

SPACE CADET

#18

(OR: THE AGING OLD FHART NOSTALGIC TIME WASTER GAZETTE)



Being the perzine of R. Graeme Cameron.

The first article was written the day after my operation when I was feeling quite chipper about finally having it over and done with. The second, done in late February, reflected my growing frustration with slow healing, constant pain, and persistent fatigue both mental and physical. I just want to mention at the outset that I am feeling much better now and am starting to take an interest in writing projects once again.

By the way, the cover by Brad Foster pretty much illustrates what I've been feeling like the past couple of months....

March 2012

LOIN RIPPED ASUNDER!

Greetings all! I'm writing this Thursday, January 26th. Yesterday I finally had my hernia operation. The day before I was distinctly nervous because the surgeon's office phoned to tell me the operation was switched to a different time and a different hospital. Arrgh! I hate last minute changes, especially to something as important as this.

However, the day of the op I am quite relaxed and calm. I get up at 4:00 am and give myself a good bath and hair wash as proscribed. I leave the apartment at 5:30 am and walk to the Skytrain. Get off at Broadway station and switch to an Express bus that drops me off at Main street. From there I walk the five blocks to St. Joseph, arriving at the Surgical Day Care ward at 6:45 am, or an hour early. Rather be early than late. Apart from my ID card and medical card, I leave all my other cards (Visa, debit, etc.) at home, as well as my Apt. key. Opportunity thieves pop in and out of hospitals on a daily basis and are rarely caught. Pays to be cautious.

There is a small lobby in front of reception, with a clear view of the larger space crowded with beds awaiting the day's in & out surgery patients. I am shown mine within 15 minutes of arriving and asked to change out of my clothes into the usual hair-bag, open-backed gown, and paper slippers. What surprises me are the long green pointy tube-socks that resemble Elf wear. To keep my feet warm I guess.

A nurse comes by and asks if I remembered not to eat or drink anything as of last midnight. I tell her my last meal was 10:00 pm on the 23rd, that I consumed nothing but tea and apple juice on the 24th, and stopped taking anything at after 10:00 pm. She is impressed, commenting that most patients eat like pigs right up to the last second as if they're afraid they're going to starve. In my case, even though I have to wait nearly three hours before they are ready for me in the op room, I have no need to go to the bathroom. My innards are composed and at rest. I doze lightly off and on.

Another nurse comes by to stick an IV in my left hand, firmly ordering me not to jerk it away when I feel the "*giant Vietnamese mosquito bite.*" I don't even flinch. She is amazed. I am amazed at her odd terminology. She asks me if I know why I am here. "*Inguinal hernia.*" "*Which side?*" "*Right side!*"

Dr. Blackstone the Anaesthetist comes by. "*Local or general.*" "*I want to sleep through the whole thing.*" "*Righto! General. Don't worry about breathing. I'll handle that. Stick a tube in your throat. Not a problem. Know why you're here?*" "*Inguinal hernia.*" "*Which side?*" "*Right side!*"

Dr. Wiseman the surgeon peeks around the curtain. "*Remember me?*" he asks coyly. Just barely. It was two years ago I'd met him to discuss the 'impending' operation. "*Know why you're here?*" "*Inguinal hernia.*" "*Which side?*" "*Right side!*" "*Exactly,*" and he pushes aside my gown to draw an arrow with a black marker pen, then adds a rather fancy initial. By now I am reasonably convinced they will probably operate at the correct position. "*Well, let's get this show on the road,*" he says, rubbing his hands gleefully. "*Any minute now,*" and leaves.

A 'porter' comes up, takes my glasses and partial upper bridge (placed in appropriate containers) to add to my clothing in a 'secured' locker, then hauls me a surprisingly short distance to a nearby operating room. Two nurses plus the Anaesthetist and Dr. Wiseman are busy shuffling instruments about at counters along the walls. I swear I hear Dr. Wiseman mutter "*Guess I better use a sharp one,*" followed by a nurse chiming in with "*Here's one. Will that do?*"

Meanwhile, having shifted to the operating slab, I am trying to suppress a fit of giggles because the massive lamp suspended mere feet above me resembles nothing so much as the death ray orb of a Martian fighting machine. Not what would normally spring to most patient's minds I'm sure.

One of the nurses looms up and states *"We're going to give you some oxygen. Breathe deeply."* I do. About three times. Then I am out like a light. I suspect the anaesthetist attached the knockout tube to the IV, or perhaps it is what I am breathing. Anyway, it works. I'm glad I am spared the sensation of a tube stuck down my throat, of having my groin partly shaved (not that I'm shy considering the circumstances, it's just that the hernia made the area unusually sensitive) and last but not least, spared the sight of whatever infernal device they use to retract my dangly bits away from the perilously nearby operating site.

I awake just over an hour later in the recovery room. *"Any pain?" "Yes!" "On a scale of one to ten?"* I experiment. If I don't move and allow myself to relax it is about a four, which is bearable. But if I move! At least an eight. Damn. I feel cheated. The anaesthetist told me the anaesthesia wouldn't wear off till the evening. I assumed that meant I wouldn't feel any pain at all till then. Nope. Lots of pain.

"Normally we would keep you here just for two hours, but we're going to make it four because of your sleep apnoea."

"Really? I went to my doctor because of my smothering dreams, where I dreamed I couldn't breathe, and sure enough woke up gasping. They tested me overnight with some gizmo but I haven't heard the results yet."

