

What do I mean by “the last issue?” Have I finally given up publishing a fanzine? What is the point, after all? Nobody under the age of 50 cares about the print medium, anymore. If you are under the age of *instant messaging* and *trending aps*, it’s all about *vids*, *tweets* and *texting*. I get it. If I were young, I would be trying to be an “influencer,” too, and buying Bitcoins – just as though they would make me rich, instead of losing it all. But, the fact is that I’m over the hill, and sometimes even *proud* of it! I intend to pub my ish until the end.



All the same, I’m bringing this zine to an end. I wanted to publish a fanzine with a *Fraggle Rock* title, and this was the only suitable title I could come up with. A *baloobius*, by the way, is a Fraggles long, tufted tail. The name was created when Boober decided to test everyone’s baloobius by giving his friends a scare. Since then, it’s been mentioned, now and then, but humans were exempt from testing.

Yet, I never really grew fond of the name, so early decided that I would ditch it. When I felt the need for a short, timely little zine that I could use to keep in touch, it was easy to grind one out. Dissatisfaction grew, however, and also my regret that I ever discontinued *Broken Toys*.

Since *Broken Toys*’ 50 issues, there Was a sort concordance, called *Forgotten Toys*, nine issues of an apazine called *Lost Toys*, one issue of another apazine called *Stolen Toys*, and a collection of my art called *Old Toys*, edited by the Ditto 15 committee in 2002. This is understandably a little

THE BALOBIUS

Issue the Tense, and last of these very bad puns. The end of the year also approaches – another year of missed opportunities, as the virus is still with us ... despite how much we deny it. I have missed the “Ex,” Halloween, Thanksgiving, and will soon be alone during the Christmas season. If only those idiots who think vaccinations control our minds would just get their bloody shots, we’d be safer, and I wouldn’t stand a good chance going to my grave wearing a damned mask! Regardless, I still live at **245 Dunn Ave. Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada – (416) 531-8976. Taral @bell.net**. This is my **333rd** Kiddelidivee Books & Art publication. I begin this fanzine on 3 December 2022.

confusing. It isn't helped by the fact that I published 12 issues of a Rowrbrazzle apazine called *Rat Sass* ... and finally 10 issues of *The Baloobius*.

Old Toys was 20 years ago, and scarcely counts as "recent." I'm also disinclined to count of either two short apazines, since they had nearly no members, and lasted for a short time anyway. Away wi' yeou! Instead, I'm going to count everything from *Broken Toys 1* to *The Baloobius* as though I had never changed titles! That makes the next zine after this one, *Broken Toys*, right? You would be wrong. I found another *toys* title that I will be continuing as ***Dark Toys 73***. No doubt, this will perplex everyone.

Well, this is embarrassing. I haven't said anything about *Faux Pause*. I have to admit that I'm a little uncertain about that. But I think I have need of a longer, more studied fanzine from time to time. I have a couple of long, autobiographical articles that need publication in a vehicle longer than a dozen pages. I also have some quite long stories that I want to publish. So the *Faux Pause* title will likely be used as needed.

MAKING BUSY

I've had an active month, but most of it would involve explanations of various snafus that are of little interest. Of greater interest was a pair of visits by people I knew from *The Long Ago* and *From The Far Away*. One was by Steven Black, an old friend who had moved from Toronto years ago, to take up residence in San Francisco. He does visit Toronto from time to time, but it had been at least three years since the last time he was in town, and we had some catching up to do. We spent that afternoon talking about the things we did when we were younger, and gossiped about old friends, including some that had come to less than good ends. We reaffirmed our views, and deplored the state of the world. Hopefully, Steven will return to visit again, and not make me wait for three more years for another visit.

The other visitor was a fan who I will allow to remain known as "Cargo." I don't know how he feels about people knowing his real name. Although I had known him from furry fandom – back when it was small and there were only two small conventions – I don't know how he feels about other furries he knew in those days knowing about him today. His visit was short – he had other bases to touch that afternoon – but I was flattered that he thought worth his trouble to drop in. Like me, Cargo seems a little disenchanted with the tribe he was adopted into, and showed some regret for what it has turned into.

I used to stay in touch with a small number of other old friends – some have drifted away, others I have parted with on bad terms, and some have died. But the number of people I no longer expect to be in touch very often has recently increased by one.

At one time, I phoned Grant Schuyler every week or two. I've know this man for almost 50 years. We used to belong to the same science fiction club. He became a little more reclusive in his 50s, largely because his significant other, Bea, suffered from multiple sclerosis. He stayed home to look after her. We stayed in touch by phone, enjoying frequent, lengthy conversations every week or two. But then Bea died, and Grant has been at loose ends ever since.

Grant is a few years older than me, and has family living about 100 miles outside of Toronto. The family was worried about his health, and finally persuaded Grant to sell his house, even liberate himself from his massive collection of books and record albums. Now he resides in small-town Ontario, near Lake Eerie in obscure Simcoe. Most of the books were of little value, he said, having mostly been picked up from used book stores, and often marked up with pen or highlighter. Mostly, they were old history books, books on economics or finances, or 29th printings of some beaten-up British edition of a Phil Dick potboiler. Grant's comic collection was another matter, however. They were only read once, and he had been collecting them since the 1960s. He was paid over \$20,000 for the collection.

Grant promised to stay in touch by phone, and said he'd call from time to time. In fact, he *did* call. But I missed the call, and only saw it on the answering machine later. But he didn't call again. And didn't call again... And didn't... Finally he called back. This time I demanded his new phone number, home address and anything else that would be useful for keeping our lines open. We did have a good, long talk, however. I elicited a description of his new two-bedroom apartment (for his remaining books and records), as well his impression of his new small-town home. On the whole I was pleased that he didn't feel horribly displaced and isolated. Maybe I shouldn't have worried. Before Grant came to Toronto, he had originally been a small town boy *not far* from Simcoe.

