirus Pandemic. I've been self-isolated since March 14 because of my age and damaged lungs. May this and subsequent issues of *BCSFazine* serve as an amusing diversion to take your mind off things. Every little bit of escapism helps fight off reality (my motto my entire life, now that I think about it). Wishing the best outcome for all.

ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE

Note – All articles unless otherwise stated are by the God-Editor The Graeme.

Nature of zine – Pretty much anything to do with SF Fandom and whatever the fen are interested in. Or, to put it another day, whatever pops up in my fevered thoughts and the agitated minds of the contributors.

Printed Copies – Frankly, I doubt it. The number of pages will vary wildly from issue to issue because each will depend on the amount of work I and my contributors

put into it in a given month. Could be 20 pages. Could be 100. People are welcome to print out each issue as they download it, but why bother? I sincerely doubt having a printed copy or two in a bookstore will attract new readers compared to word of mouth and people trying an experimental download. Producing paper copies is both an unwarranted cost and a hindrance to effort since there would have to be a cut-off page limit. *BCSFazine* has turned a new page. This open-format allows tremendous flexibility without penalty of delay. I just pour stuff into the template as it arrives via email. Takes mere minutes to convert to the “official” point size, layout, etc. What I have settled on is far too convenient to stuff into an envelope. *BCSFazine* be liberated from past, outmoded production means. *BCSFazine* be free now.

Trades Policy – As far as reviewing other clubzines and fanzines, I’m probably just going to pick one or two from eFanzines.com every issue and say a few things in praise of them. I remember from my previous God-Editor days that a couple of dozen hardcopy zines would arrive in the mail box and nobody but nobody was interested in borrowing them to read when I brought them to meetings. And that was back in the days of the height of club activities! Makes more sense to me to simply bring attention to what’s available online so that anyone genuinely interested can check them out. I certainly don’t feel a comprehensive listing is necessary. No justification for it.

If anything my focus should be on attempting to convince people to read *BCSFazine*! The era of members of a typical club being frantically interested in what other clubs were up to is more than fifty years back in the past. Not relevant today. But limited coverage of modern zinedom can function as part of an effort to amuse readers of *BCSFazine* over myriad subjects and topics, part of the entertainment package. However, I honestly don’t know what to do about current trades being received. We only have the PDF version to exchange, and it is free even if we are sent nothing. I’m focused on *BCSFazine*. Trade policy is up to the membership in Vancouver. In a pinch I’ll be happy to publish reviews written by one of them. Less work for me.

WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH

I’m off to a grand start, what with **Robert J. Sawyer** reviving his column *Random Musings*, **Stan G. Hyde** once more contributing his *The Light-Hearted Vituperator and Jolly Reviler* column, **Taral Wayne** with a heart-felt reminiscence *Fame!* about an old friend, **Ed Beauregard** his gaming report *Chrysanthemum in the Mediterranean*, **Garth Spencer** a column on the state of fandom, **Michael Bertrand** a review of Mel Brooks’ movie *Spaceballs*, **Murray Moore** an account of his trip to Corflu, and the usual nonsense by myself.

VOID BREATHER BOMBAST

Another Near Miss Coming up! – Mark Wednesday, April 29th a special day! Asteroid “52768 (1998 OR2)” will blast by the earth at 19,461 miles per hour. It’s

about two miles in diameter, definitely enough to knock the shingles off your house, but don'tcha worry, it won't hit (probably). Slated to pass by at a distance of 3,908,791 miles. Hope they didn't misplace a decimal point. Passing by at .3,908,791 mile could be a real downer.

Jovian Cannibalism on Record – Some time ago the Juno spacecraft caught a massive Jovian amoeba consuming a smaller blob (possibly a female consuming its mate). Took a snapshot of the act. Oh, sure, the scientists claim it's two anticyclones of white clouds interacting as they pass each other by each other in Jupiter's turbulent atmosphere, but we know better, don't we! I dang well recognise an Earth-size monster when I see a photo of one. Can't fool me!

Them Zany Physicists! – A recent online headline read "Physicists are studying 'bubbles of nothing' that eat spacetime." Yeh, right. I think the journalists, had they been responsible and professional, would have written "Physicists are studying 'bubbles of nothing' in order to eat up government grants."

Curiosity Mars Rover Snaps 1.8 Billion Pixel Panorama – Of course, one pixel at a time. It captures the full scene as the camera turns, but never fast enough to record the jeering Martians standing off to the side and slowly backing around the Rover in pace with the camera movement to avoid being seen. Oddly enough, the camera has on occasion caught a glimpse of what are said to be "dust devils" passing by, but are in fact dust clouds thrown up by the Martian equivalent of pickup trucks bringing fresh booze to the partying Martians making fun of the rover. It is to be hoped Martian authorities will eventually ban the local yokels to make room for scientists prepared to stand stock still in front of the cameras holding up signs like "Hello Earthlings!" and "Earthlings go home!", but don't hold your breath. Martian bureaucrats are even more slow-moving than ours.

Perseverance Mars Rover to Blast Off This Summer – Gonna land in an equatorial crater round about February 2021. Cool. Apparently its main task is to grab interesting rock specimens and stash them in a central cache somewhere to await a future, bigger, more powerful gizmo that'll gobble them up and bring them back to Earth to study while their resident disease organisms render us extinct. Seems to me, if Perseverance is going to collect rocks, instead of just piling them up at a central point, it should attempt to build an Inuit Inuksuk, or at least a stone igloo, so that a future Martian Colony Chamber of Commerce can label it "the oldest building on Mars" for tourism purposes. Gotta think ahead, you know. Course, this would mean cancelling the rock acquisition program, but that's liable to be so expensive it will probably be nixed anyway.

By the way, both Europe and China plan to send to send Rovers to Mars this year as well, and the United Arab Emirates an orbiter. The more the merrier I say! I love it when nation states spend vast amounts of money to entertain me!

Boeing Starliner Busted! – You may recall the Starliner zipped into space last December but failed to make it into the proper orbit. The culprit? Bad software coding. Starliner was supposed to automatically dock with the International Space Station, but it couldn't get up that high. So, instead of a 7 day mission, it tripped about for 2 and then was ordered to land. However, it played hard to get and was nearly lost. The culprit? Bad software code detected just before it would have gone into action and destroyed the spacecraft. So now, finally, NASA has ordered the type of deep-depth investigation known as a "high-visibility close call." I already know the findings to come, which is also the solution to the problem, namely: stop hiring programmers recently fired from gaming companies for failing to fix their bugs! At the

very least, get more Beta testers! Makes sense to me.

US Space Force Top Secret! – No surprise but kinda frustrating for a Congressional Committee grilling Space Force Commander Gen John Raymond. He wouldn't tell them where the Force would be headquartered, for instance. Though he casually admitted that so far its personal consisted of just one person, namely him. Not to worry, this makes for incredible efficiency, that being his highest priority. Besides, soon 65 cadet graduates of the U.S. Airforce Academy would be joining his outfit. And best of all, the defence budget was allocating \$15.4 billion to him under "Space Fighting Domains." I imagine he's going to have a very nicely furnished office soon, providing he ever figures out where it will be. After listening to this I'm sure "Confidence is high" be the new congressional motto.

Lettuce Grown in Space! – Aboard the International Space Station "in sealed units on the ISS in special ceramic soil under special red lighting." Special, eh? Astronauts harvested some in summer of 2014 and found it "delicious." I don't find the fact that scientists waited 6 years before releasing their findings the least bit alarming. Obviously they wanted to be sure the ISS crew could routinely harvest and eat the lettuce before the lettuce could routinely harvest and eat the astronauts.

Russians sent Green Slime to the ISS – Apparently, last summer, one of the experiments taken to the International Space Station was a Russian-sponsored shipment of green slime. Seems the ISS crew were supposed to "play games with it, toss slime-filled balloons, make slime bubbles, and even spray each other with slime in order to understand how a fluid, which isn't water, behaves in micro-gravity." Anyone who has ever seen the 1968 film *The Green Slime* can readily understand why we haven't heard anything about the results. Possible clue? While watching any broadcast from the ISS, if you can hear an annoying, high pitched shrilling in the background you'll know what's actually happening off-camera. Kudos to the astronauts for pretending to be so calm and safe.

It's a Small World, After All – As Canadian ex-astronaut Chris Hadfield surely knows, having floated high above it in the ISS. Found out the other day my big brother Stew headed the ground crew that used to start up the engine of the CF104 Starfighter that Hadfield flew when stationed as a fighter jock at Cold Lake Airforce Base in Alberta. My brother, known as "Mr. 104" to fellow veterans, remarked that "Hadfield was a real blast, great fun to be around, with a fantastic sense of humour."

More "Earths" than people on Earth! – A recently released study calculates there are at least 8.5 billion Earth-sized habitable planets in our Galaxy alone. You know what this means, don't you? It means fresh episodes of *Star Trek* taking man "to where no man has gone before" can stretch onward to near infinity. Great news for franchise fans ... and owners.

Your Next Vacation on a Space Station? – Axiom Space just signed a contract with SpaceX to use the Dragon Capsule atop a Falcon rocket to carry two, maybe 3 tourists to the international Space Station for a 10-day visit as early as late 2021, or maybe never, depending on the pace of technological development. At least the March 6th Falcon launch went off without a hitch, and on March 9th its freight-Dragon successfully docked with the ISS. So maybe a tourist visit *is* in the cards. All inclusive vacation package cost? A mere \$55 million USD. Going to be hard to save the dough from my pension funds but I'll give it a shot.

Giant Black Hole Aimed Directly at Earth – No, not that (name politician of your choice) guy. The actual headline reads "An Ancient Black Hole as Heavy as a Billion Suns is Pointed Right at Us." Sounds dangerous, right? I mean, it's a 13

billion-year-old Blazar emitting a beam of energy “forceful enough to punch holes clear through Galaxy Clusters.” Not to worry, by the time the beam washes over us it’s just an emergency beacon spotlighting the Earth to warn passing Alien spacecraft “Do not land here! These guys are weird and dangerous! Stay well clear! Don’t let them know you exist!” So, now you understand the real explanation for the Fermi Paradox. You’re welcome.

DARPA Funding Satellite-Repair Robot – Yep, teaming up with Northrup Gruman to design and build a clever satellite capable of “docking” to malfunctioning satellites and repairing them, or perhaps sneaking up on other satellites and dismantling them. It is DARPA, after all, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which is responsible for developing advanced technology for the U.S. military. Yes, I can see how the military would like to keep their satellites functioning. But I can also see how they might be even keener to bring home all the pieces of foreign military satellites to study at their leisure. Just saying. Plus, I worry about giving “Skynet” advanced repair capability. Oh, well.

The Moon is actually Theia wearing a costume – Used to be thought the Moon was created when a Mars-sized primordial planetoid, dubbed Theia, smashed into Earth and created a ring of debris which gradually coalesced into the Moon. The fact that Earth and Lunar rocks are essentially identical seemed to prove the theory, the Moon being composed of pulverized Earth bits. Ongoing research shows that ejecta rocks from the deep mantle, as found by the astronauts lying on the surface where they had fallen, are radically different from surface rocks. The deeper you go, the weirder it gets. Looks like our Moon is actually Theia (or a significantly huge surviving chunk of), lightly dusted in Earth debris. Very cool. Wonder what else is down there?

On Planet Wasp-76b It Rains Liquid Iron – Twice the size of Jupiter, and so close to its star it completes an orbit in 43 hours, this inferno of a planet is tidally locked so that one side always faces its sun, producing temperatures of 2,400 C, hot enough to vaporise metal and, in fact, so incredibly hot that molecules break down into individual atoms. Winds sweeping to the dark side flow as fast as 18,000km/h. The nightside, being about 1,000 C cooler, sees vaporised iron condense into droplets of molten rain. Incredibly, scientists have detected evidence of this, namely an iron vapour signature in the atmosphere at the terminator boundary between the day hell-side and slightly-less-hellish nightside. Fortunately, Wasp-76b is about 640 light-years from Earth. Far enough away to discourage tourism, thank goodness. (I’m not talking about humans visiting there, I’m talking about the monstrous hell spawn inhabiting Wasp-76b who might want to visit us!)

Red Giant Betelgeuse ain’t gonna blow after all – Apparently all it did was fart. Or, to put it another way, puffed out an enormous stream of gas which cooled into billowing clouds of dust (still billowing, still dust) partly obscuring the star and consequently dimming its light. The dust clouds are slowly expanding, possibly to form a bubble of some kind, and, getting thinner, and thus letting more light through. Mind you, the supergiant is 700 light years distant, so this event took place 700 years ago. Still, it’s a relief. Us seniors worry about each other, you know.

Canadarm captures SpaceX Dragon Capsule for Last Time – Happened on March 9th above Vancouver, B.C. From now on, according to NASA, the Dragons will dock automatically and the Canadarm won’t be needed. A spokesA.I. for the Union representing Canadarm expressed concern. “Sure, NASA says it’s going to keep Canadarm busy with other work, make-work if necessary, but there’s nothing in the

current contract covering this situation so we don't actually know what is going to happen." Canadarm could not be reached for comment but is said to be sulking, according to an anonymous ISS crew member.

Oil Discovered on Mars – No, not lubricant leaking from the Curiosity Rover. Seems some dried mud it sampled contains organic compounds called "thiophenes" that on Earth are present in "crude oil, coal, and truffles." In other words, normally a result of the fossilization of living critters that died. So, implies there was/is life on Mars? Mind you, a meteoric strike could generate enough heat to create these organics, and Mars certainly has been bombarded, but personally, I'm taking the most optimistic view. Our Mars Colonists will have to bring pigs with them to get at those tasty truffles!

Martian Whack AMole – The InSight Mars Lander drill intended to penetrate 15 feet deep and read Mars' temperature was designed to go through sand but it turns out Martian soil is rather clumpy and the probe got stuck. After a year of trying this and that the science team finally just pushed it in using the scoop on the end of the lander's robotic arm. Good for them. What I want to know is what makes the Martian dirt so clingy and clumpy? Truffle tendrils?

ASTRONAUT AL WORDEN PASSED AWAY

On Wednesday, March 18th, 2020, of a stroke. He was 88 years of age. He is most famous for orbiting the Moon 74 times in the Command Module Endeavour in 1971 while his Apollo 15 buddies David Scott and James B. Irwin tested the first Lunar Rover Vehicle near the Hadley Rille. They got the glory and the publicity, the scenery being spectacular and all, but they were not alone in doing useful work.

Worden managed several photographic surveys, and offered a good deal of verbal description of Lunar terrain passing below him. Particularly valuable because he had been flown over desert landscapes in the USA as part of his training, been taught to observe geologic features from above and describe them in terminology that would be meaningful to specialists. As a result, his observations of Lunar terrain helped finalize the landing site of Apollo 17.

And on the way back, while still 197,000 miles from Earth, Al performed the first "Deep Space" EVA to retrieve film canisters from the science camera bay in the equipment module. He spent 38 minutes outside the Command Module during this space walk. Reportedly he commented "Now I know why I am here. Not for a closer look at the Moon, but to look back at our home, the Earth."

The mission itself lasted 12 days, 7 hours, 11 minutes, and 53 seconds. It turned out to be Al's only space mission, thanks to a minor scandal over unauthorized stamp covers being cancelled in space and later sold to a German Stamp distributor. The idea had been to raise money to help pay for college tuition for the Astronauts' children. Embarrassed by the bad publicity, NASA made sure the three crew members of Apollo 15 never flew again.

Seems unfair, given that NASA had zero complaints about his performance during the mission. He carried out all his tasks professionally and with great enthusiasm. Afterword, he was keenly interested in encouraging children to take an interest in science and space flight, appearing 7 times on *Mr. Roger's Neighbourhood*

TV show, and authoring a children's book *I Want to Know About a Flight to the Moon* in 1974. Seems to have been quite a decent guy.

Time takes its toll. Now that Al is gone, only 11 of the 27 men who flew to the Moon (in Apollo missions 8 & 10 to 17) between 1968 and 1972 are still alive. Sigh.

FAME!

By Taral Wayne

It was a joke between us that I had my own “fans.” In fact, I had two of them, who I had come to know during the time I was a convention dealer.

My first self-declared fan was also an artist. He usually called himself “Gene Catlow,” but answered to non-fans as Albert Temple. He was the sort of fanartist who had no pretensions about ever being a professional, and used his abilities mainly for fun. We also shared an interest in collecting Roman coins, and the first time I was able to *touch* a gold coin was “Gene’s” 4th century aureus. It was minted around 395 AD by either Honorius or Arcadius, brothers who inherited the empire. Both were long-lived, nonentities, but—as these things went—their precious metal coinage was arguably affordable!

Unfortunately, although still young, “Gene” had diabetes—and a few years ago he passed away young. I had lost my first admirer.

My other “fan” was Greg. Greg was not an artist, but he admired artists enough to collect their work, which will usually open artists’ doors for anyone who is not an artist himself. I must have noticed Greg at an early *ConFurence* in the early ‘90s, when I saw that he was buying quite a lot of my sketches and prints. After a while, I was comfortable enough to ask him to sit on my side of the table, so that we could talk between making sales. After one or two more cons, it got to be a regular thing between us. Greg had become my irregular assistant behind the table, who was happy to spell me whenever I grew restless, and wanted a tour of the dealers’ room. If I was too busy to leave, Greg was free to *gofer* a Coke or a hamburger from across the road. In fact, we grew to be an informal team, with Greg knowing exactly how to set up or knock down a display, remember prices and help schlep the baggage. Good help is hard to find.

Inevitably, you get to know a guy at least a little while you talk and work together. He became more than just “the help.”

In the early 1990s there were few furry cons, and the first and largest was ConFurence in Los Angeles. I was unable to attend the first two, but was one of the guests of honour at the third. After that, I returned as a regular attendee and dealer. There was *so much eeeasy* money to be made that I was able to make extended stays with my friends in the area. As well as hanging out, I was able to engage in extended side trips with Marc Schirmeister. From his place in Pasadena, I was able to travel as far as Gold Rush Country, Death Valley, Yosemite, Reno, the Mohave Desert, San Diego, and once as even far as Tijuana, in Mexico.

One year, Greg decided that he was also able to afford to stay for a week after the Con. Schirm was more than agreeable to putting both of us up at his place. But first, we were obliged to spend a couple of days with a different fan that Greg and I knew. Predictably, this turned out to be something of an ordeal ... as was usually the case when associating with this customer. The two of us wanted to see something of Santa Ana, where our mutual acquaintance lived, and try out a genuine taqueria. But, when asked about the sights, all we were told was that our friend didn't *know* there was a downtown Santa Ana. To him, it was just a turn-off from the freeway that he had no curiosity about, even though he only lived half-a-mile away. He had always gotten around by the expressways, and generally only knew how to get to places such as the Con hotel, Disneyland and Little Japan. He had never been curious about the local stores, or even imagined eating in an ethnic restaurant. When we were asked, he had directed us to a Del Taco. "There wouldn't be anyone there but the greasers, anyway."

Ay, Chihuahua! The sooner we were on our way up to Pasadena, the better.

At Schirm's place, up in the hills above town and in sight of the San Gabriel Mountains, Greg and I had a much better time.

As usual, I had made a good profit from the Con, so I was able to stay on for a week or two, as usual. But Greg was not so lucky, however. Although he had hoped he might be able over again on a future occasion, he was never able to afford another extended vacation from work.

The last West Coast furry con I attended was probably in 2001. By that time, the cons were huge, but they were also attracting artists from every conceivable fandom ... all hungry as ticks, and willing to produce as much furry art as fans would buy. I saw my profits drying up, while at the same time the fares demanded by airlines rose steadily. Finally, I was looking at a real possibility of actually losing money at cons in another year or two. Similar changes were happening to furry cons everywhere, and my days as a dealer were numbered. I never saw Greg after that.

While Greg and I lived in very different parts of the country, we managed to stay in touch on an occasional basis. He had a small circle of friends in fandom, who I knew somewhat. Somewhat to my surprise, I learned that he was a member of an evangelical church ... but evidently this caused him no conflicts in his beliefs, or his interest in erotic furry artwork. Greg participated actively in his church, The First Unitarian Universalist, to a degree I found strange. But I figured that if he could stand the contradictions, so could I.

Life seems to have begun dealing Greg a poorer hand as time went by. I was only somewhat aware of this part of his life, but he lost a job that he had held for a considerable while, and had to give up a spacious apartment on the lower floor of a two-story house. He said he was also forced to give up a lot of stuff in order to move, including much of the furry art he had collected— originals as well as photocopies. While this was no doubt a necessary sacrifice, I think Greg may have lost a lot of interest in the fandom as well. In fact, this was a normal development among of many older furries who had lived through the **crazy** years, before the fur suits took over everything.

Having left his former surroundings, Greg seemed unable to find steady employment after that.

Control over his life seems to have been slipping out of his grasp in more ways than one. Not only was decent work hard to find, he was experiencing increasingly ill

health. I'm embarrassed to say just how little I was aware of just *how* serious his problems were.

Greg had cancer. I learned shortly after his death that there was a malignant tumor on his liver that caused fluids to build up in his lower body. Somewhat unnervingly, I was having a similar problem ... but in my case the cause was relatively benign, and a couple of simple pills would set things right. When Greg was admitted to Intensive Care, he recovered briefly and then lost ground again. Then—quite suddenly—his heart stopped.

The last time that Greg and I spoke on FaceBook was likely a little more than a year ago. I believe that I sent Greg an e-mail even more recently ... but my mail log doesn't go back more than four or five months, so I can't verify what our last words together were. I recall what was the most likely subject, however. We had talking about music, and Greg was surprised that I enjoyed the songs of Bruce Coburn, a Canadian artist who was also intensely religious. Greg had no problem with my lack of religiosity, but he didn't understand why I would like music with a religious message. Of course, I had a flip answer ... I was unable to follow the lyrics due to my poor hearing—which is a fact! But the true answer was that one has to *learn* to appreciate the nobler sentiments of the human mind, *regardless* of whether or not one agrees with them. This is so, whether it is Bach's "Mass in B Minor" or "I don't believe in Beatles."

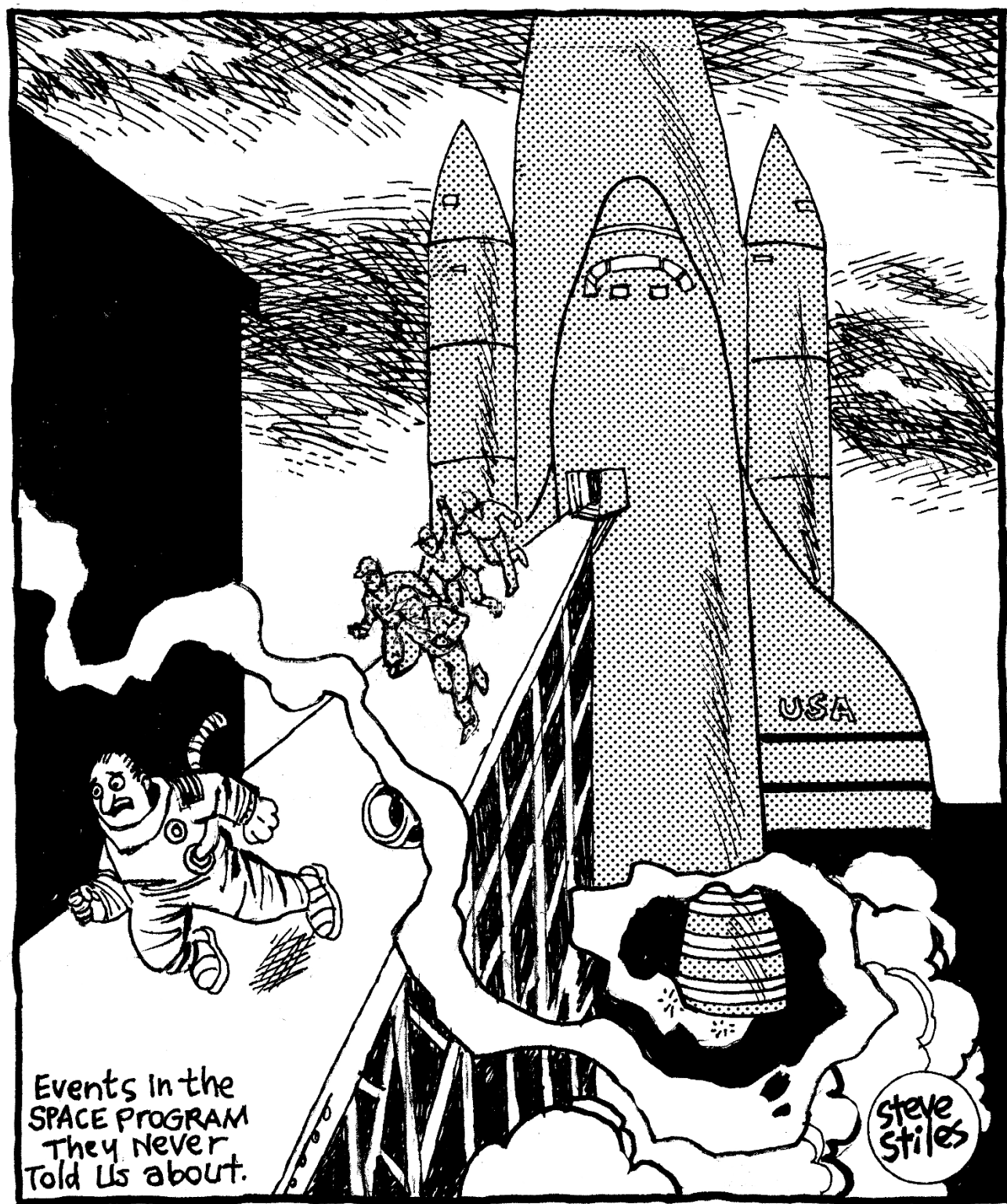
I wish I remembered more of that conversation, but I'm embarrassed that I heard so *much*, and *forgot* about it almost as quickly. There was so much more I could have told Greg as well ... if we had known each other better and I had paid more attention.

