



**Broken Toys** is a personalzine by **Taral Wayne**, and while I should be working on the next issue of *New Toy*, *The Louche Knight* and artwork I've been paid for, all the material for this issue seems to have come together by itself. This is often the case. I had hoped that the letter column would be somewhat *shorter* than it has been in past, but it didn't turn out that way. Locs are always welcome anyway. As I have for the last 22 years, I live in well-organized chaos at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6. Alternately, contact or loc me at [Taral@Teksavvy.com](mailto:Taral@Teksavvy.com). The date is **late June, 2013**, and, believe it or not, I was ready to go to print as early as the 12<sup>th</sup>. However, a two-week interval seemed like a poor idea, so I held off for another couple of weeks. That appears to have resulted in a larger than usual issue, however. You can't win. This is *ExtraTaraltoriality* (or *Hiddelidiuee Books & Art*) 268, © 2013 Taral Wayne.

## EMOTORIAL

I was browsing FaceBook and came across a link to an article about music downloads. What intrigued me was that it could easily have been about fanzines, particularly the following extract. Substitute "fanzine" for "music" and "loc" for "money."

*"But I have learned that "accessing" music and actually listening to it are two different things. Free downloading has created a kind of collector or hoarder who is unique to the digital age. In my university classes, I query my students about their downloading habits, and everyone who is deeply into music has figured out how to download music for free, despite the best efforts of the record business to stop them, and have far, far more music downloaded to their laptops and iPods than they will ever have time to listen to in their entire lives. Gigabytes and gigabytes of meaningless data. These same students invariably report that they have actually listened to all the music they paid for.*

*"If a virtual tree falls in a virtual forest and no one opens the file, does it still make a sound? This is a real conundrum ... Have I cheapened my music by not monetizing its recorded artifact?"*

– Bob Ostertag, <http://onthecommons.org/magazine/why-i-no-longer-give-away-my-music>

Do we not face a similar paradox with fanzines? Now that it is easy as infecting your system with an unwanted virus, we download tens of fanzines every month. But how many do we read? I know for a fact that many fanzines are about cons, books, the genre and authors. They bore the shit out of me, and I don't even *pretend* I'll ever read them. I don't download them, either. But there are many other fanzines that I download, simply because the title has been around for years or I know the editor. Often, they're no better than the fanzines I *don't* download because the contents are much the same. I don't care to read about Ian Banks' novels, gender issues in fandom, a panel at Corflu or another library named after Ray

Bradbury. I usually save a zine because it's a zine I save. I doubt I give more than six to eight any attention. I suspect that the situation isn't very different for most of us.

I'm probably an extreme case, as well. I read a little bit of science fiction, but I've lost any real interest in it as a subject. My appetite for biographies and literary study of the genre was satisfied years ago. I came to the conclusion that, for me at any rate, there was nothing to be studied. The books are what you read in them, and the authors have a few mannerisms that are usually easy to spot ... but there is no deep-seated meaning to any of it, so no social significance greater than that of, say, a recent fad in animated ponies and the associated line of toys ... probably less. The important development in SF since its beginnings is probably just that it has become big business, on the same level as superheroes and spies. This may mean little more than that science fiction's creative energies are spent.

I've come to the point of feeling rather tired of SF fandom. Having been almost fanatically active in it for a second time, and having written about a million words that were published in over 25 different titles in the last 8 years, I've even found the will power to be a moderately productive letter hack. But it's all beginning to seem hollow. I seem only to hear the same old conversations – what I ate at Corflu, who I saw at SMOFcon, I love the books by Terry Pratchett, we're bidding for 2018, so-and-so is dead, their filk songs are wonderful, we have to bring in younger blood and are you going to the book launch?

Well, you know what? Being in fandom is beginning to feel like I belong to a bloody cult, where everyone wears a light blue suit and listens to the same Christian rock – only we all wear the same Corflu t-shirts, smooth the same mass-market bourbon, read the same travel reports and drink the same sour, fizzy beer. Why? Because everyone else does. Having most of the same likes as your fellow fan is how you show you belong.

When I began *Broken Toys*, 18 issues ago, I said right up front that my aim was to entertain people – not to spread the gospel of John W. Campbell, nor provide reports of convention events, nor solve all the problems of fandom. What I wanted to do was brighten the day for some people and, hopefully, make them think a little better of me. I'm not so sure anymore whether I succeed in those goals. I have a full letter column every issue ... actually, I have rather *more* letters than I really ought to print, but I can't bring myself to edit a tighter column. But the majority of the letters I've received over the previous 17 issues were written by only five or six people. Between them, they've written more locs to *Broken Toys* than all the other recipients together ... by a wide margin. Do I really only inspire five or six readers to write more than once or twice ... and the majority of fans who receive the zine not at all? I suppose I must feel a little bit the way Preston Tucker did as he sat behind the wheel of his 36<sup>th</sup> and final completed sedan, knowing that his automotive dream was a flop.

Perhaps I just need a vacation ... and I don't mean a Worldcon.

---

“I hate that possible future. ‘It is a trivial and normal thing to be a fan.’ Don't like it at all.”  
– Mathew Tepper, Facebook, 9 June 2013.