Otherwise, it was an unpredictable month in which the weather changed from unseasonably hot, to cooler than anyone had a right to expect right after a sweltering spell. It was a month in which I spent an unconscionable amount of money on Star Trek toys. The Eaglemoss line of painted, diecast models is *superb*. The detail is perfect, and the starships come with elaborate booklets that explain technical background and the production work that went into each model. There are an enormous number of them, as well. I mean *enormous*. Likely in the area of 150! I have bought about 20 of the better known models – Enterprises A through D, Klingon Birds of Prey, Romulan Warbirds, Ferengi Marauders, Cardassian battle cruisers, Jem Hadar whatchamacallits and more! I've barely even touched the full line!

Sensible people sniff at such interests, but – realistically – what else can someone who is confined to a powered wheelchair do while Covid still stalks the land? **B**ut now, with a pandemic far from over, I have no opportunity to go anywhere, meet anyone, or hang out with people I know. I'm reduced to a single friend, Steven, who lives in a neighborhood

and isn't too distance for me to reach with Traveling Matt.

My self-indulgence didn't end there. My birthday was in October, and I splurged for the occasion by sharing a double-cheese and pepperoni pizza with my friend Steven. During a maudlin moment, I mentioned to him that my father's birthday was only a few days before my own. But I hadn't heard from him for many years – probably not since about when I moved to Parkdale, in 1991. We had been estranged for *far* longer than that. But, now and then, I wonder if he is even still alive? He was born in 1930, and today he would be 92 ... if living. Not impossible, but he was a heavy smoker all his life, and an episodic drunk. At this point, I'm reasonably sure that he is gone. Meh. With him gone, Mother dead in 1990 (at 60), Mom's brother and sister both dead, and no other relatives of that generation, I am the *oldest* member of my family. I find this a little scary. I do have younger cousins I never hear from, and two younger sisters ... both with families of their own. One irrationally dislikes me, and the other I simply rarely hear from. I get a message by e-mail, now and then, asking if I'm well. At least she doesn't ask if I'm dead.

If the proud MacDonald line has come to an end finally, it looks increasingly as though I will have to lean on my "legacy." Surely, people will be speaking of me as a brilliant artist, sensitive writer and profound thinker for years to come? Weeks? At least come to the funeral – I'll something my will about providing refreshments.

PERIPATETIC THINKING

Thinking on Your Feet. Recently, I've commented that our ancestry as hominins had one primary trait that goes back to when we split from the other primates. Not our brains, you might think. Our *feet*. We walk upright, but don't climb worth a damn. You can trace our ancestry back to Homo Erectus, and while they are half our size and a fraction of our brain size, we still have the same feet! On the other hand, *all* apes walk on feet adapted to climbing trees and branches. They *can* walk upright, but awkwardly, and resort to knuckle-walking, half-way making them quadrupeds. So, next time you see a statement that someone thinks on their feet, you can also be sure they are *smart*.

Crowd Control. I don't know where open borders might go in the long run. It is assumed by progressives that it is a human right, and nothing but good can come of allowing anyone who wishes to walk over a political border to set up a new life. But is it really... or is it merely a luxury that we can afford for now, when numbers are low? What happens in a free world where anyone can go anywhere, at any time, and in unlimited numbers? This, of course, is exactly what true conservatives fear all over the Western world. It is my own conviction that immigration is hugely beneficial to society. It encourages innovation, promotes social mobility and inspires cultural exchange. How can it go wrong? But then I think, how much freedom do *I* have to move to another country? It is actually rather difficult, even just to leave Canada and relocate in a country as similar

as the United States ... much less settle in Italy? Even more difficult, Japan! I would not even think about moving to China or most of the Middle-East. Nor, to be honest, do they welcome *me* into their country – at least not without a highly useful skill, such as engineering, performing surgery. Also problematic, is that much of the world is subject to arbitrary, non-democratic nations from which far more people want to leave than stay.

That brings me to my real concern. What happens in a world in which the whole world's population flees to democratic, affluent nations, leaving only a small number who benefit from misrule, who no longer have a subjugated population to rule over? What would Canada look like if our share of Indians, South East Asians, Middle-Easterners and Africans who want a better life – free of the Kims, Putins and Xis – were able to settle here overnight? Canadians as we know them today would be only of handful of people whose English (or French) I can understand. Chinese might actually be the most common language spoken in the country, the largest body of worshippers could be Muslims and those with European ancestor reviled for whatever they are imagined to have done in the name of Western Civilization. Could we become strangers in our own home? Cherished institutions could die out as the profit motive leads the money elsewhere. Back bacon on a bun, toques, poutine and pineapple on pizza could become endangered species. Worse of all, we'd have monthly soccer riots in which hundreds are killed and cities burn ... and have to learn to call it "football." Hockey could become a thing of a rapidly fading past.

The Three Year Mission. I don't think I can bear to write a detailed report of the second season of *Star Trek:Picard*. I watched the first season with mixed feelings. It has some very rough spots, but overall Patrick Stewart supported an unsteady dramatic platform merely adequately. Most of the new characters were not very satisfying, the plot difficult to follow and overwhelmed by action scenes that were not characteristic what Star Trek does best. I was able to acquire the second season in advance of a DVD release, and was able to view the entire ten episodes in a binge over two days.

At first, I was fascinated with the reappearance of Q in Picard's life. After so many years, I began to have questions. Q was dying. He doesn't explain how Qs can die, but he wants to impart one final lesson for Picard to digest before he moves on to whatever unknown destiny lies ahead for god-like being who has reached his expiry date. But, why did have to have put Picard through so many counter-productive trials to make his point? The ancestor of Dr. Noonien Soong – not the Soong who created Data, but a descendent – needlessly complicates Q's plans. One misstep and Picard would never learn this vital lesson Q wants to teach him. Why did Q add Soong to the mix at all? The subplot seemed wholly pointless, nor was that the only one source of confusion.