"Well, it says in your file during the seven hours of sleep tested you stopped breathing for exactly sixty seconds no less than nine times, and stopped for forty to fifty seconds multiple times. So if you don't mind we're keeping you here for at least four hours just to be certain you're okay."

"Fine by me." Actually it isn't. Not breathing at all for an entire minute? Nine times? Something wrong there. Better speak to my GP as soon as possible. But at least now I know when I can't

remember the name of the person I am talking to, or the title of a book or movie even though I know I know it, I can blame it all on brain damage caused by my unusual non-breathing habit. Bit worrisome that. Bad trend.

Then, just to make matters more interesting, my heart monitor starts playing a melody. Nurse materializes instantly. *"You're going into fib."* *"Yes, Atrial fib."* *"Why?" "Took my Propafenone early today. Been more than eight hours. If you bring me my coat I have more medicine in my coat pocket."* *"You thought to bring your medicine?"* *"Yes, of course."* *"I'm impressed. Most people don't."*

Half an hour after I take the pill the nurse is back. *"You're still in atrial fib."* *"Yep, I'm not worried."* *"Why?" "I know it'll stop eventually."* *"Hmm, if you say so. There's another problem."* *"What?" "You're breathing normally."* *"That's good, isn't it?" "But you don't seem to be absorbing oxygen properly."* *"Oh, that's bad."* *"We'll put you on oxygen."* *"Good, I like oxygen."* So I'm still in pain but feel alert and chipper because of the oxygen.

Eventually Dr. Wiseman shows up. *"Well, that was interesting."* *"Really? I was hoping it would be routine and boring."* *"It was an unusually large hernia. It had completely blasted away the back wall."* Of what? The abdominal muscles? It didn't protrude much, but it sure did hurt a hell of a lot every now and then.

"There may be some swelling and bruising. That's normal. And don't take a bath or shower for at least seven days because the dressing will fall off as soon as it gets wet. Best to leave it on as long as possible. The sutures will dissolve by themselves by the way, so no worries there. Don't lift anything heavier than five pounds for at least six to eight weeks. And keep moving. Don't sit or lie down for too long at a stretch. Got to get your muscles used to moving again."

The nurse reappears. *"Doctor, he's still in atrial fib. We can't let him go till he's back to normal."*

"Nah, it's okay. His heart specialist says he always snaps back. Not a problem. Well, I'm off."

Don't worry about the pain. It'll be gone in a week or two. Good luck!"

Ah yes, the pain. They're giving me Tylenol 3 pills, i.e. Tylenol mixed with Codeine. I think I would prefer litres of Morphine through an IV but evidently they don't think I need anything as drastic as that. Pity.

As for my heart specialist, I went to see him because of shortness of breath problems. He asked me about my Propafenone.

"Well, I was on three a day when I was working, but after I retired I dropped to two a day because I didn't seem to need more than that. Get through the whole day without going into fib. Because of less physical stress I guess."

"Let's give you an ecg test. Just take a second to hook you up." I take the test and Dr. Dante Manyari scrutinizes the print out. *"How are you feeling at the moment. Any symptoms of fibrillation?"*

"No. None at all. Feel great."

"Well, you're in full blown atrial fib even as we speak. And you were in fib in the test they gave you at St. Paul's a month ago. You're working your heart too hard because of it. Go back to three pills a day NOW!"

"Yes sir," I reply, rather chastened. I assumed I would feel symptoms whenever my heart started flubbering about. Seems I was wrong.

"And unless you want to die before you hit seventy I suggest you keep taking a baby aspirin every day. Actually I would prefer a more potent blood thinner, a mild form of rat poison, but it might kill you. We'll wait till you're at least ten years older, when your chances of a major stroke are much higher, because then it'll be worth the risk."

"Oh... great..."

So now I'm lying in a hospital bed, listening to my heart play a merry melody, and thinking much on the ways of the flesh. At least I don't have diabetes or high blood pressure or a damaged heart

(just a wiring problem), so if I follow instructions I should last a little longer.

Finally I am wheeled back to surgical daycare. I ask the nurse to phone my wife so she can come get me. Meanwhile the nurse plops my clothes on a chair beside the bed. *"Sit up, swing your legs over the side, and put your pants on."* There's an itty bitty problem with pain. Takes me a full half hour to pull on my boxer shorts. World's slowest strip tease in reverse. Eventually I get everything on except one sock and my running shoes. I just can't reach down far enough. The nurse helps me out with these last items. The whole effort leaves me exhausted.

It takes my wife, travelling by cab, nearly two hours to arrive. It's rush hour and the traffic is extremely snarled. But no sooner does Alyx arrive than we are on our way home in the same cab, and that's all that matters. I am rather keen on being home.

So now I'm sitting, typing away on the keyboard, and trying not to shift my weight too much because it still hurts when I move. I'd say the background pain is a three, and the movement pain a five at worst. So something of an improvement. I do tend to walk like the world's oldest zombie, but I expect to get better soonest. Meanwhile I just keep popping a Tylenol three every four or five hours.

A doctor friend of my wife, on hearing how Dr. Wiseman described the hernia, commented *"With a tear that bad your husband must have been in extreme pain the last two years."* Well, yes, off and on... crippling pain, put your full weight on your cane kinda pain. In fact, now that I think it about it, it was like having a terrible migraine in my groin. It is to arrgh! Especially cause I'm quite the wimp when it comes to pain. I'm looking forward to living a life without pain (more or less). I think better when I'm not in pain. And this is the last sentence in which I will use the word "pain."

