



THE BALOOBIUS, TOO

Another one-shot, inspired by the fear that I may forget how it's done if I don't do something to keep my hand in!

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If you don't have a baloobius, just look behind...

An Uneventful Fall can be a blessing. Unfortunately, it has been anything but an uneventful descent into the shorter days leading into the approaching winter. This is not the start of a new fanzine. I was not thinking of a follow-up to this issue, but the sheer weight of events over the last few months seemed to call for it. The comments reproduced in this one-shot were all edited from Facebook, and represent a sort of running record of my recent life. Where needed, additional comments have been added to the text. Hopefully, there will not be a Baloobius 3. With any luck, I will announce a new, full-scale fanzine sometime in the New Year. It's time to start thinking about locs, guys!

■ **23 Aug** – Selling that old Heinlein rag didn't work out, but I have a new sale cooking. For at least a year, I had wanted to sell most of my furry comics ... indeed, as many comics as I thought I could do without. A dealer found me online, and he offered to visit me while he was on a trip to Toronto. So, for the last couple of days I've been sorting out comics – those I wanted to sell, and those I wished to keep. Needless to say, this has been an awful lot of work for me – but I want to reclaim the space, not to mention converting some of their value into cash. The milk crates outlined in red are all for sale. Those in yellow still need to be sorted – I think I will probably sell some of the Carl Barks that I've held onto for so long. After all, I have all the stories on my hard drive, and in most cases the reprint issues take up a lot of space with non-Barks material that I was forced to buy along with the Barks stories. However, I am certainly keeping the old Dell Comics original issues from the 1940s and 50s, as well as the square-bound reprints. Any time I want to read classics, such as "Christmas for Shacktown" or "The Frozen North," *I can*. I also intend to sell some hard-to-find collectables, such as this rare

Omaha the Cat Dancer 45 rpm record by Reed Waller and Co. I also have a beach blanket that I have a good offer for ... having never actually gone to a beach to use it.

■ **27 Aug** – After a slight respite, I'm on the road again, with three doctor's visits in four days behind me. I expect to get another short rest early in the new month, but then I'll be right back at it, facing new daily medical appointments. Curing my various ailments will eventually kill me, never fear.

HOWEVER, I at least have had a little luck in my effort to liquidate many of my unwanted comics. I have for some time wanted to sell as many as I could – partly to clear away things I no longer want, but also to put the money to better use.

[Earlier in August I was informed that Robert Silverberg was seeking a copy of the original Heinlein speech, and I was able to get in touch with him about selling my copy.

Unfortunately, Silverberg was quite unwilling to offer anything remotely like a fair price for what has been priced by experts as a \$1,200 collectable. He offered copies of his own books that were, frankly, not going for all that much on Abe Books, and that in any case I had no interest in.]

Since the Silverberg sale came to nothing, I'm relieved that I may actually make about as much from the comics as I would have from the Heinlein zine. Short of a couple of minor details, the deal for the comics has been struck, and I should have the money before the end of the month. But I am SOOOO tired lately, getting too little sleep, in deference to *other people's* control of my time and waking hours. I don't see my friends very often, and often haven't the energy to get anything done. Sometimes, I begin to feel as though I LIVE in a hospital. Hopefully, it will get sorted out before the winter sets in too deeply – I have no idea how I will cope with going out into snow and cold every two or three days if I haven't gotten most of the doctors' demands on my time taken care of before then.

■ **29 Aug** – The dealer in comics who I was expecting finally met me at my apartment. He was traveling from one place to another, and arranged that he would pass through Toronto. Having previously itemized the goods, he was eager to buy a large number of my no-longer-wanted furry comics. Having arrived at a price we that we both thought fair, he carted away several milk crates from my now-much-smaller collection. Now I had fewer comics – that I never looked at anyway – and much more space. It will fill up again, of course, in the mysterious way that one's personal space always does.

Once the US exchange was factored in, I had cleared over \$1,100. Not a bad return for those comics, considering that I might have had to carry them to the grave instead. \$1,100 was also a better return than I would likely have gotten from that aborted Silverberg deal, too. (I wonder if Silverberg ever found someone who was willing to accept old hardcover copies of his books in return for the Heinlein rarity. I assume his books had been courtesy copies from the publishers, and cost him nothing. Or perhaps he just decided that no old

mimeographed fanzine could ever be worth more than a few dollars ... not even THAT fanzine. I never heard back from him.) At any rate, now that I've tasted a good return on a *successful* deal, I will likely find even more things to prune from my collections next year.

■ **3 Sep** - Lightning on the horizon, and I have opened a bag of licorice twists. Meanwhile, as the century grew steadily moldier around the edges, an august assemblage of seventeen fans spoke their anxiety in steadily more desperate and peremptory tones ... while the Holy Speculative Fiction Empire disintegrated around their feet.

■ **7 Sep** - I haven't felt much like writing a catch-up, but I suppose I must. I will no longer need to spend every third afternoon getting the dressings changed on my leg. This required a long trip by Traveling Matt that puts a drain on his batteries, and takes up a significant portion of the afternoon as well. Progress on the leg has been deemed satisfactory, and the swollen edema has been gradually brought under control. I no longer feel as though that leg is leaking like a sieve.

