

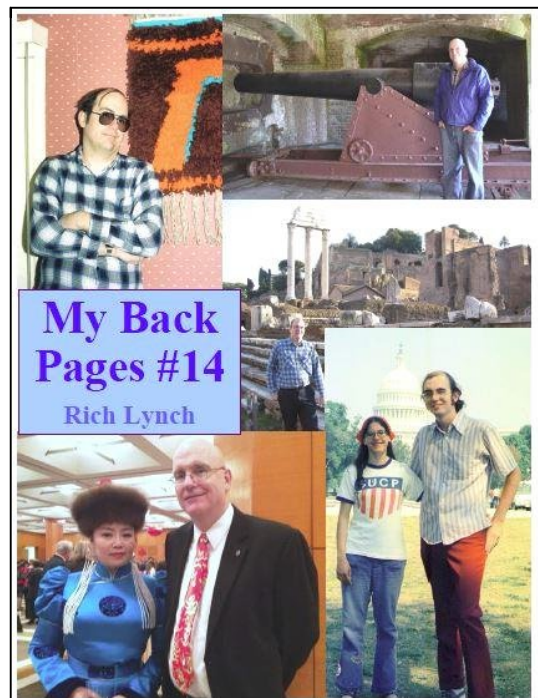
You're Still on My Mind #4

from Rich Lynch * [rw_lynch \(at\) yahoo \(dot\) com](mailto:rw_lynch@yahoo.com) * November 2023

And here we are again!

This my fourth letterzine for holding belated conversations with fans who wrote me letters of comment about *My Back Pages*, my personal time capsule which masquerades as a fanzine. The first three covered through *MBP* 13. Onward...

MBP 14 was published in June 2015 and included essays involving Norwegian humor, road trips, dinner expeditions, building restoration, coastal waters, mossy trees, spectacular vistas, famous composers, fresco murals, giant fists, famous churches, draconian choices, intimidating views, large ships, baseball stadiums, small superheros, inaccurate road maps, fanzine covers, fannish legends, and lots of old friends – all of that in just five essays! The longest of the five was a reprint from Nicki's and my fanzine *Mimosa*, where we looked back at our very first fanzine, *Chat*. That started out as the clubzine of the Chattanooga Science Fiction Association but before its run ended it became a whole lot more. [Bob Jennings](#) wrote me a lengthy comment about it.



I found the write-up about the Chattanooga SF club and your work with the fanzine *Chat* to be the most interesting thing in the issue. The mini-pics of old *Chat* covers was an intriguing bonus. Reading over your history of the club and the fanzine it seems amazing that you were able to turn the issues out on a regular basis, considering that you folks and a relatively few other club luminaries did almost all the writing and all the work, while the rest of the club sat back and smugly made little effort to even acknowledge that the zine existed at all.

Actually, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. In any kind of club or voluntary organization a few people do almost all the work and the vast bulk of the

membership are along for the ride, happy to enjoy whatever benefits the club or group offers, but willing to do next to nothing themselves to help the organization function. In community civic situations this can lead to Parliamentary-Structural Collapse when the movers and shakers burn out or move on, or just quit. This has happened so often in SF fandom you would think people would be more careful with their groups, but the lessons are never learned, and in SF fandom at least there are often some new people coming along to help revitalize the membership. Unfortunately sometimes the newcomers are argumentative and internal bickering results, which seems to have been the case in Chattanooga.

In this area the problem has struck several civic clubs. The Worcester Lion's Club is down to eight members, and only meets eight times a year after the long time club officers aged out and retired. The same situation has struck several local veterans' groups, an art-in-the-park association and a local multi-religious juvenile summer camp for disadvantaged youngsters. I suppose there are others, these are just the ones I know about because friends are involved in the clubs.

In my own little sphere, OTRadio collecting clubs has been slowly vanishing around the country as the founding members who ran the groups aged out or died off, and nobody wants to step up and do the work of running the clubs. Internal feuding has hammered a number of notable fantasy role-playing game associations, and the HGMS historical gaming society barely survived a four year crisis of corruption & stupidity after the guiding lights of the organization decided to retire and new incompetent people tried to take over the group.

On the bright side with your experience, *Chat* seems to have achieved a pretty wide readership and a good reputation, plus, of course, you folks got to develop your fanzine apprenticeship with relatively few major mishaps before you moved on to *Mimosa*.