Life can only get better.

Oh, by the way, I may not shower or sit in a tub for seven days as instructed, but I will wash with a wet cloth from a basin quite frequently, just in case you were wondering....

LOIN OBSESSING TIME

When I was very young I obsessed about my loins in terms of when I would get to use the equipment it bore. Then I obsessed how often. For a long time I worried about the excess weight abuilding, pleasing though it might be to any passing cannibal. The last couple of years I worried about everything falling apart. Since my operation I've been obsessing over the associated pain, numbness, slow healing and unexplained fatigue. There have been days when I felt too blah to do anything, let alone accomplish anything. I ask myself, have I reached the age when the first words out of my mouth are to do with my latest operation? I don't even live in Florida!

On the plus side, though the constant pain and numbness persists (involving two different areas obviously), and any abrupt movement or moderate lifting triggers 'warning' pains of some kind, I've regained freedom of movement such that I can walk fairly rapidly (as I am normally accustomed to doing) without the use of a cane. I assume I am healing, it's just taking a lot longer than I anticipated. Oh well.

Meanwhile I just completed a scheduled ultrasound examination of my heart. Took more than half an hour. The white jiggly lines bouncing around in my heart I assume are the fat/plaque buildup in veins, but maybe just normal lines of fat deposit on the heart muscle itself. I don't know. I didn't bother asking, since I know they're not allowed to tell you anything. The heart specialist earlier told me *that "If the results are typical for a guy your age, you won't hear from me. If you do hear from me, you know there's a problem."* I'll be especially interested in phone calls over this coming week.

What does worry me a trifle is the technician seemed to spend a considerable amount of time examining organs and areas other than my heart. My throat for instance. Is this typical of a heart examination? I have no idea.

Speaking of which, a friend of mine who also has sleep apnea (sp?) tells me a CPAC Mask isn't covered by B.C. Medical and costs around \$1600. First thought, do I really need the mask? What's the danger involved in sleep apnea? I'm asleep anyway

and rarely know it is taking place (except when I dream I can't breathe), so why worry? Answer: *"Stroke followed by death."*

Oh, well then. Hmmm. *"And how much does the oxygen cost?"*

"No oxygen. The mask feeds you a continuous, positive pressure stream of air which keeps everything open. It's not oxygen that's needed, but a regular intake of air."

For the past four or five years I've kept a fan beside my bed blowing a steady stream of air at my face because I seemed to breathe easier somehow. I just assumed I was one of those people who likes a draught and can't abide still air. Apparently not.

I've heard that snoring is caused, more or less, by a mild form of sleep apnea. The throat momentarily shutting down on a frequent basis. My wife Alyx drew my attention to a TV commercial which purports to cure snoring (evidently by forcing the lower jaw forward and preventing the relaxation of the jaw muscles altering the position of throat thingies in a negative manner, or something). Presumably this would also cure sleep apnea.

The gizmo in question is a sort of one-size-fits-all set of plastic dentures you insert over your teeth (or gums if you've removed your genuine dentures). I couldn't help but notice the uncomfortable-looking bulge thus created, and the pain in the eyes of the models hired to simulate gleefully hopping into bed in the secure knowledge they were cured forever. Invented by a REAL doctor. Sure. Or possibly by a REAL sadist. It smells of quackery.

On the other hand, I don't much like the idea of sleeping with a mask over my face, a mask continually pumping air up my nostrils. I prefer to sleep on my stomach for one thing, but not facedown with my face buried in a mask. However, dealing with reality always involves doing what you gotta do. And getting older always involves more reality crowding in on you. Hence my desperate plunge into my second childhood.

Speaking of which, I've painted about fifty miniature pewter warships so far. Ultimately I will get around to gaming with them. I'm now on the lookout for scenarios, and this has influenced my

reading habits. Just finished a book on the voyage of the S.S. Bremen (Germany's largest ocean liner) which, on the outbreak of WWII, sailed out of neutral New York Harbour and spent an epic three months dodging British warships. A total of two battleships, eleven cruisers, fourteen destroyers and four submarines were assigned by the British admiralty to find the Bremen, but she made it home anyway. Only to be burned to destruction by a fire-bug crew member who thought it would be amusing to see his fellow crew members run for their lives. Funny how things turn out sometimes.

About to start reading a book about the loss of the Imperial Japanese Aircraft Carrier Shinano, the largest carrier ever built in WWII, sunk on its maiden voyage by the American submarine Archer-Fish just offshore from Osaka. This is a doable scenario, involving the sub vs destroyer escorts, with the Shinano using its superior speed to possibly escape.

Don't know about a scenario about the S.S. Bremen though. Once found by British ships the game is over. Hmm, will ponder the possibilities.

I hope to use the turn of the month to get off my butt and start doing things again, like walking for exercise, writing fanzines, preparing for the next VCON, figuring out how to reproduce the Faned Award, and so on. Hope to get back on track soonest!

LOIN REJOINING THE REST OF ME

It's now March 16th, and things seem to be getting back to normal. The scar is fading, the pain only occasional, and my brain appears to be functioning again. Plus I never did hear from my heart specialist, so I hope that means I'm no more decrepit than the average person my age.

Instead of spending three or four hours a day playing computer games and six or seven hours painting mind-bogglingly tiny warships, I will devote at least four or five hours a day to my other hobby interests.