However, I will eventually be fitted for a pair of prescription stockings to prevent my leg from swelling back up again. It doesn't seem as simple as just stopping at Wal-Mart, unfortunately. A prescription means a doctor, and buying from a medical supply service ... which promises to be costly, unless I find a mail-order supplier, or unless the local Guardian Drugs sells them. I know they sell diabetic socks, but I gather that what I need is tailored to provide a specific pressure. Until then, however, I'll be seen for my dressing-change once every week. It is at least a big improvement over having it done every three days, as I have been doing! Until I have the prescription, however, I won't be able to end the changes altogether.

[And winter is approaching unusually soon, with snow already on the ground a month early!]

Among other fussin' over my leg in the last few days, I've had more ultrasounds – one set for the leg, and the other for the cardiologist. Luckily, I rather like ultrasounds. They are relaxing, like a body massage with some sort of goo that conducts sound better than naked flesh. I also see a Pharmacologist every month, to monitor my use of Warfarin ... otherwise known as rat poison. In smaller amounts, it regulates my blood coagulation factor and prevents me from having a repeat stroke. But I will be likely tested monthly for the rest of my life. Some of the news lately has been good. The toe that appeared to have become infected while my edema was leaking so much fluid, took seemingly forever to be prescribed for antibiotics – which then ran out before I could be prescribed for more – and *was still* infected. Ironically, by the time I had a doctor's appointment for the toe, and more antibiotics, it had healed itself! I still have more appointments over the next couple of months, but at least the pace will be far less demanding before the winter really settles in. After that, I refuse to go ANYWHERE unless it is life-or-death.

■ **7 Sep** – Lately, I had been having more trouble sleeping than usual. I was beginning to worry about this, since it felt exactly how it felt four years ago, when I was unable to sleep unless I was literally falling unconscious upright in a chair for a few hours. I didn't know it at the time but I had a lung full water, an "effusion" of fluid surrounding the heart and was eventually diagnosed with Congestive Heart Failure. That's as ugly as it sounds, and led directly to the stroke before measures had been taken to avoid it. So here I was, beginning to experience trouble sleeping again... This is despite using a CPAP machine – a Continuous Positive Air Pressure device – which is supposed to help me sleep! Fortunately, I remembered that I had to clean the air filter from time to time. I hadn't cleaned the foam-backed filter for some time, so I removed it for a good soak with soap and water. A thick pap of gunk that was almost black had built up. But after a good washing and squeezing the foam out before replacing it in the intake, I fell asleep in no time. Just goes to show you not to forget basic maintenance. Those filters, but the way, are a ripoff. The manufacturer tells you to throw them away, and replace them with new ones. In fact, they are perfectly good unless worn through, and so far not one *has!* It's a *filter*, after all, not a scrub pad. The manufacturer also wants to sell you replacements for the built-in water reservoir. Due to the hard water in the Toronto area, calcium will build up in the tank, which will eventually damage it. But rather than buy a new tank (or use distilled water from the supermarket), all you need to do is clean the tank now and then with vinegar, which dissolves the built-up deposit. The reservoirs cost around \$40 for one, consisting of a clear plastic upper section and an aluminum lower that warms and humidifies water electrically. But the vinegar keeps it as good as new.

■ **7 Sep** – A couple of days ago, while at Wal-Mart, I bought a video of the new *Men in Black* film. I watched it to about the one-hour and ten-minute mark, and then it *froze*. Nothing would budge it past where it stopped. Irritating, these things happen, so I figured on taking it back for a refund, as usual. I didn't expect a fight over it with the returns department, however. Usually, I have no trouble. But ... sometimes the return desk won't make an exchange, even though the disk is obviously defective, and can't be played.

The clerk claimed that the disk can't be exchanged if it has been opened. I then argued that it impossible to know whether a disk is defective unless it **is** opened ... which meant that Wal-Mart effectively refused to honour their guarantee. This *has* happened to me once or twice before, when confronted with return desk help who plainly have not had enough training. My next step was to find a superior supervisor to overrule the help at return desk, which I persisted in doing.

Later that evening, I settled down to watch the replacement DVD to watch the final ¾ of an hour of the movie ... and the damn thing stalled *again*, at exactly same spot! I played the disk in two different players, one on the computer and the other on my TV, but the result was the same. The disks were both defective, in the *same place*, and the defect must have

been in the pressing! What should I do *now*, I wondered? Find another, still-higher up supervisor's supervisor, and try for a third copy? What if that one didn't work, either? I will want my effin' money back, *that's* what!

To tell the truth, at an hour and ten minutes, it had become clear that it wasn't all that interesting a movie, either. All that sense of wonder that I was expecting from a MIB movie, and it was just another comedy about a dumb, good-looking guy being shown up by a smarter, liberated female ... little of which had anything to pique my interest.

Oh, right ... eventually I got a *third* copy, and watched it through. As expected, there were was a predictable plot surprise ... and the villain was a man everyone had trusted.

■ **10 Sep** – Golly goddamn it! I had a full agenda for today, and for the most part I accomplished everything I set out to do. One of the errands that I needed done was to take a money order to my bank to have it cashed. After pocketing the money, I left to meet an medical appointment. About fifteen minutes later, and a quarter of a mile on the way, I noticed that my wallet was missing! Of course, I immediately retraced my exact route all the way back to the bank. I didn't see my wallet near the farmer's market I passed, no one saw my wallet at the post office, and – sadly – the teller at the bank said they hadn't seen it either. I possibly had that \$300 for less than thirty minutes, including the time it took to rush back. If I had dropped my wallet immediately after leaving the bank, I might have possessed that cash for as little as little as *two minutes* before it was gone ... along with at least \$20 I already had, and all my ID.