The effort required to produce *Chat* was just barely sustainable. Until the final two issues, *Chat* was relentlessly monthly and back then we had no computers to help us – everything was typed up and laboriously hand-pieced together onto a master that was photocopied (for most of the run) or later on (for the last 13 issues) electrostenciled onto mimeo masters. Bob is correct that there were only a very few contributors from the club – Nicki and I wrote up the news stories but got much of our other content from fans who were not CSFA members.

I guess it was inevitable that *Chat* would not have a long life. The club existed for only about four years before it fractured and during that time the membership was mostly static. Once in a while someone new would join or someone else

would drop from sight, but it was fairly unusual. That stagnation may have been part of the reason that the club gradually changed from a very tight organization into one where there were frequent personality clashes and at the end, outright feuds. And *Chat* became collateral damage while all this was going down. The club had been reimbursing us for most of the production expenses but there were some very vocal club members who objected to using CSFA dues to support the clubzine when the money could be used instead for partying. Nicki and I had been wanting for some time to do a genzine, so all this hastened the timeline for ending *Chat* and starting *Mimosa*.

[Jerry Kaufman](#) also had a comment about the *Chat* retrospective as well as something to say about another essay in the issue.

I continue to be surprised that you have so much writing to collect into each issue, not to mention that you keep mailing us copies. Thanks.

Your piece on visiting Troidhaugen was cosmic, man – because just the other week I picked up a used copy of an album of Grieg’s “Lyric Pieces,” played by Leif Ove Andsnes. He recorded it in Troidhaugen, playing Grieg’s own Steinway. (It was released in 2002 on EMI Classics, if you’re interested.)

I enjoyed the rest of the issue, in particular your history of *Chat*. We didn’t start trading with you and Nicki until you were publishing *Mimosa*, so far as I can recall, and never received an issue of *Chat* (again, so far as I can remember), and I’m glad to find out what I was missing.

At first I didn’t think *MBP* would go more than about four issues. But that was before I started taking inventory of all the stuff I’d written over the years for various fanzines and blogs. Turned out there was (and continues to be) a lot – as of *MBP* 28 I’m well over 200 essays. As for Norway, after four trips there it has become one of my favorite countries. So much so that under much different circumstances I could actually see myself living there. And yeah, I’m also a fan of Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes. Back when I was still working I listened to Classical radio a lot and he was a frequent go-to guy when the radio station aired various piano sonatas and concertos.

One other letter of comment I received about the issue was from [Lloyd Penney](#), who as usual had a lot to say about many things. Starting with my observation that this was a not-yet-ready-for-retirement issue.

Yvonne is a few years away from retirement, but as we have seen from friends, like Mike Glicksohn and Bob Sabella, retirement might just be the worst thing you can do. Instead of the sudden stop of work, a gradual slowdown seems to be best. Yvonne has plans for her impending retirement... meanwhile, I’ve

recently turned 56, so I have 11 years left until I retire. There's still some years to sock away as much as I can, while still having a little fun. Yvonne and I are going to London next year, and now it looks like Florida the year after, and then, our travelling days are probably done.

For me it did end up being a sudden stop of work. Or at least a very rapid deceleration. I retired from U.S. Government civil service at the beginning of 2022 and during the months leading up to it there was what seemed to me an interminable amount of time spent sorting through and archiving more than 20 years of emails and other electronic documents, as required by Federal law. And there were literally hundreds of times during those last few months where I'd mentally kicked myself for not starting the work when the pandemic lockdown happened about 20 months earlier. It ended up being a race against the clock and it felt like a big weight was lifted off my shoulders when I finally got it all done. And just in time – less than two weeks later, my retirement date arrived.

On the other hand, now that I *am* retired I'm not sitting around at home looking for stuff to do. I found out there's plenty of things to keep me as busy as I want to be. One of them is, of course, fanac such as *MBP* and other writing. And also having belated conversations with *MBP* loccers! Speaking of which, Lloyd, in his letter, seemed regretful that he and Yvonne could not attend the 2014 NASFiC convention, especially since it had been held only a bit more than 200 miles from where he lived.

Detcon 1 was just down Highway 401 from me in Detroit, just across the border. It was close by...but we had absolutely no money to go. We heard it was a great time, and a couple of good souls asked us where we were, and we had to say we were home, and we had wanted to go. Financially, though, it was a good move on our part. We've made the decision that Worldcons are a thing of the past for us; they're great fun, but a money drain we really don't need right now, especially now that we are recovering financially.

