

BROKEN TOYS 11

Broken Toys is a personalzine by Taral Wayne, and in no way implies that my other zine, **New Toy**, is a dead letter – in fact, I hope to begin work in the coming month. The letter column this issue abounds with equal parts of news, good cheer, egoboo and malice. As has been the case for a third of my life, I live in partly self-imposed exile at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario M6K 1S6. However, contact or loc me at Taral@Teksavvy.com. The date is still **December 2012**, before the New Year, and this time for sure it is the last **Broken Toys** for the year. It is also ExtraTaralitoriality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) **261**. Copyrighted past, present, future, except in PeeWee's Clubhouse.

Taralitorial -- I wasn't planning on another issue in December. But, since events have a tendency to proceed in their own fashion, I found I had written a piece about my Christmas and I wanted to publish it.

It was never my intention to publish, of course. A large part of the item below grew out of a desire to make the opening of my gifts this Christmas something more than a reckless act of vandalism against wrapping paper, that would take all of five minutes to accomplish. The night before, however, I had what I thought was a good idea. I could lengthen the opening by performing it "Live" on FaceBook. It took about an hour, in fact. The "Live" opening also produced a fair amount of copy, that I instantly recognized as the makings of an article. It just so happened that I had a *second* article with a Christmas theme set aside, and I had written a few words about putting up my tree, as well. Finally, I wanted to write a little something about Christmas dinner at my sister's home. The results may not be an especially *unified* bit of writing ... but I want to share it, anyway.

If Bill posts in time, there is every likelihood that this will be the last zine of 2012!

When Every Christmas Was White

In an hour and four minutes, it'll be Christmas. My 61st. They certainly aren't what they used to be. To begin with, I celebrated the holiday with my family last Friday, because my sister Chris's two sons have jobs that require them to be at work on Tuesday. It could be that they're among those heroic people who answers the phone when you call 911, or who make sure the electricity is there to make the light go on when you flip the switch. Actually, it's far more likely my nephews have some far less heroic job. Could be they're one of the poor slobs who have to watch the presses run when some jackass needs 10,000

take-out menus printed for his restaurant but can't wait until the day *after* Christmas ... but the principle is the same.

Our family had the usual turkey and trimmings, but the festivities these days are less elaborate than they were when the two boys were just kids. In a way, that's fine with me. I never liked wearing paper hats. On the other hand, instead of two kinds of pie, fresh cookies and fruitcake, there were just muffins with icing.

If there's one thing makes Christmas perfect for me, though, it's Christmas pudding. Don't get me wrong, Christmas cake is good too – dark, heavy cake that's more than 50% fruit and nuts by weight, covered by a thick layer of almond paste and sugar icing that's so sweet it makes your teeth hurt. Still, as good as *that is*, *nothing* is better than Christmas pudding's dark, plummy, rum-soaked cake with a sauce – made of sugar, butter, sugar, milk, sugar and just a splash of vanilla – poured over the pudding hot. I can eat a pound of it. Unfortunately, for several years now I've had to do without. My sister doesn't like pudding, for reasons I can't begin to imagine, and never remembers to get any for Christmas dinner just because *I* like it. My only hope is to rush to a supermarket right after the holiday and hope there's some left. At \$6 or \$7 each, there's been years when I couldn't afford it, either. This year I have enough money that I'll pay what I have to... but I have to hope the last of the crinkly red, plastic-wrapped bombshells of pudding haven't all been sold, or I'm out of luck again. It would sadden me to miss my pudding for yet another year.

My other sister, Karen, was present with her two adopted girls – Victoria and Elizabeth, twins, about four-and-a-half, but delicate enough to be three. We also had an antiquated and somewhat barmy aunt on hand. After my uncle Ray's death, Aunt Kay is the only surviving member of the family who is older than me, and she is *quite* around the bend.

After dinner, on the way out the door of my sister's Chris's West-of-Toronto home, I was handed a shopping bag with leftovers, and another with my presents – to open at home, at leisure. Opening presents at home by yourself is inarguably less fun than it was to watch two young boys ripping through wrappings on Christmas morning ... but Matt and Michael are 20 and 21 now. They don't rip through wrappings like it was the most fun ever, anymore. What the hey ... even if I have to open them alone, they *are* presents, and they *are* mine. I've had worse deals.

This year I actually managed to put up my tree. For several years now, I intended to put up the Christmas tree, but days would go by and it would never be the right moment. Then it was Christmas itself, and too late to bother. This year I swore, by hook or crook, the tree was going up. The same old pattern was establishing itself, however. The days dropped off the calendar and the tree was still not up by the day I had dinner at my sister's – only three days 'till Christmas. My friend Steven visited Saturday, fortunately, and insisted he lend a hand. So the tree went up after all! It's still up! And it's bloody well going to stay up until after New Year's! Maybe even until *next* Christmas!