Much of the action takes place not in the 24th century, but in the early 21st. As you would expect in a time-travel plot, it is important that nothing be done to alter the time line. This is drummed in as the plot begins with an alternate history, and then jumps to early 21st century San Francisco. (By the way, why do time travelers never seem to be attracted

to Boise Idaho, or some village in eastern Java?) And yet as soon things start to go wrong, Picard and his companions immediately violate the timeline by introducing numerous incidents that could not possibly avoid repercussions ... the largest of which was one of Picard's companions electing to *stay in the past*, and marry a *Latino political activist*! Gee... how could that go wrong, eh?

These are only a pair of obvious points. I could as easily criticize yet another revisionist Picard family history, and opportunity to for this rock of masculinity blubber emotionally. Equally off-key was a pivotal NASA manned launch to Europa. This is said to launch the future into a mirror universe instead of a future where Star Fleet exists. Really? A different astronaut wouldn't have taken Picard's ancestor's place, and made exactly the same discovery on the icy moon? And what optimist thinks a manned mission to Europa is even likely to occur in the next forty years? Much less in 2023! While we're asking, what happened to that third world war that was supposed to take place in the 1990s? Oh, right, it was late, but appears to be happening in the Ukraine. I'll give The Future that.

We are also introduced to a Borg Queen who wants to join the Federation. Really? Okay, she's only a *half* Borg Queen, but it seems like asking a lot to trust her. After all, the Borg Collective has likely assimilated tens of trillions or hundreds of trillions of people over the centuries, and was hell-bent on assimilating the entire Federation. Many in the Federation *were* assimilated. Is this so easily forgiven that the Federation can extend open arms to the remaining Queen? Oh well... I guess we're good with that, because it would be *nice*.

The major issue that I had with Picard season two was not the lapses of logic or absence of good plotting, however. My disappointment was caused more by so much of the action taking place in 21st century Earth. I live in the past, thanks... Watching events unfold in the past isn't why I watch Star Trek. I want to see the future... even the crappy, post-Millennial future that is being written as Star Trek these days. I can always watch the news if I have the urge to watch cops chase cars around the Streets of San Francisco, or enjoy the ambiance of a dingy, dive bar. That's what I want to get *away* from!

Arkham on the Loose. We have a mini-Trump now in the Canadian province of Alberta, following a leadership review that replaced the former Premier of the province with a *total* loony, Danielle Smith! We don't have Republicans, of course, but the Conservative Party is trending in the same direction, and (at the provincial level) the United Conservative Party of Alberta has gone right over the line into Hershell Walker territory. Her first act was to sponsor legislation that *overrides* federal authority. Whatever law that doesn't benefit Alberta, the government of Alberta can choose reject. Moreover, Smith's law requires all government employs to also ignore Federal law. Whatever is law anywhere *else* in the country! That's outrageous enough, since it is virtually a declaration of independence from Canada, but it is likely to encourage other premiers who would like to become Head Cheese in their own nations. I'm thinking of Scott Moe of Saskatchewan and Bob Ford in Ontario – both conservatives who are fond of

taking unilateral and unpopular measures. If the Alberta Sovereignty Act wasn't appalling enough, the legislation that was proposed by the new Premier also divests the elected legislature of the power to make laws that the Premier and her cabinet doesn't like – in a stroke transforming Alberta into a one-party state similar to the Communist Party of China. All of this has the effect to turning Canada into ten separate nations. The measures are apparently is not going over well in Ottawa, and not even in Alberta, among the premier's own party! She had had to backtrack to some degree. It is also likely that there will be constitutional challenges in the future. But the sheer audacity and lunacy of the right wing, wherever they gain power, is breathtaking!

ROWDY TIMES IN PARKDALE

November 12th belongs to be highlighted in my dairy. The day began with excitement, rather than the usual ennui. As normal, I had been was asleep through the daylight hours, and right about when I was making breakfast, and unbeknownst to me, there were three armed robbers active in my neighborhood! They were holding up a store that was only a short walk from where I live, and where I could have shortly be once Traveling Matt and I had locked-up the apartment behind us. But all I knew about it was from a neighbor, later. Otherwise, I might never have known a thing about the tense stand-off. However, I had inclination to rush over even when the news reached me. The police would certainly appreciate my being in their way. As well, there might be loose bullets in the air. By *no means* did it occur to me that it might be all over before I got there, of course.

Still, nothing stopped me from going to the CBC's website to find out more. According to what I leaned online, the police had the robbers trapped inside the store, and there were armed men all over the area. The attempted heist was at Queen and Gladstone Streets, a corner that I pass by all the time. Nothing was said at the time which store had been held up, or if there had been any shots fired, but I was able see in the photos a familiar supermarket. Why would anyone hold up a supermarket? Too many witnesses, I thought, and there is usually only a little cash in the registers. Having no other information, I continued to eat my bagels and jam.

November 16th was even crazier. At some point, as I was dragging myself out of bed, I have a vague memory that I *might* have heard a gunshot. But I might only have *imagined* it. After all, there are any number of noises in the building at any time. Doors slamming, the garbage shoot banging, odd booming sounds in the walls, even people in the halls kicking up a ruckus. So if there was gunfire, I didn't notice, and soon forgot. Over the course of the evening, I learned more about the incident when I got a routine call from downstairs. This is mainly a senior's building, and we have social workers who monitor their clients, of whom I am one. They called around 7 p.m. to ask if I had died today, as usual, and then casually mentioned that we were not to leave our apartments. The police had asked us to remain in our apartments, while officers went from door to door, asking questions! Residents who had been outside, were not permitted to enter, either! They had

been provided with a city bus for temporary shelter. Bit by bit, the story came out, and I realized that there had been a shooting right in my own building! Disappointingly, no police came to my door, however. I'd like to have shown my collection of replica handguns! But I don't leave the apartment most days anyway, so if I no one had told me, I wouldn't have known a thing.