I replaced my bank card on the spot, prompting the teller to remark how very calmly I was taking all this, but privately I felt like randomly shooting people on the street. Now I would have to work out how to re-build my wallet from memory. There wasn't really much to be done – I needed to replace my Ontario government ID (I no longer had a driver's license), my Ontario medical card, birth certificate, an expired library card, a card for the TTC with no paid fares on it, and a card supposedly good for a dozen free bagels if I ever bought that 11th dozen ... and, I think, nothing more of importance. Still, now I would have to waste time on the phone requesting replacements for all my IDs! Fortunately, I have a second copy of my birth certificate – those were issued with spare copies in those days. But for the rest I'll have drive Traveling Matt half-way downtown and line up to apply for new cards to be issued. In the meantime, I wondered what would happen when I appeared without my medical card at the next medical appointment I was scheduled for. As it happened, there was no trouble. I was on record in half-a-dozen offices where they knew me well.

The loss my wallet naturally led to much speculation. There was a chance, for of course, that someone *honest* would find it. It *does* happen! But if some honest person had found it, they have had no trouble finding my old bank card. They could easily drop by the nearest Royal Bank branch, where, as a customer, I would soon be contacted by phone. Crossing

my fingers, I might hear from the bank in the next two or three days, or at worst by next week. *OR* ... some teenager found my wallet, and thought how cool it would be to buy the latest in gimmicky cell phones. *OR* ... yet another possibility, some street person realized he had found enough to stay drunk for the next week. *OR* ... was it possible that my lost money would save someone in desperate need of it? I'm afraid I don't believe in providence, however. Odds are my money was only a freebie for someone else who certainly didn't deserve it as much as I did, so it is hard to feel philosophical about it. It did not do much for my morale that I was able to double back to make my doctor's appointment on time after all.

■ **14 Sep** – So far, nothing has turned up about my missing wallet. Monday, I guess I'll have to figure out how to replace my vital cards. Fortunately, I had no credit cards ... just IDs. And the money is sorely missed too, of course. I will have to carefully watch what I spend next month as well.

■ **15 Sep** – Last night I watched "All is True," a film about Shakespeare's last three years of life, just after the burning of the Globe and when he had finished his last play. He only lived three more years, dying in 1616. It was a film without much in the way of special effects, but superb when it came to story, acting, costume and atmosphere. The stereotypical fan of superhero movies would probably fall asleep. He might also have trouble wondering who the boy named Hamnet was ... or perhaps who he was *not*?

■ **17 Sep** – I had a call today about my missing wallet. Not *good* news, I'm afraid. I took a call from a guy who was annoyed about calls from a number he didn't know. Who was I, he demanded? Well, I didn't know. I hadn't called *him*, either. Plainly, though, someone had gotten both of our numbers – mine and his – and was using the information for some kind of scam. Unfortunately, the calls were automated, and no way was anyone going to call back to *that* number! What I don't understand was why any robo-dialer would use my number to call a third party. It was a bit confusing, and I was unwilling to give any unnecessary information ... as was he. All I could do was strongly suggest that if my caller had any contact with the scammer, to tell the Royal Bank, immediately. But my caller didn't have my wallet, so there was little he could do even if he wanted to call the bank. The good news is that I tore up my credit cards years ago, and had none that could be used fraudulently.

■ **17 Sep** – I badly needed a complete change of pace, so I went to spend money at Toys-R-Us. Of all things, I came home with three scale-model reproductions of classic 1950s gas pumps. They have removable hose nozzles, but other than that they are static displays. One complaint I had is that the packaging insists they are 1:18 scale – but *no way!* They are clearly scaled to match my 1:24 scale toy cars, which is not a trivial difference in small scale. It's the difference between a model '57 Chevy that is 9 inches long, and another that is almost 12 inches long. But otherwise I was satisfied in all the details, even the meters

reading 0 gallons, 0 sale. I also bought a pair of 1:24 trailer homes. The doors gave only limited access inside, but from what I was able to glimpse with a flashlight, the interiors were complete. The '50s Deville was rather more accessible, because of the wide windows, and the detachable awning gives it a very "period" appearance. The other trailer is a contemporary Winnebago that is tarted up in garish colours, like a promotional van for the World Wrestling Federation. The fashionable darkened glass makes it much more difficult getting a look inside ... but everything seemed to be where it belonged.



The Greenlight company makes other models, not only trailers. One that I wasn't able to find at Toys-R-Us was a 1950s classic Airstream ... that I unfortunately didn't see in the store. I will be keeping my eye out should one turn up. What can I say, but that I am a compulsive collector? But I have few options these days ... Amateur soccer? Hiking? Political activism? Running science fiction conventions? I guess not. So I find my gratification in a new toy now and then. Toy cars have been a particular favorite of mine of late. In the past I have also been keep on collecting model airplanes, toy guns, yo-yos and – in recent years – mainly toy cars of various scales. Trailer homes are an interesting variation I wasn't expecting.