I wish I could say that it is unblemished, but I can't. A couple of hours after Steven went home, I was typing at the keyboard when the star at the top blew up in a flash of white light! I took it down to change the bulbs, one by one, but couldn't get it to light again. Something more than a bulb must have burned out. Finally, I removed the sockets and wires and stuck the eviscerated star back on the tree. It's not the glory it was, but it doesn't look all that bad, either. Maybe I can buy something similar on Boxing Day. I have some left-over turkey in the fridge from which I can make a Christmas dinner of sorts. Like a pig, I already ate all the chocolate and candy I came home with – I can't be trusted with the stuff, obviously. I was worried it would be a melancholy Christmas, despite the tree and the presents, just as the last few have been. It wasn't always this way – the Christmas in the photo is what Christmas is *supposed* to be like.

You're supposed to be 7 ... like I was in 1958. When you're 7, every Christmas is White. Much after 16 or 17, Christmas begins to pale. By the time you're 25, it's part of a lost promised land that you've absent-mindedly wandered away from by growing older.

I showed more discipline toward my presents than toward the chocolate and candy, and held off opening them until the proper time. It wasn't just an exercise of will-power for its own sake, of course – it was simply that I was aware of just how miserable Christmas itself would be if there was nothing Special to do on the Special Day. I succumbed to only one temptation. A gift from my daft aunt was barely wrapped, in plain white tissue paper ... so I made a single exception.

A small box yielded a hand-sized LED flashlight about the size and shape of a bar of soap. There was a second box of Ferrero Rocher chocolates, whose name I can never remember. (All that ever comes to mind is something like Leo Durocher.) Other than those, the stack of presents was perfectly intact when I got up on Christmas Day.

Sometime between oozing out of bed and putting the coffee on, I had a novel idea. Rather than just tear up all the wrappings and lay bare the contents – an activity that

wouldn't take more than five minutes – I would prolong the pleasure by opening my presents Live ... on FaceBook!

There is no way to do that literally, of course. But opening the presents one by one, and describing what I found on my homepage, was the next best thing. Best of all, it took nearly an hour to go through the entire pile. And now ... it's time to share the vicarious experience with a *wider* audience.



To begin with, when my friend Steven gave me *his* present on Saturday, I opened it then and there. I figured that since he helped me to put up the tree, he deserved the pleasure of watching me open the present. To be precise, he had two things for me. One was a gift card from Pizza Pizza, good for approximately 3 ½ medium pizzas at the walk-in-special price. The other gift was a boxed set of four miniature Bailey's Irish Creams. Each bottle is about one stiff drink, and they came in four flavours – Original, Hazelnut, Caramel and Biscotti. I opened the first a few minutes ago and have just finished the Biscotti, which does, in fact, *taste* like biscotti. Caramel next, do you think? Thanks, Steve!

First comes an oddly wrapped gift from my sister's family. It looks rather like a tennis racket ... or a banjo ... But, I bet it's an exotic Japanese martial arts weapon. It's ... it's a ... Well, it's a medium size, non-stick frying pan, , of course. I knew it all along. As it happens, I have a number of sizes of Teflon pans already, but the linings *do* wear out, so I'll put this one away for a rainy day. You never know when you might need to *Ka-Bong* somebody with a frying pan, and you *don't* want it to stick.

"For the third gift of Christmas, my family gave to me... "

Gawd, I have a lousy singing voice, even when I'm just imagining it. The next package I picked out of the pile was soft and squishy ... so it is obviously a large Camembert cheese. But I'm going to make a guess that it's actually a sweater.

Guess what? It was a "Multi-Purpose Casual Pack!" Burgundy. I usually carry a full-size shoulder bag, the sort that people use for laptop computers ... or diapers. But they can be

awfully bulky and heavy – the one I was using had so many flaps and hidden compartments that it was particularly so. I haven't seen one as light and compact as this one before – it looks *really* handy. It has one main pouch and a couple of smaller-sized compartments for lesser things. My only concern is that it may be about an inch too short for a regular sheet of paper to fit – which would rule out carrying magazines, fanzines or artwork. Who would be so obtuse as to make a pouch just ever-so-slightly too short to carry something of such ubiquitous dimensions? Well, it's still neat ... so maybe I can work it out.

For a change of pace, let's open something from Marc Schirmeister. First the smallest package of the three he sent. It's flexible and comic book-sized.

It is, in fact, *not* a comic book. It is a fascinating-looking booklet on the ghost town of Bodie, on the Nevada-California border. I've been there with Schirm a couple of times, most recently on the way to Reno for last year's Worldcon. Wow – I'm looking at photos taken in the 1860s, of places that I stood outside of and looked at only a few months ago! Of course, I can do that by walking down the street and looking at some of the older homes and storefronts here in my neighborhood, but somehow that's banal. Ghost towns are way more cool. Thanks, Schirm!

