

The CUFF 1999 Trip Report

What I Did on My October Vacation

by Garth Spencer

Prologue:

In 1980, some fans in Nova Scotia founded the Canadian SF and Fantasy Award. In 1981, some fans in Toronto founded the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. The fund languished, and the awards went through several ... um ... adventures, until the chair of Ad Astra 7 (1987) took the initiative to revive CUFF and tie it in to the Convention, meaning whichever convention hosted the awards. It was also decided that Conventions would alternate, year by year, between eastern and Western Canadian cons, meaning that CUFF nominees would be accepted from the opposite side of the country.

In 1998, to skip over some history documented elsewhere, inCONsequential II (Fredericton, 1999) bid for and won the Convention for 1999.

By mid-1999 the incumbent CUFF administrators, Lloyd and Yvonne Penney, had declared the CUFF race open to all nominees across Canada, not just fans west of Ontario. In August, I volunteered to run.

I conducted a last-minute online campaign, and obtained more than enough nominations, from both East and West, in less than two weeks. Nominators from the West included Randy Barnhart, Graeme Cameron, David Malinski, Andrew Murdoch, Doug Finnerty, and Clint Budd. Nominators in the East included Murray Moore, Simon Parkinson, Brian Davis, and Will Straw.

I have a history, not just in B.C. fandom, but in Canadian fan issues generally. I started up a national fan newszine in 1983 partly because I hadn't heard from the preceding national newszine in a while, and partly because I wanted to know what the score was with CSFFA and CUFF, and I wasn't getting any answers. It took about five years - no kidding - and a lot of collateral fanhistory-gathering, to track down part of the story. In 1987 I gave that up, and moved from Victoria to Vancouver.

As a result, I have some outspoken opinions: about regional fandoms like the Maritimes, about CUFF, and indeed about the Aurora awards presented at Conventions. It was curiously difficult to get the word on Maritimes fanactivity, or indeed to get word to them, for years at a go.

Equally, for all the efforts that previous CSFFA and CUFF administrators have made, I still perceive them as low-profile, barely visible to the vast majority of fans, not to mention SF professionals and science-fiction readers generally.

In short, there are hurdles to overcome and not a little work to do.

October 14, 1999:

In a way it was inconvenient that I could only book a flight as far as Halifax, and that on Thursday; the room reservation I obtained at inCONsequential's venue began on Friday. In a way, though, it was just as well - a flight across the whole continent, and four time zones, takes six or seven hours, and then I faced another six-hour bus ride to Fredericton.

So I got a room for Thursday night at Keddy's Halifax hotel. Amusingly enough, inCONsequential's venue, the Lord Beaverbrook, is also a Keddy's hotel.

October 15-17, 1999:

Convention 19/inCONsequential II at the Lord Beaverbrook Hotel, Fredericton, New Brunswick. Guest of Honour: Tanya Huff. Master of Ceremonies: Robert Sawyer. Also featuring Donna Barr (author of drawn books), Mary Ann Bramstrup (New Brunswick SF & F writer), Beverly Richardson (Gothic historian), K.V. Johansen (New Brunswick fantasy writer), and Garth Spencer (CUFF winner).

That Sensitive Fannish Face: Almost as soon as I went looking for registration I ran into one of the potential consultants on Maritimes fanhistory, John Mackenzie from Halifax. Shortly I met some more fans from Halifax, Fredericton, and the inCONsequential committee. By the time the first panel was running that I wanted to see, I had handed out cards and fanhistory drafts to John Mackenzie, Mary Ruth on the committee, Brian Davis (the chair), Andre Lieven of Ottawa, and famous writer types like GoHs Tanya Huff and Robert Sawyer. (Sawyer immediately spotted an error in one year's list of Aurora awards. Good, this is the sort of feedback I'm asking for.) Robert Sawyer also immediately enlightened me about some SF writers, and an SF market update - *Transversions*, for one thing, is now edited by Marcel Gagné and Sally Tomasevic. Jean-Louis Trudel, representing the National SF & Fantasy Society at the Convention, updated me on the Quebec *milieu*: one of the SF revues, *imagine ...*, ceased publication last year.

Con survival panel (6 pm Fri): at the point when I did catch up, this panel was discussing how a number of guests of honour, such as artists, have visited the Maritimes again. Some background to inCONsequential was covered (I had to be told why the consuite was called the "Elysian Fields 'uest House", after something in one of Tanya Huff's recent novels); the chaos that was the last Halcon; and the continuing problem that Maritime conventions have, making back their costs on T-shirts.

Opening Ceremonies (7 pm Fri): The usual welcoming remarks and introduction of Guests of Honour. I knew Robert Sawyer and Tanya Huff were listed, I had met Jean-Louis Trudel before, but I was surprised to meet artist Donna Barr again - I didn't recognize her in her new long-haired look, or in this East Coast context.

Fanhistory panel (8 pm Fri): My concern in hosting this panel was to ask questions. Does any contemporary fan, chosen at random, know something about the history of fandom, or even care? Does any such representative fan realize there are some interesting, amusing or even practical things to get out of fanhistory? Or would he or she reflect that history is what we're doing right now?

About a dozen people showed up. We rambled, as panels often do, but I think it was established that there is a history in fandom, it bears on what we do right now in clubs and cons, and I even stayed away from my tendency to focus on the negative. It may have helped that I started by setting up chairs in an oval, and offered some printouts of my Convention and Maritimes fanhistory materials.

Evening events were pretty much limited to the consuite; there were rumours that somebody might host a Toronto in 2003 bid party, but this didn't materialize. As it happened there were no room parties at inCONsequential II.