■ **18 Sep** – I finished the first new article I've written in quite some time. Am I finally getting tired, or am I finally running out of ideas? Should I start demanding that you ingrates give me more incentive, or am I simply witnessing the slow disintegration of fanzine fandom as we know it? Maybe both, perhaps? Meanwhile, I have a half-finished Fraggles "tail" that has been defying my efforts to pursue it. I don't know why it seems to be stuck in slow-mo, since I seem to enjoy the work. But getting *started* every day appears to be more than I can aspire to. Most days seem to be frittered away on FaceBook or watching a video. But progress continues, albeit slowly, and I hope to get Walt to proofread for me shortly.

[It may sound like hyperbole, but I really had no ideas to pursue for fan articles in the near future. This would be bad for all sorts of reasons, not the least of which is that I have nothing planned for the next issue of Rob Jackson's Inca should he want it. Luckily, an idea popped into my head just a few hours ago. "There s a dance in the old dame yet!"]

■ **19 Sep** – Today I visited Service Ontario and had both my Ontario ID and Ontario health card renewed. I have a temporary card for the interim, but I won't have either actual card until they arrive by mail – one to six weeks, I think they said. Now I have to focus on getting my birth certificate replaced, which will be more difficult. The ads posted online say it is easy! Convenient! Modern! That means it's going to be a big pain in the neck, next to impossible to fill out correctly and with a lot of stipulates that are tricky to comply with. But modern? Oh, yes! Modern in the sense that so much of the digital world means "modern" – which is that it is convenient for the bureaucrats, but less than convenient for everyone else. As I fall asleep tonight, I will fantasize about hunting down the thief who has my wallet, and killing him in a painful and degrading way.

■ **19 Sep** – Another new toy ... in the same series of recreational vehicles as before, but this one is a 1947 "Tear Drop" Ken-Skill Kustom Kamper. Just big enough for two to sleep in Krowded Komfort! The bicycle rack and kayak seems like a more contemporary touch, but with the detailed interior it rounds out a very nice scenario. It also comes with a cooler and picnic basket ... but no Yogi Bear.



■ **24 Sept** – A lot of people may remember Bee Stuckless from Toronto fandom, back in the 1980s. She had been living for many years with Grant Schuyler, another Toronto-area fan. Bee had been suffering from gradually worsening Multiple Sclerosis for years, and about two years ago had to leave home for a long-term care facility. She was, by this time, quite unable to move. I'm sorry to say that I had a call from Grant this afternoon, saying that Bee died early this morning. There weren't too many details, only that she had a problem with a bladder stone that needed removal, but surgery was delayed due to complications and an elevated temperature. Her death seems to have been quite unexpected, however.

[Although I attended the "celebration" of Bee's life that my old friend Grant invited me to, I felt unable to write about it in detail at the time. There were two sorts of people who attended. Most were from Bee's quilting circle, who I didn't know. It was gratifying, however, that a number were from her days as a local SF fan. Grant spoke for quite a long while, followed by a friend of Bee's, followed by a small display of Bee's quilting. Refreshments were served. The crowd was larger than I had expected, among them perhaps half a dozen my old crowd. No one lingered long after the "celebration" but it was nice to see that Bee had gotten a bit of a send-off. I was fortunate that Catherine Crocket and Colin Hinz were able to drive me to the other side of town, otherwise it was entirely likely that I would have had to beg off.]

■ **5 Oct** – In the mail today, I got two of my vital cards from the government in the mail today, replacing those lost from my wallet a couple of weeks ago. Among other things, this will enable me to vote in the upcoming federal election. Just as important, I have my health card. I had not been challenged to show one, since I have become a rather familiar figure in half the clinics and hospitals in the west end, but it was a relief to have one again. I still have to contact Service Canada, however, about my Birth Certificate – a week of rain, and doctor's appointments, effectively ruled out action on that front, however. *Next* week for sure, I tell myself. While digging through other old documents of mine, however, I found my mother's death certificate, her divorce decree and marriage document! I also noticed my own baptismal certificate. Again ... I keep forgetting how weird being baptized is. For one thing, it's all embarrassing nonsense to me. It is almost an insult to have such a certificate, as though someone, somewhere was keeping an insurance police open on me, just in case there was a God. Another oddity I noticed was that I was born, almost to the day, nine months after my folks were married. I was born nine months and two days after the date of their wedding, as though they were in an awful hurry to visit a paternity ward. That is not the least weird thing about the certificate, however. It says on the document, that I was registered as the *daughter* of my mother and father! Could I be mistaken after all these years? But my name was given correctly, so there seems little reason to be concerned about my gender after all these years.

■ **5 Oct** – Today I had visitors – Bob and Sharry Wilson, and Bob's son Paul. Bob

and Sharry live here in Toronto, but Paul lives in B.C. with his mother. Obviously I don't see Paul often. In fact, I think the last time was several years ago. I've watched him grow up, and has grown to closely resemble his father to an uncanny degree. Yet so unlike ne another. His mother, Janet, however, was unable to visit. The three Wilsons dropped in for a couple of hours, after which we went down the street to The Mother of India for dinner. The place is a favourite of mine, and considering home many other restaurants there are nearby, there are few that I care for. Dinner was superb as usual. "A good time was had by all," as they say.

■ **7 Oct** – It seemed like a good time to sort through my furry zines with an eye to selling some of them. I have a probable buyer. But before I committed myself, I decided to scan all my old con membership badges from my furry years. These are almost certainly the full record of every furry con that I ever attended ... in fact, *one more* than I actually attended. Although I did have the Program Book for Confurence 2003, in the end I decided not to go. There were a couple of reasons for this, that may not be worth going into, as that also turned out to be the *last* Confurance! I was informed afterward that it hadn't gone well, and had I gone I might have, for the first time, lost money as a dealer.