It was not in his illness or in fallen circumstances that I want to remember Greg, but rather those days that we spent in Southern California, selling soft-core art and comic books, hanging out after dealers' table hours were over, and driving out in the desert and mountains where we could enjoy the miracle of warm weather in January! In his own life Greg must have experienced many dramas and triumphs that I know little about. I very much like to think that among his best memories were that week we spent on the road that year with Schirm. I suspect that it was right up there among the top.

But what now? After losing two of the best, can I ever dare to name any more "fans?"

STEVE STILES ART PORTFOLIO

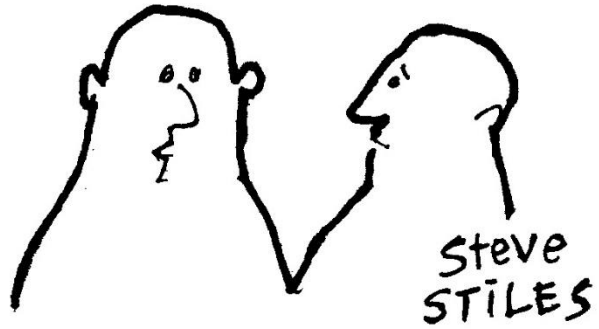
Steve Stiles, a Hugo-winning American fan and comic artist, renowned for his wry wit, once famously remarked "Death is nature's way of telling you when to stop." He passed away January 11th at the age of 76. I own some of his professional work in "Death Rattle" and "Xenozoic Tales." He was kind enough to send me some of his fan art for use in My *Space Cadet* perzine. I reprint some of it here. They capture a tiny amount of the bubbling wit which helped make him extremely popular in fannish circles. I never met him, but he was from all accounts a terrific guy to know. He was a significant underground comic artist, a giant in the field of fan art, and an inspiring presence at many a convention. He will be fondly remembered by many fen.



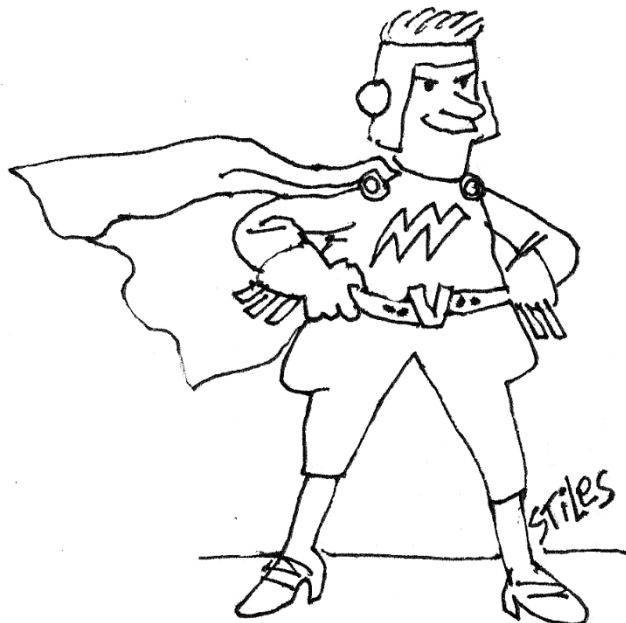
Events in the
SPACE PROGRAM
They Never
Told Us about.

©2012

EVER NOTICE
THAT CONDOMS
DON'T COME
IN
"SMALL"?

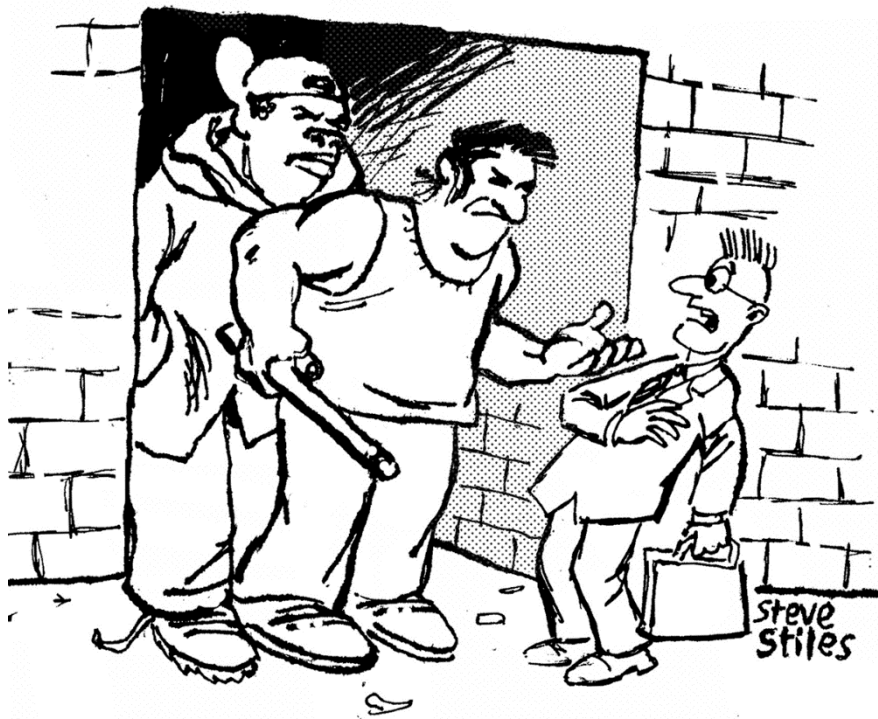


PREPARE TO
LIVE THE FUTURE
THE WAY YOU
ALWAYS SAW IT!





MARCHING TO AN
INDIFFERENT DRUMMER.



Oh my God! **LIBERALS!**



RANDOM MUSINGS

By Robert J. Sawyer

Why are so many in fandom not just clueless but nasty?

Take the Sad Puppies, who, in the most ham-fisted attempt to seize control of the Hugos imaginable, decided to ram their own picks, without even checking with those they'd selected, onto the Hugo Award ballot through coordinated ballot-box stuffing.

The results were not only the most "No Award" wins in any year in Hugo history but also deeply hurt many of those the melancholy pooches purported to honor. One nominated editor walked out of the pre-awards ceremony after being insulted by a gift of an asterisk-shaped coaster (that punctuation mark being used in sports record books to flag tainted nominations or wins). An author friend of mine, unaware that his Hugo nomination had been orchestrated, proudly brought his wife to the ceremony—and had to watch her listen while his name was booed when announced amongst the nominees.

And in my decades of being close friends with another stuffed-onto-the-ballot first-time nominee, I've never seen him more upset than when it was clear that a backlash had sent the award to a someone else. So, way to go, puppies—not only did you hurt the Hugos, you deeply wounded those you were trying to shine a spotlight on.

But so it is with all of science fiction—a shift to the dark side. Even *Star Trek*, once a bastion of optimism, has reflected this change. In the 1960s, Gene Roddenberry felt people would be better in the future. As a token of that, no one smoked in the 23rd century of *The Original Series*. By the 24th century of *The Next Generation*, he'd added that no one drank, either, and interpersonal conflict was mostly gone. But now we have *Picard*, with dissolute individuals smoking, vaping, drinking, doing drugs, and being extraordinarily rude and nasty to each other.

And, in lockstep, we fans have gone, as far as ideas and perspectives are concerned, from a Vulcan celebration of "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations" to a Talosian policy that "Wrong thinking is punishable; right thinking will be as quickly rewarded—you will find it an effective combination."

My friend Chase Masterson has organized a charity, the Pop Culture Hero Coalition, to combat bullying at science-fiction, gaming, and comic-con type events. Their slogan is a simple imperative, a prime directive, but one that used to go without saying in fannish circles and now, lamentably, has to be spelled out: "Be kind."

Is that really so much to ask?

Note: Robert J. Sawyer's 24th novel, *"The Oppenheimer Alternative,"* comes out June 2nd, 2020.

LITERARY SHENANIGANS

Aurora Award Nominating process still open! – For details of the process go to < www.prixaurorawards.ca > Nominations open till April 18th.

Futurist Conference Postponed Over Virus Fears – More science than literary, but famed SF author and Futurist Robert J. Sawyer will not be travelling to a conference in Darmstadt, Germany, to speak on “Artificial Intelligence in Past, Present, and Future Visions” this coming May because the event has been “indefinitely postponed” because of concerns about the COVID-19 epidemic. When will you know it’s a pandemic? When sports events like Hockey and Football are quarantined off-limits. Hmm, heard the Canadian Women’s Curling Championship Games in the Maritimes have been cancelled. That’s *huge* up here in Canada. Bad omen. Ominous. Update: Everything closed down now.

Polar Borealis Mag Editor Made His Choices – I (The Graeme) promised the February submissions window contributors to my magazine *Polar Borealis* I would respond no later than March 7th, and I kept my promise, just barely.

Spent the last 3 days before the deadline composing and sending off 69 emails of acceptance or rejection, or sometimes both if they had submitted more than one story.

I began each acceptance email with "Now that my February submissions window is closed, just a quick note to let you know that I would like to publish your story." Followed by some details, and ending with "If you are agreeable to this, I will keep in touch as matters progress and will be available at all times for any questions you may have. Cheers!"

My rejection emails began "Sorry to disappoint you, but I decided not to publish your story." Followed by one or more paragraphs of explanation as to the reasons why, and ending with "Just my opinion, of course. Another editor may feel differently. Cheers!"

It wasn't till I had sent out about 75% of the rejections that it occurred to me my habit of signing each email with "Cheers!" might not jive with the opening line "Sorry to disappoint you" and might strike the recipient as flippant or insensitive, or even insulting. Oops!

So, the last few rejection emails I sent ended with "Respectfully yours," which is more appropriate if only because I *do* respect all my contributors. It takes guts to send something in to *any* magazine or book publisher.

Thanks to *all* those who submitted their manuscripts!

Trouble Among The Stars Magazine Open To Submissions! – Till April 6th. Looking for SF stories up to 5,000 words and SF poetry to go into their 6th issue. Sadly, this issue will be their last. See < <https://troubleamongthestars.com/> >

SFWA Warning on a Matter Reported in Last Month's Issue – “The Board of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America is issuing a warning regarding short fiction publisher Thinkerbeat, which publishes the semi-pro magazines *Unfit* and *Unreal*. The publisher publicly posts lists of rejected stories along with the author's name and a numeric score.

This publisher's behavior is far outside of industry standards and is contrary to the interests of writers. Humiliating writers, betraying their trust, and violating their privacy is not acceptable.”

SFWA Announces Grants to Members – The SF Writers of America will offer grants of up to \$1,000 USD to members struggling financially in these hard virus-hit times. To help with a donation, go to <https://www.sfwaworld.org/donate>

MAGAZINES DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP (Canadian Zines Worth Reading)

Trouble Among the Stars issue #5

As mentioned elsewhere, this wonderful one-man operation will cease publication after issue #6. I reviewed issue #5 in my March 13th *Amazing Stories* column. You can download all 5 issues for free. I recommend you do that. Well worth reading.

Find the magazine here: < <https://troubleamongthestars.com/> >

To give you an idea, here is an excerpt from my review, dealing with just one story in the issue ((in the review I cover every story and poem in issue #5).

STILL LETHAL – by Vincent Morgan

Premise:

Amun Crane (not his real name) is down on his luck. He is stuck aboard a deep-space station owing both the station and the gangster who really runs the joint a great deal of money he doesn't have. Fortunately, Somodius Moe, an unsavoury genetically-altered heavy-worlder, undoubtedly up to extreme no good, offers him an illegal job that at least offers the prospect of escaping the station with the positive plus of a mere 50/50 chance of getting killed. Naturally, Amun accepts. He ships aboard a run-down tramp spacecraft that gives tramps a bad name. Unfortunately, nothing is what it seems. Everything is in fact much worse.

Review:

Dang! I love this story. Would have definitely snapped it up for *Polar Borealis* had it been offered to me. Granted, it reads like the opening of a novel, being open-ended with no resolution, but even so, in its atmosphere and its ambience it is all of a piece. More importantly, I quite enjoyed it. I was grinning while reading it.

Superficially the plot might be construed as the sort of thing that would happen to Han Solo in his younger days, but the clichés predate the Star Wars series. Like those films, the story is a pastiche of everything wonderful about the elements found in good old-fashioned space operas. Cliché's, yes, but with an air of jaded sophistication and deft original touches that remind me of A. Bertram Chandler who used his experience serving in the merchant marine to enliven his accounts of life aboard space-freighters with incidents based on genuine ship-board life. Which is not to say that this story is realistic extrapolation, but rather that its portrayal of less than perfect behaviour and devious intentions ring true in the setting.

A moment of being identified and yet not identified, for example, depends upon a factor obvious in hindsight but not something I recall seeing before. At any rate I found it delightful. Also the tendency of some characters not to act in their own best interests because they simply can't be bothered to look that far ahead. Another realistic touch, I figure. The overall plot may seem a giant cliché, but the individual moments which comprise it make the story fresh and innovative to the point of being genuinely entertaining. It's the author having fun with what seems like a standard formula yet becomes something better. We share the author's fun.

Chandler, yes, but with a bit of Dashiell Hammett and perhaps a touch of Philip K. Dick thrown in. I was pleasantly surprised. You will be, too.

Find my complete review here:

<https://amazingstories.com/2020/03/clubhouse-review-trouble-among-the-stars-magazine/>

BOOKS TO BURDEN YOUR MIND

How Do You Ride a Gray Planet? Ask Rip Foster! Or, the Unknown Space Cadet Rides Again.

(Previously published in Amazing Stories (online) Magazine Jan 17, 2014)

A bit of nostalgic fun here.

In 1952 (the same year the first of the “Tom Corbett, Space Cadet” novels, *STAND BY FOR MARS*, came out) the Whitman Publishing Company of Racine, Wisconsin published *RIP FOSTER RIDES THE GRAY PLANET*.

Being only a year old, I was aware of neither book.

(Incidentally, the Whitman Publishing Company specialized in “*Books for Boys and Girls*” such as ‘*TOM STETSON AND THE GIANT JUNGLE ANTS*’ and ‘*ROY ROGERS AND THE RAIDERS OF SAWTOOTH RIDGE*’.)

However, on my ninth birthday, July 1960, my parents gave me a 1958 edition of the “Gray Planet” book now retitled ‘*ASSIGNMENT IN SPACE* with *RIP FOSTER*’.

Admittedly the cover is a tad violent. My mother would have been suspicious. Probably my RCAF Dad had the final say. Flipping through the book he would have noticed illustrations with not very futuristic uniforms and multiple paragraphs emphasizing the importance of being able to do calculations in your head. This would probably have struck him as a useful motivational tool and not totally gibbering BS like most science fiction was (as he saw it).

I was delighted to receive a nifty book with so promising a cover. To me the phrase “with Rip Foster” implied it was one of a series of novels and I earnestly hoped my parents would buy me the rest as various celebrations went by, but alas, was not to be. It was a standalone.

Naturally I compared it to the Tom Corbett series I already possessed. I decided the Foster book was more ‘mature’ and therefore flattering to a little kid like me.

First of all, Tom Corbett is merely a ‘Space Cadet’ striving to prove himself worthy of ‘The Solar Guard,’ the latter policing a Utopian future society where all one had to worry about were gangsters and space pirates.

Rip Foster, on the other hand, though a recent graduate, is a ‘Planeteer,’ a sort of pioneer elite responsible for exploring and colonizing the moons and planets of the Solar System. They are in not-so-friendly rivalry with the ‘Spacemen’ (formerly called ‘Rocketeers’) who man and maintain the actual space craft ferrying the Planeteers from one planet to another. Always ready to harass and humiliate each other, not to mention inflict the horrors of pranks and practical jokes whenever possible, their unity is rock solid in the face of the enemy.

Ahh, the enemy. Bad guys you see. The good guys are the Planeteers and Spacemen of the FFG, or ‘Federation of Free Governments’ who own about half the Earth and assorted cherry-picked bits of the Solar System. The bad guys are ‘The Consolidation of People’s Governments’ (or ‘Consops’ for short) who enslave half the Earth and rule left-over bits of the Solar System (which leaves them feeling a trifle annoyed, they would prefer the best bits). But no one calls them ‘Consops.’ They are ‘Connies’ pure and simple. Hmm, ring any bells 1950s cold war style perhaps? Dang Connies.

As far as I can tell, the only visual difference between a Connie and a Planeteer, judging from an illo showing a Connie Commander surrounded by two FFG

Planeteers and a Spaceman, is that the Connies wear slightly higher boots and look unfriendly. Oh, and they wear RED tunics, hint, hint. The Planeteers wear black uniforms. Hmm. Who does THAT make you think of? Unintentional I'm sure. (Spacemen wear blue uniforms, possibly denoting their less elite status.)

And the Connies don't christen their Space Cruisers with names like "Sagittarius" or "Scorpius." No. The inhuman rotters NUMBER their space craft, as in "Consolidation Cruiser Sixteen."

Even worse, Connie space craft are purely practical in design *"They were not graceful. Rip could see no beauty in their lines..."* whereas *"Snapper boats used by the Federation... were of American design, and they showed the American's love of clean lines. Federation fighter craft were slim and streamlined, even though the streamlining was of no use in space."* (A similar comparison was often drawn between Soviet and American space craft during the Space Race.)

What else? Planeteers willingly jeopardize their mission to save wounded or captured fellow Planeteers, whereas Connies have no hesitation in sacrificing their comrades in order to carry out their mission. Perhaps, as a consequence of this, Connies defect at the drop of a hat, or should I say at the shattering of a space helmet?

Comparing the style of spacesuits, it would be fair to say RTGP art (by E. Deane Cate) represents the last of the 1940s style of SF art, whereas AIS illos (by Denny McMains) is a transition to early 1950s style. In the latter the Connies wear tubular helmets instead of goldfish bowl types. Silly Connies.

I think the author of the Rip Foster book, Blake Savage (real name Hal Goodwin, allegedly) did a masterful job of inspiring "Gung Ho" patriotism among the young lads reading the book. (Well, me, being Canadian, not so much. Our brand of patriotism more laid back you see.) Rip Foster, Tom Corbett, Tom Swift, all that crowd, patriotic in the extreme. I'm not sure it was even possible to publish a young adult's book in those days without due reverence to the established authorities as part of the theme.

Another difference between the Tom Corbett books and the single Rip Foster book has to do with the amount of alien life in the Solar System. In the Space Cadet books, apart from dinosaurs in the Venusian swamps, there is NO alien life. Oh to be sure, Space Cadet Roger is a Martian, and Space Cadet Astro is a Venusian, but they are quite human, being descendants of Earth colonists.

The Martians in the Rip Foster book I'm not so sure of. Neither is Rip Foster:

"He tried to figure out... what it was that made them strange... It wasn't the blue-whiteness of their skins nor the very large, expressionless eyes. It was something about their bodies... Suddenly Rip thought he had it. The Martian's legs and arms joined the torso at a slightly different angle, giving him an angular look. That was what made him look like a caricature of a human. Although he was human, of course. As human as any of them."

Mutated colonist adapted to the Martian environment? Intelligent alien species granted human status? The book isn't clear.

What IS clear is that alien life is everywhere in the Solar System. There are nasty *teekals* on Callisto, water-hole people on Venus who like to *fleedle*, also Venusian rabbits, *silly dillies* on Mercury who resemble armadillos and are passionate about oxygen, *goopies* on Ganymede, and no doubt other critters I missed glancing through the book. Since these creatures are referenced, but none of the moons and planets visited, I assumed future books in the series would reveal more. Nope.

And then there are the quick ‘throw away’ descriptions of advanced technology to lend authenticity to the futuristic ‘feel’ of the book. For instance:

“The spaceman... was turning an audio-mag through a hand viewer, chuckling at the cartoons.”

Or:

“Rip took the counter stylus and inscribed his name, serial number, and signature on the blank plastic sheet. Gears whirred as the data was recorded.”

And:

“...it happened that the spacemen of the SCN Scorpius turned their valves, threw their controls and disengaged their boron control rods, and the great cruiser flashed into space...”

Seems methane is heated by a thorium-powered nuclear reactor and somehow “a little nuclear material leaks into the tubes.” Result: the ship’s blast tubes get coated with carbon soot and radioactive thorium releasing Alpha particles “not dangerous unless breathed or eaten. It won’t go through clothes or skin.”

Rip and the nine Planeteers under his command are assigned the task of cleaning the Scorpius blast tubes. At least they wear protective clothing and masks with respirators. And they get their revenge when they leave the tubes:

“...somehow all their arms and hands beat against each other... the protective clothing was saturated with fine dust. It rose from them in a choking cloud, was picked up, and dispersed by the ventilating system. It was contaminated dust. The automatic radiation safety equipment filled the ship with an earsplitting buzz of warning. Spacemen clapped emergency respirators to their faces and spoke unkindly of Rip’s Planeteers in the saltiest space language they could think of...”

I’ll bet. Oh, we’re going to have a lot of fun with radiation in the future. All kinds fun practical jokes...

What about riding a gray planet? Where’s the gray planet?

Seems there is a small asteroid in the asteroid belt which has an unusual property, it consists entirely of radioactive thorium. So naturally Rip and his Planeteer squad are sent to this unnamed asteroid to explode a couple of atomic bombs and drive it out of the asteroid belt toward the Earth in a long loop past Mercury and around the Sun. They ‘ride’ the asteroid for months camped out on its surface and hiding in a cave they’ve carved out of a thorium cliff. And then there’s the lingering radiation from the bomb craters. By the time they reach the Earth they’ve been exposed to enough Alpha, Beta and Gamma rays to light up like Christmas trees. Not a problem. After a month in hospital:

“The worst of the radiation sickness was over and he was mending fast. Here and there were little blood stains just below the surface of his skin, and he had no more hair than a plastic ball. Otherwise he looked normal. The stains would go away and his hair would grow back within a matter of weeks.”

All during the fifties people were worried about nuclear fallout from a nuclear war. Silly people. Why, all you’ll need is a month long rest cure in a hospital to get back in top shape ... assuming you can find an intact hospital that is ...

Plot? Almost forgot. After the Scorpius deposits the Planeteers on the asteroid, it leaves for duties elsewhere in the Solar System. Then Consolidation Cruiser Sixteen, jam-packed with Consop Connies, arrives to evict the Planeteers. Shenanigans ensue. Shenanigans with rules:

“Connies and Feds ... were constantly skirmishing. They fought over property, over control of ports on distant planets and moons, and over space salvage. Often

there was bloodshed... But the law... said that no space ship could fire on a space ship... firing on a space ship was war, and the first such act could mean starting war throughout the Solar System."

You'll be glad to learn Rip Foster and his Planeteers improvise with material on hand as they ride the gray planet. Lots of guys get wounded on both sides, but no one is killed. Just like real life ...

To be fair, the book IS a genuine glimpse into the fears and worries of people back when it was written. Worth reading for that reason alone. Plus it's a fun adventure. Really.

The Scrambled Man – A Novel by Michael Bertrand

Thanks to Inventor Roland Banks and his United Teleline Corporation, teleport stations are becoming ubiquitous throughout the Earth, and more and more people are using them. However many still don't trust the new technology, especially when somebody materializes as a blob of tissue so randomized even the DNA is scrambled. Investigator Adam Eden, the world's first genetically perfect man, needs to identify the victim and come up with a credible explanation for what happened to ensure it will never happen again. Public confidence in the new technology is at risk. Not to mention human lives. A solution to the problem must be found!

The author, Michael Bertrand, is a prolific blogger, and in 2014 set himself the task of writing a million words. He succeeded, and this novel, his first, is one of the results of that effort. It was self-published in 2015. As typical of most first novels, it has a number of flaws that would have been flagged in any workshop I've ever attended or presented, and a number of strengths and virtues that show signs of great promise.

Flaws first. I feel a couple of plot points are introduced later than they should have been, which weakens their credibility, and that there's not enough description of settings to create a firm sense of place for the various locations the characters find themselves. A tad too many characters actually. Conflating some of them would have aided the flow of the plot methinks.

However, since this is a published work rather than a work in progress, being nitpicky over minor potential improvements is pointless. All that is relevant to potential readers are the positive aspects which make the book worth reading.