Trouble is, I have a lot of catching up to do. And I am no longer capable of multitasking (not that I

ever was) so if I try to do everything all at once I will accomplish nothing. One task at a time.

First task, complete this issue of Space Cadet. It will give me a sense of accomplishment. Then move on to...? Let's see. What do I need to do?

- Next issues of 'WCSFAzine', 'Fanactical Fanactivist', and 'Auroran Lights',
- Finally put out a first issue of Frenetic Fanac Review,
- Start work on the VCON 37 program book,
- Start organizing VCON 37 writers workshop,
- Start preparing a VCON 37 lecture or two,
- Contact the local library to see if they're still interested in my doing a sci-fi lecture series,
- Start thinking about Elron Awards,
- Solve Faned Award repro problem,
- Promote 'Faneds' again,
- Start writing 'Ask Mr. Guess-It-All' columns again, ultimately leading to another issue of 'Coruscating Conundrums',
- Come up with ideas for the next issue of 'The Canadian Science Fiction Fan' (my monthly contribution to the E-zine e-APA),
- Get back to work on updating my online 'Canadian Fancyclopedia',
- Get back to functioning on the Directors Board of CSFFA, the Aurora Awards people,
- Do more research to expand the CSFFA Archive,
- Clean up and reorganize the official archives for BCSFA, WCSFA, VCON and CSFFA,
- Clean up my room (my den),
- Get out into the real world more often (at least once or twice a month...)

- Lose weight,
- And have fun doing all of the above .

The items listed are just the ones I plucked off the top of my head. I'm sure there are others I overlooked. I think you can now see why if I try to work on everything at once nothing at all will be accomplished. So, one thing at a time, the only question being: what will the next 'thing' be? It will probably depend on whim.

Probably the best strategy will be to declare every day a 'thing' day, but a different 'thing' each day, so that I will achieve incremental progress on any given task, perhaps on a once a week basis, till the particular project is complete and another can fill its place. And of course, depending on need, to occasionally declare a 'no thing' day where I do absolutely nothing but mindless recreational stuff. Sounds good to me.

And the miniature warships? A little bit every day, perhaps an hour or two. After all, I'm currently assembling and painting about 45 ships, with many more to come. Can't let the Admiralty down!

COLLECTOR OR HOARDER?

We've all seen that depressing TV series wherein 'experts' come to trick lifelong hoarders into throwing away the bulk of their accumulated garbage in order to generate some actual living space. Since hoarders are usually motivated by deep-seated anxieties I strongly suspect the 'stuff' begins to accumulate again as soon as the cameras are switched off and the 'experts' leave. Sad.

But you and I have nothing to worry about, right? We don't accumulate, we 'collect' rare and valuable sci-fi memorabilia, right? Right?

Well, there was a pile of papers and zines sorta in the way because it blocked an aisle between shelves of piles of paperwork and stuff, so finally I picked up the whole mess, plopped it down on my desk, and began sorting though it to see if there was anything I could throw away.

Lo and behold, I came across an issue of 'STRANGE NEW WOLDS' dating from 1994. I

originally bought it because of an excellent article detailing the history of plastic sci-fi models of the 1950s. But now the following article piques my interest:

"THE CASE AGAINST HOARDING" by Jane Frank.

She starts off asking a series of questions which, if you answer "yes" to indicate you are a hoarder rather than a collector. Examples:

"Do you buy two of everything? One to display and one to preserve in mint condition?"

I don't.

"Do you buy containers that slide under your bed?"

I don't, but I would if there was room.

"You call it a collection but no one believes you?"

I'm not sure...

"You catalog everything you collect?"

I try.

"You can't pass up the opportunity to acquire another example of something you already own?"

Never!... except for the Lindberg Flying Saucer Kit which was the first ever sci-fi plastic model, the one used by Ed Wood in the immortal "PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE," and the one I used as a Frisbee before Frisbees were invented – cause you never know if my made-up kit might get broken... and, oh yeah, I have two copies of my favourite comic, the Classics Illustrated "WAR OF THE WORLDS."

"It is no longer physically possible to dust everything you own?"

Uhhmm.... True.

"You frequently misplace things in your collection?"

Yes, the magazine containing the article being a good example.

“You believe in the maxim ‘Collections expand to fill the available space’?”

Of course. It’s obviously truthful.

And so on and so on...

Hmm, am I a hoarder?

According to Jane, there are two symptoms above all which reveal hoarding tendencies.

First, having chosen to collect a particular comic, magazine or artifact, **YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE COMPLETE SET!**

Second, **YOU NEVER SELL, TRADE OR THROW AWAY ANYTHING YOU COLLECT!**

Let’s see, I used to own complete sets of magazines like CINEFANTASTIQUE, STAR LOG, and HEAVY METAL (complete as in first 100 or so issues), but I had to sell them because I went through a period of being desperately short of money. Kept a few of my favourite issues though.

I also owned most of the MAD comics, in fact most of the subsequent MAD magazines, but again had to sell them. I still have the MAD Comics in hardcover colour reproduction (sold the originals) and all my favourite MADS from the fifties and early sixties, so I only sold off maybe 70% of my collection.

But I still have a huge number of FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, AFTER THE BATTLE, complete set of MONSTER WORLD, etc., etc.