[I had vague idea of reproducing the badges, but together they would fill three whole pages! I thought, too, that readers may not find the badges as interesting as I do.]

■ **11 Oct** – Better watch out for Kiki's tail, or it might get her into trouble... (Actually, I drew this as a quick little job in exchange for some new DVDs.)

■ **12 Oct** – Today is yesterday. Or maybe I should rephrase that as "yesterday was today?" To make better sense, I should say that Friday was the 11th, and today is the 12th - which is my birthday. Typically, I paid little attention and decided only at the last moment to buy a double cheese, double salami pizza yesterday for the occasion. As mistakes go, it wasn't much of one, since I may have ordered the pie just before midnight, and ate it over the following hour, on the 13th. So it appears that I ordered my pizza on the right day, even though I ate it a day later. Sometimes things have a way of working out right, even if it seems confusing. Now, if only I could find a fat wallet, bursting with \$50 bills, to replace the one I lost on the street last month.

■ **14 Oct** – You can't win. I had not actually finished celebrating my birthday yesterday, but happened by chance to check my deep freezer the same day, to see what to make for dinner a few hours later. When I opened the door, I saw something was odd right away. All the built-up frost inside had become loose or fallen off. Much had had melted

outright. A few things were less that rock-hard, as they should have been, but a quick check showed that at least nothing had actually thawed through. I thought about the possibility of a short power outage at some time during the day, but the clocks where all fine and the regular refrigerator was okay. I placed a glass of water inside the freezer to see if it would freeze, but it didn't take long to decide that the temperature inside was only getting warmer, not colder. The deep-freeze was dead, and I had a ton of perishable food that could spoil inside. Happy Birthday! I suppose I had better look on-line for a new freezer that I can afford and purchase quickly! It was not altogether surprising that it the freezer had failed. I had owned it since I moved to Parkdale around 1991, and it belonged to my mother for a few years before *that*. Possibly as long as 35 years in all! But that the freezer should fail exactly on my birthday seemed like an insult on top of a costly, unexpected expense! *Fortunately*, I was able to stuff *everything* I needed into my apartment fridge. It was a tight squeeze inside, and to find anything would mean pulling out half the contents to get at what I wanted ... but nothing would be in immediate danger of spoiling. Except, that is, the full-size turkey. There is simply now way I can store that anything as large as ten- or twelve-pound turkey. Either I must give it away to someone who knows how to cook a full-size bird, or I will have to learn how to do it myself. I don't have much time to decide which.

[To make things interesting, the bird had been frozen at the bottom of the old freezer for years ... possibly more than twenty years. I met with some skepticism among my friends, who suggested that it was unimaginable that it would still be edible.]

■ **15 Oct** – The immediate crisis over my deep freezer is under control ... I trust. My fiend Steven drove me to the nearest Home Depot to buy a new model. While I could not find the identical model I wanted online (you never can), I found one that met most of my needs. (I would rather have a self-defrosting model, but apparently it was only available in the US.) With taxes, delivery and a reasonable charge to take the old unit away, it added up to \$344. Not a vast amount, I grant you. Some people make that much in a day ... but for, me it is closer that I like to how much is left over after rent and utilities and groceries every month. On top of it all, I had not yet been able to make up for the loss of my wallet, *only last month!* But I am ruthlessly careful with my money most of the time, and have savings for contingencies like this. As long as my purse isn't drawn on too deeply, I am able to cope. The most important matter is that I now have a working deep freezer. I know people on the street who I talk to every day who are sleeping on a bench, and worry about coming winter.

■ **18 Oct** – Well, well... In about 4 hours' time, my new freezer may be delivered. But that's assuming it is delivered first thing in the morning. The projected delivery time may be another four or five hours later. I hope it is sooner rather than later, since even with a fairly good seal there is a growing odour in the kitchen from the old freezer. Apparently some quantity of grease and water remained in the bottom of the freezer after it was

emptied, and quickly turned to inch-thick mold! Amazing, if you think about it. But disgusting. The sooner the old freezer is gone, the better. In the meantime, the final instalment of Night Court arrived sometime in the last three days, so I finally have the whole series. Next I plan to watch volume 2 of Perry Mason ... three seasons more, making six in all. A final three seasons more would finish all nine seasons, if I happen to find them cheaply enough.

*[It arrived! And it is a **beaut**. Although a little smaller than the old freezer, there seems to be more space inside. The on/off switch and the temperature control is on the front as well, where they are easy to read. Over the next few weeks I learned that frost does not build up inside as quickly as it did in the old freezer. 30 years of design improvements tell.]*

■ **20 Oct** – There's a place in Parkdale called Dollarama – it's great for finding deleted toys that are nearly dirt-cheap. Case in point, I found a plastic figure of Sandy Cheeks, my favourite character from *Spongebob Squarepants*. She is a squirrel who lives in a place called Bikini Bottom, under a glass dome, and who generally wears only a swimsuit at home. The rest of the time she is attired in a helmeted diving suit. My next favourite *Spongebob* character is Squidward, the crabby neighbor who works with Spongebob ... but so far I haven't seen one at the Dollarama.