First of all, the identity of *The Scrambled Man* took me by surprise. Not what I was anticipating. Well done, Michael. And secondly, discovering who was scrambled does not resolve the problem, in fact it raises the stakes and makes the problem much, much worse. Rather clever that.

I also enjoyed the occasional "neat touches," like the fact that aircraft are mere hobby toys since all commercial cargo and passenger traffic is now strictly monopolized by UT Corporation, or the incident with the Teleport Station "official greeter" who gets so annoyed with an "anti-telly" protester he shoves him into a teleport booth to get rid of him. Said teleportee consequently becomes convinced he's been transformed into a mere replica without a soul, much to his group's propaganda advantage. And then there's the growing frustration of an investigator who teleports to another city to interview the leader of said protest group, only to be completely ignored because the guy refuses to talk to "dead people." Michael doesn't just use teleportation as a "gimmick," he explores the possible implications and impact on people's daily lives.

Another thing that struck me is that Michael manages to reveal the selfish motivations underlying all his characters, both major and minor. Everyone has a purpose, an agenda, an angle, a pet peeve, or even an obsession. This is something beginning writers often leave out, to their detriment, since place-holder characters are frequently off-putting to readers. Michael has successfully avoided this problem.

And successfully captured the mindset of prominent public figures who find it ridiculously easy to cover up a potential catastrophe since they identify the concept of “the public good” with themselves and not the ignorant members of the public who do NOT need to know and are in fact better off not knowing. The complacent “we know best” attitude of the powers-that-be comes across quite well.

To sum up, *The Scrambled Man* is a fast-paced who-done-it that would not be out-of-place on stage or as a radio show. Michael firmly believes “Science Fiction is the literature of ideas” and what you get are onion layers of concepts peeled off one after the other till the truth is revealed. The book, despite the teleportation angle, is not hard science but more of a detective adventure mystery, and as such, a lot of fun.

Disclaimer: Michael and I have known each other for years. We’re both members of the B.C. SF Association. So naturally the review is biased in his favour, but really only in accordance with my policy concerning first time authors. Rather than “workshop” an already published book or story, I consider it far more useful to list strengths and virtues and thus encourage both potential readers and the writer himself at one and the same time. Onwards and upwards the universal motto I say.

Besides, I enjoyed the book, which outweighs any minor teething aspects to the writing as far as I’m concerned. A lot of potential shown. I quite look forward to his next novel. (You are planning one, aren’t you Michael?)

By the by, I ordered the print-on-demand hard copy from Amazon. I expected to receive a pocketbook. Instead what came in the mail was an 8&1/2 inch by 11 inch soft cover about 90 pages thick. Are all print-on-demand books in this format? I have no idea. It does make for easy reading though, the font being a good size and a decent amount of white space to rest the eyes. Looks good.

TONIGHT’S MOVIE – SPACEBALLS

By Michael Bertrand

Well, I have run out of good movies, so I figured I would finally get around to watching this piece of crap movie by that Melvin Books guy, I don’t know, I think he did *Baby Wolfman* and *Inflamed Saddle Sores* or something like that ...

I kid, I kid. Of course I absolutely love this movie, it is my favorite Mel Brooks movie, beating out *Blazing Saddles* by gnat’s pube largely because, all else being equal, I like science fiction more than Westerns. Third place goes to *Young Frankenstein* with honorable mention to *High Anxiety*.

We simply will not discuss *Robin Hood Men in Tights* or *Dracula: Dead and Loving it*.

The way I see it, if someone has it in them to make one hilariously funny movie, they are golden, and if they make more than one, they are mega platinum in my books. Most people could not make one decent comedy if you gave them a million tries, so making more than one truly awesome one makes Mel Brooks, in my books, a genius.

And I have never even seen *The Producers*.

Now, on with the show. I might be quoting the movie in this blog. I will try to avoid it but I might not be able to stop myself.

You have been warned.

I would totally buy a toy of the ridiculously huge version of the Spaceballs ship in the opening shot of the movie. I would love it. With, of course, the “WE BRAKE FOR NOBODY” sticker.

Now this is comedy, my friends. (I am likely to indulge in a lot of comedy nerd squeeing in this blog entry. Again, warning.)

The “Mr. Radar” joke is hilarious precisely because, in addition to being funny in and of itself, they do absolutely nothing to draw attention to it. Lamer, more pathetic people would have had the characters pointing at the sign and mugging, and/or really turning up the suck by having a character say something like “Oh, and this one is called MISTER RADAR! Ha ha ha!”, and all because some corporate schmuck from the studio worried that stupid people might not notice the joke. But one of my rules of comedy is “Fuck stupid people.” They have *Jackass*. I want to have a sign on my door like one of those signs that tells you how tall you have to be to get on a ride, but instead it says “You have to be THIS smart to get these jokes.” Too dumb? Too bad.

Once you accept that you are aiming for the top half of the middle of the road and not the bottom half, you are freed from worrying about whether illiterate inbred invertebrates will get your scintillating wit, hip references, and deep multifaceted satire, and you can get on with the business of making the funny.

And that includes brilliant jokes that you only get if you are paying attention to the movie, like Mr. Radar, and thus both read the sign on the radar and get that it is a reference to the Mr. Coffee machine.

Tooling around the galaxy in a space Winnebago listening to heavy metal is one hell of a great way to go through life, son.

Pizza the Hutt is one of the most hilariously disgusting creations ever. The only thing I can compare it to is the living curry sausage from the *Metamorph* episode of *Red Dwarf*.

Also, Pizza the Hutt might well be Dom DeLuise’s greatest role. After Jeremy the Crow in *NIMH*, of course.

Interesting trivia: While the voice of Dot Matrix, the sassy virginity protecting droid of Princess Vespa, was comedy legend Joan Rivers, back when it was a lot easier to like her, the person in the shiny suit was actually Lorene Yarnell, of famous (if you are a *Muppets* fan) mime duo Shields and Yarnell.

More genius: anyone could think of the joke where they literally jam the radar, with actual jam. That is funny, but not genius. But having Dark Helmet taste the jam and say “Raspberry. Only one man would dare to give me the raspberry ... LONE STARR,” that is genius. That is that rare thing that I go on about: taking it to the next level. Starting off someplace where you think you know where it is going, but then taking it that one step further than you expect. That is genius.

The shot where the jam hits the radar disk always reminds me of that indie comedy classic, *Hardware Wars*.

Nobody in all known universes could have delivered the line “I’m a Mog! Half man, half dog! I’m my own best friend” as charmingly or effectively as the late great John Candy.

And in any other movie, with people one iota less talented, the line “What’s the matter, Colonel Sanders ... CHICKEN?” would be obvious and lame. But because Rick Moranis is a genius, and so is Mel Brooks’ writing, the joke is set up way, way at the beginning of the movie, so by the time the payoff comes, almost half an hour in, you have forgotten his name is Colonel Sanders, and the delivery and editing is such that it comes as a complete surprise, and hence, is hilarious.

Now that is quality comedy. A setup and a payoff half an hour apart? That takes faith in the intelligence of your audience. And for that, you have to be confident in your ability to make that work. Genius.

I never noticed just how many physical hits Moranis takes in this movie. I bet he did his own stunts, too.

Including the amazingly perfect dead comedy faint he does after “Smoke ’em if you got ’em.” That kind of thing you cannot do with a stuntman and it takes total confidence to do a dead fall like that. You have to just fall forward like a lump without reacting at all.

“Get me the videocassette of *Spaceballs: The Movie*.” That is still damned funny, but it was really funny when the movie first came out, back in the eighties, right at the crest of the home video revolution. Believe it or not, kids, you used to only be able to see movies by going to the theater. I know, I know ... I find it hard to believe myself, and I was alive for it.

Bill Pullman does a pretty good dead fall when he collapses in the desert too, though his is only a half-body dead fall.

You can’t help but love the Dinks. Way less creepy than Jawas. Though oddly, when I found out they were giant rats under the hoods, that made them a lot less scary to me.

Yogurt sounds Jewish, but he must be Reform, because I am nearly positive there is no such thing as kosher yogurt.

“Why don’t you go back to the golf course and work on your putts!” Now there is some Drewish humour for you. Being a comedy nerd, I have absorbed a lot of Yiddish by osmosis, but for those even more goyish than I am, putts = putz = Jewish slang for penis.

(Yes folks, putz means penis, as does schmuck. I bet you have heard many perfectly respectable people in middle of the road family friendly comedy use either or both of those words and had no idea just how filthy they were (probably unknowingly) being. This is the sort of thing that keep Jewish people amused at our expense. God bless them, they deserve a yuck or two.)

If you are a prison guard in a comedy, never ever follow the heroes around a corner or anywhere out of frame, because then all it takes is a sound effect of punches, and they have your uniforms.

The scene where Princess Vespa sings “Nobody knows the troubles I’ve seen” (and it’s the gospel version, not the later secular version) reminds me of this amazingly hilarious scene from the sitcom *Newhart* where, I kid you not, Stephanie, the spoiled yuppie princess, sings Old Man River from the musical *Showboat*.

I couldn’t find that scene online, but I did find Judy Garland, one of the whitest women who ever lived, singing the song, and that is almost as bad a fit.

Yeah, tote that barge, lift that bale, Dorothy.

Man, it is good to see this movie in its full unedited uncensored glory. The last two times I saw it, it was taped from television, and while a partial *Spaceballs* beats

the hell out of the full version of most other movies, a censored *Spaceballs* is still a pitiful thing.

I mean, the entire Asshole scene is cut, not to mention “We ain’t found shit” and a lot of other wonderful moments. Sad.

“Ready for metamorphosis!” “Good, then get on with it!” “Ready, Kafka?” I can’t believe I’ve seen this movie so many times, and I never caught that joke before now. Another sign of a great movie: each time you watch it, you get a little more out of it.

OK, to amend my previous request: I would pay money for a toy of Spaceball 1, but only if it transformed into Mega Maid.

It’s hard for me to imagine Dick Van Patten as Jewish because I watched so much *Eight Is Enough* as a kid. It would be like trying to imagine Ward Cleaver as Jewish. He is just so white bread to me.

Though honestly, a Jewish version of *Leave It to Beaver* could be funny. “So, a little hard on the Beav you were last night, nu?”

So, is Spaceballs: The Shaving Cream thick and rich enough to stop a generic Spaceballs guard? Yup.

One of the Great Comedy Mysteries in my life is what on Earth possessed Rick Moranis to suddenly go Jamaican on the whole “I can’t believe you fell for the oldest trick in the book! What’s with you, man?” bit. The strangest part is that it makes no sense, and yet, mysteriously, it works. It totally works. Genius. I wonder how many different accents he tried before he hit that one?

Every time I try to imagine myself doing drag, all I can hear in my head is “I’m the bearded lady!” from this movie.

That’s the thing ... I am really attached to my beard. I have had it for a long time and I look so much better with a beard than without. Every time I come across a picture of myself pre-beard, I say “Holy crap, where is the other half of my face? Fat guys are supposed to have two chins, not zero!”

So if I did drag, I pretty much would have to go the Bearded Lady route. (By the way, in case you never figured it out yourself, there is no such thing as a real Bearded Lady. They have always been just some bearded fat guy in drag. And now you know.)

“Come back here you fat bearded BITCH!” That might be an offensive line coming from someone who is not as adorable and lovable as Rick Moranis, even when he’s being a comedy villain.

It was so awesome of John Hurt to reprise his most infamous role for a silly comedy like this. I mean, he is a legendary actor and, these days, known for a lot more than having an alien burst out of his stomach in the movie *Alien*. But at the time, he might well have wanted to distance himself from his *Alien* role. So bravo for him for doing it all again for a silly ass joke.

In the weird and crazy landscape of my mind, the space Winnebago from this movie is somehow connected to Dan Ackroyd at the end of *Sneakers* telling James Earl Jones “I want ... a Winnebago.”

Prince Valium is possibly Jim J. Bullock’s least rewarding role ever, and that poor guy has done some highly unrewarding roles.

I want Mel Brooks’ life. He got to write, direct, and star in his own damn movies. Sure, some of them are better than others, but if I got to do that only once in my life, I would die a happy man.

Oh right. And once more, for the record, this flick does, indeed, have some REAL special features. I am watching a “behind the scenes” thing that must have been done

back when the film was in the theaters. So it is extra content AND eighties flavored. Keen.

There is also an audio commentary by the man himself, Mel Brooks, but I don't feel like watching the whole thing again. Some other time, I will do it, though. I must hear the words of the master! SENSEI!

MESSED-UP MOVIE MOPES

A Few Thoughts on Shin Godzilla – Comparing *Godzilla* (2014), *Godzilla King of the Monsters* (2019), and *Shin Godzilla* (2016), I've decided *Shin* is my favourite of the three.

To be sure, *Shin* lacks traditional Godzilla violence, or at least, doles it out more sparingly (mostly the monster ploughs ahead in a straight line like a bulldozer while the authorities talk rather than shoot), and there's no romantic subplot competing with the violence (there sort of is but Machiavellian political plotting is more important than gonads or even stopping Godzilla). There's plenty of CGI, but it lacks the unrealistic theatricality of beastie combat in the other two films, which are, after all, attempts to outdo the over-the-top apocalyptic wave of impossible levels of violence in previous films, a violence so unreal it matches the unreality of the Godzilla character itself, a walking, fire-breathing metaphor and icon representing atomic destruction. Normally, Japanese films (like Japanese culture) aren't into literal interpretations in a Grogard sense, they want subtext and meaningful symbolism. But *Shin Godzilla* is different.

There, I've said it. *Shin Godzilla* is filmed as if it were a real catastrophe taking place in the real world, which is why I love this movie. For one thing, unlike the other two films, where many scenes take place in the dark or in driving rain or amid billowing smoke and dust, *Shin Godzilla* takes place, for the most part, on bright sunny days where Godzilla appears antiseptically and pristinely detailed to the point of being able to study it at leisure rather than catching fleeting impressions. In fact, some scenes are downright lovely, like picture postcards, apart from the giant monster in the background. Even the havoc of its movement is brilliant in the sunshine, the CGI so superb I was (almost) convinced I was watching high definition footage of the great tsunami of recent memory. The level of realism is incredible. Only in distant shots do you get the impression of the traditional toy trains and model vehicles being flung about. Heck, even the tanks look real, and the type of explosions as shells and missiles impact Godzilla quite authentic, which makes for a refreshing change. This is a film I can actually watch and make sense of what I'm looking at, as opposed to the usual rapid kaleidoscope of brief impressions so often hurled at the viewer in the most recent Godzilla films. Yes, "less is more," but in *Shin Godzilla* "more with less hidden" makes for a visually stunning film, and a rather beautiful one at that.

Despite the fact *Shin Godzilla* stands out by its original, somewhat un-Japanese style, sensibility, and approach, it was extremely popular in Japan. Just as the original Godzilla wasn't really about a monster so much as a cathartic treatment of the monstrous nature of atomic warfare, *Shin Godzilla* is really a satire of the nature of Japanese politics and how it goes about solving any problem. I would say this was the most attractive feature of the film to the local audience. Not for nothing is Japan

ruled by committees whose members are terrified of losing face before public opinion. Every decision is weighed and filtered through the need to spin doctor everything without risking reputation, so much so that in this film Japanese politicians openly envy the American politicians for their ability to make quick idiotic decisions as opposed to the Japanese tendency to make slow idiotic decisions after the fact.

I also appreciate the humour of politicians being interrupted and contradicted by changing circumstances even as they attempt to sooth the public mind at press conferences. Not to mention the way an emergency meeting would suddenly realize a new factor now meant it was under the jurisdiction of a different department so everyone would adjourn, march down the hall, and reconvene the *same* meeting with the *same* people in the newly-appropriate department board room. Or the compromise replacement Prime Minister staring down at the bowl of noodles on his desk after a prolonged luncheon meeting, saying out loud to himself “And now the noodles are soggy. I knew this job wouldn’t be easy when I agreed to do it.” And, of course, the only committee accomplishing anything is composed entirely of misfits and oddballs who agree to do away with the usual honorifics in interpersonal relationships and treat each other as equals, a subversive and wonderfully hilarious concept for tradition-bound Japanese audiences. Apparently many westerners failed to notice these subtleties and experienced the “politics” of the film as deadly dull and boring. I found the political shenanigans to be sprightly amusing and the whole point of the film. This is the *Alphaville* of Godzilla movies, and I mean that as a compliment.

As for Godzilla itself, the underlying concept is well thought out and unusually complex for a Godzilla film. Of course the idea of an individual monster that mutates whenever convenient and useful (as opposed to a mutation process over many generations) is downright silly but, on the face of it, rather terrifying. Not something we want to see in Mother Nature. The “science” in this film isn’t *Star Trek*-style bafflegab. It actually makes sense, at least within the logic of the premise. Good enough to suspend disbelief I say.

But it is the constant, dead-serious political second-guessing at the municipal, national, and international levels that is the true delight of this film. The shot of the Japanese Prime Minister and the surviving members of his cabinet bowing deeply to an embarrassed French Ambassador strikes Japanese audiences (and me) as profound, dignified, and hysterically funny to the point of howling with laughter. That their ineptitude would reduce them to such humiliation! The deadpan expressions of the politicians throughout the film simply adds to the perverse pleasure of watching them convert a disaster into a catastrophe through an abundance of caution. I caught the sense of this the first time I saw the film. It is only on watching it a second time I understood the subtle genius of the script and acting. Aside from the original *Gojira*, routinely considered by the Japanese themselves to be among the ten best Japanese films in the history of their cinema, in my opinion *Shin Godzilla* is far and away the best and most innovative Godzilla film since the original.

I know you disagree with my opinion, but the fact remains that *Gojira* and *Shin Godzilla* are the two Godzilla films I can watch over and over and enjoy them afresh each and every time. Go figure.

Ten Films from the 1920s You Need in Your Collection – Why? So you can watch them at least once a year like I do. The first five will be iconic films that are simply among the best of the era. The second five, not necessarily the worst, nor

iconic exactly, but certainly among the most highly entertaining of the era, at least in my opinion.

FIVE BEST FILMS:

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) – Just plain weird. Figures. Carl Mayer wrote the plot based on an idea by the poet Hans Janowitz. Then Hermann Warm, a member of the expressionist *Der Sturm* Theatre group in Berlin went totally bonkers with insane sets consisting mostly of paint splashed on canvas. Even the shadows were painted! Abstract in the extreme. Bear in mind it began production in 1919, the year after WWI ended, and investment funds were in short supply for German film studios. Entire movie cost only the equivalent of \$20,000 USD. Almost impossible now to make a film with sets as cheap as these, but boy, are they effective. Like the delirium of a dream, or more pointedly, of a nightmare. Werner Krauss is creepy as hell as Caligari, the mesmerist controlling the somnambulist Cesare. Conrad Veidt, always a brilliant actor, plays Cesare, a creature of chilling awkwardness in movement, and so incredibly thin practically a walking corpse that has already wasted away. In America, where anti-German feeling still ran strong, there were several riots at showings in protest against this obvious manifestation of German decadence and unhealthy indecency. Great publicity, in other words. In many ways, a brilliant but morbid film exhibiting more than anyone wants to know about the dark cobwebs of the human mind.

(To my knowledge the Image Entertainment version, running at the correct speed and based on a fine 35 mm print of the 1923 German rerelease, is the best available.)

Nosferatu (1922) – Everyone knows the background story? Unable to obtain the rights to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Prana Film studio filmed a version anyway, substituting Count Orlock (the *Nosferatu*) for Count Dracula, but otherwise leaving the plot of the novel largely intact. It was a critical success, till Stoker's estate sued and an English court ordered all copies of the film destroyed. The producers panicked, even though English law could not be enforced in Germany, and sold the rights and all footage, which wound up being recut into several versions available in Europe only in illegal, underground showings. A cult movie before the concept was invented.

Directed by Friedrich Murnau, the film is wonderfully atmospheric. What I particularly like are the bizarre and rather spooky buildings visible in the film. They're not sets, but actual, mostly derelict, structures that were due for demolition. They no longer exist. And, of course, none of the costumes contain plastic or artificial fibres, so look quite authentic. Max Schreck, as Count Orlock, resembles a were-rat more than a vampire, but is definitely somebody you never want to meet. Some sequences are boring, a couple even risible, but here and there are some utterly chilling moments that stick in your mind forever once you've seen them. Overall a very impressive film.

(I have the Kino International version as restored by the F.W. Murnau Foundation, complete with original score and said to be the most complete version available.)

The Lost World (1925) – A delightful romp based on the novel by Arthur Conan Doyle. A large part of the entertainment value is the character of Professor Challenger (played by Wallace Beery), a man who has zero tolerance for fools and has never heard of anger management. Even more enthralling, contains numerous animated dinosaurs by Willis O'Brien, the genius who later did the critters for *King Kong*. This is *the* dinosaurs-atop-a-lost-plateau film. Never surpassed. Bull Montana in a form-fitting ape-man suit, unlike the usual bulky gorilla costume so often seen in grade B

pictures, makes a convincing “missing link.” The one jarring note to modern audiences is the expedition’s black cook Zambo, played for laughs by Jules Cowles in blackface as the stereotypical good darkie, rather stupid but brave enough in an emergency. This character is extremely painful to watch. On the other hand, he provides a graphic example of what used to be taken for granted nearly 100 years ago, but today, to my mind, serves an educational purpose, revealing how far we’ve come (or how far we think we’ve come).

Despite a standard silly love triangle with multiple misunderstandings, the principle virtue of this film is sheer spectacle. It even goes one better than the novel, which ends with Challenger bringing a Pterodactyl back to London, a creature which unfortunately flies away before he can properly exhibit it. In the movie he brings home a Brontosaurus, and its rampage through the streets of the British Capital is amazing. No less than 2,000 extras were employed as fleeing citizens. This was a big budget film for its day and provides a wonderful showcase for O’Brien’s talent.

(The Flicker Alley version I have, which pulls together footage recently found in assorted archives worldwide, is purportedly the most complete. It must be, as it’s running time is virtually identical to the original. Yet a few effects shots, known to exist, are not included. No sure why. Perhaps quality too poor. Yet this is the first time the full 10 reels of the original film (99% anyway) has been made available, and well restored at that. Probably the best version you can ever hope to see.)

Metropolis (1926) – This is the big one. The mother of all science fiction films, even though it’s mostly a gothic romance in tone. The scenes of the mighty Metropolis itself, and the foreboding underground factories and workers’ city have become veritable icons of dystopia on a spree. Who can forget the astounding laboratory scene where the mad scientist Rotwang brings his robot Maria to life? Or the Moloch vision in the underground factory? Visually an astonishing film, utterly amazing. Fritz Lang’s masterpiece. 37,383 people in the cast. Took 16 months to shoot. Cost 7 million marks. Incredible.

Pity it was let down by the logic flaws in the script by his wife Thea von Harbou, but at the time the idea that workers and capitalists should come together to benefit all was kind of refreshing. The acting at times, even accounting for the emotive style of silent film theatrics, seems overwrought and histrionic, though I’m impressed by the performance of Alfred Abel as John Frederson, the Master of Metropolis. He reminds me, in appearance and gesture, of the former Shah of Iran, something that would probably have pleased the Shah, having spent a lifetime trying to prove he was as tough and decisive as his father. For him, Frederson would definitely have been a role model.

Thing is, the original Berlin showing was 17 reels long. This was cut down for German distribution, cut further for European showings, and cut again down to 12 reels for the British version. Sadly, the American version, the one most often seen, is only 7 reels in size, or less than half the length of the original version, which is lost forever. Yet what remains is powerful and stunning.

(I own the Kino International version which, at 148 minutes long, contains about 33 minutes of recently discovered footage which, though far short of the length of the original film, is probably the most you will ever get to watch. Clear and sharp and beautifully restored. Somewhat melancholy fact: you get to see an expanded version of what Forrest J. Ackerman saw and raved about all his life. He never saw the Olympic-sized racing stadium sequence, for instance. I find this a bit sad.)

(I also own the Kino International Giorgio Moroder 1984 release which included about 7 minutes of newly found footage. Rather controversial, because in addition to tinting and sound effects, Moroder added a score composed of songs by Freddie Mercury, Pat Benatar, Adam Ant, Bonnie Tyler, Loverboy, and others. Purists howled with anger. Personally, I quite enjoy it. It really adds a throbbing, pounding dynamic, not the sort of thing I normally enjoy, but in this case it works rather well. I have fun imagining how 1926 audiences would have reacted. Turns the movie into a rock opera. That I happen to like it is bizarre. But I do.)

Woman in the Moon (1929) – Another Fritz Lang triumph, usually cited for its prescient vision of a spacecraft capable of travelling to the Moon, courtesy of the film’s science advisors Willy Ley and Hermann Oberth, and the fact it was later suppressed by the Nazis for fear it might draw attention to the advanced state of Germany’s military rocket program. Much of the technology does make sense. Zero gravity is portrayed, countered by magnetic boots and numerous handhold loops. Launching out of a giant pool of water was viewed as a sensible way of preventing the powerful exhaust of moonship-sized rocket engines from damaging the surrounding landscape. Even the idea that the moon possessed an atmosphere in its deepest craters was considered possible at the time, though the idea that it would be breathable is not credible. On the other hand, the Lunar landscape looks reasonably authentic, given the expectations based on telescope photography which tended to exaggerate shadows and hence the “ruggedness” of mountains. Having a breathable atmosphere is the one impossible thing we can grant the film.

