

BROKEN TOYS 13

Broken Toys is a personalzine by Taral Wayne, and does not imply that my other zine, New Toy, is a dead letter. In fact, I've already done the ground work on the next issue, culling dated material and adding more suitable material to the file. The letter column for this issue of BT is an absurdly long one – can there be too much of a good thing? Don't you believe it! Locs are always welcom. 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 February 2013, It is also ExtraTaraltoriality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) 263, possibly the unlucky issue in an unlucky year!. © Taral Wayne, past, present, future ... just in case anything in this issue should ever be worth money to anyone ...

It Doesn't Take a Crystal Ball – TaralTorial

Is that a Hugo I see up there in my logo? No, it can't be. If you put a penny in *that* rocket, you know where it will go, which is more than can be said of the Hugo. Gawd knows where *it's* going next. And you know what? I don't give a damn. If the award isn't ours anymore and belongs to the Great Unwashed Masses of Sci-Fi Readers who don't know Bob Tucker from Sophie Tucker, than that's just the way it is. Time to get on with our lives, in the smug knowledge that We Know Better and that *they* will never appreciate the wry humour of Arnie Katz, the encyclopedic knowledge of Gary Farber, the sympathetic voice of Nic Farey, the modest goals of Nalini Haynes ... or my own patient forbearance.

Among other inevitable developments in fandom that I've seen of late is the uncontrollable growth of fannish groups on FarceBook. At last count, I belonged to four or five, and I distinctly remember dropping out of at least two others. One of the groups I dropped out of seemed to have been mainly a sort of trunk in the attic for old photos. The bulk of them were taken at conventions I had never attended, often before I was born, and depicted fans, often dead, whom I had never met. To be blunt, I had a hard time relating to them.

I wondered about that. One of the joys of reading Harry Warner Jr.'s *All Our Yesterdays* is the wonderful photos of all those mythical people. Why didn't I have a similar affinity for the photos on FarceBook? After some thought, I decided it was because Harry Warner's photos illustrate the text and are given a context to make them meaningful. However, show me a photo of Alva Rogers at Chicon in 1952, and my immediate reaction is apt to be,

“So the fuck what? He’s standing in a hall wearing a shirt and tie like a geek and I hardly know who the hell he is, much less have any interest in a con held the year after I was born.”

Think about it. Isn’t that probably how contemporary fans under the age of 30 (who you’ve seen flocking to get Jonathan Frakes’ autograph at a media con) probably feel when we yammer at them about staple wars and The Enchanted Duplicator? Mental exercises like that are probably good for you, so don’t take it too hard.

I don’t even remember *why* I left the other group. It may have had something to do with censorship of something ... maybe dirty words ... maybe not playing nice. Or a nipple.

In any case, I was still a member of four or five groups, and that was beginning to seem like four or five too many. They were fun, at first. After a while, though, a familiar feeling grew, and the sense that I had been here before. To misquote Yogi Bera, it was Deja Thoris, all over again. Back in the 1970s, when I had my arm twisted by Phil Paine and Patrick Hayden until I joined a handful of apas, I had discovered them full of the same sort of people I saw the FarceBook groups filling up with – some of them were argumentative, competitive, time-wasting people who played mind-games and struggled to score points off one another. Others in the groups were pleasant, friendly people who posted pictures of their favourite movie stars, photos I saw the day before on NASA’s “Picture of the Day” site and armies of LOLcats. But they were time-wasters too. The one thing they almost all had in common was that I had never encountered them elsewhere. I had joined the groups to stay in touch with fandom *as I knew it*, and found I was spending way too much time making jokes and trading barbs with people I had no reason to. One day, after some non-entity suggested that I didn’t agree with him because I hadn’t had sex, it all fit into place.

I had been dragooned back into fucking, useless apas – or at least the modern version of them – where you can spend the whole day accomplishing absolutely *nothing*. On the same day, I announced I was leaving all my groups.

It was late, and leaving groups was a little easier said than done, so I left the actual process until the next day. That’s how the situation remains. Through laziness, I’m still a member – but simply no longer *read* the groups.

It appears that we are in the grip of yet another mass migration to apas, this time in the form of Farcebook. More power to those who find this fulfilling, but I hated arguing with disagreeable people and exchanging pleasantries with nobodies when I belonged to *apas*, and I’ve grown no fonder of it in the intervening 40 years.

A more pleasing recent development is the both the appearance of Andrew Hooper’s *Flag*, and John Purcell announcement of his intention to follow suit. That would put a total of *five* relatively short, relatively frequent fanzines in motion, a change I think is sorely needed. We have any number of zines like *Banana Wings*, *File 770*, *Trap Door*, *Challenger*, *Exhibition Hall*, *Journey Planet*, *Science Fiction Review*, *Chunga*, *Argentus* and others that in

extreme cases, only come out once a year. Superb as some of these fanzine are in their own way, fanzine fandom cannot function as an extended, on-going conversation through them. They're too slow.

Smaller, faster fanzines are what we need! Think of them as efficient, electrically powered cars compared to less nimble and gas-guzzling GM SUVs and Lexus luxury sedans. Zines like *FanStuff*, *Drunk Tank*, *Flag* and (of course) *Broken Toys* are more timely in their coverage of events in fandom, and consume fewer human resources – that is, the time, effort and willingness of the editor.

And some people say that I'm a pessimist! Well ... I am, but we can discuss that some other time.

Why I Don't Write Con Reports



Of course, I *do*. But I've always been selective, and have only written a con report when I felt I had something of value to say. That hasn't been often. After I don't know how many years, I finally published a very long and elaborate con report called *To Walk the Moon*. It isn't every day, after all, that I'm a guest of honour at a Worldcon and have an insider's view. That's what I mean by "something to say."

Most con reports seem rather dreary to me, though they are obviously the lifeblood of most fan writing these days. It's the name Factor, I think. People read con reports to find their own names, and to be assured that

that the minor events of their lives will live for posterity. Hence the typical con report can be abbreviated to a template –

"The flight was awful. Seats had no room for our knees, and we were given only a foil bag containing 14 salted peanuts to last us 11 hours in the air. Immediately after landing I bolted down an \$8.75 hot dog along with a vile \$5.95 lime-and-gasoline flavoured 'energy' drink. The taxi to the hotel got lost four times, and we had to retrieve our own luggage from the trunk. Tipped the driver anyway.

"On our way up to the room, we saw Perry, Flo, Lawrence, Jerry, Marta, Jon and Dave waiting for the elevator. We agreed to meet in the lobby in 45 minutes, to all do dinner together. At the last moment, Jerry and Marta couldn't make it, but the rest of us went to a Sushi place. The tuna rolls

had seen better days. The wasabi was weak, as well – it made your eyes water properly, but didn't craze the porcelain plates at all. But the salmon and octopus were superb, and there was green tea ice-cream for desert. Service was awful, but we tipped anyway.

“We found Amie, Andy, Jason, Nick, Cas, Fred, Harry, Stevie, Jill and James in the lobby. Perry and Flo wanted to take it easy and went up to their rooms early. Andy, Nick and Jason had already been to registration, so the rest of us decided to sign in. As usual, Registration was well organized only for a mad-house. It was so inefficient we nearly tipped the guy behind the computer. Once we had out nametags and program books, we went along with James, Jill, Jon and Dave to the fan lounge. The others had to prepare for a Steampunk party they were holding later than evening.

“The fan lounge was already filling up. We saw Lars, Bernie, Jack, Norm, Trina, Bennet, Cy, Orson, Nan, Eric, Tom, Michael, Edna, Constance, Ed, Ned, Joan, Bill, Jessie, Elizabeth, Peter, Paula, Gabe, William, Saul, Emma, Lou, Martin, Christian, Jodie, Ernest, Bob, Gordon, Derek, Diane, Jim, Lisa...”

The typical con report will go on in this vein for at least another two pages, describing meals and naming the hundreds of passing acquaintances known to the author... if not necessarily to the readers. After all, it would be an almost unforgivable *faux pas* to leave someone out. By Saturday, at latest, the writer will bring up the Dealers' Room. It will be smaller than he likes, or have too many dealers selling dragon belt-buckles, Star Trek toys or Transformer Robot action figures. If, by some miracle, the Dealers' Room is large enough to satisfy, and the tables are smothered in books without exception, the writer will complain that he hasn't enough money to buy all the books he wants. You can't blame him, really. I never have enough money to buy everything I want, either. What is less excusable is the list of books that follows in this phase.