■ **21 Oct** – Gawd! What was that thing in the turkey! At first, it was impossible to get the horrible thing out of the bird, but eventually I was able to pry it out. It seemed to be the neck, but it reminded me of a Face Hugger. (It went immediately into a ziplok bag for the garbage.) There was a disgusting roll of fat and skin that also went in the bag. To my surprise, there was still some pink-tinged ice inside, despite over a week of defrosting in the fridge. I plan to let the bird sit for half an hour in the sink, to flush the rest of the ice out. The stove is preheated at 275 and I plan to follow instructions to cook for 2.5 hours. I found no weight on the package, but a friend who inspected it said it did look to be about ten pounds. It felt like it ... if not more. My chief worry now is whether I can get the turkey into the roaster. I don't know what I'll do if I can't. Perhaps dismember the damn thing and cook some other way...

■ **21 Oct** – Well, I successfully roasted my first turkey! I should have given him a name, but I didn't think of it. I won't do it again, that's for sure. The problem with cooking a 12-pound bird in the 10-pound roaster was that it stuck out under the lid. I was afraid that it would burn ... or the rest not get done enough. Fortunately, the bird came out just fine. It took a little longer than I expected, but perhaps it was larger than 12 pounds? The skin around the legs was a bit too chewy, and that was all. As it happens, I don't like turkey skin anyway, so I stripped some of it off. The important thing was that the meat was well-done all the way through, not overdone nor dried out. I ate the two legs right away for lunch, figuring that I might as well eat them while they were at their best ... since I actually don't care much for legs anyway. The rest I carved up into two portions, each large enough

to make a huge pot of stew, stored for such occasions. At the moment, both bags are cooling in their ziplocs before going into the freezer. Did I mention that I have a new freezer to freeze the turkey in? Of course I did. Then, oh Christ ... I had the entire bloody kitchen to clean up. The grease and fat had to be soaked off the roasting pan, the dishes had to be scrubbed, cutlery needed cleaning, trash needed to be bundled up, the kitchen counter wiped down and then the floor had to be mopped because of everything that spilled and leaked, and I had to wash out the grease in the sink with powered cleanser... I am NEVER going to this much trouble over a turkey again! Seriously. I don't like turkey enough to justify this effort. I *much* prefer chicken, especially breasts or Kentucky Fried.

■ **21 Oct** – I was up very early this morning – about 3 a.m. Periodically my hours are so out of whack that I can be mistaken for the guy who wakes up the rooster. So when the polls opened in my building, I was there first thing, and cast the very first vote in our station! I was pleased that I got the defeat of the Conservative Party in Parkdale off to a good start!

■ **21 Oct** – The Canadian election is still in progress, and it appears a certainty that Trudeau will form the next government ... the only uncertainty is whether or not he can win a majority government, or settle for an unstable minority. It is going to be close. The Liberal party must win 170 seats to form a majority, and at this moment they have 146. The Conservatives have 104. As things are, the Liberals have a good chance for a majority, but strong starts have a way losing ground as the race goes on. Nevertheless, even a minority government is likely to be the government for the next four years.

■ **26 Oct** – Today was Torex ... the three-times-yearly coin show. I didn't have much to spend this time, having watched my savings taking a beating over the previous months. As well, I had bought an example of first century Roman gold in the Spring – which was not cheap – and I still had the remainder to pay off. However, even considering everything else that had happened, I had a bit of money set aside. (It pays to live frugally and save as much as I can.) Picking carefully among the coins for sale, I chose a large bronze coin called a Sestertius that was struck by the mid-third century emperor Severus Alexander. It was a very well preserved specimen. I also found a relatively small bronze called a Quadrans (or a Semi) by Hadrian. Other than the scarcely seen Octans, the Quadrans was the smallest denomination of coin struck by the Romans in classic times. For the third coin, I found another AE Grave Uncia – which in unfancy Latin, merely means a Heavy Bronze coin worth One. This was struck in the late-third century BC, around the time of the Punic Wars. At that time, Rome had only a very primitive monetary system that predated the familiar Sestertii, Denarii and Aurii. I had another similar, more recent piece to compliment the new bronze. At that point my luck hit a snag. I forgot to bring my reference material for Confederate banknotes, so was unable to shop for a new one. I picked one that looked interesting, but apparently I didn't inspect it well enough. As luck would have it, I bought another of the same type of bill I already had! When you pay good

money for a collector's item, you don't want unnecessary duplications! Fortunately, I knew that I was going out on a limb by making a choice, and the dealer reassured me that we could swap it for something else at the next Torex. Additionally, I found the last two 1965 British crowns I was looking for, at a buck each. Now I have enough of these silvery, silver-dollar-sized coins for a short poker game ... 20. And that was my day...



REPUBLIC AE GRAVE UNCIA
ANONYMOUS 225-217 BC (2)

HADRIAN AE QUADRANS
(OR SEMI) ROME 121-122 AD

SEVERUS ALEXANDER AD 222-235
AE SESTERTIUS, ROME

27 Oct – I've cataloged the new coins, and tomorrow I get to add them to the collection. This will mean removing the coins in my binder one by one and shuffling them forward one, two and finally three places, until the entire collection is once again in order. This is actually my least favourite part of having a collection, since the binder is unwieldy, and the cardboard holders sometimes stick in the plastic pockets.