I read more about the incident the next day. I was initially told that one man was shot in his third floor apartment – not in the lobby. However, another young man *was* injured in the lobby as he ran away. A woman was found on public transit nearby, and was subsequently taken into custody. Two other men were thought to have been hiding in the building, but no one was sure why they thought so. Later, two other black men in their 30's were being sought. Then, as far as I know, the lockdown was over for the day.

There might be lot more going on, than anyone is sure of. Shots were reported fired on King Street, the same day. So far, no connection had been established.

A couple of days later. The news released a photo of the deceased, also a black man who might be any one of a number of young boys who have grown up in this building. Their mothers are hardworking, and their children are always polite ... but then they become young men with a propensity for getting into trouble. The often nurse understandable resentments of perceived disadvantages being a visible minority, but often they just stupidly develop a drug dependency.

Residents of my building are all talking to the reporters about *how unsafe* the neighborhood has become, and the lack building security of security. It is true that once we had 24-hour security. Then the hours were cut back, until the security office was finally closed entirely. Budgets had probably been cut by cost conscious governments, who put more officers on the doughnut patrol instead.

I've lived in this neighborhood for more than 30 years, and I've seen neighbors come and go. I don't think it is any less safe now than it ever was, or that it is particularly unsafe at all. As far as I know, the Parkdale neighborhood has a reputation for being a tough part of town for no justifiable reason. It's not like the Jane Finch Corridor, in the north-west corner of the city, which *is* actually rather risky, nor the bar strips downtown where drive-by shootings have been known to happen. Murders in Parkdale are almost unknown, as far as I know. I could name a few. I even *know* a man who lived down the hall from me, who was an insane, murderer. I had coffee with him in his apartment, once.

There are a lot of strange people, however, and some rough activity if you keep bad company. I can't say I've ever felt threatened by the neighborhood. I am 71, however, so perhaps, unreasonably, I feel less secure away from home after dark. If I must be out late at night, I stick to streets where there are more people around. The young may be fearless, but the elderly take fewer chances.

Penney For Your Thoughts:LOC5

Eric Mayer — *[As for my comments... from now on, use what you want from my comments. You can use my name to balance the *&%@ 's of the world. I haven't read fanzines in years, but I do read yours and heck I'm not ashamed of it. — EricMayer]*

You mean that, if you revert to *Broken Toys*, you'll include *The Baloobius* issues in the numbering?

Something like that. Actually, I was considering going back to issue 73, which would also subsume [Rat Sass](#) as well as [The Baloobius](#). – Taral

I guess I've commented on most of the material in this issue of *The Baloobius*, and if I tried to think of something new to say, with my memory, I would probably end up repeating myself. However I will risk doing that with reference to your tales of mouse trouble. Back in the day I used to stay up half the night drawing at my bedroom desk, a tensor lamp glaring off the Bristol board on which I penciled, or inked, or – mostly – erased. (I pretty much reached a finished drawing by trial and error.) But night after night a mouse interrupted my concentration. I'd be trying to sketch a tentacle and suddenly there was this rattling and thumping. The mouse had got into the metal wastebasket beside my desk, in search of the seeds hidden in the husks I dumped there when I emptied the parakeet's feeding tray. And although he seemed to get into the wastebasket easily enough he couldn't get out and kept leaping and scrabbling at the sides, making a racket. The smart thing to do would have been to dispose of the seed husks someplace else. What I actually did was place a yard stick in the wastebasket, leaning it against the inside of the rim. The mouse was quite happy to use this as an escape route. After that I hardly heard him and we got along fine. For some reason he wasn't afraid of me, or maybe the lure of seeds overcame his fear.

Blood thinners are a pain in the rear. My dad took Coumadin and he was constantly having blood drawn, and on the phone for results, talking to his doctor and having the dosage changed. I hope you get things stabilized for awhile.

Too bad about you missing the Canadian National Exhibition. *[Again.]* The US long ago relaxed mask requirements, even though the virus is still with us, and the longer it lingers and the more people it infects, the greater the chance it will mutate into something even more deadly. But given that practically half the population thinks science is a liberal conspiracy it would be political suicide the keep the requirements in place. I guess the attitude is: when we hear the word science we reach for our guns. That said, I hate wearing a mask. I feel like I'm suffocating. How people work all day wearing masks is beyond me. Well, I guess if you're a superhero....

At least I got my fourth shot yesterday, so that ought to keep the nastie little Covids away from me. At least until the Spring, when I request the Bivalent shot. – Taral

It's all very sad about the queen. Being such a left winger I know I should detest the monarchy. I guess I'm inconsistent. Besides, the current monarchy of the UK is toothless when it comes to harming society. All our Republican wannabe kings are a real danger. Yeah I know, the royals cost some money but there are worse wastes of money. I just read about college which wined and dined eight high school football players, hoping to recruit them. It cost \$280,000.