Often overlooked is how much fun the plot prior to the mission is. Here the poverty-stricken mad scientist who knows how to get to the Moon is actually mad, having been driven out of his mind by his peers who mock him. The cabal of rich industrialists hoping to get their hands on his spaceship blueprints in order to mine gold on the moon (everybody assumes it is abundant there) are suitably nasty and greedy, but the stand-out bad guy performance is their po-faced enforcer played by Fritz Rasp, who also played Frederson’s personal thug in *Metropolis*. Sort of a professional creep, you might say. The enthusiastic kid who stows away reminds everyone of a Hitler Youth stereotype, but this is unfair, as that perverse replacement for the Boy Scouts had not yet been mandated, Hitler not yet having come to power. Given how poor Germany was at the time, still suffering the depression-like consequences of the Versailles treaty even before the 1929 World Depression had begun, the political and criminal shenanigans come across as oddly optimistic in outlook. For that reason an escapist crowd-pleaser of a movie, and not just because of the science fiction aspects.

This film deserves its reputation for futurism captured on celluloid, but I think it is undeservedly underrated as a film per se. The overly sentimental aspects and other flaws are minor, in my opinion, and can be blamed on script writer Thea von Harbou, Lang’s wife, who was responsible for the flaws in *Metropolis* as well. Lang famously fled Germany after Goebbels offered him a job, but Thea stayed behind to write many films for the propaganda ministry, having become an enthusiastic Nazi. She offered the kind of kitsch sentimentality they liked to see in their domestic product. I believe she retired after the war, as her “talent” was no longer in demand.

(I have the Kino Video version, restored from 35mm archive prints and said to contain more footage than any version previously available in the U.S. Quite good quality. A delight to watch.)

FIVE QUITE WONDERFUL FILMS:

Witchcraft Through the Ages (1922) – I have seen this film only once, but remain impressed. Wish I had a copy. A Danish film, it consists of a remarkable series of vignettes depicting “authentic” happenings revealed in Witchcraft trials in the 15th and 16th centuries. I recall that the assorted Demons looked credibly realistic and fantastically enthusiastic. Evil reveling in evil. I saw it roughly around the time I saw Ken Russell’s 1971 film *The Devils* which is a similar sort of expose of the Church dealing with an outbreak of witchcraft-possession etc., and I recall I found the Danish film superior, more realistic, and more unsettling. Perhaps because it strove for realism and utilized a restrained yet exceedingly atmospheric photographic technique with settings often reminding me of Rembrandt-style portraits with Bosch-style happenings, whereas *The Devils* struck me as Ken Russell on a big budget finally getting to do the prolonged orgy scenes of his dreams. Of the two, I recommend *Witchcraft Through the Ages*, or *Häxan* (its Danish title). Considered quite shocking in its day, if only because it made evil seem attractive in a grotesque and perverse way, what with nudity and gleeful violence, it was seldom shown anywhere. Its director, Benjamin Christensen, later moved to Hollywood. *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929) was his most famous American film, but not having seen it I can’t comment, other than to say it is reputed to be an above-average light-hearted comedy-horror spoof with some remarkable imagery. Sounds about right. *Häxan* had moments of levity too, though it certainly wasn’t a comedy.

Aelita, Queen of Mars (1924) – Forrest J Ackerman (of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* fame) heard that this was “the Soviet *Metropolis*” and on finally seeing it, declared that it was overrated and not worth seeing. He was a tad biased. For one thing, *Aelita*, based on the novel by Alexei Tolstoy (which is quite interesting, told mostly from the Martians’ point of view), came out two years before *Metropolis* and is in no way inspired by or imitative of Lang’s film. It is wholly original, unique to itself, wildly popular in Russia (many girls born that year given the name Aelita), and so narrow in political scope that Stalin, once he was in power, preferred it never be shown again.

Why? Because it was a political comedy, making fun of the Soviet system at a time when Lenin had permitted capitalism (including advertising!) to re-emerge as a temporary boost to jumpstart an economy devastated by civil war and idiot “reforms.” Even worse, the bungling fool comic relief was a secret police detective/spy, not something likely to appeal to Stalin’s lack of humour. Most perverse of all, from the Communist point of view, though the film’s depiction of severe physical hardships, extreme rationing, habitual denunciations, seizure of mansions with entire families assigned to individual rooms, etc. were things the public desperately wanted to laugh at, scenes of evil capitalists living the good life at parties, dressed well, eating well, drinking champagne, implied Communism was not quite as much the “fun replacement” as promised. In short, as soon as the economic experiment had achieved its purpose and had been cancelled, the film became dangerously obsolete and subversive. Still functions as a good snapshot of a particular moment in Soviet history, though.

But that is not why the film is worth watching. Not the main reason, at least. *Aelita*, Queen of Mars, and her Martian civilization, are the reasons you should watch this film. Los, a scientist, kills his wife in a fit of jealous rage, then flees to Mars in a spaceship he’d been building in his spare time, along with revolutionary war hero Gusev (fond of boasting about all the enemies of the state he had killed), and the stowaway Communist cop Kratsov. They discover the Capital of Mars, ruled by King

Tuskub, whose Queen Aelita promptly falls in love with Los. Awkward. The working class consists of people wearing mind-control helmets covering their entire heads, lending them an insect-like appearance, who are kept stored in honeycomb-like structures till needed. Though he hates to be a bad guest, Gusev leads a revolution, hence the film on its 1929 release in America was titled *Aelita, Revolt of the Robots*.

What is remarkable about the film is that the sets and the costumes are truly out of this world. Director Yakov Protozanov had earlier seen *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* when visiting Paris. Inspired by its sets, he employed set designers from the avant-garde Soviet Kamerny theatre to produce what can only be described as Constructionist Abstractionist/Cubist sets totally different from anything you'd run into in real life. The costumes by Aleksandra Exter are suitably and wonderfully weird as well. The real standout aspect of the film is something I've never seen in any other film featuring humanoid aliens. The actors go to great lengths not to physically behave like humans. Their movements are subtly odd, timing off-beat, posture peculiar, even their at-rest poses are unusual. A heck of a lot of thought and care went into the presentation of the Martians. Probably due to Yakov Protozanov's direction. He seems to have been obsessed, or at least inspired, to make the film's Martian scenes a giant stir stick for the audience's sense of wonder. I love this film.

It's really two films in one, an absorbing satire on Soviet life (public adored it, critics, with party line in mind, hated it) and a truly imaginative and highly-stylized vision of a civilization on Mars. Too bad the ending sucks (It was all a bad dream!) but that probably seemed fresh and original back in 1924. The virtues of *Aelita* outweigh its flaws. Well worth watching.

(Sadly, I don't own a copy. I did, on VHR, but gave away my video collection when I moved. DVDs are available online at prices ranging from \$34 CAD to \$282 CAD. Think I'll wait till a Blu-ray comes out, if ever.)

Die Nibelungen: Siegfried (1924) – This is heroic, Wagnerian fantasy as perceived by Fritz Lang. You know it's going to be good. We first see Siegfried hammering away at the perfect sword he's creating, looking every inch the superman with dark hair bleached with chalk or lime or whatever it was the ancient Germans used for their swept-back frozen punk-look. An example of Lang's attention to detail. On the other hand, the locals at this country black-smithery make the mud-wallowing peasants in *The Holy Grail* look like impeccably-clean dandies by comparison. Everyone, apart from Siegfried seems part troll, I suppose to emphasise the magical, mystical nature of the countryside.

Then comes the battle with the dragon, a life-sized articulated mechanical contraption vaguely Stegosaurus-like in appearance but with surprisingly good neck movements. It breathes fire, which seems quite dangerous, considering the actor playing Siegfried is both bare-chested and close enough to whack the dragon over the head with his sword as the flames shoot out of the mouth in his direction. Anyway, the dragon is slain, and a little bird tells Siegfried to bathe in the dragon's blood to gain immunity from battle damage. Sure, why not? The brief nude shot of him positioning himself under the flow of steaming blood is not actually the actor, who refused to do it, but another member of Lang's stable of actors, Rufolf Klein-Rogge, who later played the delightfully insane scientist Rotwang in *Metropolis*.

Next comes the hideously misshapen Nibelung dwarf Alberich, King of the Dwarves, wearing a net of invisibility who jumps out of a tree to murder Siegfried but is bested by the hero. In return for sparing his life, the dwarf takes Siegfried deep into the bowels of the earth to show him the treasure of the Nibelungen, a vast bowl

maybe twenty feet wide filled with gold and jewels. Long story short, Siegfried somehow gathers it all up (we are not shown how), conquers 12 kingdoms (barely mentioned), and shows up at Worms to convince Gunther, the King of Burgundy, to let him marry the King's virginal sister Kriemhild.

For some idiotic reason Gunther wants to marry Brunhild, the mature maiden (probably lesbian) Queen of Iceland who dwells in a castle inhabited solely by young women and surrounded by a sea of fire. She has slain all previous suitors in a trial of 3 contests. Pretty tough gal. Invisible, Siegfried ensures Gunther wins. "Beaten, but not conquered," Brunhild vows revenge. She gets it, and then Kriemhild seeks revenge, but that's the subject of Lang's sequel *Die Nibelungen: Kriemhild's Revenge* where just about everybody apart from Kriemhild dies.

Now, the Nazis loved this film, which shows how stupid they were. First of all, Siegfried is an impulsive idiot. For instance, he throws away the "perfect" sword he himself made, for a dwarf-manufactured sword named Balrung. And once he brings the Nibelungen hoard to Worms he delights in throwing coins and jewelry to the peasantry. During a hunting trip, returning to camp, he shouts "A fistful of red gold for a cup of wine." Gunther suspects Siegfried is something less than an expert on the economics of running a kingdom.

Nevertheless he and Siegfried drink each other's blood in a blood oath swearing absolutely loyalty and fealty to each other. Hitler loved the concept. All the Nazis did. But blind obedience to their oath leads both Siegfried and Gunther to do things they absolutely do not want to do, and in a cascading sequence of consequence wind up destroying themselves and ultimately, in the sequel, the entire population of the kingdom. In short, absolute loyalty leads to death and destruction on a mass scale which, of course, is the sole accomplishment of the Nazi regime. Siegfried be a bad role model.

The virtues of the film include amazingly atmospheric sets, a nifty dragon, absolutely stunning composition and lighting, and an overall ambience that, though stylized, feels very authentic of the reality of myth, if nothing else. The main flaw is that, for the most part, the film is very slow. Some scenes are positive Japanese in their quiet length where nothing happens and the characters just stare at each other. For once, the overly sentimental script-style of Lang's wife, Thea von Harbou, works quite well, as it suits both the Wagnerian interpretation and the original legends. This is soap opera on a grand scale, *The Lord of the Rings* of its day. Worth watching for the dragon scene alone.

And Brunhild is the most intriguing character. A mighty hero and warrior in her own right, I found her far more fascinating than the fool Siegfried and the naive Kriemhild. I do believe times have changed to the point where Brunhild can now be interpreted as *the* role model in the film. Something to consider.

(I have the Kino special edition, mastered from a HD restoration of a 35 mm print put together from multiple sources. Individual scenes vary in quality, but overall everything is sharp and clear. A complete print no longer exists, but this is the best version available.)

The Bells (1926) – Let me guess. You've never heard of this movie? It's actually the 5th film version of a story written by Henry Irving. It stars Lionel Barrymore, a legendary actor (like Bela Lugosi) renowned for his ability on occasion to overact to beat the band (like Bela Lugosi), who plays Mathias, a French Innkeeper, who murders a traveling merchant on Christmas Eve in order to pay off his debts and provide a dowry for his daughter. Ring any bells?

It should. The merchant's sleigh was festooned with bells. In this silent film the ringing of bells, any bells, triggers the murderer's conscience, along with the apparition of his victim. In one memorable scene Mathias plays a game of cards with the see-through ghost while using the stolen gold coins as his stake. At times Barrymore appears insane with rage and frustration. The role enhanced his reputation considerably. But, entertaining though he is, that's not the reason I recommend this film.

I like Boris Karloff's performance. He plays a Mesmerist hired by the victim's brother to find the killer and force him to confess. Thing is, both Karloff and director weren't satisfied with the character's original appearance. It was Barrymore who came up with the solution. According to Karloff "Because my make-up for this part was a conventional Svengali-like job, Lionel sat down and on an envelope sketched an idea for director Young and the make-up person. What he sketched was Caligari."

Yep, the good Doctor from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Top hat? Check. Cloak? Check. Frizzy hair? Check. Thick bottle-bottom glasses? Check. Karloff seems to model his performance after that of Werner Krauss, the original Caligari, at times sinking his chin into his chest as if he has no neck, or staring off into space as if contemplating a mystical vision, then slowly spreading a wide, evil, feral grin like a beast of prey focusing on his victim. Quite unnerving.

We first see him, Caligari-like, putting on a show in front of his booth at a fair. Mathias is in the crowd, seeking distraction from his worries and not yet guilty of murder. Karloff mesmerises a young woman, has her lie on her back, then through hand gestures causes her to rise above the table. He passes a cane under her to show there are no wires. A standard conjuring trick. Then he picks the fat comic-relief character out of the crowd. With another hand gesture the man's hat twirls off his head and disappears all by itself. Hmm, seems beyond mere conjuring. Next he causes "fatty" to twirl about like a ballerina. Karloff's hand gesturing is good, though nowhere near as expressive as Bela Lugosi's in films like *Dracula*. The power of his performance comes when he offers to mesmerise Mathias "to tell a tale, for bad men confess and good men tell good stories." Mathias refuses to put up with Karloff's intense, penetrating stare and flees. Later he's disturbed to see Karloff standing in the street staring malevolently up at him. As if his conscience is bothering him, but he hasn't done anything yet.

Then he does. The murder is committed, the body disposed of. Mathias claims he has received a legacy from his Uncle. Time to live happily ever after. Trouble is he is frequently confronted by Karloff's Mesmerist whose leering presence, fraught with inquisitorial evil, drives Mathias frantic. He, in turn, accuses the Mesmerist of being guilty of practicing witchcraft rather than the rule of law. No one seems to mind. In a sense the film is playing with the audience, in that it frequently implies the Mesmerist knows he is guilty and is on the verge of forcing him to confess, but always draws back at the last second. Really Karloff is just a foil to provoke fits of histrionics on Barrymore's part, the movie essentially functioning as a vehicle for the star's trademark bouts of chewing the scenery. So much so that in the final "trial" sequence, though Karloff plays an important role, his performance is toned down so that the focus remains on Barrymore. Certainly the public and critics of the day paid scant attention to Karloff.

Still, I like this film. It's fun to watch Karloff experimenting with appearing evil and menacing in a manner quite different from his usual gangster roles of the period. A bit odd, since as a manifestation of conscience and justice he's actually the good

guy, and Mathias, though depicted as a decent and caring man driven mad by guilt and thus earning the sympathy of the audience, is actually the bad guy. I mean, he did cut a man's head open with an axe (implied, not shown) in order to steal his money belt. That's got to count for something.

Karloff's performance has subtle hints, a dress rehearsal if you will, of the superb menace later exhibited by his character Hjalmar Poelzig in the 1934 classic *The Black Cat*. True, his acting the Mesmerist in *The Bells* was not the stand-out role he was hoping for, in that it was unjustly underrated, being overshadowed by Barrymore, but it added to the solid body of work which later convinced James Whale he'd be perfect as the Frankenstein Monster, the role that rejuvenated his career and made him a star and a household name.

(I have a mediocre quality version of the film, part of a DVD collection titled *Legendary Series 20 Movie Classics: Boris Karloff, Master of Horror*, put out by Mill Creek. Since it includes his first film, *His Majesty The American* (1919), *Dick Tracy meets Gruesome* (1947), and 4 of his Monogram Studio films as the Chinese Detective Mr. Wong, among other goodies, I recommend this collection.)

The Mysterious Island (1929) – This is a wonderfully peculiar film, not least the fact it was thought lost for many decades. It was conceived in 1925 by Metro-Goldwyn Studios as a big-budget technicolour version of Verne's famous novel, with all its underwater colour scenes to be filmed by Ernie Williamson (who with his Brother George had filmed the stunning B&W undersea footage for the 1916 version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*), and stars Lionel Barrymore. The underwater sets and divers to be filmed (in colour—let me repeat—in colour!) on location at New Providence Island in the Bahamas. How could you miss with a setup like that? What could possibly go wrong?

Undersea sets and shore-studio, complete with all necessary equipment (including dozens of boats) were built and set-up at Highbourne Cay by an advance work crew. On the fourth weekend of July 1925 the steamer carrying cast and film crew arrived at New Providence, as did a powerful hurricane. The steamer was badly battered and the shore-studio (along with the boats) totally wrecked. Bit of a setback. Two months later repairs were complete and they were ready to shoot. A second hurricane hit, the film cast and crew sheltering in caves. Never say die, Ernie wired for more funds. Soon they were ready to try again. Third time unlucky. A third hurricane demolished everything. But, eventually, they rebuilt, re-equipped, and got the footage they wanted. And to think the critics carped at the movie *Waterworld* whose floating-city set was destroyed only once by a typhoon. Pish. A mere trifle.

There were other delays, script approval for one. Originally the movie was to be faithful to the book, but the studio insisted on innumerable "improvements." This interrupted and often postponed studio-shooting back in California. Barrymore was eventually transformed from French Captain Nemo in the 19th century to Count Dakkar in the 20th century, supposedly ruling the independent country Hetvia which is suspiciously Russia-like in culture.

Worse, the film kept switching directors. Maurice Tourneur quit because he didn't like Louis Mayer's intrusive overwatch. Benjamin Christiansen quit because of constant rewriting of the script. I mean, good grief! Considering the superb job he did with *Witchcraft through the Ages*, why didn't they simply accept his suggestions? It could have been a masterpiece! The third, and final director, Lucien Hubbard, solved the problem by rewriting the remaining not-yet-shot scenes himself and offering them on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. They took it.

Finally, after pouring 1.5 million dollars into the film, in February 1928 they released their spectacular and expensive film in a test market. I don't know where. New York maybe? It bombed. Almost literally no one went to see it. The studio failed to notice people were still flocking to hear Al Jolson talk and sing in *The Jazz Singer*, the first talking picture, which had first been released in October 1927. Bad timing, you might say.

Well, shoot, what's another year or so of post-production? The cast was called back to add their voices. Problem was many scenes which had been set-up by on-screen printed cards often portrayed characters looking away from the camera as they spoke. Actually, this made it easier to dub voices as less lip-syncing required. It became a very noisy movie. Every conceivable incident that could generate a sound received a somewhat excessive treatment. A piece of lumber falls (inside a submarine?) and by God you hear it every time it strikes something as it falls. Pistol shots sound like cannon shots. Lionel Barrymore grunts and groans and screams something fearsome when he is being tortured. Public wants to hear sound? Fine! Stun them with sound.

The film finally premiered in New York City in October of 1929, nearly five years after production began. It bombed. The fact that it was a mishmash of scenes filmed by Williamson, Tourneur, Christiansen and Hubbard was one reason. That it was quite obviously a silent film masquerading as a sound film, another. Plainly put, it was dated, and seemed like a bit of a fraud to the public.

Still, Forrest J Ackerman, as a 13-year-old kid out on the West Coast, loved it. It was in beautiful technicolour, featured some amazing underwater shots, and toward the end exhibited truly big-screen wonders such as dozens of humanoid fishmen swarming over submarines, shipwrecks and an underwater city, plus a gigantic octopus and an undersea dragon. What's not to love?

(It should be noted that scenes of multiple fishmen swimming over sets were filmed in dry studios with the stunt fishmen suspended on wires, but closeups of actors in diving suits clumping along the sea floor were filmed underwater by Williamson in the Caribbean.)

The film was around till 1969 at least, when Ackerman saw a revival introduced by Director Lucien Hubbard, but in subsequent years it was thought to be lost. However, in 2013 a single colour reel was discovered in Prague, and then the full version was found in the same archive in 2014. Film experts gave it a modern digital restoration treatment. I'd love to see it.

Unfortunately, the only version available today is an unrestored B&W DVD which, presumably, was a print quickly produced off the full version before it was restored. Suspect the Prague archive retains the rights to the restored colour version, which only gets shown at film festivals, and that American restoration experts called in were given the rights to a B&W work print as part of the deal.

In any case, I have seen the film, the unrestored B&W print, on TCM. Worth catching if they show it again. The very aspects which turned off 1929 audiences I find highly entertaining, and the whole battle with the fishmen and the undersea monsters is particularly enjoyable, the dated design-aspects adding considerably to its charm. Besides, I've always wanted to view this film ever since I read the article about it in Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* issue #68 in 1970. Finally seeing this film made me very happy. Another item crossed off my bucket list.

THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR AND JOLLY REVILER

By Stan G. Hyde

An Explanation by Way of an Introduction:

Wow! *The Light-Hearted Vituperator And Jolly Reviler* . . . it's been a long time since I last typed those words. I teared up a little . . .

The humble God-Editor asked me if I would revive my column from long ago—before the memories of most of you, I'm guessing. I said yes. The idea was always that while I cast my net wide on topics which (might) appeal to the fannish few that I might spit some poison, but it would be all be in fun (mostly), and most of the time (most) I would maintain a jolly attitude about any reviling I might do.

Mind you, this was before the age of the Internet Troll and weaponized fandom via YouTube and other social media. I really don't feel the need to spit much poison or revile too much anymore—there are plenty of fans out there doing that for me, fans with too much time on their hands and a depressingly negative idea of fandom.

To Vituperate or Not to Vituperate: the lesson of STAR WARS “fandom.”

The state of *Star Wars* fandom comes to mind (and perhaps *Star Trek* as well) where a depressingly large number of watchers who never realized that these franchises that were always largely inclusive and left of centre (heck, *Star Wars* is about the triumph of North Vietnam over the U.S.A. says George Lucas) and were actually somehow convinced that the main message of the series was that the “knights” of an essentially bureaucratic religion (er, the Jedi) were somehow the “good guys.”

Not sure how they ignored the fact that Luke actually rebelled against all authority and ignored his teachers and followed his un-Jedi-like feelings at every turn, but apparently the fact Luke eventually burnt down all the Jedi texts in a monumental bonfire somehow surprised them . . . as did the appearance of black faces under stormtrooper masks and women who knew better than men.

About bloody time . . .

If I had a penny for every time I've seen a *Trek* or *Wars* post that goes on about “Social Justices Warriors!”

(I like that phrase by the way, and have thought of getting a business card that says “*Warrior: Social Justice*—Have Starfighter, will travel!”)

At times, I think there's an inordinate number of folks out there who call themselves fans whose whole relationship to the universe presented by a commodity like *Star Wars* is playing first person shooters like *Star Wars Battlefront*.

That is, they were largely unaware that these fictional universes were always pretty liberal leaning—particularly *Trek* with its origins in the—sigh—lost world of the idealistic 60's. Of course, Samuel R. Delany did have to point out to George Lucas in an early review that it was surprising there were no black faces in *Star Wars* (Later re-titled) *A New Hope*, and no women pilots in the rebellion. (Come on, there were women piloting Drop Ships in Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* . . . and that was long before Mr. Lucas mined science fiction for ideas. For those who came in late, it wasn't until after lawsuits like the one launched by Frank Herbert that Lucas stuck to the “all inspired by Joseph Campbell and the Hero With A Thousand Names” cover story.)

(And I've always believed that Lando Calrissian resulted from Mr. Delany's criticisms, but I have no proof of that.)

The point is, while presenting themselves as “fans” of a series, they seemed to have no compunction about dumping on Kelly Marie Tran or even producer Kathleen Kennedy for being a character they don't see the purpose of or for taking the series in the wrong direction. (One character named Mike Zeroh seems to be compulsively driven to make Youtube videos with clickbait titles like “Kathleen Kennedy Wants to Cancel Star Wars Now.” When watched, the videos present a mix of factual information, sly innuendo and outright misleading stuff that ultimately seems weirdly vindictive.)

It's a complex situation and it's not really my intent to go over *The Last Jedi*—I will admit that there are reasons to like it a lot and reasons to not like it a lot. (My own opinion, which is not really the point of any of this, is that it is a flawed but essentially laudatory attempt to take the series in a new direction.) This did not sit well with everyone. As Dave Schilling points out at *Birth Movies Death*, *The Last Jedi* is more or less a metaphorical depiction of the baby boomer generation (a generation that featured a *lot* of white men—good and bad—in positions of power) handing off leadership roles to younger generations, particularly millennials, who tend to be more racially diverse and to advocate having more women in positions of power. The series' millennial good guys are a young white woman, a black man, a woman of Asian descent, and a Latino man, while its millennial bad guys are two white dudes.