Nicki and I had never been to Detroit before and the city ended up having as much interest to us as the convention did. We had a good time.

Another essay in the issue was a farewell to and remembrance of a good friend – someone who'd been in effect the patriarch of science fiction fandom during his last several decades. And also, as Lloyd pointed out, a fan history treasure.

It is indeed hard to believe that Art Widner is gone. At 97, I think we'd expected him to go on forever. There's someone who should have written his fannish memoirs; it would have been great reading, and a valuable record of fandom, from someone who'd been around it all.

No, he never did and that's a shame. But there's enough that's been written by him and about him that a biography of sorts seems certainly do-able. Especially since a lot of the material has already been archived at **fanac.org**. A Widner biography is not a project that I'm willing or probably even able to take on, but it would certainly be a worthwhile undertaking.

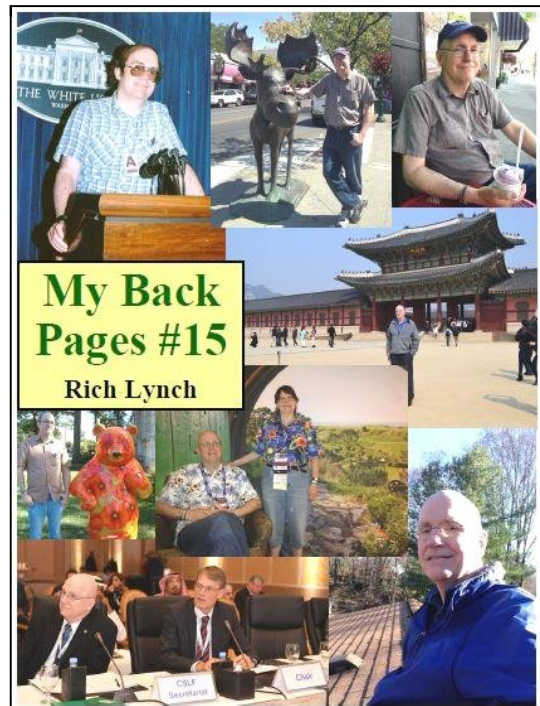
Finally, concerning the *Chat* retrospective, Lloyd used it as a lead-in for an interesting comment about fanzines in general.

I've never seen any of those issues of *Chat*, especially seeing as I got into fanzines around the time this title was finishing up, but that was definitely a past era I wish we could return to. A fanzine back then was a labour of love, using rudimentary machinery, and having a dedicated mailing list. I am certainly glad there's fanzines still around, but zines from that era were a different animal entirely.

Lloyd is right about that – publishing a fanzine is certainly a labor of love and even though it can be expensive (and often was, especially for *Mimosa*) there comes a point where the fanzine takes on a life of its own and “being worth the cost” no longer enters into the equation. But we've now pretty much transitioned out of the printed fanzines era. There are still a few of them but the vast majority are being published as PDFs, which with online archiving means there is no longer a real need for dedicated mailing lists. I do kind of miss publishing fanzines the old school way but I have to admit I don't really miss all the work that went into doing them like that.

I also heard from Lloyd, as expected, on **MBP 15** (published in December 2015). The first essay in the issue was a description of Nicki's and my annual winter mini-vacation in New York City (back at the beginning of 2015) to see museums and Broadway shows, and Lloyd had some thoughts and opinions about that.

I think the last time I was in New York City was in the early 80s, when Yvonne and I, in our earliest con-attending days, went to a couple of Strektaculars. To be honest, I don't have much interest in returning. Too big, and these days just too dangerous. Toronto's got all the



off-Broadway and Broadway-redo, and even destined-for-Broadway shows we need.

I'm not reluctant at all about visiting the Big Apple. No doubt there are plenty of places in New York that should be avoided, but any large city probably has areas like that. I suppose I should knock on wood to keep any bad karma away but in all the times Nicki and I have been to New York we've never felt that our safety has been in jeopardy. Maybe it's because we don't venture off the beaten path. Or maybe it's because criminal types don't want to be out in frigid polar vortices that often occur in January. I can sympathize with that.