And *another* package from Schirm ... this one a bit more mysterious. The customs forms said "DVDs" so that much is easily guessed. But what's *on* them? A complete set of *Tiny Toons* (that Schirm worked on in his Warner Brothers days), or the three *Matrix* movies (that I would have to schlep to the used book store tomorrow to get what I could for them)?

Wowers! The complete four seasons of *Route 66*! I'd previously seen the second season, now I've got somewhere in the neighborhood of 101 hours of one of the best TV drama series from the early 1960s to get me through the day! Say ... did you know that the Corvette Tod supposedly inherited from his Dad – and which provides the dynamic of the show – was actually a new model every year? Says so in the liner notes on the back. Not only that, but it wasn't really blue – the car only looked more like it was blue, in black and white, than if it was really tan.

Schirm also added a CD of all 51 issues of Peter Millar's *Drag Cartoons* that I can view on the computer! Not - too - shabby! I really loved those early hot rod cartoon magazines, and even imagined becoming a hot rod cartoonist some day – I was too young to realize I'd need to *know* something about hot rods and racing ... or even about just cars.

By the way, the caramel Bailey's is pretty good too.

Alright... another present from the family. It's a long, rectangular box, square cross section, very heavy, but apparently two items wrapped together ... so it's not a boxed artillery shell.

Aha! I was actually closer with the artillery shell guess than you might think! What I

thought were two items, was actually only one, but with an opening cut in one side of the box that made it flex like two. The present turned out to be a 12-case of 350 mil Coca-Cola cans, in special holiday designs. I suppose I should drink them ... but I'm tempted to auction them off, unopened, to my friend Moshe Feder. He collects every kind of Coke memorabilia, advertising and packaging. What am I bid, Moshe? \$100? \$150? Do I hear \$200? *Pop* *Fizz* Too late.

Down to two gifts now. One from the family, and the last from Schirm. I have an idea what the one from the family is – it's heavy and in the shape of a glass jar full of hard candies. My guess is that it's a container full of opals and rubies ... Failing that, candy after all.

Now *that* was a surprise. It was a huge plastic container of French's mustard – the 2.9 liter restaurant size from Costco. I use up mustard up at a ferocious rate, so it's unquestionably useful. In fact, the 2.9 L jar is the most economical way possible to buy mustard. In this super size it costs just about as much as a small glass jar at the super market. Mustard was just not the first thing I expected ...

One more present to open, and it's another one from Schirm. It arrived by mail in a large, sturdily padded enveloped, nevertheless the wrappings were badly torn by the post office. How, you might wonder? The envelope had been bent into a horseshoe to fit in my mailbox, and the flexing must have burst the wrappings inside. I averted my eyes as best I could while trying to tape the shreds of festive paper together, but it was impossible to see what I was doing and not glance inside. So I formed a pretty good idea several days ago of what's on top and bottom. The *middle* will be a complete surprise, though.

Hidden safely from sight was Peter Bagge's comic, *Hate Annual #9* – always good for a dose of hilariously bleak cynicism. *Hate* was one of my favourite comics for years, before Bagge went into annual production. Number 9 was the only issue I was missing.

Sandwiched around the issue of *Hate* were two 8 ½-by-11 soft cover books. The first is a history of Monogram Models and the other of Revell Models, both lavishly illustrated with photos of the finished kits and of the box top art. Boy – I built so many of those when I was a kid! I built quite a number when I was grown up, too, and I have a number of "re-issued" kits that I collected in the 1980s and '90s that I have not to this day got around to building. I feel like building one right this second! Unfortunately, since I have nowhere to put the finished model, I had better *not*. I expect that a lot of pleasant memories will be resurrected while reading these books.

One last gift, after all. My cat has horked up a puddle of bile on the floor. Yes... by such little signs I understand that Sailor loves me too.

Hazelnut Baileys ... maybe the best so far. But I suspect that by saving the Original for last, I've saved the best also.

I was right. It was shuperb. Isn't it amazing how little 200 milsh of 35 proof alcohol really ish.

Right after posting the last paragraphs on FaceBook, I noticed that one of the other members had posted a picture of Elvis, from *Blue Hawaii*. Apparently, Christmas was making her feel a little blue, too. Nobody should have to think about Elvis on Christmas, so I composed this little ditty on the spot for her:

Blue Christmas

In the land of Walloo
When Christmas is Blue,
The Lolgatos rise up from the Snow.
Their petals bestrew
Such a delicate hue,
That nobody knows how it is so.

So, Happy New Year everyone ... and be sure to pay *no* attention to the 13 in 2013. It's only bad luck if you notice.



Christmas at my Grandmother's, when I myself was seven
... or maybe eight.