However, though I was trying to acquire a complete set of FAMOUS MONSTERS, I recently decided to stop. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC I no longer subscribe to, but treasure the twentieth century issues as a wonderful glimpse of the past I, my parents, and my grandparents grew up in. Actually, I’ve stopped collecting ALL magazines except for AFTER THE BATTLE which deals in obscure

aspects of WWII, a subject which continues to fascinate me (when I was a child EVERY adult had participated in THE war, so I imprinted on their tales and recollections and have always wanted to learn more). Cutting down to collecting just one magazine is a healthy step.

As for comics, my primary motivation was to collect the comics I had as a kid. A single BOB HOPE comic, a single THREE STOOGES, a dozen CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, a dozen FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS, and so on. Representative samples mostly, complete sets only by accident. I no longer buy comics. Another good sign.

What about the plastic models I had as a kid? Or wanted as a kid?

No problem. I’ve got them all. No need to buy more.

On the other hand, I used to impulse buy books, figuring that was what a VISA card was for after all. Recently deceased Canadian fan Chester Cuthbert used to advocate collecting books, on the grounds that selling them off bit by bit would help you get through old age. I don’t know. In his will he left literally tons of books to a university. I suspect he didn’t actually part with very many while he was alive. Besides, I got peanuts for the magazines I sold. I don’t expect my books would earn much either.

In fact, recently I’ve been eyeing my book collection and wondering which ones I don’t really ‘need’ and should get rid of. Worth selling on Ebay? Mailing costs are so damned expensive, and most of my books are in ‘reasonable’ condition, not ‘mint,’ so not all that desirable. Seems like more trouble than it’s worth. Maybe just give them away. Get rid of them.

Certainly, some books are old friends. Don’t want to part with them, but the ones I’m unlikely to ever read again? Do I really need them? For sure I’ll pick up THE TWELVE SATIRES by Juvenal again, or the epigrams of Martial, because they’re quite entertaining, but will I ever reread the plays of Aeschylus? The poems of Tibullus? The confessions of Saint Augustine? Probably not.

Granted, I was once a completist when it came to ancient literature, but a lot of it is damn boring, so I went through my collection of 'Penguin Classics' pocket books and kept only the interesting stuff. Now I'm thinking a lot of it isn't THAT interesting, so.... Uhhmm.

On the other hand, I have hundreds of sci-fi pocket books by my favourite authors (most of them dead now). Will I ever read them again? I might. When the mood strikes me. Maybe write articles about this or that author, this or that book. This particular collection is part of my living sci-fi situational awareness, forms a major part of my self-image as a sci-fi fan, is very much part of my identity. The day I throw them out is the day I move into an old-folks home or a palliative care ward. In short, them be keepers.

Where I be truly a hoarder is my collection of old sci-fi & monster movies. I must have at least 400 of them, half in video format, half in DVD format, some in Blue-ray. Here I was definitely a completist, wanting a copy of every such film ever made. I haven't succeeded in that, but I do have almost every film I loved as a kid & teenager.

Of course, you can't buy videos any more. And even DVDs are going the way of the dodo. Soon the only source will be online downloads, and not everything will be available. What are the chances of finding BELA LUGOSI MEETS A BROOKLYN GORILLA these days?

There's a good chance I will watch each and every one of them at least once more, if only for nostalgia's sake. Will I be taking any of them to the old folks home some day? No. Let's say I wind up in a palliative care ward and I'm only allowed one personal possession. It would probably be the massive single volume version of KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES by Bill Warren, a detailed compendium of American sci-fi films of the fifties. I would be quite content spending my final hours rereading that book. It would reconnect me to my childhood, and the circle would be complete.

Yeah, I know... I'm weird.

So, I no longer collect comics or models or magazines (with one exception) and rarely buy

new books or films. Have I kicked the collecting and/or hoarding habit?

Hell no!

I've spent way too much buying miniature pewter warships and half as much again buying reference books on Naval history, a spending spree of four months duration.

But.... and I do mean BUT.... We're talking an initial investment in a whatever-time-remains-to-me life-time hobby. From now on I'll be keeping within a much saner mad-money monthly budget which will get me a 9 or 10 pewter ships, 1 or 2 books, and whatever else within budget that strikes my fancy. That'll keep me happy.

I really, really enjoy painting said ships. Final touch, to signify launching of ship down the ways, a dab of red paint atop the funnel to signify up-steam status. I have over 200 ships, of which 71 have been 'launched.' And thank Ghu, because concentrating on painting these little lumps of pewter got me through the worst of the post-operation pain without feeling sorry for myself overly much.

I am also spending a great deal of time researching various battles at sea, as well as various sets of rules for war-gaming said battles. Eventually I hope to come up with a simplified, fast-paced set of rules with which I can play many a solo war-game in the course of an hour or two, choosing eras from the turn of the century to the end of WWII.

Okay, fine. But where am I going to store these hundreds of ships?

In clear plastic desk trays stacked atop each other, the whole collection filling perhaps two desk drawers. These are teeny, tiny warships. Very space efficient. In that sense, impossible to hoard.

Twenty-one of the ships I've collected are aircraft carriers complete with 1/2400 scale aircraft. How to mount them independently of the ships to simulate strikes on enemy ships?

Answer: dice.

I buy black dice and glue unpainted (so shiny silver in contrast to the black) airplanes atop the dice. I can fit one large flying boat, or three fighters, atop each die. Works fine. Visually striking.