“While there weren't as many booksellers as I thought there should have been for a con this size, those that had a table managed to have just enough interesting stock that I was able to find a few, minor additions to my collection. All in all, I only bought Prostho Plus by Piers Anthony, Isaac Asimov's Fantastic Voyage II, The Practice Effect by David Brin, Rendezvous With Rama by Arthur C. Clarke, Samuel R. Delaney's Dhalgren, A Voyage to Arcturus by David Lindsay, Ursula K. LeGuin's Malefrena, both Sharon McCrumb's Bimbos of the Death Sun and Zombies of the Gene Pool, Better Than Life by “Grant Naylor,” Anne McCaffrey's Ship Who Sang, Inferno by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen by H. Beam Piper, Spacetime Donuts by Rudy Rucker, Joanna Russ's Female Man, Robert Silverberg's Lord Valentine's Castle, and Calculating God by Robert J. Sawyer.

Wow. Like, who cares, Dude? I wouldn't even *read* most of those books if they were free review copies and signed by the author. But the strange thing is, I know a lot of fans who really *would* care. I bet Chris Garcia would, for one. Earl Kemp, for another. Joseph T. Major, Robert Sabella, Bruce Gillespie and any number of perfectly intelligent fans – who have no *other* character defects that I know of – probably would. I'll bet they even read all the way to the end of the ad hoc list of books that I made, just to see what books *I* have. Admit it – you *did*, didn't you, Chris?

Of course, I may be misreading this. Maybe most fans don't care what everyone else is reading, but are obsessed with telling *us* what *they're* reading.

And, by the way... *I have* read all those books. (I just don't ever intend to *again*.)

When it comes to fans and books, I'm put in mind of The River Rat from *Wind in the Willows*. Shortly after he meets the Rat, the Mole is introduced to a brand new experience, boating. It's *so nice*, said the Mole.

"Nice? It's the only thing," said the Water Rat solemnly, as he leant forward to turn a page. "Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply browsing in a good Dealer's Room. Simply browsing," he went on dreamily: "browsing – along – a row of books; browsing..."

Of course, the Rat was actually talking about *boats*, not *books*.

After one blow-by-blow account of a meal, it might be thought that we could be spared another, but that is rarely the case. In most con reports, the appetite to describe every calorie consumed seems as insatiable as a genuine hunger. The reader will hear about every breakfast, every dinner, and – if particularly unlucky – what was served at every major party as well. It is not as though the reader was likely to learn about a restaurant that only served meals in brass tubas, spun a wheel-of-fortune to determine your order, or would grill the puppy of your choice. I never heard of any fan eating in a place where the waiters danced in your lap as you ate, or where the walls were painted with scenes from German death camps. Nor has any con party I have been at *ever* put out candied fish heads, or stuffed hamsters with onion dip. The sad truth is that nobody *ever* has anything new to say about what or where they ate.

"We had Ethiopian/Indonesian/Tandoori/Szechuan/Korean/Caijun/Jamaican/Hungarian/Greek/Deli/BBQ Ribs/Pick One." You know what would be genuinely esoteric? Meat Loaf. With boiled carrots and potatoes. But that was the stuff we all grew up on, and *I* won't eat it either.

Once having spelled out the menu, the typical con report inevitably follows up with yet another long list of names. It will be sometimes be given in such detail that you will not only know who was present, but who was sitting next to who, and what they ordered. If one or more members of the party are from New York, a lengthy argument with the waiter over the bill will be the final chapter for Saturday.

Yes, they usually tip anyway.

Thankfully, most cons run no more than three days, and Sunday is the last. A return visit to the Dealers' Room is often the start to the third day, but a description of the art show is optional. Since most fans lack even the most basic vocabulary to discuss art, this part is usually restricted to opinion and a disclaimer that "I don't know art but I know what I like." This usually means the writer can't tell chiaroscuro from chutney, but admires anything with dragons in it. At this point, the author has nearly concluded his con report. Only one dinner party, the dead dog party and then – unless the trip home is eventful – the ordeal is mercifully over!

Well, what do you want from a con report, anyway? Another verbatim record of what Ben Bova, Greg Benford and Greg Bear said about the odds of an extinction-event asteroid in our lifetimes? A discussion about the impact of the internet on fandom? We've all sat through those panels three or four times ourselves, and don't need to read about it to savour the *deja-vu*.

When you come right down to it, there isn't really much to be said about a convention. They tend to be all rather the same – some of the faces are different and your room is off-white instead of eggshell. Different heads at the front of the room, but much like the last set of talking heads. Even wireless internet connections are becoming beneath notice. While booking the same weekend as a motivational seminar for Al Qaeda suicide bombers – or a family reunion of snake-handling Appalachian Pentacostalists – might be a notable change of pace, nobody wants that much aggravation.

So in the end we write the same, drab, by-the-numbers con reports that everyone writes, and by all accounts *some* of us even read them.

I admit, in moments of extreme weakness I have written my share of con reports. But I *aim* to be different. I prefer to write sordid character assassination instead.

Left-Over Pieces

Locs on Broken Toys 12

Ron Kasman, ron.kasman@gmail.com 22 Jan 2013

Thanks for the e-mailing. I especially enjoyed the article on Rebecca. I have noticed not that there are a disproportionate number of transsexuals in fandom (as true as that may be), but that there are a disproportionate number of homosexuals in, specifically, comics fandom. My theory is that one large segment of comic fans are those who wished to prolong childhood for as long as possible, and avoid the messy world of adolescence. I am in this group. We did it for a variety of reasons, one being an awareness that the whole sex thing was not going to work out smoothly for us. We kept our arts interests in the most juvenile form of all. I don't know if this extends into SF fandom. SF fans seem a little different.

I went to San Francisco a few years ago, for the first time, where I saw transgender people in many social situations. On a bus I saw one transgender person give up her seat on a bus for another, older transgender person. She later realized that my wife and I were unsure of where we were and helped us figure out which stop to get off at. Really, it was my first interaction with a person like that and it gave me a greater desire to understand them as a group. I suppose I have been like a Christian in North Dakota trying to figure out Jews or a native in China, trying to understand Africans.

I have little to relate to in my own personality. I am a man trapped in a man's body. However, I don't act like a male caricature. I have a fine arts degree, I have been a swimming instructor back when 80% of them were women, I took two years of ballet lessons and danced in a production, I stayed home for a year with my youngest child, I spent 31 years teaching art. There is absolutely nothing in me that makes me want to act like a "real man" but nothing at all that makes me want to have a woman's body. I can't identify what makes me happy to be male, except maybe, when I see a long

line up at the women's washroom. I think if I was female I would just be happy to be female. Does that explain it, as much as a single paragraph can?

I do understand homosexuality. It is easier to understand. See, I have this compulsive desire to have sexual relationships with women. I have had it ever since I can remember though the meaning of sex was different when I was in grade two. I can easily understand compulsive desire towards a sex, though I have the compulsion that is the majority one. There, I have come out in a fanzine as a heterosexual. I hope you and everyone else (all sixteen of them should you print this) can accept that.

Chris Garcia, cgarcia@computerhistory.org 22 Jan 2013

Good to get back into the reading habit after Christmas/New Years/Sleeping phase. I've managed to make it two and a half weeks without publishing a single issue of anything (though doing four podcasts and a few blogs). Which means I'm itchin'!

Three and a half weeks, now. Surely a record?

Anyhow, as a guy who does a digital zine or two, I hear that a lot. I hear more that folks won't read zines because they're not easily digestible like a blog with an RSS feed. No one form or format is going to make everyone happy. I like to interact with zines on my screen more than hard copy, largely because I'm running out of places to stash the paper bits. I'm not one who needs the functionality of digital, but it does make it easier for me. I probably read more Fanstuff than any other zine too, now that I think about it (and I really should send Arnie a LoC one of these days...)

I only vaguely remember that you said you were going to re-publish *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*, which is a wonderful thing to do! I've a lot of commentary about it, and it just solidifies that I'm not a Laney guy. Some of his writing was great, I especially liked how he wrote about Jazz, but really, he was just pissing vinegar much of the time and that's not what I enjoy reading. Still, ASI is one piece of Fan History that should be read. A GIANT PDF would be fine by me!

The scans were made long ago, and I've gathered a lot of supplementary material. What remains to be done is to do artwork for the cover, and to write an introduction. You might think that with all the writing I've been doing, an introduction would be a snap. But it hasn't been. Instead, I keep wondering what I'm going to say - it has to be the right thing, shedding light on the subject and not just a litany of platitudes. Maybe a .pdf in several parts? The thing is, I don't want to release the material just any old way, to satisfy cheapskates and pragmatists - I want it to be a work of art!