CONQUEST OF THE EAST POLE

Mjr. Cyroll Boothroyd Wayne, retired, CBE

It is a poorly educated British youth who does not know of Scott of the Antarctic, or is unfamiliar with his tragic end. Sadly, the same cannot be said of Scott of the Sahara.

Robin Falguy¹ Scott was a career British naval officer stationed in Bermuda, as a quartermaster's adjutant, the year before the Great War. Assessing his chances for promotion quite accurately as somewhere between squat and nonexistent, Scott requested a risky assignment that would entail an immediate improvement in grade. His naval record was notable for not being notable in any way, however. Hence the reception to his request was somewhat lukewarm. Scott was offered a number of rather *low-priority* assignments, such as determining the navigability of the Jordan River for ocean-going vessels, or carrying coal to Newcastle.

It was Scott's own suggestion that he instead discover the exact whereabouts of the "East Pole." The Admiralty was unusual in its alacrity – in effect replying, "Sure, why not?"

Scott lacked nothing in the way of a well-developed sense of duty. His problem at the outset was that he was not altogether clear in his mind where the "East Pole" was located. It would certainly be in the east, of course. After quickly deciding that Bury St. Edmonds in Suffolk would hardly be far enough east, and ruling out the American Pacific Coast as more in the way of west than east, Scott spent a number of weeks deciding whether to set his course for Afghanistan, China, the Indies or perhaps even Japan. Gradually, he came to understand that the "East Pole" could be located at none of those destinations ... indeed only be one place in the world could fit the description: Mecca, lying in Arabia.

And so it was that Robin Falguy Scott knew he wanted to be the first Royal Navy officer to trek overland to Mecca to plant the Union Jack at Mecca.

Unfortunately, while Scott planned his expedition meticulously, instead of camels he chose to ride walruses across the Sahara. His first attempt was an inglorious failure, with all 27 walruses dying of heat and dehydration before the expedition had expedited itself a quarter of a mile. Although strongly advised to ride camels in his second attempt, Scott was made of sterner stuff. Also, he had spent nearly all his budget on walruses. Scott reasoned that cattle would do nearly as well ... and be a damn sight cheaper than the much-in-demand camel. In this, he was correct. Hiring a number of unemployed American cowboys who happened to be stranded in Tangiers, Scott's second expedition set out as a cattle drive. The steers proved to be excellent beasts of burden for the tons of supplies, dozens of box cameras and thousands of glass photographic plates without which no late Victorian expedition was complete.

Along the way, Scott's cowboys constructed numerous caches of supplies, knowing that they would not find pinto beans, biscuit or chawin' tobacky at affordable prices once they arrived in

¹ Pronounced "Faw-gwee."

Mecca.

There was a slight delay at the Nile, as Scott had forgotten to pre-purchase passage for his expedition with the company of Thos. Cook & Son and had to wait for the first available berths in steerage.

The point rider of Scott's cattle drive arrived in Mecca, followed by swing, flank and drag and 17 surviving, dusty head of cattle on February 4th, 1914 ... the other 113 having perished on the trek across the Sahara. One of the cowboys had been lost to bad whiskey, and four others to a game of poker with too many aces and six-shooters.

Despite these sacrifices, Scott of the Sahara was beaten to the gates of Mecca by some damn Norse guy named Finlaysson. Irving Finlaysson. Finlaysson had read of Scott's expedition in the newspaper, and warranted that a drunken ski-instructor could beat a mere Limey across a desert any day of the week, and set off at once. From the beginning, Finlaysson understood that the best way to cross a parched expanse of sun-bleached sand was with bicycles ... and to begin his expedition from Aquaba in Jordan, at the head of the Red Sea, rather than from Algeria.

So it was that, when Scott of the Sahara arrived at the Qaaba, he found that the Norwegian flag already flew above it. Although severely tested, Scott remained a gentleman – his noble words, “Garn! Didn't some herring-snapper in the Antarctic already knick our headlines?” remain an inspiration for British school children to this day.

On his return journey, unfortunately, Scott forgot that he had no reason not to hike to the much nearer Mediterranean coast, rather than back to Tangiers, more than three thousand miles away. Moreover, he had neglected to corral his steers ... and only belatedly realized his loss when the pervasive smell of barbecue spread across Mecca. Two days before the German Empire mobilized on July 30th, 1914, Scott and his remaining loyal cowboys struck out into the desert.

Bad luck seemed to plague the return trek from the moment they crossed the Suez Canal. First of all, no one had remembered to bring the saddles, and the horses complained that the coarse in-seams of the cowboy's jeans were chafing them raw. Refusing to carry the expedition members another mile, the horses went on strike. Scott decided to have the ringleader shot. However, as this failed to persuade the other cowboys to launder their jeans, he had no choice but to leave their mounts behind.