Other retirement hobbies? I have about 200 1/72 scale model aircraft to build. No room in my present abode to display such, so not working on them yet. Hope there will be more space in the next apartment (or house) we rent whenever that happens.

And I'm still collecting 1/72 scale Airfix soldiers and tanks to relive the solo war-gaming of my youth, but no rush on that. I get a box of soldiers or a model tank or building maybe two or three times a year. Eventually I'll have enough to play with. An indoor sandbox might come in handy to create battlefields.... No, wait. I have a cat. Hmmm.

And there's all the reading I plan to do, and writing, and watching movies... yep, no lack of things to fill my retirement with.

And all to be kept within a strict budget with, as time goes by, considerable down-sizing of my assorted 'collections.'

So, if I am a hoarder, I think I'm learning to kick the habit....

Except I forgot to mention the unbelievable amount of space I devote to the archives of the various fannish organizations I belong to.

But that's another matter entirely.

DELIRIUM TIME

Extremely well-known (and deservedly so) fan Christopher Garcia has taken to recounting his dreams on Facebook. And quite intriguing they be.

I, too, often have unusual dreams. For example, I once dreamed I was Julius Caesar, but it didn't work out too well because I dreamed I was Julius Caesar standing on the corner of Granville and Robson in modern downtown

Vancouver and no one believed I was who I said I was. Very frustrating dream.

And then there are my flying dreams which I quite enjoy.

But let me tell you about two recent dreams...

THE PERFECT HOBBY SHOP

I dreamed I wandered into a hobby shop entirely devoted to Godzilla. There were the usual plastic models and battery-operated toys, but as I explored the shelves I discovered figures of Godzilla made out of pewter (pewter on my mind lately), of silver, of jade, of gold, even one Godzilla about three feet tall carved from a single giant ruby! (I didn't look at the price tag.) And then there was the aisle devoted to man-sized robots of Godzilla (with warning signs everywhere saying "Do NOT activate!"). And the cages with living (!) gerbil-sized Godzillas setting their bedding on fire (miniature automatic sprinklers installed). I was gob-smacked by what I was discovering.

Imagine my delight when I entered a room decorated with oil paintings by the legendary Godzilla fan (and my friend for more than thirty years) Stan G. Hyde of Monster Attack Team Canada. I had no idea he could paint life-like images so well.

As I moved closer I discovered the paintings were extremely three dimensional, almost holographic. I was amazed. What fantastic talent!

I accidentally touched a painting. That's when I discovered they were interactive! If you touched Godzilla's tail he'd thrash it at you angrily. Touch his snout and he'd try to bite your finger off. Tickle a nearby building and he'd trample it to dust, roaring and gronking all the while.

And then I had the feeling there was something really, really BIG standing in the street outside the store... but that's when the dream faded....

I wonder. Does Stan experience dreams like this, or does Godzilla merely fill his waking hours?

THE ULTIMATE VCON

I remember this dream was rather disjointed, or at least my memory of it was incomplete upon awakening, but in essence I was helping to organize the next VCON.

Rather oddly the concom had decided to hold the convention in one of B.C.'s old-time well preserved gold rush towns. As a publicity stunt staged for the media all the guests of honour and concom members (several hundred people) rode into town aboard an authentic 1880s steam train, which is a cool idea.

However, when I say 'rode', I mean 'rode.' The people in question stood atop the carriages clinging to each other in terror as the train bumped and ground against the face of a cliff on one side, occasionally tilting ominously toward the other side above the roaring torrent of rapids of a river far below. By the time the train halted in front of the convention centre we few survivors were drenched with sweat.

I remember looking down from atop the engine (I think I survived because I had hung on to the smoke stack with all my strength) at a minion with an urgent message to impart: "*You gotta cancel the con! None of the microphones work!*"

And I remember thinking "*Most of the GoHs are dead. So I guess it doesn't matter.*"

And then I thought: "*But we can still display the bodies. That'll work! We can save the con yet! Give FILE 770 something to write about!*"

I'll say. Very odd dream. Don't know what it says about my anxieties re: preparing for VCON 37, but it does offer a useful solution to the problem of any attending GoH not being available due to their sudden lack of life.

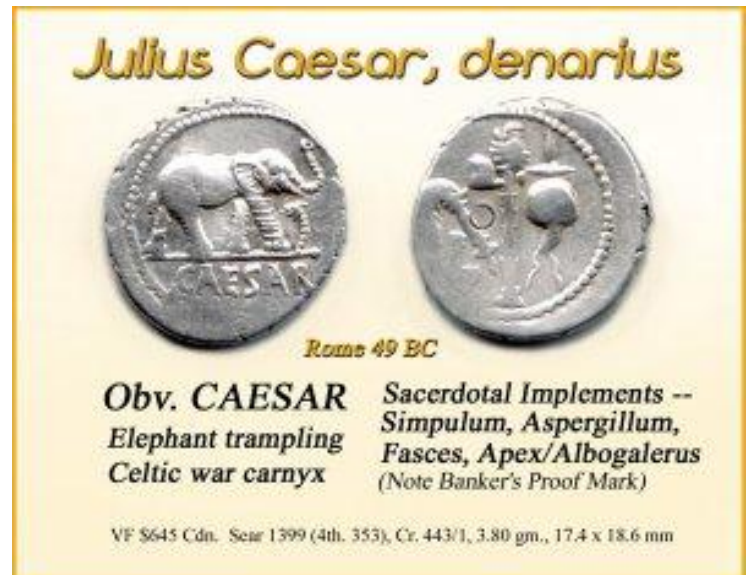
Which begs the question: would it be all right to get the GoH's to sign a document allowing us to display them in the hospitality suite in the event of their death (which would make for a heck of a wake) or might some view this as a tad tasteless? I must bring this up at the next concom meeting. Never hurts to ask.