Make of this what you will, my problem is more with the fact that many “fans” acted not as if it was a movie that they could choose to like or not, but as if it was some kind of holy writ. It is like they are taking the idea that *Star Wars* is “modern mythology” way more seriously than it was ever meant to be.

Let me come clean . . . *Star Wars*—and maybe more so *Star Trek*—are hugely influential in my life. I was in the audience when the first *Star Trek* cartoon premiered at Torcon 2 in 1973, and the crowd started mouthing “Space the final frontier . . . these are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise” in voices that started off as a slightly embarrassed whisper and wound up with a ballroom shouting “To boldly go where no man (oops) has gone before!” Wild times. And that Star Destroyer going over our heads in *Star Wars*—well, it wouldn't be inappropriate to say it “changed everything.”

But, at the same time, this stuff is not *Dune*, it is not *The Left Hand of Darkness*, it is not *Neuromancer*, or *Solaris*, or *The Three-Body Problem* . . . it's space opera.

Space Opera is a lot of fun, and I greatly enjoy reading and re-reading Leigh Brackett, and Edmond Hamilton, and Doc Smith . . . they're a lot of fun. And they are, in their way, as much “modern mythology” as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* are. But they're not really meant to be taken too seriously.

And, I think it's kind of sad when fans try to control the universes that they enjoy, instead of trying to simply enjoy them. Because the sense of unreality among some of this crowd is astonishing. After *The Last Jedi* some “fans” tried to convince Disney via petition to essentially make the film uncanonical.

“We don't like it. It shouldn't exist.”

This reminds me of some fans of Anne McCaffrey's *DragonFlight* series who were essentially beginning to tell the author what to do, what Pern was like, what the rules were. It was nice to see McCaffrey respond in no uncertain terms that, well, hey, this is my universe.

If you want to run a universe, invent one of your own.

Ultimately, fictional universes that are given to us are gifts.

We get to live in another universe.

Sometimes, instead of accepting the gift of someone else's imagination, we feel compelled to say "this isn't the place I thought it was."

Okay, that's what happens when you get to know a place well in real life. You realize the place you loved has warts, that it is more subtle and complex than you imagined, that you don't like everything you thought that you liked, and that you also like other things more than you ever imagined. (I'm not talking about books here, but countries—which are like books in their way.)

Ditto for imagined universes.

It's not yours. Yes, you have a stake in it, but maybe if you're doing something thankless and small—like attacking actress Kelly Marie Tran because you didn't like her character Rose Tico in the *Star Wars* series . . . well, maybe you should have a rest, take a vacation, move to another universe—temporarily at least—or even better, invent your own universe.

It's one thing to discuss these things as fans and trade opinions, realizing that opinions teach us more about the people who hold them usually than they ever do about the fictional universes being discussed. It's another thing to spend useless time trying to influence, well for instance, *Rotten Tomatoes*.

Did Russian Bots actually use the *Star Wars* series as a test to see how much influence they could wield? That has been suggested—if true, we are invulnerable to such influence if we just don't play the game.

Relax. Liking or not liking something—a fictional universe or a politician or a political party—is not war. We are better when we listen to the other person about why they like something we don't like, and when they listen to us and why we care about something that to them is silly. (This is firsthand for me. I love Godzilla. Many don't. Happy to explain why I'm serious about this if you want. Tell me when to stop.)

I'm happy to hear what you think, but honestly I want my time spent talking about fictional universes to be fun. I'm not saying they don't change your life. They do. But the change should be positive.

Warrior: Social Justice, or perhaps just, *The Light-Hearted Vituperator* . . .

Man I Just Realized How Long Ago I Started Writing This Stuff:

A friend of mine is working on special effects for Denis Villeneuve's *Dune*.

When I first started reading fanzines, around 1973, Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Dune* was "being made." (Sigh. Orson Welles as Baron Harkonnen! I would loved to have seen that—though I probably wouldn't have liked the adaptation of the book. However if you haven't seen Frank Pavich's documentary, *Jodorowsky's Dune* (2013) it's an amazing portrait of an ambitious failure.)

Looking back, I remember David Lynch working on his 1984 version . . . which is a mess of good moments and horrible misunderstandings. (Lynch seems to say he really didn't understand the part about Paul becoming an unwilling messiah which, well, is the point right? Or as Frank Herbert said, "Messianic Leaders should come with a warning label—may be hazardous to your health.")

And now we have—fingers crossed—a new version of *Dune* coming out in November of 2020—barring theatres open after the pandemic passes.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Like this column.

Back in the early 1980's I was hopeful that "real science fiction," not just space opera like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* would soon be playing in local theatres. (Maybe

that came to pass. There have sure been a lot of films based on Philip K. Dick novels. Who would have thought that would ever happen in 1974???)

I'm not sure "real science fiction" happened, but I'm still hopeful.

(Did I mention that my friend who is working on *Dune* was also due to work on a TV series of *Foundation*—one of the most expensive television series ever produced. Apple suspended production of the show in Ireland on March 12 due to COVID-19. It's possible it will be cancelled.)

The more things change . . .

It's midnight here. In the good old days I would have gone over to a friend's to print out the copy, and probably driven to Graeme's to drop off the copy. Used to love those late nights discussing the column and other fannish stuff, even when there was work in the morning.

Now I'll just email the copy.

Welcome back - seems like I still have a little bit of the old Vituperator in me.

Stan Hyde

[God-Editor notes: When I received Stan's column I sent an email response. Stan suggested I append it to his column. How can my ego resist? Here it is:

"Great fun to see the "Jolly Reviler" again. Great article. You put your finger on one of "the problems" with fandom. Robert J. Sawyer in his column addresses similar issue with Spec Lit fans re awards and such. Even Hugo Gernsback knew that the fannish fans of his day (which he helped create) were less than 1% of the people who bought his magazines. Consider the famous T-shirt logo "I'm not a fan. I just like the stuff." The fans who write and argue on line are a microscopic niche fandom compared to the millions who go to the films for the fun of it. And that's the key point. Fandom should be fun. No harm in critiquing something, in presenting your opinion, but to obsessively nit-pick and attempt to destroy reputation and careers? Positively evil. Whereas you and I both know that the real purpose of examining insignificant details is to savour and glory in the film or book all the more.

I mean, to a model railroad buff the history of how the HO scale came about could be quite interesting, maybe even amusing, but to write angry letters denouncing the industry for choosing that particular scale would be more than bizarre, it would be insane. Or to put it another way, there are cranks in every field of endeavour.

Another thought occurs to me, I suspect many an "angry" fan has no idea how difficult it is to make a movie. Nothing short of a miracle that so many are worth watching. They fail to understand that. Their grasp of the reality of the industry is rather poor. This is not unique to the tiny niche fandom of overly-obsessive fans. The grasp of politics shown by a certain percentage of the general public is equally poor, equally prone to cranks and idiocy. I guess it's a human thing. But so is enthusiasm and intelligent observation.

I'm glad to see you and your column back because I know I can rely on you to be the voice of sanity and passionate enthusiasm. Let's put the fun back in fandom! That's my goal for BCSFAzine. And given these exceptional hard times, let's put the fun back in life for our readers. After all, part of the excitement of early fandom was that it transcended the consequences of the Great Depression in the 1930s, WWII in the 1940s, and 1950s paranoia. With this hideous pandemic, the "escapism" of fannish fun is more vital than ever. We be doing good and useful service.

Some fen think I'm nothing more than an aging Pollyanna, to which I say "Hell, yeah!" Don't see anything wrong with that. actually. – The Graeme]

IT IS WHAT IT IS, MANSPLAINING THE STATE OF FANDOM

By Garth Spencer

Karl Johanson once defined fandom, or fannish fandom, as having fun and doing neat stuff together. This is a good, simple principle, partly because it doesn't prescribe tiresome rules and expectations to people, and partly because once you repeat it, you have to tell people what Karl did: he participated in the first two fan-run conventions in Victoria, he helped produce the *Dawn of the Living Socks* fan film (and recently remastered it, posted it online, and started the Dawn of the Living Socks Official Facebook Group), he started the "Worldcon '89 at Myles' House!" hoax bid, he co-edited the award-winning fanzine *Under the Ozone Hole*, and now he publishes a small-press SF and fantasy magazine. All of this, while maintaining his sense of fun and mischief.

I wish I were more like that. Graeme once wrote a summary of my own fanactivity, but I don't think I quite achieved as much fun and mischief as I could.

There are a number of things that remain true about SF fandom, no matter who is active (or still alive) at the moment, or what the current interests of SF fans are. It seems true that we tend to bring our baggage with us into fandom. Some people expect fandom to be a step towards a professional career, and are puzzled when conventions don't automatically serve their promotional purposes. Some people expect all fandom to be about their particular interests—whether they are professional writing, or costuming, specific TV or film franchises, or tabletop/LARP/online gaming, or comics, or visual effects—and depending on our investment of ego and identity, it can take years to part with these illusions. Nobody, I think, expects fans to become scientists, although a few of us will.

By now I think I have recognized my own baggage. I was looking for an identity and a community. In the early 1980s, the kind of fan-writing I came across convinced me that fandom was a lively community of active, original minds and creative people—as compared to my family and friends in Victoria. I wanted to join the real people and become a real person. It took some years, but I got over this illusion.

Graeme recently had occasion to review an account of early fandom—*Ah! Sweet Idiocy!* by Francis T. Laney—which was a good example of someone parting from fandom very explosively, before parting with his illusions. Laney found a variety of average people, and some social marginals, in the early Los Angeles SF Society. Put that way, there is nothing particularly wrong or strange with LASFS in the 1940s, but he was in no mood to appreciate that when he wrote.

It takes a while to accept that one is part of the process. It took me decades to own up to the baggage I dragged into fandom, and the misconceptions that I had to let go.

Some interesting features of SF fandom—in the past, and in the present—are basically demographic features. There is no explaining why one set of preoccupations

dominated fandom in a particular time, and then took second place to other preoccupations, but the changes came over and over again. Fans of Graeme's age and mine were preoccupied with fanzines, and fan-run conventions, and clubs which sometimes served as alternative communities. Fans of later cohorts and generations were more concerned with SF and fantasy and horror stories in broadcast media, than in print; with special effects and costuming, rather than the reasoned speculation behind SF, especially hard science fiction; and with the "gateshow" model for conventions, adopted by studios such as Paramount and franchises such as CreationCon.

One of the demographic changes that has occurred in fandom recalls something Frederik Pohl observed, in his biography *The Way the Future Was*: simply, in popular publishing, everything keeps getting bigger. That is, the proportion of each year's publishing occupied by specific genres may keep on growing; that appears to have happened with SF and fantasy. The same thing appears to have happened again, in television programming. Over the decades, fandom has not only grown in population, but began to separate into distinct fandoms, centred on specific interests, media franchises, or activities. As a consequence, they cannot have the same points of reference, background history, or running jokes.

Now, we have to consider what changes are going to happen next. Will we need interpreters at conventions, between members of the Camarilla and any Elfholt members out there? When the current epidemic scare is over, will convention committees be in a better or worse negotiating position with respect to hotels? Will an unforeseen new wave of fandoms overwhelm and displace the mutually unintelligible subcultures that now meet at Worldcon? Or will we all be swept away by a religious dictatorship?

I don't know, I just read the stuff.

Yours truly, Garth Spencer

OUR THIRTEEN DAYS IN THE USA, TO CORFLU IN TEXAS IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

By Murray Moore

Summary. – Mary Ellen and myself, in our 2004 Toyota Prius, Mar. 6-19, drove in 13 states. A boomerang curve through New York state, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, and (a bit of) Michigan. Two nights with friends in Virginia, four nights with more friends in Texas, and a second, half-day, visit with more friends in Texas. We returned without symptoms of coronavirus to find non-native snowbell in flower in our back yard.

Mar. 6. – Our shortest driving day, to Mars. Mars, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. We stayed in the Doubletree Hotel, the hotel in recent years used by Pulpfest.

Mar. 7. – I like driving through West Virginia; the rolling hills, the light traffic. Destination Abingdon, Virginia, and the first of two nights with Curt and Liz Phillips and their two Westies and a cat named Smudge.

Mar. 8. – Conversation, food, a visit to a flea market, evening meal in a Japanese restaurant in nearby Bristol. The four of us sat on two of the three sides of the stove and watched the cook—Vietnamese—cook our food while he talked to us. Flaming of liquid occurred.

Smudge and I got on well. The Westies were Westie-like.

I brought to trade to Curt one photo-copy paper box of books, a smaller box of 1950s and 1960s issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and a big bag of books. In trade for my books and magazines plus \$60 I received a photo-copy paper box filled with early issues of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* plus half a dozen 1950s issues of *Galaxy magazine*.

Mar. 9. – Abingdon, Virginia through Tennessee to Birmingham, Alabama. We had to visit Curt—a surgical nurse—at his hospital to collect a GPS to pass to Keith Freeman who will use it to visit them after Corflu Heatwave.

Mar. 10. – Birmingham, Alabama through Mississippi to New Orleans, Louisiana, for the first of two nights.

Mar. 11. – We stayed in a Best Western on an edge of the French Quarter, on N. Rampart Street. Cheap for us—\$112—and expensive for our car—\$39.

But you should stay within walking distance of the French Quarter. The streets are one-way, one lane: street parking is minimal: off-street parking also minimal. And staying further away, you will waste time visiting and leaving the French Quarter, a small part of a big city.

And if you too have only one day, take a guided two-hour small bus tour. Little of the two hours we spent in the French Quarter. Our local driver/guide —she grew up in adjacent Treme—drove us through adjacent neighbourhoods talking all the time. We stopped twice, in 1,300 acre City Park and in the cemetery where the city's richest are buried in tombs.

I managed to visit three used book stores. In Beckham's Bookshop I bought a bevy of used books, including four titles by Charles McCarry, the U.S. equivalent of John Le Carre. Next, in Crescent City Books, I found a reading copy of the complete stories of 'Saki' (H. H. Munro). Last was Dauphine Street Books. The stock might have included one or more books I would have bought. Small space, books floor to ceiling around three walls with an island of bookcases and stacks of books in the middle. I am not wide but to walk around the island of books at times I turned sideways. No room to crouch. Many books were horizontal, bottom facing outward, thus anonymous.

In the French Quarter the buildings with their galleries and ironwork and the glimpses of gardens are interesting. Tennessee William's cottage house was around a corner from our hotel.

Mar. 12. – New Orleans to College Station, Texas, for the first of four nights. West through Cajun Louisiana, the highway elevated for miles above swamp, into Texas, through Beaumont and its massive oil/gas processing plants to College Station, location of Texas A & M University (1876).

Pandemic was declared this date.

Mar. 13-15. – Mary Ellen and I were two of 33 people who turned up for Corflu Heatwave, the annual gathering of people with an interest in amateur magazines edited and published by people who had, or continue to have, science fiction as a common interest.

Although geographically we were in south Texas and thus close to the Gulf of Mexico, neither in College Station nor previously in New Orleans was I uncomfortably

hot, despite feeling humidity. When we left home, snow still lay on our shaded back yard.

Reaction to coronavirus during our trip began in College Station.

Arrangement had been made for members of Corflu Heatwave to visit the University's SF Collection. Students were absent—March Break—however, because of caution about coronavirus, the university was closed to outsiders.

Starting in 2008 Corflu supporters have paid the cost of attendance at Corflu of a fan or a pair of fans who members of Corflu want to join them. Corflu Heatwave's special guests were from near (Austin, Texas) and far (Belfast, Northern Ireland), respectively Howard Waldrop and Tommy Ferguson.

One of my future immediate memories of Corflu Heatwave will be my conversations with Howard Waldrop. Howard is Texan by inclination, i.e. although he was born in Mississippi my understanding is that he has lived in Texas most of his adult life, except for a period when he lived in Washington state, and enjoyed the opportunity there to fly-fish; see his 1982-published fishing story set in England; Izaak Walton (c. 1593 – 15 December 1683) is the main character in *God's Hooks!*

A majority of Corflu attendees are regulars or semi-regulars. Then there are interesting local attendees not met previously and likely met never again. I do not expect to meet John Moffitt again.

The entertainment of most Corflus on Saturday evening is a play written by Andy Hooper. If Fritz Leiber's characters Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser had been characters in Andy's Corflu Heatwave play, John Moffitt would have been Fafhrd and Howard Waldrop the Mouser, for their respective heights.

[From Wikipedia: Fafhrd is a very tall (nearly seven feet) and strong northern barbarian, skilled at both swordsmanship and singing; the Mouser is a small (not much more than five feet) mercurial thief, gifted and deadly at swordsmanship (often using a sword in one hand and a long dagger or main-gauche in the other), and a former wizard's apprentice who retains some skill at magic.]

Moffitt also is a member of the 200-member-strong trilobite-collecting community. For photos, search John Moffitt + geologist + trilobites.

Mary Ellen and I were members of the Bowman & Rosenthal Fossicking Expedition during Corflu Heatwave. Six of us ate barbecue at Fargo's BBQ Pit then in two cars we drove a short distance to a high bank of the Brazos River. Trilobites were not found. We collectively gathered tiny shells. We took them to the hotel and displayed them.

Saturday evening I shared an elevator with members of a wedding party. The man beside me was the stereotypical Texan. He was taller than myself. His shoulders were broader than my shoulders. His clothes were dark from his boots to his hat. He was the father of the bride. The mother of the bride and three nieces were the other passengers. All of them wore cowboy boots.

My Corflu Heatwave disappointment was Auction item No. 26.

“Lot 26: Original Cover, UNKNOWN magazine (Dec. 1939)

Recipient:* Corflu 37/38

Editor/Author: Artist Edd Cartier

Donor: Andy Hooper (Andi Schechter)

Headline for Lest Darkness Fall by L. Sprague De Camp.”

Here is the cover: http://www.philsp.com/data/images/u/unknown_193912.jpg

An original Cartier painting at a Corflu auction is like a Group of Seven member painting in the display case of a charity shop. Too good to be true? Of course! Auction item No. 26 was a colour copy of the cover of the magazine.

I meant but forgot during Corflu Heatwave to ask Mark Olson for his support, like this: “Mark, you are a long-time and respected member of the audience of the Worldcon Business Meeting. I have a proposal to improve Hugo Awards voting. Will you speak in favour of my proposition that future Hugo Award recipients be selected at Worldcon using the Iowa Caucus method?”

Mar. 16. – College Station, Texas to Decatur, Texas. First day of our four-day drive home. A short driving day, to a ranch north of Fort Worth, to visit bronze sculptor Vince Villafranca and his wife Michelle.

Vince's website: <https://www.villafrancasculpture.com/>

We arrived after 3 p.m. Our plug-into-our-car GPS was inaccurate. My Google directions, hand-written before we starting driving, got us to the ranch, after we back-tracked, and after I mis-read a sign. I told Vince “You are in a perfect location to be in isolation.”

Mark Olson was flying home from the Fort Worth Airport. He too wanted to visit Vince. To paraphrase Calpurnia in the Wayne & Shuster Julius Caesar skit, I told Mark, “Go early, Mark. Go early.” Vince reported that Mark flitted like a hummingbird, from room to room, and in and out of Vince's workshop, before he hurried to the airport.

That evening Michelle joined the three of us in the nearest town, Decatur, in Sweetie Pie's Ribeyes restaurant. Michelle showed us photos on her phone of the flowers that will bloom beside their ranch house. I share with Michelle an interest in native plants: I gave her a group's website address, Blooming Boulevards Mississauga. Michelle also is a member of a prairie grassland preservation group.

Mar. 17. – Decatur, Texas to Springfield, Missouri. This morning, no hot food, only a choice of packaged food and fruit for breakfast. Reaction to the declaration of pandemic has begun. Evening meal in Springfield, in an adjacent restaurant to our Best Western, last day serving hot food.

Mar. 18. – Springfield, Missouri to Plainview, Indiana. Grab 'N Go bags on offer for breakfast, takeout only at the adjacent restaurant. Midday meal was at a Cracker Barrel that was closing, end of day. Our evening meal? Pizza Pop Tarts from a refrigerator in our Best Western's lobby, warmed in our room's microwave.

The room was free. We took advantage of a Stay-Two-Nights Get-A-Free-Night offer.

Majority of the vehicles around us between cities were transport trucks. The trucks were dinosaurs and we few cars scurried around and among them like mammals.

Mar. 19. – Plainview, Indiana to home. Breakfast option included warm eggs and sausage, surprisingly, but we took Grab 'N Go bags. Again, mostly transport trucks on the highways we travelled.

At one rest stop, a gas station/convenience store, maybe by then in Ohio, Mary Ellen reported to me that the women's washroom lacked toilet paper.

Then we saw this announcement on a sheet of paper taped to the store's window: “—Attention—Please see cashier for toilet paper. Due to Toilet paper shortage people are stealing it out of rest rooms and we are trying to ration it out for our customers. We are sorry for the inconvenience.”

Additional now-behind-the-counter items included diapers and hand sanitizer.

Today and yesterday, whichever state we were driving through, I saw few out-of-that-state licence plates on cars. The most common out-of-that-state plate I saw was Ontario.

We crossed Detroit-to-Windsor on the Ambassador Bridge. Two of the three lanes from end-to-end were solid with slow-moving and stopped transport trucks. How many of those trucks, I could not help wondering, were full of rolls of toilet paper?

More cars than I expected were ahead of us and beside us as we waited to clear Customs and Immigration. While waiting our turn I ate the last two pieces, liberated from the Corflu con suite, of lammas bread, or, two excellent home-made chocolate chip cookies.

We missed our opportunity to be smugglers. Two questions. "How long have you been away from Canada?" "Thirteen days." "Are you aware that you are requested to self-isolate for 14 days?" "Yes," we chorused, as I accepted a flyer.

And so we have, not counting nipping into Longos supermarket that evening to buy milk that one of us must have in her tea.

Sue, next door, offered, and we accepted, to be our personal shopper. She took our list and delivered the items, including the Kawartha Dairy ice cream that one of us must have.

Mary Ellen cannot visit her mother or keep a dental appointment. (No visitors, actually, to her mother's building.)

I cannot go to a library, a used book store or a new book store, a movie, nor a play (ticket cancelled for one performance each at Tarragon, Soulpepper, and Coal Mine theatres), nor to a charity shop. nor Canada Blooms (second largest flower show in Canada and U.S.), cancelled of course.

We would have attended, under normal circumstance, Windy City Pulp and Paper Show, in Lombard, Illinois, next month. It has moved to a September weekend.

Mary Ellen and I are better off than many: we are retired. Our two daughters-in-law, in Toronto and in Vancouver, are laid-off. Our younger son is working from home. Our older son is working from home.

What will be the state of our world next year? Corflu next year is in England, in Bristol. If we can go, we will.

Audio books to which we listened: *How the Light Gets In*, Louise Penny; *Death of a Ghost* and *The Dead Ringer*, M. C. Beaton; *The Temptation of Forgiveness*, Donna Leon.

Corflu Heatwave recorded and viewable via Rob Jackson's YouTube channel: search 'Rob Jackson Corflu'

/\\ Murray Moore

FANNSH FAILURES AND FOLLIES

(News from the World of Fandom)

MonSFFA cancels club activities – Cathy Palmer-Lister posted the following on the Montreal club's website on March 13th: "All MonSFFA events are cancelled until further notice. Please keep an eye on this space. We hope to be able to use social media or skype or something. As usual, we are just muddling along. There may be some sort of game on our web page April 4th."

Concellation 2020 Gathers Momentum – Two American fen, Christopher Ambler and Craig Glassner founded the Concellation 2020 FaceBook page on March 12th. By March 14 they had 904 members! By March 28 reached 26,540 members! “The SF&F con that’s always cancelled. Celebrate the con that never was—cancelled before it was even announced. Concellation 2020 is the event you wish you could have pre-opposed!” Events suggested by members in more than 300 posts over 2 days include “The Dave Kyle Memorial Musical Chairs” (those who know fannish history will get it), “Mobility Scooter Races” (for the average fan to participate in), and an all-male panel on the subject “Why aren’t there more women in SF?”

To join: < <https://www.facebook.com/groups/concellation/> >

FAAn Awards announced – at Corflu 37 in Texas on March 15th. 2020.

Best Over-All Fanzine – Banana Wings, edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer.

Best Genzine – a tie: Banana Wings, and Chunga, edited by Andy Cooper, Randy Byers, and carl juarez.

Best Whatchamacallit Zine – a tie: Ansible, edited by David Langford, and Lofgeornost, edited by Fred Lerner.

Best Special Publication – Thy Life’s a Miracle, edited by Luke McGuff.

Best Fan Writer – Mark Plummer.

Best Letterhack – Stephen Jeffrey.

Best Online Achievement – Fanac.org

Best Fan Artist – Ulrika O’Brien.

Best Fanzine Cover Art – They Life’s a Miracle, by Ulrika O’Brien.

Fwa Lifetime Achievement – Robert Lichtman.

Fwa Past President, 2019 – Rob Jackson.