Considering that a few million dollars isn't what it used to be, the Civil List – the sum that government puts aside for the monarchy – isn't all that much. Just building the parking lot for a major sports stadium probably costs as much. The Royal family may be largely self-supporting. It lives from its properties, which earn a lot of revenue. The money isn't used entirely for luxury, but luxury is expected

of a monarch. An elderly old poop in a rented limo wouldn't make much of an attraction for the tourists to gawk at. The monarchy also supports numerous charities and causes. Moreover, some of the burden of looking after historic sites also falls on their shoulders. After the fire at Windsor castle years ago, the Queen paid for the entire restoration. Just recently, King Charles announced that he would make Balmoral Castle – the Queen's favourite Scottish estate house – open to the public. As well, he has made it known that he favours a "slimmed" down monarchy, with fewer indolent nobility. Of course, there are people who simply resent Charles for existing at all, and want the money spend on planting trees on the Orkney Islands, or demand the King pay for their ancestors' remote enslavement in 1704. – Taral

[After the big storm that opened this winter,] we had the side of the house repaired this week. The boards had been torn away when a falling tree pulled down the utility lines. Next, an electrician needs to replace the power line running into the meter. The meter and the lines coming from the pole to the house belong to the electric company but the line running down the side of the house from their lines to their meter is ours. Go figure.

Do you have the same kind of stupidity in Canada, as in the US?

Is poutine fattening? You bet it is, and we do! We have lots of stupidity in Canada, unfortunately! The new leadership of the United Conservative Party in Alberta (a little different from the federal party in Ottawa) has put the government in the hands of radical right-wing loonies by the MAGAhat mob, and are already tabling provincial legislation that would enable Alberta to set aside any Federal legislation that it felt wasn't in Alberta's interest ... which is totally unconstitutional! Alberta has no such power nor can it confer on itself such power. As well, the new Minister of Tin Foil Hats, openly praised the Trucker's Strike, speaking the need to defy Trudeau's "tyranny." I can't imagine where this would go if the province tries to enforce such legislation, and attempts force. Send in the Mounties and arrest the Federal government? Indications are that the majority of Albertans don't agree with these radical ideas. However, focused zealots have captured the party apparatus ... sound familiar? – Taral

I wonder if Ukraine is raising money by selling those war stamps to collectors all around the world? I imagine they would be popular. The style reminds me of the old railway travel posters. The war is horrifying. Of course there have been wars of aggression, full of atrocities, in many parts of the world since WWII, but at least in the US they haven't gotten much coverage. And, probably naively, I had not expected to see another Hitlerian, unprovoked land grab in Europe in *my* lifetime. So, in response to Ukraine blowing up the bridge that Putin has been using to fire missiles at playgrounds ... just horrific.

Man, the photos you email me of your apartment make it practically a museum! – **Eric Mayer, July '22**

Likely the Ukrainians are raking it in with that stamp. They should do more -- a destroyed T-72 tank with the turret blown off would be good subject. A Ukrainian firing an anti-tank rocket from his shoulder. Maybe Putin hanging from a meat hook just like Mussolini.

Museum AND home. There are exhibits in all rooms, including the kitchen and bathroom. – Taral

Hope Leibowitz – I don't even know what sort of phone plan I have, if any. I keep getting phone calls about upgrading various things and I tell the guys I don't need what they want to sell me, as it usually costs more every month!

Same here. Those calls come so often that I recognize their voices. Every time they call, I have to tell them that I already have Bell and Bell's internet service, and not want more service. Then they call again next week, as regular as clockwork. The long distance from India must be killing them. – Taral

Somehow, I'm at the point now where I'd rather communicate by e-mail. Used to have regular phone calls with a woman I know, but that stopped. I should probably call her (She's older than me). Saw her a few times at live jazz things. We even went to several of them in people's back yards!

Today I couldn't find my datebook, was going totally nuts... then there it was on my table, only slightly hidden. Latest one has a nice white Stallion on the cover. I leave for Stratford with Charles in (maybe less than) FIVE days, short trip though. Bus... Or cab to train - I live in a constant state of confusion... no fun. Only two plays and I was told to choose one – probably a mistake! – **Hope Leibowitz**

You have an embarrassment of things to do, and you complain? I haven't gone anywhere three years, other than to a neighborhood mall, to the bank and have a monthly blood coagulation test. – Taral

Lloyd Penney – Thank you for *The Balooobius 9*, and time is at a premium for me, but so is fanzines I have and have yet to respond to. I will fix that now...

I am feeling old (no more than usual), now that Elizabeth II has passed, and now we have a king, Charles III. Look for Charles to appear on a coin, bill, stamp or school or government building wall near you!, RSN. I expect Charles to be thrifty to the point of being cheap, and it looks like he is going to reign (no pun intended) in some of the spendthrifts and naughty people in the Royal Family, like Harry, Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, just to name a few, doing all the thing that mummy Elizabeth wouldn't do.

The best presents the Queen left us were the two film shorts with James Bond and Paddington Bear. I had read some time ago that she had a wicked sense of humour, and she proved it with her appearances in these shorts. Not so High and Mighty as to not make fun of herself, and her position. Charles was in a film short when he was in the Navy, telling his commanding officer to piss off in a high voice. We need to see that again.

All my life I thought the nearly unimaginable Future would happen! And now we are there! It only took me seventy years to get here, and it still doesn't quite seem real. As it happens, I am a little older than you, and I was actually a subject under a king, who reigned before Elizabeth II – George VI. While this is technically so, I was too young to remember anything about it, only that some pennies had an odd face on them, ... not the Queen's. We can't get ahead of ourselves, however, because it will take the mints around the world a year or two to adapt, and release the anticipated portrait of Charles. Will he wear his crown? I suspect not, if the last portraits of Elizabeth are any indication. More to the point, will members of the Commonwealth abjure the portrait of the king entirely, as not worthy of modern would-be republics? I can easily picture the mint in Ottawa deciding to honour an Inuit conceptual artist, advocate of magic mushroom therapy or transgender mime instead. If so, the long line of royalty in my coin collection might come to an end with the image of paraplegic activist instead. – Taral

When I was a student, an aeon ago, my student flop had mice, but student services at school had an appropriate solution ... get a flat-bottomed paper lunch bag, and put a smear of peanut butter on one bottom edge on the inside, and place the bag down with the PB on the top edge. The mouse will smell the PB, run into the bag, jump for the smear of PB on the upper edge, and tip the bag onto its flat bottom, trapping him. The upright bag tells you the trap has been sprung, and the mouse is easily disposed of outside, or will serve as a bag lunch for any feral cats.