I have to say that I don't think I know Ro Nagey, though I did see the announcement. I never really thought about fandom being a place with an exceptional number of "trans" people. I'm often surprised when I learn that one person or another used to be one gender or another back in time. It's not that unusual around these parts; hell, I've had two different cousins transistion, one each direction. I will admit, it can be confusing when I've known someone for a wide period of time and have to make the change from 'him' to 'her' (or vice-versa) in speaking. I am, after all, a creature of habit. Still, transitioning isn't weird, it's just something that some folks need to do to feel right.

John Nielsen Hall, johnsila32@gmail.com 22 Jan 2013

I'm afraid I cannot keep up with your production schedule, as I have only now read #11 and I see #12 is in my inbox. I liked your Xmas Presents - particularly the *DragToons*- I only got about three issues of that over here, and even those are lost to me now- in fact, I think I actually bought them in LA- but whatever, their impermanence has become absolute. The catalogue of Monogram and Revell models sounds great too- I should like to look at those. I never made many or maybe any Monogram models (if I have told you this already, please forgive as I am Very Old) as I was a stickler for 1/25th scale and they made too many in different scales. The Revell and AMT models I could mix up happily in my customising efforts.

My best Xmas present this year was a DVD of the Met production of *Nixon In China*. I am now given to untuneful and entirely inappropriate renditions of "I Am The Wife of Mao Tse Tung" when people least expect it.

Sounds like the perfect B side for "I'm Loney," sung by Kim Jung Il in *Team America*.

Alan Dorey, alan10258@aol.com 22 Jan 2013

You mount a spirited rant at the supposed treatment of on-line fanzines: I haven't undertaken a scientific study comparing and contrasting electronic versus paper, but I do agree that in general, they should be treated in the same way. The same creativity and effort has gone into them – if not the production aspects – and if you're good enough to specifically send them to your distribution list, then I can't see why they should be overlooked.

Of course, it's about the physical presence: a pile of paper fanzines awaiting attention is more difficult to ignore – an e-version sits there in the ether and doesn't draw attention to itself. As you observe, recipients can always print them off (and some do), but I prefer to read on-line – so I maintain a list of fanzines received and gradually work my way through them. Fanzines deserve the LoCs they get, so it's a fine line between failure to respond (the issue itself sparks not one whit of interest or the recipient finds the whole process of writing *laborious*) and total abstinence because "it's not on paper." And we do want fanzine fandom to survive, so I'm with you on this mini-crusade. I take a hybrid approach – some paper copies for those that ask – and thus far, my last issue of *Gross Encounters* has received LoCs mainly from the on-line edition.

I observe a prejudice myself – I'm much more likely to write for zines that give the contributors paper copies than ones that don't. I make very few exceptions. Why? Writing is a lot of work, and if I'm not paid for it in cash, a copy is my payment. Nor is it as though the survival of fanzines depends on my contributing to each and every one ... at least, I sure hope not, or fanzine fandom is surely doomed.

I failed to notice *Fireball XL5* on the masthead of #11 - but I wish I had. I had watched *Supercar*, but *Fireball* was the show (along with *Doctor Who*) that fired my youthful SF ambitions back in 1962/3. However, I can't let you get away with consigning *UFO* to the "ignorant UFO mythos" bin – yes, yes – it did have a less than original concept, but for me, the attraction was the attempt to create a show grounded in the (then) not too distant future of 1980. The initial episodes showing the creation and financing of Shado, the relationship issues, the depiction of things that go wrong and don't work out the way we would like them too, were well structured. The cast ensemble was interesting – and any show that has Gabrielle Drake in it (sister of much-missed singer-songwriter

Nick Drake) is right up there in my estimation. I've watched re-runs in the years since first broadcast in 1970 and it still works for me, unlike Anderson's later live-action show *Space 1999* which I still find unimaginative and derivative. (Not to mention that when it was first broadcast here, it was put up against *Doctor Who* – so for me it was no choice, Tom Baker every time). Oh – and I do realise that the whole *Space 1999* moon thing was a development of the idea of *UFO*'s moonbase set-up.

All I can say is that I found *UFO* to be too much like Anderson's other flying saucer-conspiracy show, *Captain Scarlet* ... but without the miracle of *Supermarionation*!

Finally, good to see your piece on transgender fans sparked off by Ro Nagey's New Year's announcement. I spent a good part of last year corresponding with Ro – a shared interest in radio and music – and was so pleased for her. I'm sad too that as you note, some folks took it upon themselves to be less than positive, but more fool them. I can't answer your question about whether fandom is proportionately more enriched, but I'd like to think that its generally greater tolerance in many things helps those going through the process to feel more at ease. I also recall the prejudice shown in "real life" (work, for example) for a couple of UK fans, such prejudice bordering on outright discrimination and ostracism. Perhaps the world at large is less surprised these days, I don't know - but I just hope that anyone who decides to go for it (as it were) is met with continued friendship and support.

Eric Mayer, groggy.tales@gmail.com 22 Jan 2013

Your piece about Rebecca was intriguing. I can't imagine what someone like her must feel, how could I? Sexual orientation aside, I already feel like an alien in this society. To feel I was stuck in the wrong kind of body – well, no thanks. I am glad to see her picture though because it is nice to know there really are a few other people in this world as thin as I am.

I would gladly spare each of you 30 or 40 pounds.

Sounds like you have a lot of projects simmering. That's good. Creative projects are what have kept me alive. Even when I was stuck in a morgue of an office all day I knew I had some new article, or fanzine or mini-comic waiting at home to revive me. The inertia of age tries to drag everyone to a stop. Artists have an advantage in that the creative spark can keep them going.

Recently I think I have slacked off a bit too much. I need a little more variety in my creative efforts. I'm not sure exactly what direction to go in but I intend to cut back my fanac and see what replaces it. So I won't be continuing *Revenant* this year and I surely will not be writing 83 locs again.

A large part of my decision is due to the prejudice against ezines that you talk about. I've never been a convention goer, don't read science fiction any more, and don't have much a faanish past to wax nostalgic about, so there are only limited ways for me to connect to fandom. The best way would seem to be to publish a fanzine. But as you point out many fans consider ezines to be second class if not beneath their notice entirely. And I'm not going to waste my time on zines that automatically are considered inferior to print zines. Beyond that, I realize my writing runs to the mundane so to publish a decent fanzine I need contributors like you and Steve Stiles and Brad Foster helping me out. (As was the case with the final *Revenant*) But I don't feel right using stuff by contributors in a

zine that fandom doesn't value and that gets little readership and response possibly for the simple reason it isn't printed. Artists and writers who do the sort of work I would like to see in my fanzine are readily welcome in print zines where they will find the readership and response they deserve.

Sorry to hear that, but if you don't have the interest in keeping up a zine, then you don't. And while it's nice to see someone take my rants to heart, I don't feel the bias against digital zines is insurmountable, nor any reason not to publish. As for *Revenant*, and *eDitto* before it, it may be that most of your writing and Mary's had little connection with fandom, but is this necessarily a bad thing? The contris to each issue by other fans may have been exactly the right thing to balance them ... not something to feel embarrassed about.

Back in the day, it frustrated me how fan pubbing depended largely on one's disposable income. Didn't seem faanish. Too much like the mundane society. With the advent of the Internet and .pdf zines and Bill Burns' efanazines I thought that a golden era for fanzines was at hand, when everyone had equal access to fandom regardless of how much they could afford to spend. Alas. The haves always want to maintain the status quo, don't they? Even in fandom. Well, I certainly can't see myself financing a printed fanzine even if I wanted to involve myself in print zinedom, which I don't. I can see words and images on my monitor just fine. The words mean the same thing on screen as they do on paper – at least it seems that way to me. And the art, if anything, looks better. At least you seem to be getting some response to *Broken Toys*. Hope it continues, and that enough fans take notice to make it worthwhile. I don't think *Broken Toys* is a lesser zine because you can't afford to have it printed but I guess I am in a minority.

It may be early yet, but so far I feel that I'm fighting a battle I can win. It's been possible to edit a decent sized letter column each issue – though sometimes only just – and this issue may well have more locs than I can print in a standard issue. What I aim for is to spread the word about *Broken Toys*, so that more people hear of it, download a copy, and become readers.

Bill Patterson, bpral22169@aol.com 22 Jan 2013

While my head is with your plea to have e-zines treated the same as print-issued zines, I have to acknowledge that (a) I don't read the zines on-line; like many another worker-bee in these parlous days I spend a minimum of 8-10 hours a day in front of a screen, and I have no desire to reduce my television viewing, films, or books and fanzines to an on-screen experience either. So I print out the zines and take them with me to read while I'm waiting for a bus (or something). And (b) when I do print them out -- that is, when I do the production work myself -- I don't value them as I do, for example, my run of late 1960's-early 1970's SFR. There is something denatured about the experience. Perhaps not entirely reasonable, but my sensibilities, and there you have it.