FANZINE EXTINCTION EVENT

(Where Fannish Dinosaurs Go to Die, i.e. Fanzines)

FAPA (THE FANTASY AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION)

“The Fantasy Amateur Press Association or FAPA ("FAP-uh") is science fiction fandom's longest-established amateur press association ("apa"). It was founded in 1937 by Donald A. Wollheim and John B. Michel. They were inspired to create FAPA by their memberships in some of the non-science fiction amateur press associations, which they learned about from H. P. Lovecraft.”

Back in the day membership was restricted to 60 individuals who would send 60 copies of their fanzine to an organizing editor who would collate them and mail them such that each member would get a package with one copy of each contribution. Not everyone contributed for a given mailing, but the packages received, or multiple packages, was like Christmas-in-July for all the fanzine fans who were members. Demand was so great there was a long waiting list for people desperate to join. Dues reflected the cost of the mailings, but were considered well worth it.

Today the situation is not quite so frantic. We are down to 16 members (13 American, 1 Canadian, 1 British, 1 Australian), which means there are 45 vacancies. So, if you apply I’m pretty sure you’ll be accepted. Mailings come out 4 times a year, in Feb, May, Aug and Nov. Minimum page requirement? 8 pages a year. Membership fee? Only \$10 USD.

The last Mailing consisted of 9 zines for a total of 42 pages. I've become more active lately and tend to include an 8-page *Entropy Blues* zine in every mailing. I typically devote 2-3 pages to mini-essays with the rest consisting of comments on the zines in the last mailing.

Looking at it in a historical sense, "How the mighty have fallen" etc. etc., but I prefer to think of it as having 14 pen pals with whom I share my views on damn near everything. Isn't it the same as Facebook? Hell, no! It's a relaxed, leisurely pursuit, where you give each zine due consideration before you compose your comments, and with a three month period between each mailing you have plenty of time to edit until you've got it down to exactly what you want to say. No instant troll attack feedback. Instead, people look for comment hooks on which to express their own enthusiasms. There's very little "debate," as it is mostly anecdotal tales and observations of interest.

Some of the contributions, like mine, are done strictly for FAPA, others are included in other APAs, some sent out to additional mailing lists, a few posted at efanazines.com I believe. Not everybody bothers with commenting on mailings, but several, myself included, make it part of our routine. I don't actually mail anything. I send a PDF to O.E. Ken Forman and he prints out at cost sufficient copies to include in the next mailing, a service I believe he is willing to do for foreign members finding mailing costs prohibitive.

There's quite a wide variety of material. Eric Leif Davin likes to send in short stories he's written: Randy Everts has an ongoing series on "Unknown Friends of Lovecraft;" Fred Lerner features many letters from members and non-members commenting on the previous issue of his zine; Robert Silverberg sends in a single 8-page zine once a year; the last one describing the 70 years he's been a member of FAPA (he joined in spring of 1949), and so on.

Every member has a different contribution style; some concentrate on books they're read, movies and plays they've seen, courses they've taken, conventions they've attended, places they've been, vivid memories of the good old days, or whatever. Politics is seldom mentioned, possibly too depressing a topic for a bunch of old-timers. Besides, politics is too generic and ephemeral. What the members are interested in are each other's personal experiences in life rather than Facebook-style opinions. To be sure, a book or a play may be examined in depth, but usually the politics, if any, is examined from a historical viewpoint rather than a breathless "breaking news" hype point of view. Generally, a very erudite bunch whose contributions are a pleasure to read.

If you are a traditional fanzine fan you may recognize many of the current members: Jim Benford, R. Graeme Cameron, John L. Coker III, Eric Leif Davin, Randal Alain Everts, Tom Feller, Ken Forman, Arthur D. Hlavaty, Patrick Ijima-Washburn, Fred Lerner, Robert Lichtman, Eric Lindsay, Karen Moulton, Vicki Ogden, Bob Silverberg, Keith Walker, and Roger Wells. If you think corresponding with these people is something worth doing, why not Join FAPA?

For Details on joining contact: FAPA Secretary-Treasurer:
< [robertlichtman \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:robertlichtman@yahoo.com) >

E-APA (THE ELECTRONIC AMATEUR PRESS ASSOCIATION)

This is a monthly APA distributed online, sort of, in that it is posted at efanazines.com and requires a password for its members to access. One issue a year, October's I believe, is open to anyone who wants to read it. It's not that there's a

passion for secrecy, but rather a desire to replicate the “feeling” of an old-fashioned paper APA being “mailed” to its members.

I belonged for quite a while, then dropped out for mundane reasons that had nothing to do with eAPA. Now I’m back in, contributing a monthly 4-page zine titled *The Torpidity Times* divided equally between mini-essays and commenting on the previous “mailing.” I limit it to 4 pages because that makes it easier for me to complete an issue every month by the deadline (end of the month), and also, the shorter the contribution, the more manageable the size of the PDF version of a given issue.

The advantage of an electronic APA is that there are no dues. Simply write a “letter” or “Zine” to your satisfaction, convert it to a PDF, and email it to the Organizing Editor Garth Spencer who will put the “mailing” together and post it online. Our next “mailing” will be issue #192.

At the moment eAPA has but 5 members, including myself.

Garth Spencer contributes *I Never got The Hang of Thursdays*, in which he concentrates on fannish stuff, life-style choices, and personal musings.

William McAbe of England sends in *Damned if I Know* wherein he explores the frustrations and joys of life in retirement (a subject of great interest to me).

Ahrvid Engholm of Sweden produces *Intermission*, usually the largest contribution, often as many as 20 pages, packed with fascinating research on Scandinavian fandom, movies and literature, plus accounts of artistic events he attended and occasional political and science observations, the whole enlivened with colour photos and art.

And the latest person to join, Marc “Starwolf” Gerin-LaJoie of Ottawa, has concentrated thus far on his fascinating travel experiences.

Always interesting, sometimes inspiring, with plenty of room for more fen to join.

If interested, contact Garth Spencer: < <mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com> >

UPCOMING EVENTS YOU SHOULD AVOID

TRUMPETER SALUTE GAMING WEEKEND – (April 17 to 19 April, 2020) –
Convention and monthly meets cancelled for the foreseeable future courtesy of the
Coronavirus Pandemic. Go ahead and read about Trumpeter. You may want to get
involved when normal life resumes.

Usually the Trumpeter Tabletop Gaming Society (registered non-profit – founded 1964 – North America’s oldest gaming club and Canada’s largest – currently 120 members) holds a meet on the first Friday of every month, but April is their annual extravaganza spread over three days. Both the 3-day event and the Friday sessions during the other 11 months are held in the banquet hall on the second floor of the Bonsor Recreation Complex just East of the Metrotown Skytrain Station and Mall. Plenty of free parking in the Bonsor Lot.

A typical monthly meet – involves historical miniatures (tabletop wargaming), fantasy miniatures gaming, science fiction miniatures gaming, plus several board games and role-playing games. Quite a variety. A staffed Cantina opening off the room offers pop, bagged snacks, and some cooked items like hot dogs to consume while you play. A small entrance fee (\$6) applies but it entitles you to a raffle ticket for the meet’s prize draw (several tickets drawn for games, books, miniatures and

whatever else has been donated for the purpose). New members are always welcome at the Friday meetings and your first attendance is free! Friday meets run from 6:30 PM to 11:00 PM.

Check out the Society at: < <https://trumpetergaming.weebly.com/> >

The April Salute weekend – features 100 assorted games, hobby vendors, “Swap & Shop” tables, numerous door prizes, and an average attendance of 275+ gamers. Special features this year include a *Warhammer 40K* tournament and play testing of a game titled *Veil of Ruin* which is described as “a cooperative deck-building dungeon-crawler game.” The Cantina will provide Pop, Tea, Coffee, Pizza, Samosas, Smokie Hotdogs, muffins and other goodies.

See: < <https://trumpetergaming.weebly.com/trumpeter-salute-2020.html> >

My experience – When I lived in the Lower Mainland I used to drop by every few months just to admire the miniatures and soak up the ambience. Apart from partaking in several *Supremacy at Sea* battles, relying on Ed Beauregard to explain the rules during play, I never actually played any games as I was mainly there to enjoy the scene and meet with friends of mine who were regular participants and/or game hosts. Besides, whenever I admitted to anyone my preference was solo wargaming at home, I triggered a response akin to a vampire suddenly confronted by a cross, so that was a fact about myself I normally kept secret.

Of particular interest to me are the games hosted by Lisa Smedman, a professional author and college teacher (gaming history, how to construct games) whom I’ve known since we were both at UBC back in the late 1970s. She hosts games her students are developing, running them past the public as a kind of beta test. They’re often totally off-the-wall bizarre and highly imaginative. She and her students are usually at a table up on the stage.

Anyone who joins the Society as a member can host a game. You just fill out a simple online form which is submitted to the Trumpeter Game Master. He in turn sends it out via the Society’s Email News Service (currently 400 recipients including non-members) and posts the info on their website.

Here is an example of the notice sent out to inform people what games were planned for an upcoming meet, in this case for Friday, March 6th, 2020.

TYPICAL SELECTION OF GAMES FOR A MEET

1) Game: *Black Magic*

Host: Lisa Smedman

Rules: Congo

Scale: 28mm

Players: up to 4

Scenario: It's witch doctor vs. witch doctor as two tribes of the Kokongo region square up in a battle over fetishes hidden deep in the jungle. Warriors led by M'bulu seek to destroy the fetishes, while his rival Oagasou and his warriors seek to protect them. Meanwhile, a white explorer and a missionary have blundered into the battle, with their bearers and askaris. If black magic doesn't get them, the bullets and blades will!

2) Game: *Battletech*

Host: Daniel Thomson

Rules: Battletech

Scale: N/A

Players: ?

Scenario: ?

3) Game: Battle of Moscow

Host: Doug Hamm

Rules: "What a Tanker"

Scale: 1:56

Players: up to 10

Scenario: WW2 armoured warfare on the snows of the Russian winter December 1941. As long as your 1:56 scale WW2 tank was one produced before 1942 by the Germans, you can bring it along to command in this fun set of rules. German advance towards Moscow continues.

4) Game: Savage Swords of Lankhmar!

Host: Fritz Leiber, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser!

Rules: Savage Worlds RPG

Scale: 28mm

Players: 2-6 Scoundrels

Scenario: MOONLIGHT MADNESS - The Moneylenders' Guild hires the heroes to collect from a reclusive cult known to worship the moon ...

5) Game: 1828

Host: Bill Dixon

Rules: 18xx

Scale: Board Game

Players: Up to 5

Scenario: 1828 is an expansion of the original Avalon Hill 1830 game. 1828 is a PnP (Print and Play) game. If work delays my arrival we will play the shorter 1846.

6) Game: Betrayal at House on the Hill 1828

Host: Kathleen Moore (famed Treasurer for BCSFA, WCSFA, and VCON)

Rules: Betrayal At House On The Hill (with Widow's Walk expansion)

Scale: about 20 mm/character figures; not to scale

Players: 2-6 (best with 4 or 5)

Scenario: Self-generating. Explore a possibly-haunted (or possibly otherwise-evil-infested) house, discovering rooms and finding useful/dangerous Things until worsening random chance reveals the Haunt. At which point, one (un)fortunate character shifts to Traitor, and outright combat becomes possible. Will the surviving Hero players win out against the House and its manifestations this time?

7) Game: World War I air

Host: Rene' Charbonneau

Rules: Canvas Eagles

Scale: 1/72

Players: 2-12

Scenario: October 1917 the fight on the ground is quietening down, the struggle continues in the air. The British must conduct a bombing run.

8) Game: Spoils of War (Baltic Winter War, 1300)

Host: Colin Upton (well-known underground comics artist)

Rules: Lion Rampant

Scale: 28 mm

Players: 6

Scenario: With the Baltic Pagans "nominally" Christian all there is to fight over is possession of the land and it's people. A German coalition (including the Teutonic knights) and their Baltic subjects face off against the rapacious Danes with their

Swedish and Baltic allies. It's Knight against Knight in the frozen forests of the North!

9) Game: Kids DnD Adventure

Host: Doug Oak

Rules: DND

Scale: ?

Players: 6

Scenario: Our adventurers have reached a mysterious place called a CITY. What strange adventures will await them? Can their faith in the all mighty GOAT god contend with the power of the FARMER? Stay tuned...

10) Game: "Shall Not the Roundhead Soon be Confounded? " : The Battle of Edgehill, 1642

Host: Kevin Aldridge

Rules: Lion Rampant School. Pikeman's Lament / Rebels & Patriots (modified)

Scale: 2mm nano scale(!), but plays like 15mm

Players: 4

Scenario: First major battle of the civil unpleasantness. Charles is determined to march his army from the Welsh border country to London, thus bringing the traitors in Parliament to heel (like the dogs they are!). But can the Earl of Essex's Parliamentary army stop him? The first verse of this Royalist recruiting song sets the tone:

"What, though the zealots pull down the prelates,
Push at the pulpit and kick at the Crown,
Shall we yet never once more endeavour,
And strive to purchase our ancient renown?
Shall not the Roundhead soon be confounded?
Sa- sa- sa- say, boys; ha- ha- ha- hey, boys!
Then we'll return with triumph and joy.
Then we'll be merry, drink claret and sherry,
Cast up our caps, and cry, VIVE LE ROY!"

11) Game: Give me Victory or give me Death

Host: Ian McCandlish

Rules: Supremacy at Sea

Scale: 1/2400

Players: 10

Scenario: Vice Admiral Charlie wants a Knighthood for his efforts in putting the Axis BB/BC fleet out of action in the Mediterranean. The Admiralty response: "YOU WANT WHAT? You have lost more Capital Ships and killed more British seamen than in all of the history of the British Navy.

VAdm Charlie decides to call on his minions in Parliament to lobby for his plan "Victory or Death". The Parliamentary pressure gets his plan approved, and VAdm Charlie leads a fleet of heavy and light cruisers into the Mediterranean to recapture Malta and relieve the siege of Alexandria, setting the stage to kick the Axis out of North Africa.

12) Game: A simple task

Host: Graham Acton

Rules: DND 5th edition

Scale: 28mm

Players: up to 8 (10)

Scenario: Spent the night in the inn in the town just before dawn there is fighting in the streets, goblins, bugbears, giants oh my!!

CRYSANTHEMUM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

(After action report of test run of scenario to be played at Trumpeter Salute)

By Ed Beauregard

[*God-Editor's Note: the April Trumpeters Salute is cancelled due to the Corovirus Pandemic.* However, this report gives a good idea of what it is like to play a Supremacy at Sea game at any Trumpeter Meet. This is a set of rules developed by a bunch of computer programming students at UBC circa 1968. After all these years, they're still playing.

What you see is 4 banquet tables joined together to form the ocean playing field, a bunch of GHQ 1/2400 scale pewter warships, finely detailed and sometimes painted, plus about 10 guys, some old, some young, consulting charts and taking measurements with rulers and protractors. Occasionally tiny tufts of cotton simulating shell fire are placed beside some of the models. To the untrained eye it looks dull and boring. But it ain't.

There's actually considerable tension going on in this simultaneous-turn-based game. Deciding what ships to target and what course to take are decisions fraught with peril and potentially fatal. Typically, each player commands a squadron of several ships in their side's fleet. Make a mistake and you can cause your Admiral to lose the battle! And it is a battle. Most of the players are intimately familiar with the virtues and flaws of each individual ship, they are experts in naval history, and their imagination runs overtime as they "experience" their combat scenario. For them, it's like the spectacular climax of a major naval war movie, vivid and exciting. They never play historical battles, preferring alternate history scenarios where the outcome cannot be predicted, which adds to the tension. They may look calm, but they are "in" to it as much as any gamers can be. For them, it is a tremendous intellectual and, dare I say it, emotional challenge. Gamers know of what I speak.

So where do you come in? Anyone who expresses an interest in playing is usually provided a squadron of 2 or 3 ships with ongoing advice and instruction from one of the players. Ed Beauregard shepherded me through several games. Though I eventually possessed a printout of the rules, having evolved over fifty years or so they are quite sophisticated and much of it is beyond my ability to grasp. No matter. Under active guidance you catch on to the gist of it, enough to share in the excitement and thrill of it all. Plus, as in my case, having a strong interest in Naval history helps maintain interest and enthusiasm.

Here follows Ed's article in which he well describes what is actually going on in the minds of the players of this test scenario. Fill in the blanks (crew actions, sound effects) with your own imagination and you'll figure out what it is all about and what the attraction is. Who knows? You may want to join in when Trumpeter begins its meets again. – End of God-Editor's notes.]

CRYSANTHEMUM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

On Friday, February 28th, at our unofficial weekly naval gaming evening, I wanted

to test out one of the scenarios I will be hosting in mid-April for our annual Trumpeter Salute tabletop gaming convention in the Greater Vancouver, BC, area.

The rationale for this battle is a timeline where Italy fulfills its treaty obligations and joins the Central Powers in late 1915. The prospect of picking off French and British possessions in North Africa is too attractive to pass up. Unfortunately for Italy, strong British submarine forces based in Malta strangle Italian supply lines. As this is long before aircraft can play a major role, the only option is a seaborne invasion of Malta. On Empire Day (May 24th), 1917, the Italians undertake this operation.

Facing two powerful navies, the Italian and the Austro-Hungarian, the British scrape up some of their older and less useful dreadnoughts from the Grand Fleet, press the French for help, and turn to their newest ally, Japan, for badly needed reinforcements. And since this force will be based outside Britain, the Royal Navy will accept both ships and crews, rather than just asking for the ships.

The scenario opens on a day of clear weather, with visibility to 180 hectometers. The Italian and Austro-Hungarian forces have joined up, and are escorting the invasion convoy of four troop transports.

ORDER OF BATTLE:

Italian: *Dante Alighieri*, *Conte di Cavour*, *Guilio Cesare*, *Leonardo da Vinci* (no magazine explosion in this timeline), *Caio Duilio* and *Andrea Doria*. For close convoy escort, *Regina Elena* and *Vittorio Emanuele*, along with three *Soldati* class torpedo boats. Through the generosity of the Kaiser, the convoy close escort ships are equipped with chemical smoke generators, so they (alone among all the ships in the battle) can lay effective smokescreens.

Austro-Hungarian: All four *Tegethoff* class dreadnoughts and the three *Radetsky* class pre-dreadnoughts.

The Central Powers fleet enters from the north, headed south, with the convoy and close escort in the centre, Italians to the west and Austro-Hungarians to the east.

The **British** have a force of old battlecruisers (*Indomitable*, *Inflexible*, *Australia* and *New Zealand*) coming from Gibraltar. They enter from the southwest, headed north east. The other British force consists of *Dreadnought* and the three *Bellerophon* class (*Bellerophon*, *Superb*, *Temeraire*). They are coming from Alexandria and enter from the south east, headed northwest. A little to the north of that force is the **Imperial Japanese Navy** contribution, the new battlecruisers *Kongo* and *Haruna*, and the semi-battlecruisers *Ibuki* and *Kurama*.

Finally, the **French** have sailed from Toulon, and enter the battle several kilometers to the north of the British battlecruiser squadron. They have *Bretagne*, *Courbet*, *Paris*, *France* and the pre-dreadnoughts *Danton* and *Mirabeau*.

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES AND VICTORY CONDITIONS

British

All the British ships have 12"/45 guns, which are less powerful than the Italian 12"/46 and Austro-Hungarian 12"/45. In addition, most of the ammunition is older, and subject to the kind of premature detonation that made the Battle of Jutland inconclusive. Each ship has received a consignment of high quality Greenboy shells. This varies randomly for each ship from 5 rounds of fire to 8 rounds of fire (26 rounds in total per ship, normally one round per turn but rapid fire uses two rounds

per turn). The British also have all their ships equipped with director fire control, markedly superior to early technology. The British objective is to turn back the invasion, while sinking or seriously damaging as many enemy ships as possible. The British do not lose victory points for losing their own ships.

French

The French also have only 12"/45 guns (and lots of 9.4"/50 on the pre-dreadnoughts) which are inferior in performance to the Central Powers ships. Although the French shells can be relied on not to be duds, the design of the turrets restricts maximum ranges to between 135 and 145 hectometers, far less than any other ships in the battle. The French fire control is at the stage before director control. The French also have turning back the invasion as an objective, but even more importantly their goal is to sink (or get sunk) Italian dreadnoughts. However, unlike the British, they lose victory points if their own dreadnoughts are sunk or seriously damaged.

Japanese

The Emperor is watching very closely, and would be heartbroken should the new battlecruisers be sunk or even moderately damaged, so preserving those ships with minimal damage is the major Japanese objective. However, the old semi-battlecruisers are viewed as expendable, and the goal is to "test the ships to destruction" to determine if they still have any fighting value. In addition, the Japanese gain victory points for ALL non-Japanese dreadnought battleships and battlecruisers sunk (thereby reducing European naval power). Unfortunately for the Japanese, the British haven't shared details of the Greenboy shells, or what needs to be done to prevent magazine flash detonations, so the Japanese ships suffer from both drawbacks. Fire control on the new battlecruisers is director, but the *Ibuki* and *Kurama* have much more primitive (little better than Russo-Japanese War era) fire control.

Italians

The six Italian dreadnoughts have the superb 12"/46 gun with its massive 997 pound shell. This gives better penetration and much more damage than the 850 pound shells of the British 12"/45 guns. The French guns get some additional benefit from their heavier (960 pound) shells, but lack the muzzle velocity of the Italian guns. However all the Italian ships have been built for speed, and cannot match the armour on the French or British battleships. The Italian objective is to push through the convoy, while at least keeping ship losses to an even match.

Austro-Hungarian

The Austro-Hungarian 12"/45 guns are the equivalent of the Italian guns for penetration, but not for damage. However, the *Tegethoff* class is the best armoured ships in the battle. The A-H victory conditions also are strongly weighted to getting the invasion force through, while also rewarding sinking or seriously damaging enemy dreadnoughts with some minor penalties for own ships sunk.

Battle Results

As we were short of people (7 present, scenario designed for 10) that meant some overloading and slowed the progress of turns. In a four hour period we completed 7 turns, which represented 23 minutes of battle (3 minutes, 15 seconds per turn).

First phase (Turns 1-3)

The French desperately tried to get within gun range and had to suffer somewhat of a pounding from the nearest Italian squadron (*Cesare*, *da Vinci* and *Cavour*) who

concentrated on *Bretagne* and *France*. The Italian force elected to run at 11 knots so as to remain in a strong blocking position. Finally on the third turn the French were able to engage and *Bretagne* got a critical turret hit on *Cavour*. While the magazines didn't explode, both forward turrets were burned out. The situation was made worse by *Cavour* being in rapid fire against *Bretagne*. One of *Courbet's* hits on *Cesare* started a minor flood. *Da Vinci* failed to hit *France*, a result of the inferior fire control system. However *Cesare*, which had hit *Bretagne* on the second turn and gone into rapid fire on the third, got a crippling hit on *Bretagne*, smashing the conning tower and leaving *Bretagne* helplessly circling for two turns.

The second Italian squadron (*Dante Alighieri*, *Caio Duilio* and *Andrea Doria*) engaged the first three of the British battlecruiser squadron (*Australia*, *New Zealand* and *Inflexible*). Despite the better (director level) fire control on the two newest Italian ships, it took until the third turn before hits were registered. These did minor damage and a 1 knot speed loss on *Australia*. The return fire from the first three battlecruisers was equally ineffective, as ranges were over 140 hectometers. *Indomitable* managed a hit on *Cesare*, but as older ammunition was being used for this initial ranging fire, it turned out to be a dud shell.

The Austro-Hungarian dreadnoughts drove straight in, keeping their A arcs open against the Japanese battlecruisers. The *Radetsky* pre-dreadnoughts turned directly towards the Japanese, trying to close the range so that their poorer fire control and smaller number of guns could get into effective range. The British line of battleships (*Dreadnought*, *Bellerophon*, *Temeraire* and *Superb*) was left to fire uninterrupted at the A-H dreadnoughts. The fact that all were equipped with director fire control, and they were getting the benefit of unengaged fire, allowed them to start getting hits on the second turn. However, at this point the British were still using older ammunition, so many of the hits turned out to be dud shells, doing little damage. However one of the shells worked, temporarily knocking out Y turret on *Tegethoff*.

The Japanese concentrated fire on the A-H pre-dreadnoughts, with *Haruna* engaging *Radetsky* and the two Japanese semi-battlecruisers engaging the other two pre-dreadnoughts. *Kongo* engaged the third ship in the Austro-Hungarian battleship line, *Szent Istvan*. *Kongo* got a hit on the second turn and went into rapid fire for the third turn, with a working shell causing a turret flash in B turret, which fortunately went no further than burning out the turret. Other dud shells did minor damage. The semi-battlecruisers got close enough to open up with secondary armament on the third turn, but *Ibuki* failed to hit at all, and *Kurama* got one hit on *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* which reduced speed by one knot and started a minor fire. With the less efficient damage control on the pre-dreadnoughts, the crew did not manage to extinguish that fire during the remainder of the game.