Now on foot, pulling their Gypsy caravans by hand, Scott discovered that sand readily got in their boots. Worse, so did scorpions overnight. He ordered the members of the expedition to proceed sock-footed. The hot sands forced a drastic increase in the pace of their march from that point ... as it did the necessity of hopping on one foot, then the other, while swearing.

At mile 2,109, Scott found the next cache on his route had been plundered by a horde of roving mummies. They must have been going the same way, as the mummies had ransacked the next cache in their route as well.

Struggling on, Scott and his comrades very nearly completed the homeward journey. They were a mere 50 miles from Tangiers when they consumed the last of his carefully conserved food and water. There was a final supply cache, however. If it were intact, Scott and his party would be

saved. He had every right to hope it would be unopened, too, as the tracks of scuffling mummies and fragments of rotted bandage had veered south several miles previously.

Or so Scott thought. In reality, Scott had himself veered abruptly north, for no reason anyone has been able to reconstruct since. As a consequence, the intrepid naval officer was never able to find his final stash of tinned Peek Frean's biscuits, and so perished miserably. Many years later, a company drilling for oil found Scott's final camp, their sole remaining caravan almost completely buried in sand. Inside, Scott and his comrades were huddled around a portable wind-up phonograph, as though alive and still listening to Lillie Langtry. It was, however, merely a recording of King George V's coronation speech. It appears that when Scott filled out a requisition for two dozen phonograph records, he was issued 24 copies of the same 78 r.p.m. disk.

So ended the tragic attempt at the British conquest of the East Pole.

LEFT-OVER PARTS

Lloyd Penney – 18 Dec 2012 – penneys@bell.net

I am finding it hard to keep up with the deluge of fanzines that come my way these days, and I now have two issues of Broken Toys to respond to. I will get caught up right now.

[Broken Toys] 9...Hurricane Sandy was terrible in NYC, but a great spectator sport here. Sure, we got rains and wind, a mere taste of what the US east coast had to endure, but it is best observed from the safety of a warm and dry apartment.

Your remarks on the passing of Dave Locke remind me that people gaffiate and leave our happy asylum very much for their own reasons. We can't do much about thin skins, but those with thicker skins will look elsewhere to participate. I hope Victoria is happy with what she is doing, but it also would have been nice to see her around and actually meet her. I may have seen her from a distance in my earliest years. Dave Locke, unfortunately for me, becomes yet another fanzine fan I wish I'd met.

True, you must find your audience, and with fanzines, I thought I had combined both my journalistic training and interest in zines in the local, and I still think that way. I wouldn't have stuck around for 30 years if I hadn't. For the record, I am still enjoying the writing that I am doing, and if people don't like the fact my letters appear to be everywhere, they can look elsewhere in the zine. Awards are subjective, but I have my share, and in the long run, I am pleased. Awards only matter if you value the opinion of the people who nominate and vote, and hand them out.

My steampunk friends may take issue with me...as an old costumer, I enjoy the costuming aspect of steampunk, and a good costume is simply the right combination of old/vintage clothes, plus some of the iconic additions, which include goggles, gears, a cane, a pith helmet, a pocket watch, and others. Without those additions, your costume may be Victorian or neoVictorian only.

I recall SF short stories where any facility where one could go to have fun or just relax was generically called a disney. Once again, science fiction may become science fact with Disney buying Lucasfilm. The original Star Wars came out just before my entry into fandom, in 1977, and there's a certain amount of nostalgia there, but I have to keep reminding myself that I am no longer in the demographic these movies were aimed at, and that they will make those movies for those who are in the demographic. I may regret the movies they make, but I hope Episodes VII, VIII, IX, etc. are at least decent.

As I write tomorrow is Yvonne's 60th birthday, and we do plan to celebrate, very likely at the Keg Mansion downtown. I haven't been to a Mandarin in a while, I never thought I could really eat my money's worth at a buffet restaurant, and I used to live in Brampton, where Mandarin's head office is, and there are buffet restaurants everywhere.

10...A little something different is always good, and I do appreciate publication design. When it comes to writing an article, very seldom do I come up with an appropriate topic for that, for as a good journalism student, I seem to need an assignment editor.

SFContario 3 was quite enjoyable for us, with Yvonne picking up Chris Garcia at the airport and me at the Globe and Mail, chatting over dinner, doing some voicework on the Friday night, and getting the party going on Saturday night. We have our memberships for next year, and I think we will just...attend. Great pictures, one or two with some true blackmail potential.

Bill Patterson's loc...I do write locs to all the zines I receive. And, I get a lot of them, many of which most people might never see, which means I write many letters most will never see. Believe me, I do not promote fannish passivity, but encourage activity to make the engine rev again.