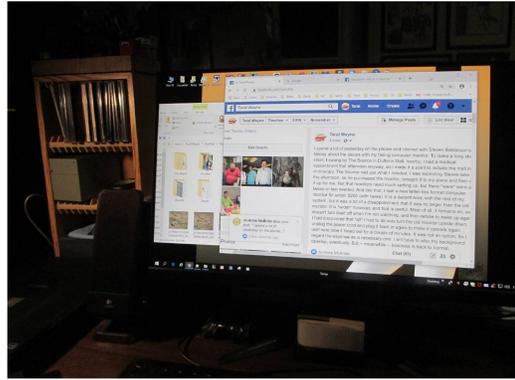
[Halloween is almost upon us! And what more could I want than a dead unicorn! They cost a buck at the Dollarama. A more elaborate dead rat in a hanging cage that set me back \$3 was irresistible, so I added it to the cart as well.]

Nov 4 – I wasn't expecting this – another 1/24 scale recreational vehicle at the Toys-R-Us. This one is a Shasta, and – like the other two I own – it has a fully equipped interior. Bed, sink, stove, cabinets, and table. No toilet. While I tried my best, getting well-focused photos was impossible. I notice that on-line there two other models that I don't have, and one is a silver, bread-loaf-shaped Airstream. I desperately want one of them, but they don't seem to be available at Toys-R-Us.



■ **Nov 4** – Oops... after a summer full of nothing but problems, a slightly wonky computer monitor has become a full-fledged predicament! While going for a coffee, I came back to find it had cut out for no reason, and nothing seemed to bring it up back up. I was fooled into thinking I was waiting out a six-hour Microsoft update ... which are unfortunately known to happen without adequate warning. No such luck, however. It appeared that it might be an actual computer glitch, and I might face a serious problem. After some thought, however, I concluded that it was that tricky monitor tricky monitor of mine. One of the cables was loose, and sometimes went dead if joggled the wrong way. It was always okay after joggling it the right way, so it had never been a real problem. But *this* time it refused to come back on line ... there was just a tantalizing green light telling me that it was "on." Also, that it could not be turned "off" unless the whole computer was shut down, which was definitely not kosher. Eventually, I was forced to unplug the monitor – not an easy thing to do because of the poor location – and hope that re-plugging would result in a better connection. It didn't seem to be enough, so a little expert shaking upside-down did the trick. The monitor came alive. It worked just fine, too, as long as I was working at the keyboard. But the next time I left my desk for a couple of minutes, I found the monitor had shut down again. I re-plugged and applied vigorous shaking until it resumed function. As a technique it worked, but it was damned awkward. So my plan now is to buy a new monitor as quickly as I can find one that suits me. Maybe letterbox-format ... hopefully, a larger model as well.

■ **Nov 5** – I spent a lot of yesterday on the phone and the internet with Steven Baldassarra, discussing the issues with my failing computer monitor. To make a long story short, I had a medical appointment that afternoon anyway, so I included in my itinerary a store in nearby Dufferin Mall. The Source had just what I needed and told me that I could carry it away if I was able. That complicated things a mite, but I contacted Steven later in the afternoon, when he purchased the monitor, brought it to my place, then set it up for me, at the end of which I repaid him. Not that monitors *need* much setting up, but a tweak or two needed to be made to the screen's dimensions. And as simple as that, I had a new letter-box format computer monitor for under \$200, with taxes! The new model is an Acer – along with the rest of my system – that I was totally okay with. Yet it was a small disappointment, since the new monitor was no larger vertically than the old one that I was replacing. The new model is *wider*, however, and that is useful since I can work in more than one place without moving windows around. Most of all, the new monitor remains ON! It doesn't turn itself off when I'm not watching, and then refuse to wake up again unless turned upside down! Constantly dealing with that problem was not an option. The expense, therefore, was therefore a necessary one – nothing to reconsider. I will have to alter my desktop background, however, since the art doesn't fit the letter-box format. But that can wait.



■ **Nov 7** – Today I braved worsening weather to make a coffee run to Kensington Market. I figured that the weather might only grow worse as the month wore on, and I could not afford to put off bringing in the winter's coffee beans any longer. A word of explanation first. Of course, I *can* buy coffee anywhere, from Maxwell House at the supermarket to Starbucks blends on the street. But one is fit only for vending machines in gas stations, and the other costs three times as much by the pound than it's worth. I buy fresh un-ground coffee beans fresh off the boat at Kensington Market for around \$9 a pound. While it is a nice drive in summer, spring or fall, an hour-long drive in Traveling Matt in the dead of winter is no joke. Not only do I prefer to avoid the cold, but snow is ever-present threat. Despite the greatest caution, I've many times gotten stuck in snow, and unable to escape without help. Experience had taught me to plan ahead, therefore, and lay in a full winter's worth of coffee beans no later than early December – and freeze them. I noted that it has been a mercurial year so far, so I decided to take no chances with the weather. I chose to make a coffee run *early*. As it happens, I spent \$80 on four bags of Ethiopian (Harar), After-Dinner Blend, Light Kona, and French Continental. Hopefully that will keep me awake until April.