In return, the Austro-Hungarian pre-dreadnoughts concentrated on the Japanese semi-battlecruisers, while the battleships doubled up on the Japanese battlecruisers. All three pre-dreadnoughts managed to hit on the third turn, with *Ibuki* losing underwater torpedo tubes, 2 knots and suffering moderate flooding. *Kurama* lost an 8" gun turret, but as it was not firing there was no danger of a flash to the magazine. *Tegethoff* and *Prinz Eugen* both got hits on *Kongo* on the second turn, and went into rapid fire for the third turn. These hits started two minor floods and caused 3 knots speed loss. *Szent Istvan* hit *Haruna* on the second turn and went into rapid fire for the third, while *Viribus Unitas* got one hit on the third turn. As the Japanese battlecruisers had kept at long range (over 140 hectometers) there were few hits on them and most did not penetrate.

Second phase (Turns 4-5)

The French, who had finally gotten into firing range, now saw their formation disintegrate. *Paris* and *Courbet* carried on trying to close on the retreating Italian force. *Bretagne* spent the time circling, not under control, and *France*, for some unknown reason, slowed to 10 knots and saw the Italians fade out of range.

Courbet continued to fire at *Cesare*, and finally got its first hit of the game on turn 5. This caused another 1 knot speed loss and minor flooding, while the damage control on *Cesare* dealt effectively with the first flood. *Paris* was more successful firing at *Cavour*, getting a hit on turn 5 that knocked out an engine room and started a moderate flood reducing *Cavour's* speed by 4 knots. The French pre-dreadnought targeted *da Vinci*, but only managed one hit during this time that temporarily put B turret out of action.

Both French pre-dreadnoughts engaged *Leonardo da Vinci*. *Mirabeau* failed to get any hits, but *Danton* got a hit on turn 4 and switched to rapid fire on turn 5, but failed to get a hit. The one hit that was obtained did very minor damage.

The first two British battlecruisers (*Australia* and *New Zealand*) switched fire from the Italians to *Tegethoff*, as it was closing on them. Indomitable followed suit on turn 5. *Inflexible* continued to target *Dante Alighieri* but failed to register any hits. The first two battlecruisers got hits on turn 5 but these only started a minor flood.

The British battleship line was much more effective, having switched to Greenboy shells for these two turns of fire. *Dreadnought* was able to rapid fire on *Viribus Unitas* on turn 4, but then was masked on turn 5 as the British battlecruiser line passed in front of the battleship line. However the one turn of rapid fire did significant damage and knocked out Y turret as well as jamming the rudder to starboard.

Bellerophon was in rapid fire for both turns, getting a total of five hits, all Greenboy shells. These knocked out a forward 6" secondary gun, started a moderate fire, destroyed a funnel causing a one knot speed loss and disabled X turret. *Temeraire* continued engaging *Prinz Eugen*, maintaining rapid fire with Greenboy shells. Of the four hits, two were on the conning tower and did not penetrate, therefore doing minor damage. Another temporarily disabled X turret and the last did damage to the upper works, riddling the funnels and causing a one knot speed loss. Finally, *Superb* maintained rapid fire on *Tegethoff*, and was now the only British battleship getting the accuracy bonus for not being engaged by enemy fire. The three hits from *Superb* on turn 4 started a minor flood, knocked out a pair of secondary guns, and temporarily disabled Y turret. Three more hits on turn 5 permanently knocked out A turret, temporarily disabled X turret and destroyed the stern torpedo flat (fortunately without setting off any torpedo warheads).

The Japanese battlecruisers did a 180 degree turn away to open the range. While turning and after they had steadied on a new course trying to pass behind the Austro-Hungarian ships, both concentrated fire on *Radetsky*. Turn 4 fire was greatly degraded by the effects of the radical turn, but on turn 5 there were hits and for this turn the shells all worked. *Radetsky* lost two secondary turrets (one on each side) and suffered a major fire as well as a one knot speed loss.

Ibuki finally hit *Zrinyi* with both main and secondary guns, and went into rapid fire for turn 5. However the 12" shell hits were all duds, and the 8" hits didn't penetrate, so little damage was done. *Kurama*, which had hit *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* on turn 3, went into rapid fire for turn 4. However even this did not produce a hit, and *Kurama* did not survive into turn 5. Both *Zrinyi* and *Erz. F.*

Ferdinand had targeted *Kurama*, and the latter got the fatal hit on a rapid firing 8" gun turret which penetrated and caused a fire which flashed into the magazine and blew up the ship.

The first Italian squadron (*Cesare*, *da Vinci* and *Cavour*) continued at 11 knots to remain in position between the French and the convoy. *Cesare* continued to engage *Bretagne* (as did *Cavour* for the 4th turn), but at a range over 140 hectometers few hits were penetrating. Two more moderate floods were inflicted, while damage control on the French ship dealt with the flood from earlier turns.

Da Vinci engaged *France* on turn 4 then switched to the much closer *Courbet* on turn 5. Two hits did minor damage and a small flood, plus a one knot speed loss. *Cavour* switched to targeting *Paris* on turn 5 at a range under 90 hectometers but achieved only a single hit doing minor damage.

The second Italian squadron concentrated on smashing the British battlecruiser squadron. *Dante Alighieri* in rapid fire got a total of 7 hits on *Australia* which practically tore the ship apart. Q and Y turrets were both knocked out, though fortunately there was no cordite flash into the magazines. Major hull damage slowed the ship by two knots.

Caio Duilio chose to not rapid fire, reducing the number of hits to three. The range was such that the shells were still descending at a significant angle, and two of the hits skipped off a turret top and the deck. The third hit did major damage to the forward part of the ship, caused 1 knot speed loss and knocked out A turret. *Andrea Doria* also chose not to rapid fire, restricting the number of hits to 5 on *Inflexible*. These started a major flood and knocked out A turret along with moderate structural damage.

The Italian convoy and its escort were now within effective gun range of the Allied ships, and a cosmically complicated ballet ensued as the two pre-dreadnoughts and three torpedo boats bobbed and weaved to maintain smoke screens between the convoy and likely assailants.

The Austro-Hungarian battleship squadron was now being targeted from all sides. The overbuilt and cramped ships suffered from inadequate damage control, and this was now highlighted as none of the major floods and fires were controlled during the entire battle. However they valiantly fought back as best they could. With the Japanese battlecruisers now pulling out of effective range, and the British battleships greatly benefiting from not being engaged, on turn 4 *Tegethoff* switched fire to *Dreadnought* and on turn 5 went into rapid fire. This was immediately effective as both stern turrets on *Dreadnought*, as well as the stern torpedo tube, were knocked out. On turn 5, the British battlecruisers, passing on an opposite course, were close enough for the 6" secondary battery to open fire on *New Zealand*, doing minor damage.

Prinz Eugen similarly switched fire to *Bellerophon*, hitting on turn 4 and going into rapid fire for turn 5. Coincidentally, this also knocked out both stern turrets and the stern torpedo tube but also did 2 knots speed loss and started a moderate fire. The secondary battery engaged *Australia*, starting a minor fire.

Szent Istvan switched fire to *Temeraire*, failing to hit on turn 4 and finally getting one hit on turn 5. This hit temporarily disabled Y turret for one turn. *Haruna* was still close enough to *Viribus Unitas* to make it worth continuing rapid fire, and the two hits obtained destroyed *Haruna*'s director fire control and temporarily disabled B turret. However on turn 5, with the rudder damage that drove the ship in a semi-circle, fire was much less effective and no hits were obtained.

As previously mentioned, *Zrinyi* and *Erz. F. Ferdinand* engaged and sunk *Kurama* on turn 4. *Zrinyi* then switched to *Haruna* and *Erz. F. Ferdinand* to *Kongo* but neither got hits. Radetsky continued rapid fire with 12" guns and opened fire with the 9.4" secondary guns on *Ibuki*. All got hits, knocking out another secondary turret, the stern torpedo tube and starting a major fire and a major flood. *Ibuki* was able to control an earlier flood.

Third phase (turns 6-7)

Bretagne finally got control of the helm, but could only proceed at 10 knots. *France* also did 10 knots on turn 6, then began to accelerate on turn 7 but neither ship had targets within their limited gun range. In contrast, on both turns 6 and 7 *Courbet* engaged *Cesare* with rapid fire and *Paris* engaged *Cavour* with rapid fire. *Cesare* had central fire control knocked out, forcing the turrets to go into local control, and suffered another moderate flood. *Cavour* lost the centre and Y turrets, and barely survived the flash rolls. Significant structural damage was done as well as another 2 knot speed loss.

After missing *da Vinci* on turns 4 and 5, *Mirabeau* hit and went into rapid fire on turns 6 and 7, while *Danton* failed to hit on both turns. However this only temporarily knocked out B turret and caused a 1 knot speed loss.

The British battlecruiser squadron was now on a death or glory ride (emphasis on the former). *Australia* continued rapid fire with only two turrets on *Tegethoff* on turn 6, then switched to one of the troop transports on turn 7. One hit was obtained on *Tegethoff*, which knocked out X turret, but the fire on the troop transport failed to hit. *New Zealand* also engaged *Tegethoff* on turn 6, then switched to *Szent Istvan* on turn 7. 3 hits were obtained on *Tegethoff* which started both a flood and a fire and knocked out two 6" secondary guns. One hit was obtained on *Szent Istvan* which did minor damage.

Inflexible also targeted *Tegethoff* on turns 6 and 7, but as the director fire control had been destroyed earlier, only four guns could bear, and there were already a profusion of shell splashes around *Tegethoff* not hits were obtained. *Indomitable* also targeted *Tegethoff* both turns. With director fire control and six guns, even with the overfire from other ships a hit was obtained on turn 6 and two more hits on turn 7 after locking on and going into rapid fire. This started two more fires on *Tegethoff* and knocked out two more 6" secondaries, as well as doing serious structural damage.

The British battleship squadron maintained the same targets on turn 6, and all were able to rapid fire. *Dreadnought* and *Bellerophon* did minor damage to *Szent Istvan* and *Viribus Unitas*, as well the secondary battery fire control was knocked out on *Szent Istvan*. *Temeraire* and *Superb*, firing full 8 gun broadsides, were able to significantly damage *Tegethoff* and *Prinz Eugen*, causing two more major floods on the latter as well as jamming the rudder to starboard. After so much pounding by so many ships, and with only one turret still operational, *Tegethoff* sinks at the end of turn 7.

On turn 6 *Haruna* targeted one of the torpedo boats laying smoke screens. That turn no hits were obtained, primarily because of the small size of the target greatly reducing the chance of hitting. On the second turn, with an improvement in accuracy for the lock on bonus, a single hit was made and this was enough to blow the torpedo boat out of the water. *Kongo* had hit *Radetsky* on turn 5, so went into rapid fire on turns 6 and 7. This produced 7 hits, 3 of which were duds and did minor damage.

However the four working shells did significant structural damage. *Ibuki* was now in position to see the convoy, and fired on transports both turns, but got no hits.

For the first Italian squadron, the approaching *Paris* and *Courbet* now become the primary target. *Cesare* lets loose the last rapid fire salvos against *Bretagne* on turn 6, doing little additional damage, then changes to one of the Italian dreadnoughts on turn 7, but gets no hits from initial ranging fire. *Da Vinci* gets two turns of rapid fire against *Courbet* at ranges under 90 and then under 75 hectometers. A total of 7 hits over the two turns knocks out two engine rooms, reducing speed to 13 knots, and starts another major fire. One of the hits on turn 6 is a critical hit on the steam plant, which will cause a loss of 5 knots per turn until damage control repairs it. At this point, since *Courbet* has taken major damage, the damage control function is seriously reduced, to 1/3 the initial effectiveness.

Coincidentally, on turn 7 *Paris* gets the same critical steam plant hit, and with earlier speed loss damage is reduced to 11 knots, losing 5 knots per turn. Fortunately, *Paris* is not as seriously damaged as *Courbet*, so damaged control has only lost 1/3 of original effectiveness. One of the hits from *Cavour* penetrates and wrecks X turret, but there is no fire and risk of magazine explosion.

The second Italian squadron has also reacted to the approach of the French dreadnoughts. On turn 6 *Dante Alighieri* switches fire to *Courbet* and adds two more hits to the damage total. *Caio Duilio* and *Andrea Doria* switch fire to *Paris*, adding to the damage totals with 4 more hits.

For the Austro-Hungarians, it is a time of diminishing returns. From the full 12 gun broadside on turn 5, *Tegethoff* is reduced to 6 guns on turn 6 and 3 guns on turn 7. To add to the problems, central fire control is temporarily put out of action on turn 6 and the remaining turret goes into local control for turn 7 and fails to get a hit. However one of the hits on turn 6 puts *Dreadnought's* Q turret out of action. The full 6 gun secondary battery engages *Australia* on turn 6, but by the next turn it is down to 2 guns and cannot get a hit.

Prinz Eugen continues rapid fire salvos on *Bellerophon* for turns 6 and 7, first with 12 guns, then after A turret is knocked out, with 9 guns. To maintain course despite the rudder hit on turn 6, *Prinz Eugen* slows to 10 knots (becoming easier to hit) and steers using differential propeller speeds. The 6 hits on *Bellerophon* destroy Q turret (again without a turret flash occurrence) and start another major fire.

The rudder hit that *Szent Istvan* took on turn 5 causes the ship to swing around almost a half-circle, leaving the former target *Temeraire* in the stern arc, where there is only one working turret. Instead fire is switched to *Ibuki* on turn 6, but with the reductions for ranging fire and the effect of the radical turn no hits are obtained. On turn 7 *Szent Istvan* continues to turn at the same rapid rate, now almost back on the original course. Fire is shifted to *Australia* with both main and secondary guns, and the few hits obtained are enough to leave *Australia* in a sinking condition.

Having recovered from the jammed rudder on turn 5, *Viribus Unitas* makes a more moderate turn to regain initial course. Even the more moderate turn, however, throws off fire control and no hits are obtained. On turn 7 the ship is now fully under control and switches fire to *New Zealand*. One hit knocks out Q turret, and with the effect of cumulative damage and the other hits that turn *New Zealand* sinks.

On turn 6 *Radetzky* continues rapid fire on *Ibuki*, getting hits from both main and secondary guns. One of these hits starts a major flood, others just do structural damage. Unfortunately, on turn 6 *Radetzky* gets a bridge hit which prevents new movement or fire control orders being given for two turns. On turn 7, even though

Ibuki has moved into *Radetzky's* stern arc, fire is maintained only on that target with 2 guns.

Zrinyi continues firing at *Haruna*, but since no hit was obtained on turn 5, cannot increase to rapid fire. Finally a hit is made on turn 6, which allows rapid fire on turn 7 against *Haruna*. The hit on turn 6 knocks out *Haruna* director fire control. The additional hit on turn 7 just does structural damage.

Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand maintains fire on *Kongo*, which is now in the bow arc. One hit is obtained which passes through the upperworks doing minimal damage.

Assessment

This scenario is designed for the 6 hour Sunday gaming time block at Trumpeter Salute, so being able to complete 7 turns in 4 hours is a good sign. However, this meant that many ships were still in very good shape, and the convoy had yet to survive its closest encounter with the enemy.

Allied ships sunk: *Kurama, Australia, New Zealand*.

Allied ships seriously damaged: *Ibuki, Dreadnought, Bellerophon, Inflexible, Bretagne, Paris, Courbet*.

Allied ships virtually undamaged: *Temeraire, Superb, Indomitable, France, Danton, Mirabeau*.

Central Powers ships sunk: *Tegethoff*.

Central Powers ships seriously damaged: *Prinz Eugen, Szent Istvan, Radetzky, Cavour*.

Central Powers ships virtually undamaged: *Dante Alighieri, Caio Duilio, Andrea Doria, Zrinyi, Erz. Franz Ferdinand*.

For the victory points earned to that point, the Japanese were far ahead of anyone else.

UPCOMING CONVENTIONS TO PRETEND TO ENJOY

Note: AGoH = Author Guest of Honour, ArtGoH = Artist Guest of Honour, ComGoH = Comics Guest of Honour, FanGoH = Fan Guest of Honour, GamGoH = Gaming Guest of Honour, MedGoH = Media Guest of Honour, SciGoH = Science Guest of Honour, and Toastmaster = Toastmaster.

78th World Science Fiction Convention

CONZEALAND – (29th July to 2nd August, 2020) – **Shapeshifted into a strictly online conference** – As originally planned for Wellington, New Zealand it featured *George R.R. Martin* is the Toastmaster, for Ghu's sake! Wowzers! *Mercedes Lackey & Larry Dixon* were the AGoHs. *Greg Broadmore* was ArtGoH. *Rose Mitchell* was FanGoH. Basic Adult membership rate as of March 2nd was \$450 NZD = roughly \$375 CAD. Was to take place at the TSB Bank Arena and Auditorium (Shed 6), the Michael Fowler Center, and the Intercontinental Hotel), plus nearby overflow hotels and myriad Wellington bars and pubs. They were expecting about 2,000 attendees.

However, what with strict measures being enforced by the New Zealand government, on March 25th the Worldcon committee announced CoNzealand would

be going online. It was either that or postpone, and as there seemed no certain virus-free time period in the year ahead, so switching to virtual was the only reasonable choice. Shape-shifting is in the very earliest stage of planning. Nothing certain yet.

Currently only supporting memberships can be purchased. The virtual con will require an online membership, rate to be announced April 15th, 2020. There was a policy of no refunds for purchased attending memberships, but limited refund possibilities, such as refunding the difference between a former adult attending membership and the new online membership, are under consideration. In any case, the ConCom are hoping people won't ask as they will need every penny they can get to cover the enormous increase in expenses necessary to successfully carry on the Worldcon in its new form. Relevant information will be released on an ongoing basis.

For details: < <https://conzealand.nz/> >

Canadian Conventions

COSTUME CON 38 – (~~13 to 15 March, 2020~~) – **Cancelled** – It was scheduled to begin Friday, March 13th in Montreal, but on the Thursday the day before the Quebec Health Minister banned all gatherings of more than 250 people throughout the province.

For details see: < <http://costumecon38.org/en/home/> >

CAPITAL CITY COMIC CON – (~~20 to 22 March, 2020~~) – **Postponed till some undetermined future date** – This popular Comics convention was to have been held in Victoria, Capital of British Columbia. Celebrity Guests had included Gates McFadden from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Sean Gunn from *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and Garrett Wang from *Star Trek Voyager*, but apparently some GoHs announced they wouldn't be attending due to health concerns. The announcement came on March 12th, the same day the Health Minister of B.C. "advised" that gatherings of more than 250 people should not take place.

For details see: < <https://capitalcitycomiccon.ca/> >

TRUMPETER SALUTE GAMING WEEKEND – (~~17 to 19 April, 2020~~) – **Cancelled** – A popular, annual Gaming convention in Burnaby, B.C. which had no choice but to cancel. Three reasons, actually: fewer than normal pre-attendance signing up, a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people, and the Bonsor Recreation Centre where it was to be held shutting down operations. As luck would have it, I was in the midst of putting together an article extolling the virtues of Trumpeter. I published it anyway so you can see what you are missing out on and perhaps, if it sounds intriguing, check out one of their monthly game nights when they resume.

For details see:

< <https://trumpetergaming.weebly.com/trumpeter-salute-2020.html> >

AD ASTRA – (~~1 to 3 May, 2020~~) – **Postponed till May of 2021** – Postponement announced March 23rd. Ad Astra is Toronto's longest-running general interest fan-run SF&F convention. Guests of Honour were *Heather Dale*, *Ellen Kushner*, and *Peter Kenneth*. Featured GoHs included *Robert J. Sawyer*, *Eric Choi*, and *Ed Greenwood*. Theme had been: "Astralogica – A Celebration of the Wizarding World. With activities ranging from house sorting, potion demonstrations, quizzes on wizarding lore, introductions to magical beasts, and various literary works of the

muggle kind.” Also planned: “Discussion panels, book signings, a meet and greet with our guests, writing workshops, Masquerade costume competition, book launches, Saturday night dance, live music, Tesla Tea Service, a charity event hosted by the Toronto Steampunk Society,” and much else. Sounds like it would have been a lot of fun, equivalent to a full-fledged VCON. ConCom is hoping to try again in early May of next year.

For details see: < <https://ad-astra.org/> >

ANIME NORTH – (~~22 to 24 May, 2020~~) – **Postponed till 28 to 30 May, 2021** –

Their web site states “Given the current situation ... it simply does not appear possible to hold a 35,000 odd person gathering two months from now ... Everyone who has pre-registered for Anime North 2020 will be given the option of rolling their admission over to the 2021 event or receiving a full refund.”

For details, see < <https://www.animenorth.com/event/index.php> >

VCON 43 – (~~2 to 4 October, 2020~~) – **Pre-postponed, in that it was originally scheduled for Labour Day weekend October 11th to 12th in 2019, but had to be cancelled. Logic would dictate it being resurrected in October, 2020, but cancellation penalties are so difficult to deal with the VCON resurrection has been put off till 2021. VCON is the trend-setter way ahead of the curve! Our potential 2020 date was cancelled before the Coronavirus even existed!**

As originally planned for its site in Richmond, B.C, it featured AGoHs *James Alan Gardner*, *Marion G. Harmon*, and *Maxwell Alexander Drake*, ArtGoH *Kasia Slupecka*, Pop Culture GoH *Hope Nickolson*, and Cosplay/SciGoH *Ethan Siegal*. Dozens of other professionals in various fields would have participated in panels, workshops, lectures and demonstrations in at least 5 tracks of programming. Also planned: designated gaming rooms, an art show, a vendor’s hall, a book launch with multiple authors, a Saturday night dance, a costume contest, author readings, and a hospitality room.

VCON (first held in 1971) is the longest-running fan-run convention in the Pacific Northwest. It would be a darn shame if it can’t be brought back to life. Plenty of people in the Vancouver and Lower Mainland region are determined it will return, but in what form that would be feasible and practical given the myriad concerns that caused cancellation in the first place has yet to be figured out. At any rate, a tentative 2021 booking for the Hilton Hotel at Metrotown Mall is in place. If I’m still alive (pending what the virus has in mind), I volunteer to moderate the usual three writers workshops I’ve done for the past 15 or 20 years.

CAN-CON – (16 to 18 October, 2020) – **Apparently still going ahead on-site at the Sheraton Hotel, Ottawa, Ontario** – “The Conference on Canadian Content in Speculative Arts and Literature.” Tends to focus on written SF&F and on Science. Volunteer-run but no gaming, cosplay, or media programming. Pretty close to being a genre writer’s festival. *Fonda Lee* is AGoH. *Tricia NarWani* is Editor GoH. *Sarah Megibow* is Agent GoH. Current adult membership price (as of March 2nd) = \$50 CAD. Pre-registration tends to sell out. Often no price-at-the-door because maximum-capacity cap already filled.

For details see: < <https://can-con.org/> >

American Conventions

EMERALD CITY COMIC CON – (~~12 to 15 March, 2020~~) – **Postponed till 21-23 August, 2020** – Speaking of Viral Virus fears, this popular Seattle convention, after at least a dozen sponsor exhibits pulled out, thirty or more guests cancelled appearances, with an ungodly number of panels subsequently cancelled, decided to postpone the convention. They are currently hoping to try again August 21-23. The mind boggles at the administrative mess involved what with ticket sales, reservations, travel plans, venue possibilities, etc, etc., all under question. Possibly the first big con to run into the sturdy brick wall of an impending pandemic.

When you consider that, under the best case scenario, CoronaVirus is expected to peak in April and not begin to fade away till May, and that most virus outbreaks last for many months ... Sheesh. A proposed August date may be too optimistic.

For Details see: < <https://www.emeraldcitycomiccon.com/> >

NORWESCON 43 – (~~9 to 12 April, 2020~~) – **Postponed till sometime in 2021** – Apparently memberships will be rolled over for next year. How the Philip K. Dick award will be announced and presented remains to be figured out, but the result will be released somehow. GoHs included AGoH *Jacqueline Carey*, ArtGoH *Sana Takeda*, SciGoH Underwater Archaeologist *Dr. Susan Langley*, and Editor GoH *Claire Eddy* representing Tor Books. Also to have attended, more than 150 pros, of whom I recognize three names, which shows you how out of touch I am. Norwescon has always been tremendously popular with B.C. and Alberta fen and will be greatly missed. For many fen in the Vancouver Lower Mainland region their presence at Norwescon was an automatic yearly event, in some cases going back decades.

For details see: < <https://www.norwescon.org/> >

Terran Conventions

SWANCON – (~~25 to 27 April, 2020~~) – **Postponed till 24 to 26 April, 2021** – Was to have been held in Perth, Australia. Their web site states “We would be irresponsible to hold such a large public gathering, regardless of the amount of hand sanitizer and tissues provided.” Sobering to conclude that attending a science fiction convention has now become literally a death-defying act.

The theme for Swancon had been *Dark Visions*. Indeed. Guests of Honour were *John Robertson*, *Nalini Singh*, and *Emily Smith*. Event topics included 1950s Science Fiction Films, Happy Stories at the End of the World, Live Action Quidditch, Australian’s Children’s Fantasy Stories, Unreliable Narrators, with assorted other goodies culminating in the presentation of The Ditmars, Australia’s premiere Genre Awards. No doubt all the people looking forward to attending are sorely disappointed. Not to mention the ConCom left with the administrative consequences. Sad.