*I've seen somewhat similar ideas on YouTube. I watched one such video with fascination as the a large plastic pail collected about 20 mice in a short while, using a spring arrangement to drop the mice into the pail with a little grain floating in the bottom as bait. I've also seen a video of mice being caught in a glue trap, and *that* wasn't pleasant at all to watch. They die from exhaustion or suffocation. – Taral*

Corflu was in Vancouver last weekend ... any youngsters there? I doubt it. As you say, there's no personal connection to fanzines for them. I've been in the local for 40 years now, and I am still enjoying it. But there are times when, even after all these years, I am still on the outside looking in. I guess fanzine fandom, and fandom as a whole, will keep carrying on until it's down to a few people who are too far away to meet. There will be someone to turn off the lights as they leave. I am trying to make my own post-fandom career, and I hope there might be some results soon.

I sensed foreshadowing. Now I know why. For many of us we are already too far apart to meet. – Taral

All for now, the list of things to do today keeps getting longer. Take care, and whatever title you choose for the next issue, please do send it to me. – **Lloyd Penney, July 2022**

There will definitely be a tenth issue – you should be reading it. But thereafter I plan changes that I'll discuss elsewhere in the issue. Or maybe the next issue. A little mystery is good for the soul. – Taral

Heath Row — I took the day off work today, and my errands are finally done, so I can turn my attention to more important things—like *The Baloobius* 9. I've gone to the post office to mail APA-L, a local bookstore to pick up Robert J. Sawyer's *Illegal Alien* and Trina Robbins's *Last Girl Standing*, the ATM, a nearby drug store to look for Nichelle Nichols bookazines (with all the Leonard Nimoy tribute issues when he died, you'd think there'd be one Nichols memorial magazine special—we shall see!), the local music store to return a rental tenor saxophone, a record store that unfortunately closed sometime during the pandemic (it's a loss to that neighborhood, for sure—there used to be a great used bookstore there, too!), and to get a haircut. I've done more by 3 p.m. along those lines than I do most weeks. And to put some icing on that cake of a day, a new propeller beanie arrived in today's mail. Let me don that now so I can formally begin this letter of comment.

Much better.

Even though you said that you “feel nothing about the Queen,” I think you might! It's notable that you also lived during the reign of George VI, and you consider the queen “a lady who brought dignity and a sense of determination to the crown.” You wanted her to live longer. Why, I think you... liked her. That's an OK feeling to have, even if you didn't immediately mourn her passing. I can imagine that the Canadian view of British royalty might be more complicated than that of the English, and even there, there's a spectrum of royalists: from those who exalt to those who despise the concept. Her successor and son strikes me as a bit petulant, and perhaps riding on his mother's coattails a little so far, but time will tell. It's been interesting to see how his becoming king has brought up more about his relationship with Princess Diana, Camilla Parker Bowles, and the politics of royal marriage and succession. It's also inspired public discussion about inherited wealth and privilege, which is always good to question.

And yet, oddly enough, I think it Americans who feel the mystique of the British Royal Family more strongly than Canadians. We think little about it, and it has little effect on our daily lives. We see the Queen's image on postage stamps, but not the pretty ones that showcase our artists, writers or stand-up comedians. We see her face on our small change, but only on the \$20 bill. At one time, post offices all hung a painting of the Queen on the wall, but we today they are only substations in drugstores, and the

walls are decorated with ads. Only a few Canadians are much interested in Royalty as a hobby. In fact, a good half of Canadian citizens were born in different countries, with no special feeling about the monarchy at all. It seems that Americans are more interested in royalty than us jaded Canadians – whether to love it or despise it, as the case may be. – Taral

This, sir, is a wonderful sentence: “It’s a wonder all the crockery at Buckingham Palace wasn’t chipped by biting.”

I will have in engraved on a piece of Wedgewood dinnerware, just for you! – Taral

Walt Wentz’s “Nobody Excepts the BBC” was a delightful bit of comedic levity that reminded me of the writing of Carl Brandon. (I say that having just learned about him and his writing, so your mileage might vary.) “Wee Beastie” and “Feelin’ Blue” were also enjoyable (except for the latter’s portions focusing on your health concerns; I’m still going on about the mice, but I hope you’re on the mend). I appreciated the idea of your apartment being the mouse’s natural habitat. The fact that Warfarin was originally developed as a rat poison brought the two storylines back together. Snap! Just like a mousetrap.

I asked my pharmacologist how much Warfarin I’d have to save up in order to poison somebody, but she only laughed. I gather you would be unlikely to get anyone to swallow several handfuls of pills. – Taral

Of course, Lloyd Penney wrote a letter of comment to *The Balooobius* 8. I enjoy seeing his name in lettercols almost as much as I enjoy seeing old missives by T.M. Maple in comic books (most recently in *Creepy* 126, a rare instance in which his name is in quotation marks, and my first time seeing his commentary in a Warren magazine!) Penney’s invocation of Bill Rotsler – “Fandom, so neat, so nifty ... too bad it’s full of fans,” – reminded me of a similar sentiment, paraphrased: “I’m all for humanity. It’s people who I can do without.” When that feeling arises, I try to remind myself that people are weird and wonderful. Our oddities are part of our awesomeness.