Another essay in the issue was a reprint of a fanzine review column I'd pseudonymously written back in the 1980s. One of the fanzines, as well as its publisher, happened to be very familiar to Lloyd.

There's a name and title from the past...Leland Sapiro and *Riverside Quarterly*. I'd send him locs regularly, but I also found out from him that he attended the University of Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, and he was putting out issues of *RQ* even then.

Nicki and I corresponded with Leland as well as traded fanzines but I can't remember if I ever met him in person. I don't think he attended very many conventions. Anyway, of all the other essays in the issue, Lloyd passed over "My Short Career as a Chess Non-Expert" where I'd described how I'd met George R.R. Martin back in 1970 at an intercollegiate chess tournament and instead fixated on my brief issue-ending essay about London. From his comment, he was very much looking forward to a visit of his own.

Chess? Never. Even when I did want to learn it, no one wanted to teach it to me, so I will pass on it now. Time is limited, and I've got some things to do and places to go in the meantime. One of those places is England. We've wanted to go for many years, and were unhappy when we couldn't save enough to go to the last British Worldcon, but now we can afford it, and we will be spending two weeks there starting in mid-August, and ending on the 30th of the month. We plan some days in London, staying at the Georgian House and then at the Grosvenor, and then we will spend our last five days in Lincoln, staying at the Castle. We will be tourists while in London, but after, we will be attending a huge event in Lincoln called The Asylum, the biggest steampunk event in the world.

When we will be in England, we do plan to see Buckingham Palace, the Marble Arch, Baker Street, the BBC, Tower Bridge, as much as we have time for before we head up to Lincoln.

While Lloyd didn't have much to say about my chess essay, another friend did. [Carolyn Frank](#), in a brief email-of-comment, described her own short career as a chess non-expert.

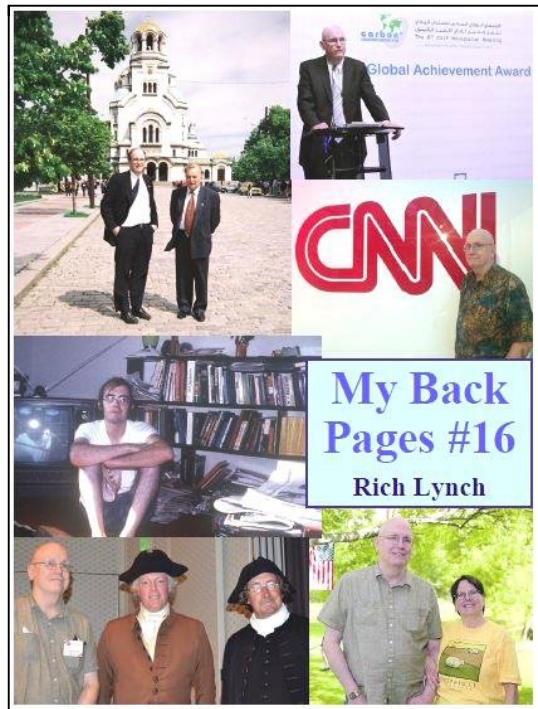
I was amused by your chess career, which at least lasted longer than mine. The local township sponsored chess lessons on Saturday mornings so my brother (3 years older) and I went when I was 8. After learning how to move the pieces and elementary strategy, we came home and tried to play a game. This lasted until he took my "horsie" and I refused to have anything more to do with the game. I did, and still do, adore "Through the Looking Glass" which was my first contact with a story built around chess, and since then have found and enjoyed any number of other fantasy tales around the chess motif.

I was a bit disappointed that **MBP 16** (published in June 2016) did not result in very much reader feedback. There was the usual collection of "thanks for sending me the issue" replies and Lloyd Penney wrote me a long letter, but it was mostly an update of his travel plans for England that he'd briefly described in his previous letter of comment. The issue contained a lengthy essay about my business trip to Saudi Arabia the previous November which induced [Esther Cole](#) to briefly tell me that:

You've seen and done and made and traveled some fascinating places and avenues.

I guess I have at that. I received a slightly longer comment about the Saudi trip from [Mike Glycer](#), who also had some thoughts about business trips in general.

A lot of enjoyable material in there. The visit to the Kingdom was the most intriguing. Your basic travel account was certainly enough to engage me. In addition, I could identify (in a rather smaller way) with the idea of government trips, and finally meeting one's boss face-to-face at some remote location. (Someone else in our workgroup went two years before finally meeting him in person. Whereas for me, it hadn't taken very long, just required a meeting in Chicago.)