Now there's a name I haven't seen in a fanzine in a long time...Allan Burrows. He will know by now that one of those conventions (Polaris) that escaped north of Toronto has decided to shut itself down, mostly because they don't have enough people to fill the committee positions or act as staff or gophers. They plan to run a relaxicon and then a Doctor Who con, and who knows after that. At least Ad Astra, which technically is in Markham now, can still be gotten to via the TTC.

All done for right now, and now I can say that I am caught up, but there's still a lot of zines I have to respond to. Wish me luck, and many thanks for these two issues.

Eric Mayer – 18 Dec 2012 – groggy.tales@gmail.com

Now here's my problem -- and feel free to edit this bit out if you don't want to reveal all to those who are not within your Secret Circle -- what do I say when I know I have already commented on some of this material before? It seems kind of shabby to recopy my letters to you and besides, you can do that yourself. (Go ahead. You're welcome!) On the other hand, I know very well that if I comment from scratch, right now, being a forgetful old geezer, or at least playing one in fanzines, I will surely repeat myself. Well, this time at least, I'll just jot down a few thoughts, hopefully in addition to what I already wrote.

First, I love the header. It's kind of eerie and very attractive. Don't hem yourself in by committing to a particular format, is what I say, including doing covers. If doing covers is going to be a chore and will diminish your fun, forget it.

I think you would do well to limit your contributions and concentrate on your own zine. Might make a bigger and better impression than scattering your efforts everywhere.

Your efforts to write about nothing were entertaining, but then again people are always nosy about how others pass their time. I'm with you in liking a good lie in. Nothing starts the day off right like getting up after a lot of it has already passed. For many years I dragged myself out of bed, usually before it was light, to drag myself in to school and then to the office. One of the joys of self-employment is not having to do that, and I revel in it every day. Well, except for the one lousy day of the week. Trash pick-up day. The damn waste disposal truck arrives early and I can't leave bags down by the road overnight, else the wild beasties tear them to shreds.

I'm also with you in brewing coffee, booting up the computer and sitting down at the keyboard right away. (So you are one those folks, like me, who turns the computer off at night?) I also eat a fair amount of corned beef, which is probably dreadful for one's health. Mostly fat and salt, I suppose.

I hope that the sf con awarded you a purple heart. Four hours on public transport and partly in the wee hours of the morning. No thanks! Maybe it was worth it for the hat though. A Sammy Davis hat. Yeah, it does make you look a little like Sammy Davis....Naw...just kidding...I've been debating whether I ought to wear a hat if I go bald. Okay, so "When I grow old I will wear a hat" isn't like "When I grow old I'll wear red" but my grandfather wore a grey felt hat, always. Today people wear baseball caps but maybe I ought to get a hat like my grandfather's.

Some of those webcomics, sound amusing. My dial-up makes it difficult for me to look at many web comics however. One simple comic I enjoyed for its two year (or thereabouts) run was *Prometheus*. Coming up with a couple of jokes a week about a guy chained to a rock was pretty impressive.

Wonderful article about our changing perception of outer space. Can't add much, but I enjoyed it. I do vaguely recall the concern about the radiation belt now that you remind me. There are so many unmanned craft flying around the solar system it's hard to keep up with. It is amazing. I was going to say I'd have been even more amazed when I was ten years old but probably I'd have just taken it for granted.

You talk about rearranging your fanac. I'm re-evaluating my involvement. I've enjoyed all the zine reading and loccing and publishing the past few years. I wouldn't have been doing it otherwise. In two years I've published 27 fanzines and written 159 locs. But for whatever reason, I don't feel in any way like a member of the club. I highly doubt that many, if any, of the people I'd consider fans consider me a fan in any significant sense. Maybe publishing and loccing zines isn't sufficient to make one a fan these days. Probably that's it. I have been kind of overworked recently, so maybe when things calm down, in the new year, I will change my mind.

By the way, at one time it was legal for women to go topless in Rochester, NY as well as in Toronto. As I recall, a city magistrate stated a law banning such displays was unconstitutional.

Well, a city magistrate's opinion as to constitutionality isn't usually worth much, but in this case the authorities, at the time, didn't appeal so as to avoid the possibility of a higher court upholding the ruling and making topless bans illegal beyond Rochester. Don't know what the status of all that is today. Hey, I'd better go look it up. I'll get this loc off first though. If there are photos, research might take awhile.

PS – Well, not surprisingly I remembered that Rochester incident totally wrong, as least according to topfreedom in Wikipedia which says:

In 1986, seven women who picnicked topless were charged in Rochester, New York with baring "that portion of the breast which is below the top of the areola". That law had originally been enacted to discourage 'topless' waitresses. The women were initially convicted, but on appeal two of the women's charges were reversed by the New York State Court of Appeals in 1992 on equal protection grounds.

Obviously I need to examine the issues...uh...issue further...