A POCKET FULL OF HISTORIES: COIN NOTES

By Taral Wayne

(Editor's note: though I've decided to make SPACE CADET much more of a perzine, I continue to include Taral's articles on ancient coins cause I likes ancient coins.)

The coins illustrated in these short written pieces are all from my collection. I've scanned each one, and drawn on my own knowledge to describe the coin, the Kings, the Queens, the Emperors, and the times. Certain statements are my opinions only, even guesswork, but that's alright. After more than 2,000 years in some cases, there's nobody around to sue!



The first fruits of my sabbatical from doing art for a living have been plucked. I turned in my first writing assignment yesterday, and \$150 was placed in my account with the coin dealer I named. The coin had in fact already been mailed, so by wonderful coincidence it arrived the day the first payment was made on it! I'll take this as a good omen.

The coin, as you see is a silver item about the size of a dime and called a denarius. This one was struck by the authority of Julius Caesar in 49 BC, just before he crossed the Rubicon and became not just conqueror of Gaul, but master of Rome. It shows on the face an elephant apparently crushing a snake. That's the orthodox interpretation, though

more contemporary one describes the item underfoot as a "carnyx".

A carnyx was a Celtic war trumpet, similar to horns used by a number of tribal peoples in Europe. It was held upright like a flag and blown through a mouthpiece at the bottom. The bell at the top was often shaped like a wolf, hound, or boar's head, but sometimes like a serpent. The animal head type would rather resemble the segmented, mop-topped whatchamacallit shown on this coin a lot more than it looks like any snake. The area below the elephant (called the exegue) bears the inscription CAESAR. ...for it is he, who's that this is, unto whom one renders it.

(Biblicalese is tough to parse, whew!)

The explanation for the older interpretation was that the "snake" represented the security of the Republic, being trampled by an elephant. The elephant was a symbol of the Metellus clan, who were Caesar's old enemies. Representing the safety of the Republic as a snake scarcely seems intuitive to me, though. On the other hand the Celtic trumpet was often depicted on Roman coins as part of the spoils of war.

The reverse side presents much more of a challenge. You could be forgiven for looking at these strange objects and deciding they were an assortment of party favours. Don't you blow the one on the left, to straighten the paper snake out and make a whiz? No.

It wasn't hard to figure them out, actually. I knew what a couple were already. From left to right there's a simpulum first. It's not struck very well, so you can't really see it. It's roughly comma shaped, and is in fact a sort of dipper for pouring oil over sacrifices, or some similar gesture. The wheezer above it is the aspergillum. This is a sort of brush dipped in holy water, and used to sprinkle around to sanctify things or people. If you're a Roman Catholic you should recognize this implement. It's still used in Mass, and for all I know its still called the same thing. The upright gizmo in the center is a fasces. It has an odd shaped axe blade showing at the top, to the left. Around the axe handle a number of rods were tied, creating a strong bundle. The symbolism of the fasces is that in unity there is

strength... especially when there's a sharp blade in the bunch representing power of the state. Such fasces were struck not just on Italian Fascist coins in 40's, but on the reverses of the famous Mercury Head American dimes of that period as well. The next oddity is the real hoot!

It looks like a balloon with a dildo on top, doesn't it? The balloon part is the albogalerus, a round cap with ear flaps that tie under the chin. It was made from white hide. On top of it is the apex, which is a twig of olive wood, with a scrap of wool wound around the base. It was attached to the cap with twine of some sort whose substance I forget. The apex was to be worn by one of the chief priests of Republican Rome whenever he left the house. He must have felt like a real chump. The Flamen Dialis had to wear a number of odd things as well as avoid wearing others. He could not be in the presence of a corpse, knots, or iron of any sort -- a chained man had to be freed in his presence. It must have been one heck of a status symbol to be this particular kind of Roman priest -- there was only one at a time -- if it meant putting up with a bunch of loony-tune nonsense like that. Caesar was in fact nominated for the office as a young man. It would have ruled out a political or military career, but fortunately for Caesar he was never confirmed in office, and managed to weasel out of the "honour".

The 3/4 circle between the fasces and the aspergillum is a banker's proof. It would be struck into a coin with a hammer like instrument to prove the coin was silver all the way through. They're not uncommon on ancient coins, and as long as they're not too unstrategically placed -- like on the emperors forehead or nose -- don't materially affect the value of the coin.

This is the most common denarius struck under Julius Caesar's authority. There are other types, but none of those that were struck by Caesar himself bear his likeness. However, while he was dictator in Rome, two bankers (or money-lenders) were evidently given authority to strike denarii with the bust of the perpetual dictator, so that the only coins with his portrait were never actually struck by him. After his assassination, the dies were hastily modified to show his likeness with a funeral veil over his head. He definitely didn't strike those!

LETTERS OF COMMENT:

OOK, OOK, SLOBBER DROOL!

From: LLOYD PENNEY, January 17th, 2012
Aurora & Faned Awards-winning Loc Hack
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2

Dear Graeme:

I've got another zine of yours to comment on... this time around, it's Space Cadet 17. Time to see what there is to say, and to see if I can type it up so it's halfway readable.