It is of interest to note that inCONsequential's consuite is a "dry" consuite. Apparently, this is a general policy for Maritime conventions, ever since Halcon 10. (The story I got is that Maritime fandom experienced a phase when university students discovered their cons, and perceived them as a cheap place to get drunk and weird. Also, Maritime fans are generally concerned to present their fandom as a safe place to bring kids.) I commented that other cons in North America have similarly found reason not to serve alcohol.

October 16, 1999

Saturday morning I wandered outside and found a sort of farmer's market, a few blocks away, and had something for breakfast. My impressions of Fredericton were limited to the downtown area where the Lord Beaverbrook is situated. I was strongly reminded of Victoria, particularly the James Bay suburb around the provincial government buildings.

Back at the con I sampled the Robots East and World Building panels, but found them very modestly attended. There was also *supposed* to be a presentation on the Kingcon SF society on Saturday afternoon, but no-one showed up.

The artshow and dealers' room were limited to rather small rooms, but the level of artwork seemed to compare favourably to artshows at other North American conventions. I never did get to the dealers' room while it was open, heaven knows why.

Buffet dinner (6 pm) and *Aurora Awards presentation* (8 pm Sat): For whatever reason, we presented the Aurora awards this year in reverse order. Robert Sawyer served as MC; Jean-Louis Trudel, Paul Valcour, Donna Barr and I took turns presenting the awards; I had agreed to present two of the fan awards, so to my dismay I was up first. I pray I didn't butcher the French translation too badly. Everybody but Donna Barr and myself accepted awards for winners who could not be in attendance.

- Fan achievement (other) went to Janet L. Hetherington, co-curator of the *60 Years of Superman* exhibit at the Nepean Museum
- Fan achievement (organizational) went to Ann Methe of Montreal, for chairing Con*cept 98
- Fan achievement (fanzine) went to *Warp*, edited by Lynda Pelley for MonSFFA
- Artistic achievement went to Jean-Pierre Normand
- Best other French work went to «L'entreprise de Frankenstein» by John Dupuis (in *Solaris* 126)
- Best French-language (short form) went to «La Demoiselle sous la lune» by Guy Sirois (*Fantasy*, Fleuve Noire)
- Best French-language (long form) went to *Corps-machines et rêves d'anges*, by Alain Bergeron (Vents d'Ouest, 1997)
- Best other English work went to *Arrowdreams: An Anthology of Alternative Canadas*, by Mark Shainblum & John Dupuis, editors (Nuage Editions)
- Best English-language (short form) went to "Hockey's Night in Canada", by Edo van Belkom (in *Arrowdreams*)
- Best English-language (long form) went to *Darwinia*, by Robert Charles Wilson (Tor, June 1998)

Costume contest (9 pm Sat): Mary Ruth recruited Donna Barr and myself and the representative of the Tanya Huff fan club to judge the costume masquerade contest. I think I was pretty useless at this exercise, partly because I can't distinctly remember the costumes or how they were judged, and partly because I didn't learn to judge costumes. I need some remedial education or something.

There was a dance, but at that point I was wilting. I don't remember anything more from Saturday.

October 17, 1999

CUFF presentation (10 am Sun): After more than half an hour, perhaps a dozen people showed up, which tends to support my conviction that it's pretty useless to schedule anything before 11 a.m. at a convention. To my dismay I found all the historical CSFFA/Convention/CUFF chapbooks had gone, so I extemporized on fannish fanzine fandom, fan funds, the history of the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, and the topic of Getting The Word Out.

At least one fan was interested to know, well, how do you apply to be nominated?, which I answered in a long-winded and roundabout fashion. I think I needed more coffee that morning.

Perhaps I should have set up the panel room today the way I did for the fanhistory panel, as no-one made offers for the sample CUFF sale items I displayed.

CSFFA Business Meeting (noon Sun): A number of items were raised, discussed and settled at this meeting, with Paul Valcour chairing the meeting and Dennis Mullin serving as secretary.

Two hours were budgeted for this business meeting, but it actually went on for three. Things kind of dragged after thirty to forty-five minutes, or maybe the panel room was a little close and crowded for the number of people there. Robert Sawyer later said it was a good, productive meeting; but I got fed up after nearly two hours and left, because I thought it was getting bogged down.

It was decided, though, that TT2000 will host Convention 20. (This convention was formerly known as Toronto Trek.) This year's chairs are Katherine Cheng and Kimberly Nash.

There was also supposed to be a slave auction on Saturday, but practically no-one showed up.

Closing Ceremonies (3 pm Sun): All the guests expressed their appreciation of Fredericton, and of the hospitality they received at inCONsequential II. Brian Davis mentioned that inCONsequential I had been a good con, inCONsequential II had been even better. I was asked to say a few words, stood up and said "A few words!" and sat down to equal applause. (Hey, it worked for Robert Runte in Victoria.)

Dead Dog: this was mostly fun, and intimate, since perhaps two or three dozen people were left out of 78 or 79 attendees.

I'm not real proud of my exhibition of temper at Robert Sawyer; I was really appalled at the CSFFA meeting, and kept saying so, heatedly. But Sawyer, and Tanya Huff, and Patricia Evans all assured me that meetings usually are slow, and inefficient, even in professional associations and conferences.

I guess it's just as well, for me and for you, that CUFF is not run by a committee.

October 18, 1999

Preliminary CUFF 1999 statement (as at October 31/99)

Some other expenses I covered out of my own funds, such as taxis, a night's stay in Halifax, and the bus fare to and from Fredericton.

Income:	\$
From Lloyd Penney:	1,000.00
Donations	
from Faith Magwood:	100.00
from Robert Runte:	30.00
 Total income:	 1,130.00
 Expenses:	 \$
Air fare:	528.59-
Accommodations:	258.75-
General	
(food, camera, other):	150.00-
Total expenses:	937.34-
 Balance on account:	 \$ 172.66