I appreciated your exchange with Lloyd about the habit, or practice, of writing letters of comment. I think you two might be onto something. John Hertz and I have recently been discussing the dynamic in terms of participation culture vs. consumption culture. We see it most commonly in con attendance. Do you buy a membership to *belong to* and get involved in a con – to participate – or do you buy a ticket to an event that is held for you to witness – *to consume*? Is fandom a system in which you’re involved, or a performance or spectacle that you watch? There’s a meaningful difference. *The Usual* still means a lot to me. We don’t just buy each other’s fanzines, we trade. Or we send a LOC. Making fanzines freely available through sites such as eFanzines or Fanac complicates things *slightly*. Do we owe the publisher anything if we just downloaded it for free, without their knowledge or involvement? If we want to participate in the system of fandom, if we want to engage in the correspondence culture such affords, we do. Clearly, we can just consume and squirrel away fanzines as you remarked, but just like the early days of the World Wide Web, there’s a person behind every single one of those pages. All you have to do is reach out and say hello. – Heath Row, October 2022

TOREX-OCT COIN SHOW

I had been saving money for the upcoming coin show for a least a year. Torex is an affair that occurs three times a year. When it was held downtown, on King Street, I was able to drive Traveling Matt, there and back. But then, the show moved to a new location in the north-west corner of town that I couldn’t possibly reach. The only way to attend the next

show was to ask a friend to drive me by car. This turned out to be more of a challenge than expected. Unable to bring my chair with me, I had to walk myself across the parking lot and through the lobby. Luck was with me at least to the extent that the hotel *had* a wheelchair at the desk that I could use. But luck ran out when I discovered that the exhibition room had been laid with a thick, pile carpet, and it was impossible for me to move! The wheels sank so far into the nap that changing direction was like thing stuck in glue. Even if I wanted to move forward, it was better to get out and push the chair without being in it! This was more than a little ridiculous, but it far better than going nowhere! I decided that if there was going to be at the next show, I would have to think of something different!

As the next coin show approached, Steven and I discussed three main options. One was to do all my own walking, and stop to rest as needed. While possible, it would likely be exhausting and time consuming. The second idea was one we discussed at considerable length. Steven had found a sort of folding stool online that was not exorbitantly expensive, and could be carried over the shoulder. I studied the website, and considered it carefully. In the end, however, I thought it might be money spent that might be no more convenient than the third possibility. I still had Rolling Thunder, the fold-up walker under a tarp on my apartment balcony. We had used it before, folded up on the back seat, and I was fairly certain that the walker would roll more easily than the hotel's wheelchair on that paralyzing carpet. The walker was lighter than a chair, also, and I could go anywhere. Nevertheless, I worried over the problem right up until the end, and only made up my mind on the day of the show. I would bring Rolling Thunder with me.

This turned out to be the right decision! And yet it wasn't going to be as *simple* as that.

I planned to attend the show over the summer, but it turned out otherwise. Steven informed me that he would be tied up with a favourite aunt, who was being married. Or was it for her funeral? No matter to me. On the other hand, I did have another several months to save money for a *tremendous* blow-out! When October came around, I had a phenomenal amount saved, and could buy almost anything without needing a bank loan.

The turn-out in the room was somewhat disappointing. It looked only half-full and lacking the activity of collectors on a full spending frenzy. I hurried over to my favourite dealer, Robert, but he had almost nothing in his display cases. I asked why he had so little to show me, and he said he had made a deal to sell *almost all his stock to another dealer before I had a chance to look at it!* He was retiring, he continued, and would no longer attend shows, only sell from his store! His store, unfortunately, was in Calgary! I took this blow like a man, but I was really crying like a small child inside. Robert was a source of invaluable information, and always gave me a large discount on the listed price, and he was in no hurry to be paid if whenever I was short of money.

Once I collected myself, I asked who Robert sold his stock to. Could he point out the dealer in the room who bought his coin, merely hours earlier? Robert indicated a man at the far side of the room in the corner, and I hurried over as quickly as I could. Maybe there was still treasure to be had.

What I found wasn't initially encouraging. Robert had not been acquiring stock, and what he sold the other dealer was lackluster. Not entirely, however. My first good finds were a pair of silver denarii by the emperor Titus. This is not surprising in itself, as the Flavian emperors has been active moneyers, and had produced hundreds of different coins. But these two denarii were two that I never expected to see, and snapped them up immediately. They were of a series called *Judaea Captiva*, and celebrated the capture of Jerusalem by Vespasian and his son Titus. This was possibly the largest war in Roman history at the time, and you could almost forgive the Flavians for boasting about this victory. The Temple had been reduced to rubble, thousands killed, and vast amounts of loot carried back to Rom from Judea. The disaster to the Jews was so great that collectors of Jewish history have been collecting these scarce coins ever since ... even though they usually have no interest in Roman barbarians. So here were two worn, but still serviceable examples in my hand. They were costly, but not so much that he put a major dent in my spending plans. I also found an odd bronze coin from Asian Minor, in Phrygia, that had been minted by the emperor Claudius. It was an unusual type, not the common As from the Roman mint that are fairly easy to come by. So I bought that, too.



Torex Oct 2022 Show, L to R

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Claudius, Amorium in Phrygia | 4. Diocletian, AE Follis, Heraklia |
| 2. Vespasian, Denarius, <i>Judaea Capta</i> issue | 5. Constans II, AU Semisses |
| 3. Titus, Denarius, <i>Judaea Capta</i> issue | 6. Islamic, Burji Mamluk, AU Dinar |

In another part of the room, I bought three new paper bills from the American Confederacy. Once comically commonplace, they had become impossible to find in the

1980s, when I began collecting. By the turn of the century, once-worthless bills were worth hundreds of dollars each! I have managed acquire a decent collection of some less costly examples, and I was able to added three more to my collection. However, others I saw for sale at the show, were priced at \$500 *or more*. I think I will not be buying any more legal currency by Jefferson Davis. I also asked for some modern bills to further fill out my collect of Canadian paper money. I aim to complete it back to the 1930s.