Oh, Ned (Brooks)! I think the West Pole must be the one in the Naked Ladies! Girls! Girls! strip joint out on Century Boulevard near LAX (the one Matt LeBlanc got busted in, ten years ago).

You and John Hall commiserating on the gluten thing: Well, it's true, gluten "allergies" have achieved the status of a fashion in southern California, particularly among the crowd who seek out new and ever-changing food disabilities to belabor their longsuffering friends with. My brother-in-law has a gluten sensitivity (which is a fairly common thing, as opposed to a gluten allergy which is not common at all), so in an effort to include him in the pecan frenzy this year I tried making pecan meltaways with almond meal instead of flour, with a curious partial success: they did not stay balls the way pecan meltaways normally do, but flattened out somewhat. They cannot be picked up at all

while warm, but do get some structural stability when allowed to cool completely -- and are delicious and almost but not quite entirely completely unlike pecan meltaways, *sui generis*. Cultivation of wheat is not all it is cracked up to be. We're not really evolved for it as a staple of the diet (though I suppose as much smaller part of a general mix that includes grains and pulses it would be fine).

I understand the prejudice against digital fanzines entirely -- my dirty little secret is that I don't like to contribute to fanzines without a paper presence! In the old days, I went to all the work of writing an article and at least got something I can hold in my hand. But now I get bupkiss, so I make very few exceptions about contributing to fanzines without paper. Yet, if people won't read digital zines, they miss an awful lot of fine writing. *Broken Toys* for one... There's nothing I can do about it -- I don't have hundreds of dollars to spare. I'm on the pogeey, waiting to see if I can be put on disability benefits. Should my work be ignored because of that? Not that I'm accusing you of it -- you've obviously read at least some of the issues I've sent.

Steve Stiles, stevecartoon2001@gmail.com, 22 Jan 2013

Well, it's a sad state of affairs when one must be shamed into writing a LoC on a fanzine as you did with me on page ten, Taral.

So, there; that takes care of my letter of comment on *Broken Toys* #12; thanks!

Oh, how you do run on!

Ah, seriously, I'm sure I've previously talked about my problems with writing LoCs; that, long ago I realized that, what with my job and long commute to and from work, my time was seriously limited and that I'd have to choose between writing and artwork as my form of fanac. As, hopefully, I'm better at the latter than the former -- I never know where to put those pesky commas!—my choice was obvious.

But, you say, you are now retired. Well, yes, now I'm free from earning a living and should have time for everything, although there's not enough of me to go around for everything: not only am I falling apart, but so is the house that Elaine and I are living in. I really should fix that closet door that keeps on popping open while I spend more time on the exercise bike while I finally finish painting on that canvas that Ray Ridenour gave me eight years ago, not to mention painting various parts of the house plus the outdoor railings that are starting to rust.

And then there's the matter of my past employment: I worked for Daedalus Books for ten years, and, before that, for Random House as a temp for eighteen months; both of these companies had the generous policy of allowing employees ten free books a month, and beyond that a 40% discount on anything else. Like all fans, I am a book addict and with these jobs I was like a kid in a candy store, so, discounting the 40% off books, that's 1380 books I've acquired! Assuming I read four books a month, that leaves me with 828 books to go in whatever time I have left on this mortal plane.

So, there's the competition factor: shall I LoC a fanzine or shall I read that biography of Woodrow Wilson? Time's a-wasting and do I really want to go to my grave without knowing what fuckups that particular President committed during his time in office? A difficult choice.

Getting back to my first point, there's still the matter of art. Just a few days ago I finished that full color illo of landscape painting in Hell. "There," I said to myself, "now perhaps I can devote my time to writing a letter of comment to some deserving fanzine!" But no; no sooner had I awakened the next morning than three more cartoon ideas popped into my head before it left the pillow. I don't know about you, but I'm compulsive about these things and once I think them up have to get to work on them right away. I got the latest Cthulhu gag done and am now working on something I call "Galley slaves Republicrats and Democians driven by The Demon Of Avarice." I'm still undecided about doing the one of the naked woman being digested by sentient jello....

My vote is for the naked woman and the sentient jello. I've had my fill of Republicrats, lately.

So with all that in mind, it's a wonder I can spare six hours a day for Facebook! Of course, now that I've read your the *Week Is Too Short*, I'm a little embarrassed to have gone on about my own workload when yours, and your ambitions, far outstrip my own. I do hope that you eventually reprint *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!* for entirely selfish reasons – back in the sixties I had loaned my copy to a young woman named Lee Thorin – actually Gloria Gaghin (sp?) – and Lee/Gloria, being an underage runaway, was dragged back to Philadelphia by agents of her father, leaving my copy in a Trailways rental locker.

The trick will be to not publish this issue of *Broken Toys* any sooner than need be.

By the time the various Gerry Anderson productions began appearing on the tube, I was too old to have any appreciation for what, to me, appeared to be pure corn: thirteen-year-olds can be very judgmental. I have a slight connection to *Thunderbirds F.A.B.* due to my extremely slight connection to a cousin-in-law, Barry Ganberg, in the U.K.; Ganberg produced the ambient music for a modern dance troupe performing as *The Thunderbirds*, dancing with large models of the space ships balanced on their heads. This happened in the 1984 and it's hard for me to imagine a contemporary ballet company doing that, but dancing *Thunderbirds* resurfaced in 2001 and was rather tongue-in-cheek. I understand that another revival is in the works.

My own acquaintance with transgendered individuals, other than my few meetings with Sandra, are limited to running into Hank/now Jean Marie/ Stine at a party at Bill Donaho's years ago: as I had done some freelance work for Hank in 1970s, Jean Marie was amused at my being puzzled that she knew me. My main impression at the time was that she had a lot to learn about the proper application of makeup, but a quick check with Google just now reveals that she got over that particular hump, and I'm glad to see that she seems to have successfully continued on with her career.

Not so with Jeffrey Catherine Jones, who did have afterthoughts after her operation and suffered a nervous breakdown in 2001 that caused her to lose both her studio and career. I knew Jeff when he was holding comic art meetings at his incredibly posh apartment on the Upper West Side in Manhattan, and it was deservedly posh because Jones was an incredibly talented artist, as most of us are well aware. Evidently the breakdown was naturally an impediment to her creativity but I read that she returned to non-illustrative art in 2004, earning a living by producing pure art on commission. Which is probably a good thing, because I was also read that she had become dissatisfied with aspects of illustration work, nor do I think there would've been a ready niche in the commercial world for the type of work she excelled at. The illustration field has been dying for decades.

What's with your unfinished comic strip?

It's dead, Jim. No, seriously, I explained the comic pages in the passage about Rebecca's mission to convert me into a manga artist – those six pages are as far as she ever got, and also just the only "serious" non-funny animal comics I ever attempted. I may have punched up the text, but I thought it had a nice Chandleresque ring to it. Notice that I showed that the "far future" was 2015? Jeezus – that's only two years from now!

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com 23 Jan 2013

You are right that publishing on paper is expensive – more than it used to be, though I'm not sure whether the cost has gone up faster than inflation. It costs me \$500-600 to do *It Goes on the Shelf* on paper once a year (but nothing to put it online as a .pdf) – fortunately, it takes me a year to think up that much stuff. And there is a bias against cyber-zines – I don't read or loc many of them, And I have no idea of trying to include them in the fanzine index that I update at fanac.org.

How can the history of fanzine fandom in the first years of the second decade of the century be complete without *Broken Toys*, though? It's likely to become the *Hyphen* or *Egoboo* of its day, don't you know?

On the other hand, what do you have against fetish objects? This house is full of objects that have no function but to be looked at and collect dust - including some of the books and fanzines. We don't imagine that Kane had any notion of ever gliding down a hill on Rosebud.

That's the problem ... I love fetish objects, and have thousands too many of them. Not just fanzines, but also comic books, novels, toy guns, plastic dinosaurs, bubblegum cards, scale motorcycles, DVD movies, figures, dishes, tools, mimeo paper and ink, and more things than are made under Heaven and Earth... But I am told by forward-looking people that "things" are 20th century, and we won't be allowed them in future.

Your Net links come up blue in Foxit, but not "live," and I am too lazy to copy/paste them into the browser. I'm in the middle of trying to bring order to the collection of books about words.

I suspect that the Utoob problem is at your end. The videos done in hi-res are too much for my DSL link, but I think I have enough RAM to let the regular ones load and replay smoothly.

One of my UghToob problems – stoccato audio – seems to have vanished. But I still can't save.