As a lawyer, you are obviously qualified to observe legal matters as closely as necessary. As for my future plans for Broken Toys, don't take this impromptu issue as an indication.

Brad Foster – 21 Dec 2012, bwfoster@juno.com

Alright, made that first milestone, moving in to two-digits on the issue number. Now just do *that* ten more times for the next milestone. Go ahead, we'll wait...

Good to hear you're still working toward the next *New Toy*, as sometimes these "fill-in-the-spaces" type projects can sap too much life from the main projects they were meant to be adjacent to. (Besides, very curious to see how you work that red graphic piece I sent you for NT back in September... of 2010? (Damn!) into the zine.)

But, we're all about the tenth Broken Toy right now..

Thanks to the miracle of the PDF file format, I actually was able to enlarge the eye in the banner image. Could see there was something more than just a pupil there, but it broke down too much once it had gotten up to a 800% enlargement. If you have a larger-format file size of that image you could load in there, we might be able to see you reflected in the eye after all. This computer stuff is cool!

Yeah, great to read you are not only now contemplating more, and larger, art pieces again, but also playing with color. I think you need to hit a balance of your drawn and written creations— seems like when you try to concentrate on only one or the other, you get a bit burned out. You are good at both, and the creativity directed in one direction will often also feed the other. Plus, I know *I've* been having a heck of a lot of fun playing in color the last few years, probably more color work than I created in my entire life up to that point. So would think it would get you going, too.

I don't normally eat breakfast, will just pop a diet Coke can and get to work. My mornings start with a long soak in a hot tub, reading. Eases the strains out of muscles, and reading seems to gear

my mind up for the rest of the day. Sometimes the cat will come in and jump on the edge of the tub, check me out to see if I've been brewing long enough, then take a couple of sips of, as I call it, Brad soup. Bowl of fresh water on the bathroom counter for her, but she prefers a couple of laps of dirty Brad water at times. Maybe she's just checking now and then to see if I'm done yet, then will end up eating me one night.

I too find the internet a distraction from getting art done, which requires more concentration. I've found that I can now do a run-through of the various Facebook groups I comment on, then leave that up on the screen and turn to draw, and just "check in" every once in a while to see if the conversation has progressed. Mainly though, like you need to shut it down and then put on some music so I can focus purely on the drawing board.

Bummer on how simply getting to and from a convention can put a strain on the whole experience. On the other hand, good to read that you did enjoy the time you had at the con. We've got a couple of small local conventions here in Dallas, ConDFW usually in February, and FenCon, around September, which give me a chance to touch base with local people I don't get to see the rest of the year. Aside from a convention or two up in Oklahoma, we've not been able to attend any conventions outside of the area for quite a while, all the costs involved just too much these days. So, nice to have some local events to still keep touch with.

Liked your line about "I don't want to appear wildly optimistic..." as, truth be told, you do seem to be mellowing out a bit these days, actually enjoying things and telling us about them! Of course, it's understandable with all the med problems you've had to deal with, but seems that getting some of those properly treated at last has made life a bit nicer again for you. At least, I hope so.

A website I like to drop in on now and then when need a jolt of the "wows" is over at <http://www.thisiscolossal.com/> Called "Colossal", The guy who puts it together finds amazing images of art, usually large-scale pieces, from all around the world. Puts up a lot of samples of each, plus links to the sources for more info. Some truly astounding things being created around the world. I am usually awed by much of it, and after feeling a bit overwhelmed at my own meager artistic talents in comparison, I also find it often juices up those small creative urges, and gets me back to work. Check it out now and then.

I liked Andy Hooper's recommendation of you and D. West getting together. I'd pay to see that. (Okay, I wouldn't actually pay *money*, 'cause I don't have any. But would enjoy it for sure!) I admire the work both of you guys create, and am amazed and entertained by the jaundiced, but always entertaining, eye you both lay on the world around you. Maybe just an exchange of emails between West and Taral, where they each spiral deeper and deeper into biting irony and vitriol, but on higher and higher levels of entertainment? How can we make this happen?

Andy also reinforces what Eric has said, and I believe I have mentioned in the past: a lot of your writing would probably go over well in markets outside of zines, maybe even pull you in some bucks. Would take a bit of research to find it, but hey, there's a new challenge to take up. And you've got a backlog of material to work off of. Maybe if we keep mentioning it to you enough, you might think there really is the tiniest glimmer of hope in giving it a shot. Worst that can happen is they will say "no," and you're no worse off than before. But, what if they say "yes"...?

In your final piece, when you mentioned “Bode’s Law”, what came to my mind –first- was thinking I had read years ago that, found among the voluminous notes and sketches Vaughn Bode’ left behind after he died, were folders full of designs for a solar system with 100 planets, all inhabited, and all worked out in quite detail. What he might have done with all that material, we’ll never know.