■ **7 Nov** – I've never had a real knife until now. Yes, I've had Exacto knives, and steak knives which could do serious injury if I had a mind to. But I've never had the sort of knife that you would turn to if you wanted to be a Juvenile Delinquent in a musical, or a British Commando! It wouldn't have to have an actual SS death's head or swastika on it to satisfy me ... though that might be an interesting conversation piece. Somehow, though, the moment never came to shop around for one. At the Dollar Store today, however, I found just the thing, for just \$4! It is not just a workaday disposable blade that snaps off, but an actual knife that means business. It folds away nicely, and is certainly sharp enough to slit a few throats should they need slitting. I was embarrassed at first to have no idea of how to fold it up. Nothing I could do worked. There was no catch or spring that enabled me to fold the blade up. A few minutes later, however, it came to me. Voila! It was so simple that I don't know how I didn't think of it immediately. Only an idiot would have had any difficulty with anything so simple ... and unfortunately I was that idiot. I can't **show** you the operation ... but maybe you know the secret anyway. While I had a deprived upbringing, perhaps **you** were a well-adjusted Juvie when you were young.



■ **10 Nov** – Oh poop. In the middle of shopping on Amazon, I got a warning that I've got no server! I did my bit by looking seriously about the problem, while inside I was panicking. While this drama in my head was playing out, however, I had to think. Presently it occurred to me to look at the lights between Bell and my internet connection, to see what was on. The system was running as it should. I was using Photoshop and MS Word without any problems, so I knew it was only the internet connection that was off. Next I called Ma Bell and listened through ten layers of automated messages, hoping to find the answer *there*. It was somewhat embarrassing when I *did*. After listening to a list of recommendations from an automated voice, I realized that all but one of the lights on my telephone connection were off, and the message was telling me to reboot Bell! I didn't find a button to push, but I just pulled something loose and re-plugged it, and then one by one all the lights began to come to life! My internet connection was back. It turned out not to have been the headache it might have been, and probably wasted no more than four or five minutes of my life. But I wonder if this sort of thing ever happened on the *Enterprise D*?

Changing Leaves TARAL WAYNE

I love Halloween ... or least I try hard to enjoy it. I was ready to have a good October 31st, with a bowl of my favourite candy to eat, some movies selected for later watching, and a bag of plastic gems and gold necklaces to hand out to the kiddies while I rode among them in the neighborhood streets. I wanted to carry my plastic Kalashnikov and bandoleer of plastic 7.62 rounds, but prudence overcame my childishness once again. In the present climate, carrying a rather realistic automatic toy rifle was only likely to cause panic, not the joy of Halloween.

But it was not to be. Last year had been cold and intermittently wet, but nothing like *this* year. The weather forecast for the day predicted relentless rain. When I got up, it was grey and the streets were sodden. Nor did it improve markedly during the day. Perhaps some hardy children hit the streets with their cries of "Trick or Treat," but I couldn't see anything on the streets from my 21st floor balcony. Dispirited, I didn't even take my Halloween toys down from the closet – the rubber rats, the skeletal cat, the gravestones, the chains, the leering jack-o'-lantern, the iron railing around my tiny cemetery or any of the rest. Pity. I had even bought a new one from the Dollar Store, a caged rat I could

hang from a hook ... but it was never hung.

But I *have* been encountering a certain amount of wildlife lately. Over the last few weeks, I wondered where the pigeon droppings were coming from. It was not an isolated incident. The guano being deposited at my balcony door was growing, and I was in no physical condition to easily dispose of it. A couple of days ago, I found the pigeon that was doubtless responsible, perched on my balcony ledge.

My balcony has a pigeon net, a feature I despise wholly, and passionately, since it spoils my magnificent view over the west end of the city. Apparently the wind has chafed it just enough to let a moderately sized bird squeeze through between the balcony rail and the net. Equally likely, of course, the feathered nuisance pecked a hole through. Either way, there was a cozy little space for a pigeon to hole up in, out of my sight, and yet wander in to take a poop in what is effectively my back yard! I was not amused, and shooed it away.

Still, I was somewhat moved when I went to look for it later that day, and found the bird had returned, and would not leave. It was cold, even for the end of October, and all it would do in response to my urging was to move farther along on the balcony, obviously reluctant to leave the modest shelter it had found. This time I shrugged, and let it be.

Still, this could be a problem if the bird shit continues to accumulate. Unlike dog poop, which washes away in the rain, pigeon poop sets like cement, welds itself to concrete and is insoluble in water. If it dries, it has to be chipped away like stone. Nor do I have a water hose on the balcony that I could use to wash the stuff away before it is there for good. To clean the mess, I'll need to carry a bucket over a high step, hold open a door and work a mop in an awkward space as best as I can. Given my condition, this would not be easy at the best of times. Clearly, this is why the nets were put up in the first place.

Now what will November bring us, I wonder? Christmas things were already on the shelves two weeks ago, so I better get shopping.

*At present I have no plans for a **Baloobius 3**. Stranger things have happened, but as my plans stand, I will begin a new regular fanzine in the New Year. It will be different from **Rat Sass**, the last zine that I published for Rowrbrazzle. Although there were few mailing comments, it an apazine, and a creature largely of convenience. **Broken Toys** had begun that way, but in the later issues it finally grew entirely out of hand, with a massive 74-page final issue. The new zine will embrace much of what was strong and true about **Broken Toys**, while discarding that which had grown tiresome or didn't appeal to my different mood. The constant litany of medical crises is a case in point. But I had also grown to regard the extensive comments I wrote in reply to letters of comment as another anachronism. While I hope to conduct a lively letter-col that will be more tightly and carefully edited. Another difference I hopefully want to make is the more generous use of illustrations in the text. Then the piece de resistance - a cover with every issue! The title? Let's let that remain my little secret for a while longer, while I "wemble" over a decision.*