I know there is a chapter of the International Plastic Modellers Society. There used to be some kind of fannish connection, but as of now, I do not know who locally might be a chapter member. I know that IPMS conventions have been held in Toronto, but that's the extent of my exposure.

There is a local IPMS that meets monthly and holds an annual contest/swap meet, but it's strictly plastic models and I doubt anyone would have the expertise to tell me how to duplicate the 'Faned' award. I like to attend the annual show though, as it features some amazing work plus the opportunity to purchase the occasional rare, hard-to-get-ahold-of model.

I have to wonder if I should get the gooseneck light and magnifying glasses you have. I am not a modeler, but I am producing jewelry for selling at local conventions these days, and I could really use a new pair of glasses.

The gooseneck combo light/magnifier is essential methinks. Couldn't paint or even assemble my miniatures without it. Someday I may need it for reading, but not yet. It does come in handy for enlarging details of pictures though. A photo of 19th century sailors crowded on deck really comes alive when you zero in on facial expressions and note which guys seem bored, which are desperately tired, which delighted to have their photo taken, and above all, which ones are the jokers attempting to spoil the shot by mugging for the camera. Not to mention those who seem worried as if they're afraid the photo will be compared with a wanted poster

somewhere. The angry, pissed-off guys glaring at the photographer are interesting too.

Magnification helps you 'experience' the scene all the more vividly. With historical photos it's almost a matter of time travel. But then, that's what photos are. Ghosts of the past. I have only to look at a picture of myself as a kid to realize that.

The tale of Forry's plight at the hands of Ray Ferry is truly a sad one to tell, and I don't think it was ever resolved, at least to Forry's satisfaction. I did not know about the return of Famous Monsters in 2010, or any of the other monster magazines that have followed. I doubt there's any distribution locally, and it has been a long time since I've been in a comics shop.

Comic shops and hobby shops seem to be the only source available, and not all of them (and precious few there are) carry such zines. Searching for the mags online and taking out subscriptions is probably a collector's best acquisition strategy. They've gotten unbelievably expensive though. One of the reasons I decided to stop collecting them.

The letter column...retiring as soon as it is financially feasible is a fine idea. With that in mind, I doubt I will ever be able to retire. Only a lottery win will make that happen, but I still have some hopes.

Still, you never know. Whenever I buy a lottery ticket (not often) I give myself a fifty/fifty chance of winning (based on the logic that either I win or I lose). And when you consider that flipping a coin multiple times and always coming up 'heads' is quite absurd, I figure I'm long overdue a massive win (because every ticket purchased is a 'flip' of the lottery). There may be a logic flaw somewhere in the above, but I haven't put my finger on it yet.

Years ago, I worked at the CNIB head office in Toronto in their e-publishing department. I was getting books ready for the blind and low-sighted, and I thought I was doing very well at learning the technology right up to the day they let me go, two days before the end of my three-month probation. I seemed to be doing well, but many non-profit

organizations let new employees go just before three months to save on benefits, but keep the positions filled.

So many letters I've read recently, here and in other zines, about how some parents left their children fine books as part of their heritage. The antiquarian books Yvonne and I have ourselves, they were given to us by friends, or we bought them. Our parents had no tradition of reading to follow; we started that ourselves. I've gotten myself some inexpensive books lately, picked up for cheap from the Globe and Mail annual internal book sale, plus some fine gifts from Yvonne. They are waiting patiently, and I am waiting for them impatiently.

I am about done, so I will fire this off electronically to home, where I can save it, archive it, and get it off to you, and start off with another zine. See you the next time.

Yours, Lloyd Penney

**From: DOUG FINNERTY, Feb 25th, 2012
Elron Award-winning Canadian Fan.**

Dear Graeme:

Thanks for sending me SCG. Although I've only printed off issues #14 and #17, I expect to access the rest someday.

I am happy to learn that your hernia was eventually exorcised. I had received the news just hours after watching the John Carpenter remake of "The Thing".

Seems appropriate. Hmm. Interesting question springs to mind. How do you operate on a wounded shape-changing alien? I wonder if Murray Leinster answered this in his 'Interstellar Medical Service' stories? Or James White in his 'Sector General Hospital' series? And what about dental work? Did Piers Anthony tackle that in his 'PROSTHO PLUS' novel? And how many modern fans have even heard of these authors? Let alone read them? At least I own all of the above and can reread them any time I want to. One of the advantages of being a collector/hoarder.

I've always wondered if that porn "palace" you almost worked at is still around. There is one notorious place on Granville that sounds exactly as you describe it, but it's a block or two north of Davie.

No, it disappeared long ago, probably not long after I "worked" there. The police were trying to shut it down after all. I suspect they succeeded.

I've dabbled with "solo" gaming as well, although with me it's mostly been centered around board gaming. There are a few board games on the market that cater to this niche. I think you might have better luck with online sources when it comes to the subject of solo gaming (or as I prefer, "solitaire gaming"). Those two Warhammer gamers you encountered were probably just being jerks. I do not think you were making any social gaffes when making enquiries at the games night.

Well, they were in the midst of setting up their game, and I think they realized I wasn't about to ask any specific questions re: Warhammer so they abruptly turned back to the task at hand. Or maybe I was just too damned boring. You never know.

sincerely, Doug Finnerty

COLOPHON

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