Cruising another part of the show, I found another dealer that was selling a small number of gold coins. I covet gold, and would not hesitate to paint any pretty young blondes who got my way. One was minted in Constantinople by the 7th century emperor, Constans II. I have a number of gold solidii, but there was a smaller coin that I have not been able to find, called a *tremissis*. I was looking at one, and knew I *had* to have it. I also bought two small US gold coins, from 1843 and 1856. One was a single dollar, and the other a \$2 ½ coin. Did you even know there had ever been a \$2½ coin? The \$1 piece was the smallest every struck by the US mint, and the other about the size of a dime. Of course, a dollar's worth of gold was worth a lot in mid-19th century, when a man worked a ten hour day for that hard one buck. So it cost me a lot more than a buck to those two slivers of gold.

I bought a nice looking follis by Diocletian that was relatively inexpensive, impressed by the nice condition. It was almost 100% bronze, but had once been silver coated, and traces of it still remained. At this point, I began to realize that my bottomless pocket book was reaching the bottom. I returned to Robert, my starting point, and had another look at one of the remaining coins that he still had on display. He still had a small gold dinar, struck by one of the Mamluk sultans. It had been produced in the mid-15th century, about the same time as Henry IV. It wasn't large, but gold is gold.

So... now I am a great deal lighter in the pocket book than I was before ... but I also have months to build a fresh wad for the next show.

Torex Oct 2022 Show



US gold 1 Dollar 1856

US gold 2 1/2 Dollar 1843

GROUNDING ON THE ROCK

Last year, Apple streamed Fraggles Rock as *Rock On*. I've said about as much as I'm willing to say about the handful of 15-minute episodes. It looked the same as the original, but unwisely it has been updated to include live actors to interact with the Fraggles over the internet. They were unaware of who was at the other end of the connection, but they joined in with the songs. Thus he made the fundamental mistake of confusing *Fraggle Rock* with *The Muppet Show*!

I was primed to be disappointed, which is unfortunate. There is much to like about *Back to the Rock*, the re-launch. Perhaps I'm too critical? All I can do is list my objections and let you decide.

The original series from 1983 developed slowly. First, Sprocket discovered that unknown creatures lived in the walls of Doc's workshop. Later, Sprocket discovered that Fraggles are friendly, but he had trouble convincing *Doc* that that anyone lived on the other side of the hole in the wall. Doc is the only live actor in the show. He does all the talking, and steadfastly refuses to take the dog seriously. It isn't until the final two episodes that Doc learns that there really *are* strange little beings living behind his workshop wall. It was very nearly too late, however, since Doc has made up his mind to move away from home, and believes that he has lost his last chance to learn more about the Fraggles. There are many moving episodes during the 96 episodes, but these two final shows are among the most moving I've *ever* seen aimed at a children's audience.

The re-launch of *Fraggle Rock* does away with it all. I never happened. Instead, we begin the first episode over by uncovering the hole to Outer Space. I was fine with that, I suppose, but then I noticed many small details being rewritten that didn't have to be. Several Fraggles had been changed, the most important of which was Mokey, one of the five *main* characters, who now looked completely different. But I've written about all that before, and *Return to the Rock* is a wreck.

This is about a completely different children's program, one that first aired in 1994. Curiously, just as had been *Fraggle Rock* had been produced in Canada, so had been this imitation. Like *Fraggle Rock*, it was about creatures living in a separate world. Also like *Fraggle Rock*, they were puppets. They didn't live in a rock, but but in a marsh. Of course there were a *lot* of children's shows that copied Henson-style puppets after *Sesame Street*, *The Muppet Show* and *Fraggle Rock*, but the similarities go beyond having a similar format. I watched at least 20

episodes on YouTube, and have a feel for the show, but it didn't take long for me to understand that *Groundling Marsh* was a shameless rip-off.

They call themselves Groundlings. Unlike Fraggles, no two Groundlings are entirely the same. One character has two heads and two names! But then I started to see how there were far more similarities than differences. "Galileo" was Gobo, the explorer and rationalist. "Maggie" was the athletic, and extrovert, just like Red. "Eco" was a little like Mokey, the mystic and lover of nature. "Hegdish" was a trouble-maker, which Boober never was, but can still be compared to Boober as a depressed, pessimistic misfit. It is more difficult to compare "Stacks" with Marjory, the Trash Heap, but "Stacks" was a computer put together from junk, and not unlike Marjory who is made of trash. The characters have few motives and the character development of a sock with a hole in it.

If you doubt that *Groundling Marsh* was a soulless imitation, consider one of the little stories told by Eco. Unlike Doc's live action interludes, that often reflect events among the Fraggles, they are also funny in their own right. "Eco's" stories are cheaply animated cartoons on a level similar to *Spunky and Tadpole*, but without the sense of style. They have blatantly obvious teachings that the Groundlings apply to their own problems and are as subtle as squeaking chalk on a blackboard.

"Ha, ha, just like the bullfrog that swallowed a football, right Eco? I better cough that up!" said Galileo. "That's right, Galileo," added Eco, "I'll spoil your dinner."

Like *Fraggle Rock*, *Groundling Marsh* includes songs written for the show. Probably the less said about them, the better. Perhaps it is only a matter of taste, but I thought the music was clearly inferior to the songs in *Fraggle Rock*, being less inventive and overall less fun. The hammer a message into the pee-brained little urchins like square pegs into the round holes. However did this show get greenlighted for production for a single season, much less for *four years*?

THE ALTERNATE FUTURE IS BACK

Here we are, crowding the end of page 18! In fact, I'm not even sure what comes next. Most likely I will remind the reader that the next fanzine you see from me is likely to be **Dark Toys 73**, following from *Broken Toys*, *Rat Sass* and *The Balooobius*. Will this be the end of my obsession with *Fraggle Rock*? Not a chance. If I can put up with fandom's tedious recitations of Corflu dinners and Hugo results, then you can put up with *my* annoying eccentricities.

Endit