I wonder if Cute .pdf Maker is from the same outfit as the Cute FTP that I use for uploads to my website or to fanac.org. It works well. To make .pdfs I use OpenOffice, where there is a utility to "export as PDF". I wonder if some .pdf makers are more efficient than others – I paid \$5 for 9 scans from the Pelz archive. I must say that byte-wise I got my money's worth – they came as a 35 megabyte .pdf!

Adobe Acrobat is supposed to have a .pdf maker as a built-in function, but the "distiller" doesn't work – it never has. No idea why. But Cute .pdf Maker is simple and quick, and works with MS Doc, so who cares?

The closest I have to toys from my childhood are a couple of "hunting" knives, a Kabar and one hand-made. And some horse gear. My mother had a marble-swirl-color glass 2 inches in diameter, in poor condition, as her brother had one like it and they rolled them against each other until his broke in half.

There is certainly a lot of fuss about people who are sensitive to gluten and have a hard time avoiding it, but I didn't know it was supposed to be bad for the rest of us.

The current theory is that only what our hominin ancestors ate 300,000 years ago is good for us. The problem is, nobody knows for sure what this was, or if any of it grows anymore. Of it could be the idea we have to have evolved for a diet of certain grains and greens and fruits but nothing else, is a lot of hooley.

Ro Nagey is the third transgender fan I know of – the other two are Sandra Bond and Jessica Salmonson. They are all male => female. I corresponded and traded with Jessica both before and after. It seems odd to me that you found Jessica unpleasant – but I have not heard from her in some time. As far as I know she still runs the book business, but most of what I buy now in books are chance finds, not collectibles I was searching for.

If you shared an interest in moldy old dark fantasy, she probably forgave you for being a man.

The "Secret Weapon" (like bagpipes) is better from farther off – fortunately my .pdf reader Foxit zooms in both directions.

You were aware it was only rough work, not finished pages? Compared to some roughs I've seen, these were almost publishable.

R. Graeme Cameron, rgraeme@shaw.ca 23 Jan 2013

You certainly are churning them out! That's a good thing. A *very* good thing.

Got to agree with your *Ghost in the Typewriter* editorial. Like you and many other oldfens, I prefer paper copy zines to online publications, but since most (?) faneds can't afford the luxury of printing and copying costs, many worthy zines are available only as e-publications. Anyone who enjoys the content of fanzines *should* love both paper zines and ezines impartially, methinks. However, I suspect Murray refusing to love e-zines has more to do with his priority given to paper zines than simple prejudice, because Murray *has* loved my e-zines on occasion, so I know he reads them. Besides, I've only recently begun loving myself, so I can't really criticize someone who follows a particular philosophy of loving, since I lacked as much till now. One thing of note, I hate reading books online and stick strictly to paper. I have observed comments by newfens to the effect that they hate reading paper copy books and read only online books. It is to arrgh!

So you're offering me the explanation that Murray doesn't love me zines because he hates them? I feel so much better that it wasn't only because they were e-zines. Like you, I've tried to read books on the monitor, and hate it. It makes my eyes sore if I do it too much, which seems to be a physiological effect. So how can younger readers prefer to read a screen to a printed page? Are their eyes actually different from ours, due to growing up with reading lit surfaces? Are they bored if advertising isn't jiggery-bobbing and blinking at the side of the page? Do their thumbs itch unless kept busy scrolling the page?

Too lazy to write. You're lucky. Half the time I'm too lazy to think. That said, [it was] a brilliant mini-essay illustrating one of the annoyances of much online writing. I only click on links if I think it's important, otherwise I ignore them. This little bit of satire of yours is bang on.

The Week is too Short. Actually, you *are* lucky. You have loads of projects to work on and they all involve creativity and inborn talent. A great way to remain mentally alert and active, looking

forward to each day, etc. I think about things like that, being a retiree. Fortunately I have my fanac and assorted hobbies to keep me busy.

Except that I am bored and don't usually look forward to anything but dinner, a couple of hours reading and then bed. A life of the mind isn't enough, I hate to say it - I need to go white-water rafting, banqueting and be visited by exotic ladies in the middle of the night. I've been waiting all my life for those things, and so far not a sign...

But speaking of New Year's resolutions (as you did in the above article), once again I've decided to lose weight. I *do* have an exercise bike after all, but have never used it, being the type who can't self-motivate when it comes to exercise. Recently, however, I hit upon the perfect motivation. I get up at 7:00 AM, slap one of my favourite B movies from the fifties into my player, and cycle merrily away watching, as per example over the last four days: *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, *The Colossus of New York*, *Gog*, and *Satellite in the Sky*. Lost four pounds in four days. Tomorrow I'll cycle away to *World Without End*. Life doesn't get better than this for a sci-fi movie buff like myself. I think I've found the perfect solution to the problem of self-motivation. Works for me.

I used to use an exercycle every night when Newhart reruns came on. But the last I had TV there was nothing I really liked on, and now I don't even have TV. I can shove a DVD in the player, but it isn't the same, somehow. Nor did it ever seem to do much good. On top of the exercycle I did miles of walking when I was younger - I never lost an ounce. Only hunger ever worked, and even when driven half out of my mind I would only lose about 10 pounds that I put back on as soon as I stopped starving myself. So, I rarely made a serious effort - since repeated dieting is even worse for you, maybe it's just as well.

In *The Odd Kipple* you ask: *"It's left me thinking once again about transgendered individuals in fandom. Are we unusually enriched compared to the average, or has society in general come that far since I was young?"*

Good question. I begin with the subject of racial intolerance. I remember watching the *Smothers Brothers Show* and seeing (whichever the 'dumb' one was [Tommy]) kissing Lena Horne and hearing the American studio audience gasp. I turned to my mother and asked *"Why did they gasp?"* I didn't get it. My mother had brought me up to be *very* liberal, to think of all people as people and to hell with their variations in appearance. Further, mom worked in radio, and occasionally threw parties for radio folk, some of whom were obviously gay. I took them for granted too. I mean why should I care? Sitting on a beach once, musclemen working out to my right, bikini-clad young women playing volleyball to my left, while sunk deep in no-doubt profound thought I happened to notice my eyes kept straying to my left. *"Aha!"* I thought. *"I guess I'm straight. This my subconscious has just revealed. Okay, that's fine. Damn. Lost my train of thought."*

More to the point of your article, I have known a number of Gay and Lesbian fans locally for years, plus a transvestite (with two fan personas depending on role at a given moment) and a transgendered fan (with two persona, albeit before and after). All of them are as much fen as any other fen I know, much given to discussing and thinking about life in general and not just SF. I would go so far as to say their gender has no bearing on their fanac other than the usual socializing role a given gender tends to have. I think most fen take this for granted, whereas many mundanes do not and would be horrified or even outraged meeting say, a transgendered person.

So, yes, I do believe fen *are* more 'liberal' in their attitudes, or at least a greater proportion of them are compared to the number of mundanes who share their understanding and empathy. On the other hand, I also believe the percentage of mundanes who 'hate' gender variations is dropping, mostly as

a result of the new generation slowly replacing the old. It's a win/win situation frankly. Society (including fen) is constantly improving. And *that's* a good thing too. A *very* good thing.

See how cleverly I tied the beginning and ending of my loc together?

Yes, both sentences end in periods.

Brad Foster, bwfoster@juno.com 24 Jan 2013

Well, that was certainly an interesting internet experience! ("Interesting" as in...well....not...)

Got your email and was reading the issue when got to "Too Lazy To Write." Clicked the first link, but nothing happened. However, my pdf viewer-thingie has always been odd (it won't let me click to copy anything, so if there is something in a document I want, I have to re-type it by hand in another program, and other such fun things), so figured the problem was just with my setup. But, obviously, much time had been taken to find links to some funny/odd things to make this article work, and I wanted to get the full affect. So, decided to wait until it showed up in efanazines, maybe that would work better.

Notice in today that it was up – hooray! Cruise on over, open it, still no luck, for some reason it just will not make the link connection. It keeps opening up with the link in a stupid "Bing" search engine. What the heck? Why doesn't it just go to the site? Try that on a couple, same thing.

Finally decide to see if can get another pdf viewer... first one up is a free one from Adobe. Could have sworn had such a viewer several years back, who knows where the hell the one that is on my computer now came from. So, take the plunge and load the new one up. Click for *New Toys*, it opens up...

Damn, now have to figure out how this new viewer works, where are the damn buttons??.... Finally find those... hey, look, I can copy text now, Yay! Okay, let's get to that article! Scroll down, click on it.. and now get message the browser "cannot display the page". What? Then the shoe finally drops: these are all fake links. They are written out in the right format, so the pdf is treating them like they are real and so I can click on them, but then there is nowhere to go.

So, in the end, blew about half an hour on that gag, but did end up with a new pdf viewer where I can now copy text out of , so all's right in the end.