My Back Pages #16
Rich Lynch

For most of my Government civil service career my immediate supervisor had an office right next to mine. After she retired at the beginning of 2013 there was a 25-mile distance between me and her successor – he was down in D.C. while I was out in the Maryland exurbs – but thanks to videoconferencing at times it almost seemed like he was also located next door to me. It wasn't until the pandemic hit that there was a non-commutable distance between me and my next boss after that. But I wasn't aware of it until he let it slip during a telephone call – there was required work-from-home so he'd gone back to the Williamsburg, Virginia area (where he'd gone to college) to save some money by living with relatives.

One other comment Mike made, a brief one, was the only feedback I received on two convention-related essays – one about the 2015 Worldcon out in Spokane and the other about the 2015 DeepSouthCon which had been held in Bristol. In particular, Mike seemed a bit intrigued by the twinned cities of Bristol, where the Tennessee-Virginia state line runs right down the middle of it's main street.

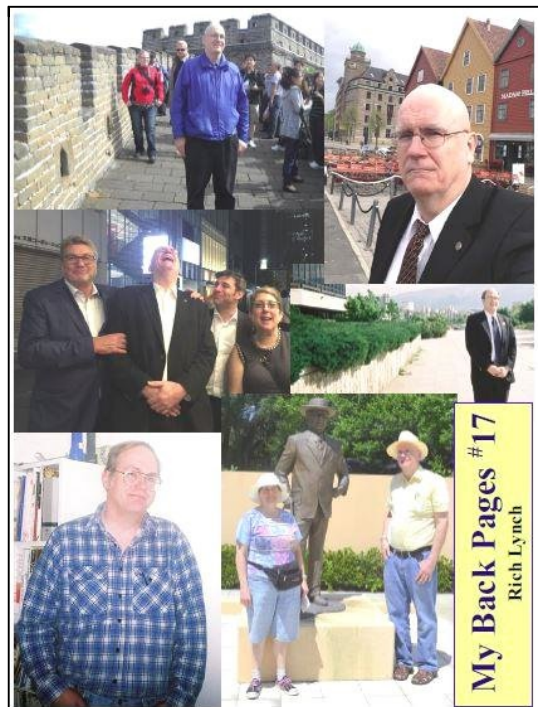
[I also liked the Worldcon report, and the visit to Bristol \(including the photo of the state line.\)](#)

Nicki and I paid another visit to Bristol last year, on our way to another DeepSouthCon (this time in Huntsville, Alabama). It's actually a place filled with history, especially about the birth of the Country Music industry, and my essay about that (and a lot more!) will appear in a future *My Back Pages*.

I didn't do much better for **MBP 17** (published in December 2016) in terms of reader comments. The only letter with any substance was from [Lloyd Penney](#) but at least he had a lot to say – starting with a comment on my concern (to put it mildly) about the outcome of the U.S. Presidential election.

[Long, strange journey over the next few years...no kidding. If you can survive this joker, you can survive anything. But in a few days, he will take office, and we will find out how serious this joker is. I do not like what I see.](#)

As we all know now, the Trump presidency was an unmitigated disaster. I had a lot more to say about that jackass in *MBP 25*, so maybe it's best to put off further discussion until we get to that issue.



The first essay in the issue was about the conclusion of my 5½ year virtual Walk Across America, where I'd mapped a one-mile walking route inside the building where I worked (which is very large) and then proceeded, over the course of all those years, to walk it 3,500 times – it was the equivalent of going from my home in Maryland south to New Orleans, then west to Los Angeles, and then north to San Francisco. It started out to be a good way to get a little bit of needed exercise but it ended up being so much more than that. This appeared to resonate with Lloyd.

I am also the type who's behind a desk all the time, and I do need more exercise. Over the past few years, I gained far too much weight, and so came the low-carb diet. Diets don't usually work for me... but this one did. I have lost 25 pounds, and I am hoping now that the holiday foods season is done, I might get below that plateau.

I'd expected that the walk would result in about the same amount of weight loss for me, but it ended up being maybe half of that. Which is okay – I came out of it only about 10 pounds above my ideal weight and I've remained that way ever since. All in all I'm counting it as a win.