For details see: < <https://swancon.com.au/> >

Writing Festivals

CREATIVE INK FESTIVAL – (~~15 to 17 May, 2020~~) – **Postponed till roughly the same time in 2021?** – Must admit I’m disappointed. I was going to give a talk on writing columns for *Amazing Stories*, do an hour-long Blue Pencil session critiquing 4

newbies, and participate in one or more panels not yet determined by the programmer at the time of postponement. I'd been to and participated in all the previous Creative Inks, and was very pleased to see it building from strength to strength and gathering momentum with each succeeding year.

The postponed CFI was to have featured AGoHs *Wesley Chu* and *Colleen Anderson*, with *Barbara Ferrer* as Keynote Speaker. About 50 presenters had signed up to participate in what has been described as a cross between a conference and a convention. At least 4 tracks of programming with panels, lectures, author readings, blue pencil sessions, pitch sessions, Coffee Klatches, plus a banquet and a dealers room. Last year was jampacked, often all seats taken, during most events. Lots of high energy excitement and enthusiasm. Not fannish as such, since the emphasis is on how to survive and maybe even flourish as a professional writer. Ideal for anyone with that goal. I look forward to the return of the CIF. It's a "must attend" for me.

For details see: < <https://www.creativeinkfestival.com/> >

SFWA NEBULA CONFERENCE – (28 to 31 May, 2020) – **Shapeshifted into a strictly online conference** – Until March 22nd the Science Fiction Writers of America had planned to go ahead with their 55th annual convention where, among other things, the peer-determined Nebula Awards would be presented. Practical considerations had virtually forced them not to cancel.

To quote their website: "Our challenge is that the hotel will not allow us to cancel the event without paying penalties unless it is 'illegal or impossible' to host it. Similarly, they will not offer us refunds. This limits our choices. With that said, the board's priority in decision-making still remains with the health and safety of our attendees and by extension their families."

At the time it seemed like good news. The Awards ceremony would be free to attendees, as were the mass autograph sessions. Many Industry professionals, publishers, editors, and authors intended to be present. Program items included the likes of "Citation Needed: Marginalia and Meta-Text Elements in Storytelling, I am Not a Lawyer: Contracts for Authors, Finances for Traditionally Published Authors, Spending Money to Make Money as an Indie Author," and other sercon stuff. Definitely an important conference for writers and would-be writers. But would worsening circumstances permit? One possible factor, if city authorities were to ban public gatherings beyond a certain size. Already happening elsewhere.

Then, apparently the venue itself started issuing cancellation notices without first notifying SFWA. I have no idea if SFWA is still stuck with penalties and no refunds. At any rate, on March 22nd SFWA announced the conference will indeed still take place, but strictly online as a virtual livestream event for the 3 days, with "online panels with real-time interaction ... solo presentations, conference mentorships, workshops, forums, chats, virtual room parties (including a virtual dance party hosted by John Scalzi), plus the Nebula Awards Ceremony which will stream live at 8 PM Eastern on May 30th." Cost to join? \$150 USD. An online demo was conducted March 31st. As for those who already paid to register with the now-cancelled physical con, they "will have the option to defer to the L.A. Conference in 2021, donate to help with COVID-19 assistance, or receive a full refund." Have to say, this is quite an exciting concept. Kudos to the ConCom for coming up with it. Hope it works.

For details see: < <https://nebulas.sfwaworld.org/nebula-conference/> >

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE – (August 14 to 16, 2020) – Apparently still going ahead on-site at the Delta Calgary South Hotel, Calgary, Alberta – The latest word is that the Aurora Awards Banquet has been sold out, and the membership cap is 78.1% full with 626 passholders paid up, which includes about 200 presenters! Current adult rate is \$45 CAD.

This is the 10th WWC and the first one I've made arrangements to attend. Got my membership paid, my room booked, and airline tickets purchased for a direct flight from Nanaimo and back. Everything wonderful and perfect. Unfortunately I suspect the Pandemic will still be raging in August. My fingers be crossed. Won't cancel till I have to. Should it not take place, I fully intend to attend in 2021, if at all possible.

WWC is a multi-genre (SF&F, Mystery, Horror, Romance, Westerns, etc.) writers festival run by volunteers (modelled after traditional fan-run SF&F conventions). Fiscally sound. Everyone buys a membership, even the GoHs and organizers. No refunds given. Membership cap. Expenses thoroughly predictable and easy to budget for. Tends to sell out with no memberships available at the door.

AGoHs this year include *Cathy Ace*, *Vicki Delany*, *Steena Holmes*, *Fonda Lee*, and *Morgan Rhodes*. *Dave Reynolds* is Bookseller GoH. Multiple tracks of programming begin 1 pm Friday and run till 5 pm Sunday. There's a Merchant's Corner, author readings, "hidden" art show, an Aurora Nominee pin ceremony on Friday and the Aurora Awards banquet on Saturday.

For details see: < <https://www.whenwordscollide.org/> >

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL! (Letters of Comment)

Note: Annoying comments by God-Editor [*are in brackets*] immediately after introduction of topic in question. This, a feeble attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in a fanzine lounge or a hospitality suite in the interests of conviviality. But mainly, to avoid tiresome necessity (if editorial comments are at the end of each LoC) to start each paragraph with "[*Re: your comment...*]" which would be a terrible waste of space (unlike this brilliant introductory note which is, of course, a triumph of its kind.)

From: **Garth Spencer** – (March 1st, 2020)

Dear Graeme,

With a fond farewell to Felicity, who carried on *BCSFazine* for astonishingly long, and with a "Welcome back!" to you, I humbly submit this here letter of comment.

Also I submit some retro illos that you may find amusing, in the same spirit as the cover you chose.

[Apart from portfolio presentations, for purposes of saving both time and space my focus will be on text. If I put in art I want people to actually look at the artist's work. Images for the sake of images I'm not too keen on. Am thinking of this clubzine

is a mini-book full of text for readers, as opposed to an artsy screen display or glossy magazine. Besides, placing images can be finicky and time consuming. Because of my other projects and their deadlines, I'm all about streamlining the BCSFAzine layout process to be as easy and fast as possible. Simplicity of layout is key.]

Your mention of the most socially active times in BCSFA felt nostalgic. I wish I had felt more a part of events, and I still want to enjoy a milieu like that. I haven't quite given up hope of finding or making one.

[Maybe contributing to BCSFAzine can be a small part of communing with like-minded people.]

Trades: you seem to be under the impression that other fanzines are out of reach, except by regular post. *Au contraire*; check out efanzines.com, and fanac.org, and sflovers.org.

[I know there's a zillion fanzines out there. Trade in electronic form no problem. But I have the impression some clubzines aren't available except in paper trades. Since we probably won't be producing paper copies and mailing them because it's too expensive, my point is some zines may not want to trade their paper zines if all they get in response is PDFs.]

For future reference, shall we distinguish between "fanzines" and "zines" in *BCSFAzine*? I gather that libraries and comic shops and some video, record, and book stores feature zines, of the sort featured by *Broken Pencil* and Canzine West. Zines seem to be about contemporary poetry, political/social activism, or punk/metal/other contemporary music.

[Short answer: No. Long answer: I'm aware of modern zinedom and that it has nothing to do with traditional fannish zines. I'm also aware they've never heard of us. Entirely separate publishing phenomenon. But it is all a matter of context. I assume readers of BCSFAzine know I am using "fanzine" and "zine" interchangeably, which used to be the custom back in the day. I see no reason to stop doing it. All part of the traditional fannish ambience I'm trying to convey. I don't plan to kowtow to modern times.]

About mining asteroids: the sooner we can develop primary and even secondary industries in orbital space, the better. A note: in describing the Bennu asteroid, you seem to be looking for the word "carbonaceous", rather than "carbonate". Carbonaceous bodies will be valuable as, I am given to understand, there are rather more stone and metal-bearing bodies, and carbonaceous bodies provide other materials needed to complete habitats in space.

[You are correct. The article I was reading referred to Bennu as being covered in carbonates. So I assumed it could be called a carbonite asteroid. Here I was being imprecise due to my ignorance. You not only corrected my mistake, which is good, but also explained why carbonaceous asteroids are useful, which is even better. But you have to bear in mind that I was concentrating on my main point, namely that I consider it remarkable that Bennu is a loose pile of rocks rather than a solid body,

and the importance of that for ease of mining. Minor details like the factual term for that type of asteroid aren't particularly significant to me, relative to the point I was trying to make. I'm more than happy to sacrifice accuracy and precision when I don't consider them important. You might say I'd rather contemplate the significance of the forest than bother fussing over individual trees. I'm not a detail guy. I prefer the big picture.]

Alan White draws really **fun** illustrations.

Conventions: Since last fall I have also been working on a list of upcoming conventions; it's pretty skeletal now, only dates and titles and some URL hyperlinks, but that can change.

[Sounds useful. The sort of thing that needs a website anyone can access. The more comprehensive, the better. However, my policy in BCSFAzine will be to point out the most appropriate conventions for local fen, as well as to highlight some of the major ones elsewhere. In no sense will I be completist.

And, of course, in light of the Coronavirus Pandemic, soon (maybe already) there will be no SF&F conventions anywhere to recommend.

However, assuming things get back to normal within a year or so, I want the majority of space in this zine to go to articles that entertain or intrigue. Even my convention listings will have a snarky comment or two to liven things up. I intend to ensure that fen enjoy reading this zine. What they do with the experience after the last page is up to them. Ideally purge it from their memory and go on to something equally as fun, or better. Live in the moment, I say! Consequently, needful information will be kept to a minimum. – The Graeme]

From: **Robert J. Sawyer** – (March 2nd, 2020)

Felicity Walker did a wonderful job, but thank you for stepping up to the plate, Graeme!

[It was more like slipping on a banana peel, but it promises to be fun nevertheless. – The Graeme]

From: **Taral Wayne** – (March 2nd, 2020)

Considering all the other things you have to do, and the things you'd recently given up doing, how likely is it that you can publish *BCSFAzine* regularly? I wonder if this might not be the time to consider a final issue?

[Good point, but long story short, providing I put in about an hour a day, I know I can do it. Besides, I want to do it.

My book reviews for Amazing take 3 days on average (including reading.) Takes about 2 weeks for me to prepare an issue of Polar Borealis. My FAPA and eAPA contributions involve an hour or two a day till they're done.

But for all that, still a gap in my fanac. I like to entertain and amuse. I've tried doing that in Facebook conversation but the silence of the void seems to be particularly deep there, apart from the shrilling of the Trolls.

Whereas there's something very old-fashioned and leisurely about sitting down and composing articles in a time-pressure-less, relaxed, civilized frame of mind. I can edit and rewrite to my heart's content, as well as interject yet more examples of my sense of humour if anything springs to mind. NOT being connected to the world while writing is a blessing. The simplicity of solitude. An ideal path to bliss, in my mind. In short, working on BCSFAzine is part pleasure, part fun, and part salvation from the modern world. I will go on doing it as long as I enjoy doing it.]

Another idea to mull over is why BCSFAzine and not just another Graeme-zine, with all the usual warts and some new name? How would it be different from an actual BCSFAzine? Apart from a loc from Lloyd Penney, what do you think will fill issues—the usual logs, calendars and meeting reports (that seems to be doubtfully useful)?

[If I did put out another perzine I'd simply revive SPACE CADET as I had been contemplating off and on. But really, that would just be another version of what I write for FAPA so, it would come out on an irregular basis as I'd be saving up a lot of material for the quarterly FAPA.

What I'm hoping for is an ongoing, albeit everchanging, variety of contributions from the hundred plus ex-BCSFAns I'm still in contact with, plus occasional contributions from world fen in general.

My theory is, since modern fen vent their opinions at the spur of the moment online, maybe some of them would care to jot down their opinions and impressions in brief, just as they do on Facebook, only a tad more carefully composed, and send them into me. Their effort would be the same, only less frantic and with fewer regrets over saying not quite what they actually meant and being instantly attacked by trolls.

This kind of thing appeals to me as I deliberately curb my Facebook comments, having grown tired of it. I think I'm not alone in finding Facebook more nuisance than value these days.

Of course, I could be "realistic" and assume no one will send in anything, and it'll just be me and my keyboard and, as you say, a loc or two and nothing else. But where's the fun in that?

Besides, I seem to be doing pretty well, despite short notice, in receiving contributions. From yourself, for example.]

Well ... that's it, all in a nutshell. What do you really want to do, and is doing it this way the best way? I have to admit that I have not been an enthusiast supporter of BCSCAzone, and have had to have my art twisted two or three times to continue sending a bit of material now and then to Felicity to publish. In a real way, her leaving *BSCFAzine* is a signal for me to drop out as well. As far as getting material published in fanzines goes, I have no trouble, and needn't look for opportunities. If anything, finding more incentive is the challenge I need to rise to, and clearly I have been producing fewer articles of late ... and almost no artwork at all. All the better if I can focus more on the five or six zines that I want to stay involved in. Mind you, if God owes you a favour, maybe *BCSFAzine* will turn into the Focal Point of the 2020s ... good luck with that.

[Thank you, and thank you for later sending in your article. Much appreciated. Always open to anything you care to contribute, including LoCs of course. – The Graeme]

From: **Ed Beauregard** – (March 5th, 2020)

So a couple of modest suggestions: forget the missing three years and just go with a current date on the next issue; drop the 50% of the zine that is devoted to "Coming Events" that occurred three years ago. And yes, keep sending it to me (same email address).

[You wrote the above before seeing my first issue, I believe. Am attempting to make the zine as current as possible, apart from articles wallowing in nostalgia. My primary goal is to entertain, rather than inform. Will soon find out how well that's going to go over.

And yes, you are on the list. – The Graeme]

From: **Lloyd Penny** – (March 5th, 2020)

Dear Graeme:

Well, this is certainly different. I have two issues of BCSFAzine to respond to, but by two different editors. Hello, Felicity, too!, and thank you for your many years of working on this clubzine. I have issues 537 and 538, so I will get to it.

#537 ... I know some people were complaining about how things with the zine were about two years behind, but I know, Felicity, that you wanted to be complete. I gather you have left to pursue other things, and I can't fault you at that one. I doubted whether you'd be able to catch up, and I didn't think you'd want to do this for as long as it would take you to catch up. Thank you for all the issues.

Gigabytes, terabytes, petabytes, exabytes ... and now zettabytes and yottabytes. We seem prepared for unthinkably massive amounts of data for the future. And yet, there's never enough. With all the memory ever created, I wonder if it about 10 petabytes.

Our memories of our second trip to England are still fond, and we are thinking of going back yet again. Money is extremely tight for us right now, so this one may be more of a pipedream, but stranger things have happened. As I have said before, help us, 6/49, you're our only hope!

Mort Walker doesn't have his best-known cartoon strips listed ... "Hi and Lois" and "Beetle Bailey". I enjoy comic strips, and more and more, finding animated cartoons enjoyable, especially those with quality animation and drawing, and good stories behind them.

And then, **#538**. Graeme, I never thought you'd come back to fanzines, seeing how you're doing with your own semi-pro, but then, I am making a pro-like advances myself. I am trying to reinvent myself as a book editor, and I now have three books

and five magazine issues under my belt, and the learning curve is a little steeper than I expected. With some luck, I might even get some work doing this, and I would be pleased, given the amount of ageism in the current work force keeping me from employment otherwise. And yet, here I am stuck in the letter mine.

[Well, reading fanzines and commenting on them is your principle fanac, I believe. The eternal quest for comment hooks. You could quit cold turkey, but that might leave a gap in your life. Perhaps just cut back? Just one or two paragraphs each LoC? At any rate, I hope you keep locking BCSFAzine.

Best of luck with your editing career. Good for acquiring a sense of accomplishment, and if earnings are involved, something more practical than mere egoboo. Furthermore, editing is something you can do at any age. And considering the quality of some books self-published these days (and even professionally) there is a growing need for editors. All kinds of possibilities, mehinks.]

Indeed the past times are impossible to resurrect. So many of our friends have moved on, and some believe we've moved on, too. Our fun for the past ten years, right after cashing out of our career of conrunners, has been steampunk, and even now, that is now starting to fade. We have been steampunk vendors for close to ten years, and we expect to shut down our little business, Penney's Steampunk General Store, in the next year or two. It's been fun, but more and more, we just want to attend. Our local con continues on without us, to our relief. We will be going to Ad Astra the beginning of May, and it is now a reunion con for us, to see who comes, and who we can reunite with. There is less and less incentive to physically meet, with the internet making it possible without leaving the warmth of your own room, and then the coronavirus comes along and accelerates the process a little bit.

[Steampunk is beginning to wane? I suppose it was inevitable. Makes me wonder what the next "new" roleplaying fad will be. Not sure there's going to be one, actually. I've always enjoyed reading Steampunk and will continue to do so. One of my many genre interests. Still, just attending for the pleasure that entails is worth while.

I've noted elsewhere my growing disenchantment with Facebook socializing. I hope to make BCSFAzine an old-fashioned throwback of an alternative. Be cool if it works.]

This old coot (think of me sounding like Abraham Simpson) is still happy to contribute. It's just that my current editorial workload can range from nothing to a good day's worth, and I never know if there is another responsibility waiting in the wings for me. I have a regular workload of fanzines waiting for me, and there's about 30 zines in my TO BE LOCCED box. Don't send me paper copies ... sounds strange, but these days, a paper copy, as much as I'd prefer it, simply adds to my storage problems. I admit that I will probably have to give away my fanzine collection within the next few years, and if no one is interested, I may have to recycle the whole thing; I'd rather not.

[The way I see it BCSFAzine will be distributed as a PDF only. Up to the club if they want to go to the expense of printing paper copies for whatever reason. Nothing to do with me. I'm concentrating on trying to put in as much fun or at least interesting stuff as I can per issue.]

Wonderful White artwork! I used some of these fillos for convention badges many years ago. The elderly gent with the shopping bags at the bottom of page 12? I tried to use that on Ad Astra badges a couple of decades ago, but the committee thought he was a Klingon, and didn't want him there.

Done, and must get to work on dinner, so off this goes, and off I go to the kitchen. Thanks for this issue, thanks for taking over, and let's see what can go in there. I keep lists of conventions around highway 401 from Quebec City to Michigan, plus around central and southern Ontario, plus New York state. I also have a list of upcoming steampunk events in and around the Toronto area. I have always thought that the currency of fandom is information and contacts. See you with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

[Yes, information and contacts used to be the currency of fandom. Contacts not so much in this era of rampant Pandemic. And information, less than it used to be. The target readership of BCSFAzine don't actually go to many conventions any more and, I suspect, like me, don't pay much attention to contemporary fandom to the extent of wanting to know everything that is going on.

I personally believe that the tendency to consult information as such is less and less in demand. People now cherry pick what they are interested in and can't be bothered to even attempt to take in the tsunami of info available online. Rather than an "encyclopedia" of fandom, or an "official history" of fandom, I think what appeals most these days is a personal account with amusing anecdotes. Puts "life" in fandom rather than "facts."

Entertaining readers one way or another is my absolute priority. Let the facts fall where they may. They're not as important. I much prefer wry observations and unusual experiences. I'm confident the readership will let me know what they think of my priorities. – The Graeme]

From: **John Purcell** – (March 19th, 2020)

#357 ... Well, Felicity, I saw on a recent Facebook posting that you have stepped down from the editorship of BCSFAzine after a lengthy run. You have done well at its helm, and I thank you for your years of working on this zine. It is always good to see what is going on in that neck of the fannish woods even if the news is a year old. It is my

understanding that R. Graeme Cameron will now be taking command, and I wish him well. He has been quite the active fanzine fan in recent years, so it will be interesting to see how the club newsletter transpires in his care. I am sure the format will be mostly the same, but the big challenge will be to bring the zine more up to date. My best wishes to you and him.

Speaking of which, Garth Spencer opens the loccol with a comment about this very topic. Perhaps instead of embiggening—is that even a real word? well, in fanzine fandom it now is—the fanzine, I like the idea of producing smallish issues of the distant past on a more frequent basis while producing a currently dated issue that same month. For example, the 537th issue is the February 2018 one, meaning Feb 2019 will be issue 549, and Feb 2020 is 561. To catch up with the calendar, Graeme could produce in March issues like this: a double-month back-dated #538 Mar

2018/ #550 Mar 2019 in mid-March of this year so that by the end of this month Graeme would pub the current month's issue as #562 March 2020. It's just an idea, but of course this is up to Graeme, but I was just speculating on how this could be done. Content-wise, on those back-dated double-month issues just include key events and information that happened then. That would keep the page count and thus the postage costs down as well.

Of course, doing something like this could really make some readers' heads spin and fly off in random directions, and that would be quite the sight.

Well, I just finished up running a successful Corflu 37 convention right before the Coronavirus epidemic shut down venues around town here in College Station, Texas. Not surprisingly the headcount was down, but we ended up with 33 really awesome people here who had a smashing good time instead of an expected 42-45, which is not bad considering the circumstances. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves, and it was a real joy to see so many friends again. Ghu only knows when we can gather together again in scientictional conviviality again.

With that I shall leave off. There is school-related work I must do to prepare for teaching my English classes online for the rest of this semester. Life is interesting these days, and I wish you and all of my friends in sf fandom well.

Take care, everyone!

John Purcell

[I'm putting my response at the end to make it clear that I, rather than Felicity, am commenting on your LoC which she forwarded to me.

My solution to bringing the zine up to date is simply to bring the zine up to date. One of the advantages of aging is that not only do the simplest solutions appeal most, the only one that springs to mind is always the simplest, and therefore a solution is always at hand on first thought. Maybe that's the theory behind insisting that heads of government be as old as possible. It's not their experience which counts, but their state of senility and the advantages that brings. With any luck BCSFazine under my guidance will be proof of that concept.

Congratulations on a successful Corflu 37! It makes me feel good to know that 33 old-time fen got together and enjoyed themselves. Small is often better, in that the members are more like-minded and appreciative of each other, just as in the early cons of yore, than can be experienced in many a modern large convention. Glad you had fun. Cheers! – The Graeme]

From: **Felicity Walker** – (March 30th, 2020)

#538

Cover – I like the use of the font Chiller for the Masthead on the cover.

Editorial – Thank you for your kind words.

I enjoyed the issues from your time as editor in the 1990s. When I inherited back issues of *BCSFazine* (first from Garth Spencer downsizing his collection and then from inheriting the archives from you), those were my favourite issues to read.

For what it's worth, FRED is every other Sunday, as opposed to once a month—although it's on hiatus for now, because of the pandemic.

I'll try to remember that advice about jotting down reactions to things rather than

writing formal reviews, and submitting them to *BCSFazine* being like posting them on Facebook. That might help circumvent writer's block.

[Formal writing can be such a pain! On any given topic, a book read or a movie seen or whatever, just pretend someone at FRED just asked you "So what's your opinion on this?" and write down what you would have replied. A conversational approach rather than an academic essay, no citations required.]

I recently bought 44 movies on VHS from another patient of my therapist, and have been ploughing through them as the world self-quarantines to wait out the pandemic. Maybe I'll get around to doing the column I was going to do at one point, *Felicity's Collecting VHS*. So far I've only written an introduction to the concept.

[Always open to genre-movie reviews!]

What the God-Editor Would Like to Publish – I'll try to keep a log of conversations at FRED—assuming we ever get to have FRED again!

Void Breather Bombast – Interesting article. I liked the sub-headline *Space Peanut!*

Messed-Up Movie Musings – Your speculation about Harry Hamlin's process in *Clash of the Titans* (1981) sparked my curiosity, so I did some cursory research on the Internet.

Apparently when producer Charles Schneer shopped *Clash of the Titans* to Orion Pictures, Orion wanted Arnold Schwarzenegger to star, which certainly would have resulted in a more interesting performance. However, Schneer felt there was too much dialogue for Schwarzenegger.

Hamlin may not have shown a lot of emotion in the movie, but behind the scenes, he fought like hell to get certain things done his way: he argued with Ray Harryhausen about what moves he could use in the fight with the scorpions; he'd done this thesis on mythology at university and insisted that Perseus chop Medusa's head off with his sword, and that there be a shot in homage to the famous sculpture of Perseus lifting Medusa's severed head; he wouldn't promote the movie in South Africa because he was against apartheid; and he asked that the robotic owl not be called "Bubo" because it's the word for an infected lymph node (he lost that one—the filmmakers figured no-one else would ever make that connection, and the name stayed).

So, in other words, he felt pretty strongly about the movie, to the point of daring to be a difficult star on his first job, but that didn't translate into on-screen passion.

[Fascinating. When I saw the movie in the theatre I immediately associated "Bubo" with the black swellings in the armpits and groins of plague victims. Did not endear the character to me. Didn't like him anyway, as he fell into the "too cute for words" category, an imitation Star Wars R2D2, albeit flying. – The Graeme]

AFTERWORDS

DONE! (Hah! Just one "Afterword." Oh, wait a minute ... dang.)