Seriously though, disappointed that there weren't links to things that put another level of humor on the whole piece. Might be something worth doing for a future piece. Dan Piraro used to do that a lot in his blog posts for "Bizarro", random links to odd images and such.

Anyway, the adventure is at an end, and that will have to suffice for a loc on the issue, 'cause I am **exhausted!**

Ron Solomon, fanboy@rcn.com 27 Jan 2013

I just read *BT* 12 and thought I would attempt My first LoC **[and/or]** eLoC of '13. I don't have the money to do what I would like to do, print out the zine and make notes on paper before gathering thoughts in my head and typing them up, so instead copied text to a Word file and will delete and insert comments as I reread your pub. As a first attempt I have no idea if this works for me and if so whether it will then work for you as a letter of comment. Exhaling deeply now and...

If I read your comment about Murray Moore correctly the idea is that he does not comment on ezines, but there is no indication to me he does not read the things. I admit to not reading ezines for years and years, with just a few exceptions, but that it my combination of laziness and low prioritizing. Did I just gerund incorrectly? Anyways, I hope to do more fanac this year on the zine front. I have thought of my paragraph or so postings on facebook to be my microminiest of personalzines, and since the feedback is constant and minimal, have restrained myself from attempting anything even in the manner of my old 2- and 4-page print personalzines of decades ago which had the minisculist of distribution, even though the print and disty rituals were so pleasant for me, and I can't think of any pleasing ritual with the digital lifestyle version of such. Which is a roundabout way of saying I cannot imagine ever submitting anything for Bill Burns to add to efanazines. So my attempts this year will be more of this sort of nonsense, eLoCing, at least until the number of threatening responses proves overwhelming to me.

I admit that I have no idea whether he reads ezines, particularly my zine, or not. I was hoping that perhaps a friendly dig might provoke an answer. It isn't that Murray isn't a fanzine fan. He published in the 1970s and again not so long ago. As well, he locs paper fanzines. So, I don't deserve egoboo because I can't afford to publish on paper. Is it too much to ask that a fellow Toronto fan try to support the town's only fanzine?

Oh, I think of one other thing may have caused me to prevent myself from letterhacking in recent times, and for that I blame Wikipedia. I can remember often asking faneds questions because of my questions regarding things written, which nowadays rather than inclining me to respond for more information on a subject, now just moves me to click and read Wikipedia for immediate gratification.

I tried watching "Space: 1999" but I was turned off by perceiving Barbara Bain to be an ice princess character. My loss?

Your gain, in my opinion. I have rarely seen a more wooden actor.

Taral, a lot of stuff in Facebook lately about *My Living Doll*. Think it is related to *BT*? I lusted after Julie Newmar but totally forgot who replaced Bob Cummings on the series, but then again I probably only watched the first few Cummings was in before losing interest in the show, just like I gave up on *I Dream of Jeannie* after figuring out I would never get to see a belly button on a sitcom. On *Laugh-In* however, my memory tells me they were a weekly occurrence, but that might have been because the TV landscape was starting to loosen up a little bit later in the 1960s.

There has been a flurry of discussion about "My Living Doll" on FaceBooger, and it might have been sparked by my posting a photograph of Julie Newmar as AF-709. Then again, maybe it was just time people thought of it again. I liked Julie Newmar as The Catwoman, but my three heart

throbs of the '60s are Carolyn Jones (Morticia Adams), Barbara Eden (Jeannie) and Judy Jetson ... just kidding. I mean Barbara Feldon (Agent 99).

I still see many more new comic books than I do poetry collections in the local Barnes & Noble.

See, right about here I could easily check if Woolworth's as a chain [I know, different ownership than in North America] still existed in Australia instead of asking in this LoC I'm hoping such a hook would get me promoted from the WAHF list. Heck, I'll leave this bit here for you to flush, Taral.

Not to worry - almost nobody goes in the WAHF list. I don't have the luxury of deciding which 10 or 12 out of 30 locs to print. I also hardly edit anything out. Hardly ...

I misread Bill Paterson's LoC as mincemeat farts. The only foodie Christmas tradition I ever participated in was back in the day when a friend threw an annual holiday party to which a British friend would contribute a huge trifle. Sadly, that is all in the past.

I now happily have the earworm of Nelson Riddle's "Theme from *Route 66*" playing in my head. One of my favorite '60s TV dramas, and the only one I can think of that wasn't strictly of one genre of writing or another, as in doctor stories, detective stories, lawyer stories, and yes even skiffy dramas.

There's an interesting story about the music for *Route 66*, according to the Special Features on the DVDs. Originally the producers wanted to use the song "Get Your Kicks on Route 66," but the composer, Bobby Troup, wanted too much money. The producers turned to Nelson Riddle instead, and asked him to write the opening theme. Troup must have been asking an awful lot, as Riddle himself couldn't have been cheap.

One of my many dietary weaknesses: I am a glutton for gluten. But not mutton.

Younger son Aaron has been into hats for a couple of years now. Not caps, but particularly the narrow-brimmed hat variety, for which he has been a school trendsetter, gotten numerous compliments on his head coverings, and now the halls are crowded with male chapeau afficianados.

I would like to find out about bhowling, please.

"Bhowling" is defined as any activity that fans participate in that they claim is fannish, but is just as mundane as your father's poker night. In fact, the term could as well have been "phoker," but that would be pronounced "foker" and probably give people the wrong impression. Victoria Vayne and I came up with the term at one of the couple of Octacons we attended. Octacon was an extreme example of a relaxacon, with no scheduled events whatever. You came, you put on your swimming trunks, and you chilled out for three days. One of the favourite pastimes at the con was the hot tub, another was poker and the fatal one - for us - was bowling in the alley attached to the hotel. It was not a scene that either Victoria or I fit well into - we were bored, and dismissive of all the mundane activity around us. When we got home, we began to call fannish non-fannish activities "bhowling." Unfortunately, this useful idea never caught on. Probably because no fan would ever admit that he ever did anything unfannish. There ought to have been a word for that too ... but we knew when we were beaten.

I can imagine [I am a science fiction fan after all!] that people could be proud enough of any part of their original or revised anatomies to want to send images of them to others to comment on, more power to them and so forth, but cataloging myself the only thing I can think of about myself that I would consider exemplary would be my invisible eyebrows, which I have proudly worn my entire

life and are the only vestige of my original childhood light blond hair. Oh, I do have one oddity about them, what I would describe as a curb feeler kinda thing. Remember curb feelers? They were the semistiff metal rods attached to cars in the old days that would notify you by sound when you were within a few inches of the sidewalk when parallel parking. I think they stopped having them on cars in the '60s or '70s. Anywho I have one long dark hair that erupts from one 'brow and which I occasionally cut off when it extends more than an inch or so and starts to droop over one eye. Go ahead, call me a freak, don't sit next to me in the cafeteria, see if I care. [Wipes tears off of keyboard and abruptly ends LoC.]

Not a word too soon, now that I think of it.

Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net 29 Jan 2013

Much like I usually do with Chris Garcia, I have fallen a couple of issues behind with your fanzine, *Broken Toys*. So, I have issues 11 and 12 with me, and locwise, it's time to catch up.

BT11...As you say, Christmas isn't quite what it used to be. My own family Christmases were gone long ago, and with Yvonne's mother in a retirement home, her family Christmas gathering is a little tense and strained, but still can be a little bit of fun. The presents are often good-intentioned, but we did get rid of the Star Trek action figures some time ago. We rationed the chocolate, and finished it off just the other night, and as far as I'm concerned, Christmas is well and truly over, and now come the push to start buying more for Valentine's Day. Yvonne and I will probably go to Swiss Chalet a few nights before the actual day to avoid the mad rush.

My loc...we are now looking at a dealer's table at SFContario 4, where we can be comfortable sitting some place, and still make a few bucks. I should pester Murray Moore a little bit...he's the fan in charge of the room. Eric Mayer talks about a better diet, and that's something I have to pursue myself. I know I have to lose some weight, and I have, but I have also been diagnosed with high blood pressure, so I really need to not only lose weight, but reduce the salt in my diet, and take a prescription I may have to take for some time, if not the rest of my life.

You and Alan Dorey are right in hoping for some feedback on your writing and artwork, and getting silence. In all the years I ran conventions, I knew that sometimes, the greatest praise you could receive was silence because then you knew you didn't screw up. (If you did, you never heard the end of it.) I still get mostly silence, but sometimes there's positive feedback, and more and more, negative feedback. Some say what I do is the heart of fanzine fandom, but yet, others are tired of seeing my name everywhere. That's an indication that more people have to write for the locol, and that I may have to revise what I write in my letters, and that perhaps some faneds have to edit locs more.