It took me a few minutes to figure out what Lloyd's next comment was all about. One of the essays in the issue described my 2015 business trip to Regina, Saskatchewan and a field trip from there to see a carbon sequestration project that my iPhone's mapping app showed to be only about five miles from the U.S. border. Which apparently had brought to mind the topic of cartography. And other stuff besides that.

The Velvet handshake, the breakup of Yugoslavia, the reunification of the Germanies, the split of Sudan...who would have thought that cartography would be a growth industry? Now, we look towards Great Britain with the Brexit, and it looks like it will be utter and complete. Get out the maps again, I think. Scotland intends to rejoin the EU as an independent country, which might let the Irelands rejoin, and the UK will consist of England and Wales only.

I don't think the folks who voted for Brexit really had thought very much about those kinds of possible future implications. Back in 2016, not long after the Brexit vote happened, I had a business trip to London for a carbon sequestration meeting and none of my British friends had wanted to talk much about it. But the taxi driver who took me in from the airport sure did. He was very vocal about how glad he was that the vote succeeded in getting the U.K. out of the European Union. Have to wonder if he still feels that way.

Meanwhile, coming back to the Regina essay, Lloyd had a comment on my observation about how incredibly flat the terrain is between Regina and the U.S. border.

Yup, Regina is very flat, and the streets in Saskatchewan are straight. Very straight. I've been through it a couple of times on the train. (Your president-elect keeps wittering on about walls. The Republicans seem to like the idea of building a wall along the Canada-US border. They don't seem to realize that building wall will keep them in.)

Many years ago, one of Nicki's uncles took me to a very rural section of the U.S.-Canada border, up in far northern New York State near where he lived. I remember that the narrow country road continued on into Canada but there was a simple dropped rail barrier, similar to what you'd find at a railroad crossing, which denoted where the international boundary was located. I don't remember seeing any customs officials or border police at all. Pretty sure things are different now.

Another essay in the issue noted the passing of my friend and esteemed fan Ned Brooks, who had died when he fell off the roof of his house. I regret that I didn't cross paths with Ned often enough to be able to do a remembrance of him, but as I wrote in the essay the circumstances of his death did make me a bit more cautious about being up on my own roof for leaf removal each autumn. This had induced Lloyd to comment:

I remember being coerced by my father into helping him with re-shingling the roof of our old house. I also remember almost falling off the roof, and catching hell from my dad, who was much more experienced with that kind of thing. Ned Brooks' death sure brought that back to mind. Tie yourself down next time you head up onto the roof.

That essay marked the first time I'd included a previously unpublished essay in *My Back Pages*. And it wouldn't be the last – most subsequent issues of *MBP* also included original pieces. One of my reasons for the change was exorbitant printing costs – I'd had to stop including color photos (as well as color anything else) in my printed SFPazine, *Variations on a Theme*, where many of the essays reprinted in *MBP* originally had appeared, and that meant any essay which really *needed* photos couldn't be published there. And my ideas for some of these essays didn't seem a good fit for other fan publications (many of which also did not do color). But I'll admit that another reason was to provide value-added content as an inducement for anyone who might have already read the essays being reprinted in *MBP*. I'd thought it might lead to more reader comments, but so far that hasn't been the case.

Lloyd's final comment on the issue was about a topic near and dear to me – winter weather. Specifically, gargantuan snowstorms that bury any communities in their paths. I'd described one of them in my "Snowzilla!" essay, and that had absolutely resonated with Lloyd.

Snowzilla...you can guess that I grew up in storms like that. In Ontario, we refer to the Snow Belt, an area between the cities of London and Orillia, Ontario, that seems to get tons of snow every year. And, I grew up in Orillia. Snowstorms like that were a regular event every winter, where you cleared the driveway with a shovel, and a pickax on occasion, and the sidewalks turned into corridors. We had an extra wide snow shovel that on occasion was used to transport snow into our back yard, when we literally ran out of room to throw the snow. You wouldn't like that.

Sez who?? Hey, I grew up in Jefferson County, New York, in a little village west of Watertown (which often gets mentioned on national news broadcasts whenever there's an extreme snow event up there). I remember that snowstorms were a way of life – I thought it was the most natural thing in the world to wake up on a cold December morning to discover that an overnight storm which had blown in from nearby Lake Ontario had deposited a foot or more of newly-fallen snow. There were some winters where there was so much snow that roads could not be cleared by snowplows – instead, front ends of county dump trucks were outfitted with super-sized snowblowers. And they were absolutely necessary – after repeated clearing, sometimes the snowbanks bordering the highways were more than ten feet tall.