No date on the Schirm piece, like to hope it is something new. And Mel. White on the by-line, too, another name not seen in zines in, well, ages!

John Purcell – 28 Dec 2012, j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Hey, Taral. As you can see, I am finally delivering on that promise to write a loc on your latest issue.

First off, I like the banner header with the updated and improved Saara Mar. She looks good. May I recommend keeping this particular header as a regular feature; it is good, sir, and that is why I think it's worth keeping.

It's a thought ... but it would rob me of the chance to play with new ideas. Also, it isn't so much an "improved" Saara Mar as just one playing at being human, without the fur and all that. You would simultaneously flatter and insult her if she could hear.

Ten issues is not too many. Frankly, your plan to run another 10 to 12 issues at least is another good thing. Even if your contributions to *Askance* and other fanzines slow down, having a regular outlet of your own shall prove to be beneficial. I think your writing has greatly improved in these past few years, even though it comes at the cost of not producing much artwork anymore. By all means, make time to draw and such. I can think of one fanzine for sure that would definitely be a fine showcase for one of your cover artwork endeavours. (Boy, that wasn't very subtle, was it? Oh, well...)

I well know the feeling of not having much to say when the need to fill in some pages on an issue. So I do what you did: natter a bit about daily life. Usually a theme or a solid topic reveals itself, and I'm off to the races. Making bread is something that I don't do, despite owning a bread making machine. The problem is always having available time. Maybe someday soon I will get back into that.

As for SFContrario, I am glad you had a good time when you were there. That Garcia fellow is a bit frenetic, for sure, but I survived a weekend of having him as a convention roommate at CorFlu Quire back in 2007, so it's good to know that Toronto survived as well. And thank you for the pictures: many a familiar face, which is the thing that makes a con for me - friends. With the passing of so many other fannish friends in recent years, then that makes contact with remaining friends even more important. With luck and good health, I hope to be around for quite a while to enjoy them.

And I think that I shall wrap it up here for now. It's getting late and I'd like to do some reading before I call it a night. Many thanks for posting the zine, and here's hoping for the chance to actually meet you some day.

I can't go there -- cost, mobility issues -- so you'd have to come here. SFC is a very small con, though. I've heard that the last one might even have been a bit smaller than the first two.

Alan Dorey – 29 Dec 2012, alan10258@aol.com

A monthly personalzine and stacks of other bits and pieces too – and here's me, with just one new issue in 14 years (Gross Encounters #22). It doesn't surprise me that you say in Broken Toys #10 that in 2013 you'd like to focus more on your preferred fanzines (for articles) and give yourself time to devote to the next issue of New Toy.

I was not one for writing that much for other fanzines. It's not that I didn't want to, but with con-running (inevitably, doing publications), chairing the BSFA (and often editing its publications at *short notice* when previous editors moved on) and working – well, I wanted to keep my musings for my own fanzines. Looking back now, I wish I had written more for other folks as it's fascinating looking back at a good genzine and marvel at the variety of content.

I've long said that conventions were responsible for killing fanzines!

But I digress.

I'm not convinced that a good writer can write at length about “absolutely nothing” and still entertain the reader. I don't consider myself as a good writer, but I have been called upon to write all manner of odds and ends about which I have no interest – particularly for websites, a little side-line I have in terms of providing content and linking material. The idea is to turn someone's site (personal or business) into a destination where at least it sounds interesting, the sections relate to one another in a logical manner – and there's some measure of continuity and new material from time to time. A good friend of mine runs a Coaching Consultancy and he's bursting with ideas and enthusiasm, but just can't put them down in a readable and compelling fashion. I spent several days last year revamping his whole site and ended up researching all manner of management-speak in order to truly understand what he was trying to convey. I spoke to some of his clients and staff and ultimately, had enough background material to allow me a degree of free-form writing that still linked back to his business.

His site visits have rocketed since then, but I can't pretend I enjoyed it although I suppose that I was writing about *something* and getting paid into the bargain. Which can't be bad.

Of course, "writing about nothing" was in fact "writing about something" -- a gimmick that attempted to disguise that it was a gimmick. Like a good virus pretending to be harmless email, my intention was to penetrate the reader's defenses and waste another two minutes of his life with my pointless fabrications.

I can empathise with your tale of “writing or not writing”: vast energies can be poured into a project and the subsequent silence is deafening. Maybe such projects are too personal or too specialist, I don't know – but if your comment “I am bored with writing for the moment” does mean more time devoted to artwork, then I for one won't complain.

Case in point, the long, long fan story I wrote for John Purcell's Askance -- I'm sure it will be mentioned in the next issue's letter column, but until John publishes again, I'm standing in a barren wilderness of egoboo, stunned by the silence, unsure whether anyone will read it or simply skip over the fiction to some cheap, fannish gossip.