I'm not going to complain about anyone writing too many locs - at present there are about a dozen people writing half the locs in fandom, I think. If for some reason they were all in one bus that went over a cliff, fanzines would have trouble assembling anything you could call a letter column.

12...I remember Mike Glicksohn would not respond to e-zines, because he didn't like them, and preferred a paper fanzines. I never thought that fair, but in the long run, we'd all like paper fanzines. Today, we all know the costs behind such paper fanzines, few of us can afford it or want to afford it, and e-zines are the perfect, IMHO, solution to the problem. Current postage rates (had to look them

up) are 63¢ for domestic (the P on the stamps makes sure most people never know), \$1.10 for US letters, and \$1.85 to mail overseas. Goes up every year, too.

Christmas foods are delicious and full of fat, sugar, salt and all the things are so tasty and so bad for you. If only we could make Brussels sprouts taste like chocolate, we'd all be healthier. And then Eric mentions Brussels sprouts in his loc. If I have to have some veg with my dinner, give me asparagus with a little melted butter. Never be ashamed to have believed in Santa...our parents feed us a passel of nonsense when we're little, and finding out the truth becomes a painful ritual of growing up.

The picture of Hope on page 10...Artcon? When and where was that convention? More and more, I am out of the loop on so many things.

I know several transgendered folks, and know of a couple more, and I hope to meet them soon. Their own travail of self-discovery is a difficult one, like many of my gay friends. It is difficult to become aware of who you are for any person, but for gay and transgendered people, it is much more difficult to ascertain who you are, and then, even more difficult, to figure out what to do about it. Ro Nagey was the FanGoH at Ad Astra II in 1982.

Secret Weapon...is this the 'macro' you were asked to produce? An interesting story, I'd like to see more.

"Secret Agent Yuki" was written by Rebecca Jansen, and I don't have much idea where she intended to take it. The six pages are not a first chapter, technically ... but it was all I had. So far as I can make out, the girl in the tube was a sort of organic computer that ran the city, but her semi-conscious thoughts were intruding into people's dreams at night, somehow. There's obviously a complication -- some sort of humanoid aliens who are infiltrating human society and up to no good ... maybe. And perhaps a sub-plot about virtual reality addiction. But I'm guessing all of this. Whatever I did know about Rebecca's intentions has been forgotten many years ago.

"Macros," on the other hand, are giants/giantesses, usually squashing things or using skyscrapers in inappropriate ways. Some people are into that sort of thing, but I have to confess that it's not one of my assorted kinks. I don't object to being paid to do macros, though. Right now I have a customer offering me money for a new commission, that I'm actually too busy with other work to take on right away. It seems that once I had announced I had "retired" from commissioning, customers came out of nowhere to throw money at me. So I have the best of both worlds - I'm "retired" and working too.

I have a few more things to do before I head off to the evening job, so I will fold for the moment, and say thank you for two more interesting issues. I'm looking forward to issue 13.

Mark Plummer, mark.fishlifter@googlemail.com 3 Feb 2013

There's a flip answer to your question in 'The Ghost in the Type,' at least so far as we're concerned. Yes, absolutely it is prejudice that has caused us not to list *Broken Toys* in the 'fanzines received' column in *Banana Wings*. At least I'm pretty sure it's prejudice. It's certainly the only reason I can think of for failing to acknowledge in *BW#46* (June 2011 and the last issue of *BW* to feature a fanzines received column) that you would begin sending us *Broken Toys* the following year.

But that's just us, and you probably weren't talking about our infrequent listings – and anyway the

less flip answer is that if I were to have included a fanzines received column in *BW#51* (November 2012) I probably wouldn't have included *Broken Toys* in it. Arguably you have correctly identifying a prejudice even if I'm not actually displaying it.

I cut out several paragraphs here explaining the genesis and evolution of my personal fanzines received log, which is the source for any fanzines received columns we run. The summary version is that it started out as a list of every hard-copy fanzine coming into the house, which was at the time the same thing as all the fanzines I saw. It did after a year or two include efanzines as well but only because I printed everything that was sent to me or that I accessed at efanzines.com, which was in turn just about everything Bill hosted, the only exceptions being those titles I was already receiving in hard copy anyway. However, by the middle years of the last decade I was already printing selectively and a few years after that I realised that even that was daft as I was just creating stacks of paper which I had to store and if I ever needed to refer to any of those fanzines again it was far easier to do so via Bill's website. When I stopped printing efanzines I stopped listing them as 'received' and thus they stopped appearing on any fanzines received lists we ran in *BW*. I suppose I need to remember things like this if I ever start comparing the numbers of fanzines I logged in, say, 2004 (200) with those logged in 2012 (87).

You got me thinking, though, about the purpose of fanzines received lists. I think latterly I've pretty much treated them as a resource along the lines 'other fanzines are also available such as....' I list the hard-copy titles because those are the ones potentially interested parties will only know about if somebody notes that they exist. I could, I suppose, list the entire contents of efanzines.com for the previous month or two as well but really, why bother? If somebody wants to know what's on efanzines.com they just look at efanzines.com. And if they can't do that for some reason then knowing what's there doesn't really help all that much.

Is it a form of acknowledgement? Well, maybe, a bit, but if so, why privilege the fanzines I'm sent above those I look at? Some people -- although I think it's only you and Arnie at the moment -- do email me their fanzines, but the truth is that there's no real need to do so as I at least skim everything posted to efanzines.com anyway. I suspect that some of the people who simply post their fanzines online without direct-emailing them out do so because they know people will see them anyway, and in my case that's certainly true.

(There are other interpretations too, that the list is a kind of bragging -- hey, kids, look how many fanzines I get sent! -- or that they bolster the publisher by publicly reassuring them that they're not alone in perpetuating an out-of-date medium in the second decade of the twenty-first century. I think I'll stay away from those.)

Still, the upshot of all this is that I conclude that my personal fanzines received log should probably be what it purports to be and thus include all fanzines that I do receive, whether that's on paper or via e-mail. 2013 is yet young enough that I can retool and update for this year to reflect the new policy, and as a result my list for 2013 has just grown from seven to nine items. What difference this will make to the world I cannot say, but I thought you'd like to know.

John Nielsen Hall, johnsil32@gmail.com 8 Feb 2013

Re: the transgender thing, I suspect fandom by its very nature will have a somewhat larger number of people who have issues with their gender than you might find in a similar number of people outside it.

Back in the dim dark past, fandom was much more a very male dominated thing, and then as now they tended to be obsessives and collectors (or hoarders). But even then, the fans were different because they tended not to be socialised in the male ways that were expected back then, that is around work (which was much more segregated along gender lines than now) and sports and competitiveness. So fans were always refugees from that, and fandom is a place where you can pretty much be what you want to be, and so changing sex kind of seems natural.

Actually, I have a guilty secret from my past, that resurfaces whenever discussions around transgender issues come up. Back in the late seventies or early eighties, I had a work colleague at the City accountancy firm I worked at, and he was big, hairy and went to a gym and played football and so on. One boozy lunch time, in some den of iniquity such as may readily be found around the square mile, and probably after having had slightly too many pints than was entirely prudent on his part, he confessed to me, apparently seriously, that he wasn't happy with being male, and that for a very long time he had been making plans to go abroad and have surgery to change sex. My reaction to this tsunami of unwanted information was initially shock and puzzlement, followed by derisive laughter. I may have said something along the lines of "Have you had a look at yourself? What sort of woman would you make?" Whatever I said, it was less than sympathetic, and however unwisely, I think he thought I would be just that. And I can't really say why I wasn't. I think - I hope- it was just the shock and the ridiculous contrast of this six-foot bearded bloke built like the proverbial brick exterior convenience with at least my idea of femininity. At least, I had the sense not to mention it to anyone else, or bring it up in any of our somewhat more infrequent subsequent conversations. I have no idea what became of him- whether he really did go through it or not- mostly, because I changed jobs and worked in the West End and we never had a relationship that wasn't connected to the work that we did, so I never saw him again. But I'm ashamed of my reaction still.

When I was a much younger fan, I 'm told that, while passing a graveside ceremony in a cemetery, I once made derisive comments about funerals in a voice loud enough to be heard for a city block. I thank you for lifting from my shoulders the mantle for having made the least well-considered remark in fandom. That one was worthy of an Seth McFarlane Award without runners-up.

I know two transgendered people – one of them is Sandra Bond – but in neither case did I know them before they were reassigned. Your having known your friend Rebecca before and after probably makes you more of an expert than I, but I do think that society does want to force people into gender roles that are too often based on false and narrow assumptions not only about sexuality, but about personality and socialisation as well. The common assumption nowadays is that straight people are like This and gay people are like That and that's okay, but you still have to conform to This or That. There are fifty shades of grey (sorry!) between those assumptions that simply don't fit, still. A lot of the people in those margins are bound to end up in fandom.