Anyway, thanks, Lloyd, for helping me to dredge up those memories. There'll be an future essay about them, for sure!

* * * * *

Okay, on to the 'meta' section of this issue: comments on the previous *YSO*. Once again, [Lloyd Penney](#) rescued it from being totally commentless.

Thank you for *You're Still On My Mind 3*, and I am certainly having a good time with this letterzine... egoboo galore. I shall explore further...

As you probably have surmised, the Stanley Cup is nothing short of a national icon in this country. I have seen the Cup in the Hockey Hall of Fame, plus one on the road as it toured a town.

You're Still on My Mind #3
from Rick Lynch * rw_lync@st.yahoo (dot) com * August 2023

Welcome back to all my friends!

This my third letterzine for holding balated conversations: (of sorts) with people who wrote me letters of comment about *My Back Pages*, a personal time capsule which masquerades as a fanzine. The first two covered through issue no. 10 of *MBP*, so let's see what loccers told me about the next three issues...

MBP 11 was published in December 2013 and while it didn't result in very many responses from readers, the ones I did get were pretty substantial. One of them was from [Tarril Myrnes](#), who after seeing a photo of a roadside sign to a much-larger-than-life street art replica of Lord Stanley's Cup (in my essay about a business trip to Edmonton for a carbon sequestration meeting) took the opportunity to provide some interesting background information about the actual Stanley Cup:



I've seen the real Stanley Cup at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto several times. It's presently about a third the size of the one you posed next to, but still rather impressive. Originally, when Lord Stanley presented it to the nascent National Hockey League, it was just the silver bowl at the top, but over the years the list of winners grew, and new stages were added to the bottom. What you may be unaware of is that there are three cups in existence. One is the actual one created by Lord Stanley's order and is kept in a secure place at the Hockey Hall of Fame. The second is the one that is presented to the winning team every year, but normally resides on display at the Hall of Fame. It has the league's crest on the bottom where it normally can't be seen, hence the custom of hoisting the cup over the player's heads when it is won. Just checking... The third is a cheap knock-off to lend to good causes or promotional tours. It differs from the two, "official" cups in the

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The most recent time I've seen the Cup was a few years ago, during the Washington Capitals victory celebration parade that practically shut down D.C. for several hours. But I hadn't gone to the city for that – I'd been there to attend a carbon sequestration-related seminar that had fortuitously been scheduled for later that day. When I saw the cup at the Hockey Hall of Fame, back in 2003 during the week of the Toronto Worldcon, I was able to get up close and personal with it. For the D.C. parade...I wasn't.

I think I'd go to Calgary for a Worldcon, but to be honest, I doubt there will ever be another Canadian Worldcon. Not enough money, or time, or numbers of people who might consider themselves a science fiction fan. I'd like to look for Canadians on the membership lists of the past five or six Worldcons...I'd think our numbers are dwindling.

Ah, but the test of time has proved that there would. Or at least a bid for one. In the end the Winnipeg bid didn't win but I think it's inevitable that a future bid from Toronto or Montréal will have a better outcome.

Indeed, we lost Gordon Lightfoot earlier this year, and the city of Orillia has paid tribute and commemorated his life and work with a bronze bust outside of the Orillia Opera House, and another memorial down by the edge of Lake Couchiching. This city always loved Gord and his great music, and I expect to see the name Lightfoot almost everywhere there for some time to come. I only got to see him perform once, at Massey Hall in downtown Toronto, and that was about five years ago.

I stand by my remarks about *Amazing Stories* taking away a lot of time, but I guess I am speeding up. I hope to be caught up with both editorial work and fanzines by the end of the month. I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...

Thank you kindly for this issue, and it has been fun to comment on the comments, and get a little meta. See you with the next.

And thank *you*, Lloyd, for all the comments you've given me over the years on my fanac. Truly appreciated!

And that's it for this issue! Next one will be early next year, maybe in January but more likely in February. Before then there will be another issue of *My Back Pages* and that'll happen in December. Previous issues of *MBP* and *YSoMM* are readily available at both **efanzines.com** and **fanac.org**. Hope to hear from you...

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