Did you mean, "There are fifty shades of gay," I wonder? (According to later e-mail, he did not.)

SAARA'S ICEBOX

While downloading photos from the official Curiosity website, I noticed something unexpected – a patch of white under the protective overhang of a rock. It looked just like the snow found in similar spots on Earth, protected from the Spring sun. I wondered, could it really be? Why not? Ice has been seen in many locations on Mars. Near the poles, of course, but also in temperate latitudes. Orbiters have photographed new meteor strikes that uncovered blue-white ice and splashed it around the rim of the new crater. Subsequent orbits showed the ice gradually vanishing as it sublimated into the atmosphere. Eventually, the ice disappeared completely, leaving no doubt as to its identity.



Frost was seen by both Phoenix and by one Viking lander. As well, it is believed that the darkening of the reddish soil that is sometimes observed on hillsides and slopes indicates that liquid water flows under the surface. When I looked closely at Saara's Icebox, I saw that it, too, had a ribbon of darkened soil under the "snow."

There is an alternative to snow or ice. Fractures criss-cross the bedrock, filled with veins of lighter mineral – perhaps gypsum. I've also noticed mineral deposits with a quite different appearance. They are thin, flat glazes, resembling a swatch of grey paint – not at all like the "snow" in Saara's Icebox. Nor is there any darkened soil associated with these glazes. But I have what I hope is even better evidence that there is snow in the Icebox.

After searching hundreds of other photographs for this distinctive-looking rock, I found several frames taken from a much greater distance. It was difficult to be certain whether anything unusual was present. However, about a month after the Eureka photo was taken, Curiosity transmitted another Eureka shot. It not only showed the white substance just as clearly as the first – it also showed that it had shrunk in size! I continue to search photos as they arrive from Mars, in hope of finding the conclusive evidence – that the "snow" has melted still further ... if not entirely disappeared. It would be a maddening sort of confirmation, though.

I immediately contacted NASA about my "discovery," and eventually got back a bit of boilerplate – to the effect that they have a board or committee that will review all photos in the fullness of time. By then, of course, it will be too late. The snow will be gone, if that's what it was ... and there will be nothing for scientists to investigate.

No matter ... in my mind it will always be Saara's Icebox! It would have been so nice if it had become official, though. Some other time, I may tell you about the features I named on Saturn's moon, Titan.

Speaking of Mars ...



Like most people, I have odd dreams. Maybe not so much like other people's, my dreams tend to be about proprietary Hollywood properties, and – if only I could get the rights – potentially worth millions!

The other night, I was in a light sleep and dreamed the perfect Bob & Doug McKenzie movie.

To remind those of you who have sensibly forgotten who Bob & Doug McKenzie were, the beer-soaked, toque and parka-garbed “Canadian” brothers appeared on SCTV in two-minute skits that spoofed the idea of “mandatory Canadian content” in national broadcasting. To everyone's surprise, the time-fillers were a smash hit. A generation of Americans practiced their trendy “Canuck” accent for parties, one that consisted mainly of expressions like “take off,” “hose head” “beauty” and the ubiquitous “eh?” The two congenial hosers were played by

Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas, who went on to become the stars of a full-length motion picture and produced a single hit album before dropping off the face of the Earth.

So where did they go, after falling off the edge of Planet Earth? Mars, or course!

In the script treatment I intend to work up (at the proper moment, of course), Bob & Doug will be on an Air Canada flight to Sudbury, Ontario, the winners of one of Tim Horton's minor Roll-Up-the-Rim Free Vacations. There is a low overcast and they have barely cleared Lester B. Pearson Airport when the plane grazes the CN Tower. By singular good fortune, the grazing blow peels back the skin of the Airbus only where Bob and Doug are seated, and they spill out onto the summit of the Tower. In the pitch black night, there seems to be nothing but empty space all around.

Strangely, the tip of the Tower isn't the needle-like point that it appears to be from the streets below. It is, in fact, a round platform about twenty feet across, its rounded edges curving downward, and painted red. In fact, it looks somewhat like the knob of a gear shift lever. Bob and Doug argue about this, Bob insisting that the colour warns away approaching aircraft, and was cheaper than a red light. "If it warns away airplanes," is Doug's retort, "Why'd we hit it, eh?" There is no answer to that, so they slide down the gently curving sides of the tower, slowing down gradually as they near the ground and the Tower's fins flare out.

"I don't think this is the CN Tower," says Doug.

"Take off!" says Bob.

"We already did that, eh? Now where are we?"

Obviously it is *not* the CN Tower that their flight struck after all. It appears this is merely a water tower somewhere north of Toronto. Bob and Doug are stranded in the middle of an empty field with a light cover of snow and chuckholes of all different sizes everywhere – some of them large enough for a backyard skating rink. It seems vaguely familiar to the boys.

"Hey, you know what?" says Bob. To him, it looks just like they are on the planet Mars. They wander from one crater to another, taking it all in, astonished that they are the first human beings to stand on another planet – even though they haven't any idea how they could have gotten there. Eventually, though, it sinks in that they never left Earth. They notice the chain-link fence all around, and a billboard sign lit with sputtery fluorescents. Rather than Mars, this is a miniature golf course whose novelty is that it is tricked out to look like Mars. Somewhat. The craters are sand traps and water obstacles. "I tol'ja it wasn't the Red Planet. More like the Greens Planet, eh?"

One of the boys notices there is debris scattered all around, and stoops to pick up a goofy-looking back massager. They debate whether it is a fishing-fly for whales, or an alien cell phone. The course is littered with stuff they conclude must have fallen from the plane at the same time they did. Doug picks up a readily identifiable videotape recorder. There are small plastic cards scattered around also. These turn out to be credit cards, somehow lost with everything else when their plane struck the water tower. "Hey, look, this one's Conrad Black, eh?" Another is Neil Young's. Another is Rex Murphy's. Some of the other cards belong to David Miller, the ex-Premier of Ontario, Rick Mercer, comedian, Chris Hatfield, astronaut, Cindy

Klassen, Olympic skating medalist, and many other notable Canadian figures. One belongs to Lorne Michaels – that’s known in the field as an in-joke, or sucking up to the boss. Spotting other neon signs beyond the golf course, the boys have an idea.

We jump forward by a couple of days.

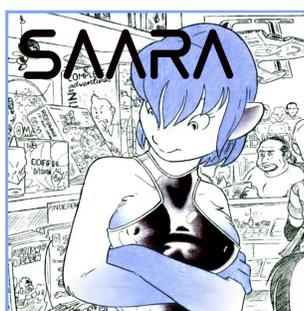
We see them next in a cheap motel room, in pajamas so new the tags are still pinned in them. Whenever Bob sits down, he discovers a new one he has missed. Doug is aiming the videocam through the darkened window of the room. “I guess that’s enough for today, eh?” he says. On the TV, Peter Mansbridge of the CBC is speaking, “More dramatic footage from Mars arrived today at CBC studios, delivered by courier from an unknown source. Like previous footage we have presented, it shows the surface of Mars in unprecedented detail and clarity, as the never-seen, unidentified explorers push forward the frontiers of human experience. NASA disclaims all knowledge and speculation is rife how ... etc.”

“I can’t believe they’re still buyin’ that, eh?,” says Bob from the end of the bed. Doug wants to order another pizza ... the third that day ... and another carton of beer from the party caterer, but Bob says they have to use a different card or it’ll look suspicious. They choose a blue and gold one, this card belonging to Larry Tannenbaum, who is the majority stockholder of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team.

Brighten to sunlight as I wake up.

I reviewed the script-so-far in my head, in essence transcribing the plot from short term memory to long term, and managed to save almost the whole thing. Yes, I’ve filled in a few blank spots, but fewer than you might think. And the plot has no ending. But who needs a finished script to sell a million-dollar movie? Once a deal is clinched, you hire some schmo with a typewriter to deal with the details. We movie moguls call them “writers” to salve their egos ... and so we can pay them peanuts.

This is where the fundamental injustice of the world comes into play. If I had an uncle who was a studio producer – or if I was Johnny Depp – I would not be denied my chance to make Hollywood history, and you would be seeing *Bob & Doug McKenzie, War Lords of Mars* next year. But, because I wasn’t given a winning lottery ticket like that when I was born, you’ll be spared. Still, I have an idea for a short article now ... and *that you will read*, you can be sure.



A selection of icons I use on my DeviantArt <http://taralwayne.deviantart.com/> and FurAffinity <http://www.furaffinity.net/user/saara/> Pages. If you haven’t browsed there, why not?