“Fans must be simple-minded. Just give them a typo to play with and they will amuse themselves for hours, as though the spelling mistake had been discovered for the first time that minute.”  
– Me, Facebook, 9 June 2013.

---

# Dream a Little Dream

I have recently watched the first season of *I Dream of Jeannie* from beginning to end – all 30 episodes. The boxed set of DVDs were previously viewed, and far cheaper than merely reasonable. Otherwise, I wouldn't have dreamed of buying it – my memory of the program was of a pleasant, lightweight, formulaic comedy that was similar to *Bewitched*, but with less class. (It's hard to beat a cast that includes Elizabeth Montgomery, Agnes Moorehead, Paul Lynde and Maurice Evans, after all!)

To my surprise, *I Dream of Jeannie* held up much better than I'd expected. The plot of each episode was less repetitive than I had remembered it – “Jeannie makes something appear, Dr. Bellows sees it, Jeannie makes it disappear and Dr. Bellows is made a fool of yet again.” Perhaps the episodes fell into that pattern in later episodes, but throughout the entire first season, the story followed a sensible development of character and situation.



Barbara Eden at age 56! (1987)  
Maybe she was magic, after all?

There is also no question in my mind that astronaut Major Tony Nelson, Jeannie's “Master,” is a much more likable person than advertising executive Darrin Stevens, Samantha's husband and foil. Where Darrin either panicked or blew his stack almost like clockwork, Tony was as likely to see the humour of changing his friend Roger's car into a donkey, or turning the tables on Dr. Bellows. Nor was he as determined to stamp out the free spirit or self-expression of Jeannie, as Darrin was of Samantha. Tony never asked Jeannie to stop being a genie ... just not to “blink” magic in front of strangers.

As for the blatant wish-fulfillment aspect of both shows – it cannot be denied. But I refer you to Barbara Eden herself, who said that *I Dream of Jeannie* was a wish-fulfillment fantasy for women, too. “Who wouldn't want to be freed from a bottle after 2,000 years by herself ... and the first thing she sees is a handsome young man with a glamorous career?”

Jeannie pursued her Master for five whole seasons, trying alternately by persuasion, deception and magic to get Tony to marry her. The catch was that although he loved her very much, Major Nelson was unwilling or unable to make the plunge. Millions of male eyes were glued to the TV screen every week in amazement – what knucklehead *wouldn't* marry a delightful, beautiful, magical young woman who *threw herself* at you so persistently?

In the final season, Major Nelson in fact *did* marry Jeannie. There were a couple of re-union specials, as well. In one, Jeannie was forced to abandon their marriage and erase her Master's memories of her in order to save his life. It ends on a hopeful note anyway ... Jeannie contrives to “accidentally” meet Tony Nelson as an ordinary woman, and he immediately begins to fall in love all over again.

After that ... who knows? Many years later, however, one can imagine an episode something like this:

"Master?"

"Yes, Jeannie?" Major Nelson speaks in a piping, elderly voice.

"You are 74. And you look 94."

"Well, Jeannie, mortals grow old and ... eventually die."

"Why did you not tell me this *before*, Master?"

"Ha ha, what ...? You mean you didn't know?"

"Of course I did not know! But what will I do now? I do not like being married to a smelly, wrinkled old geezer who takes his teeth out at night!"

"Well, Jeannie ... you could 'blink' me young again, I suppose."

"Oh Master! That is a wonderful idea! Except ... "

"Except what?"

"Except that you would only *look* young, but still want to nap in the afternoon, eat bland, digestible food, and be too dull of spirit to go dancing all night with me. You would still be old on the *inside*, you see?"

"Yes... I guess that's so. But I suppose the only thing to do is wait until my time comes ... then you can find a younger Master."

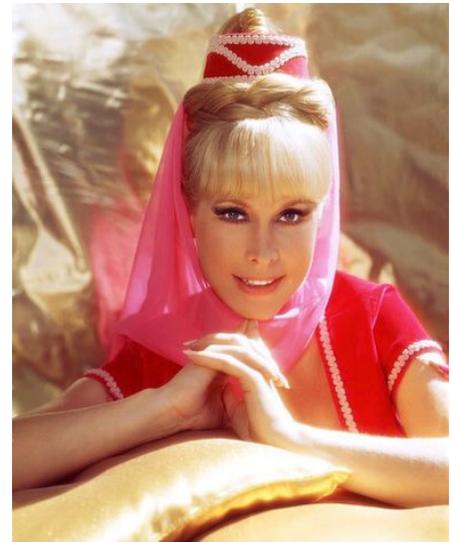
"Oh, but that could be another 20 years! And if I look after your health with magic, you may live to be 100! Maybe even 120! I cannot wait that long!"

"I don't see wha... "

She blinks and places a elderly-looking tortoise in a glass terrarium next to her bottle.

"There! Now you can live as long as you wish, *and* I can still find a young and handsome new master!"

Well ... perhaps by the time he's 90, he won't mind.



Jeannie as herself, photographed in Cocoa Beach, Florida, about 1967.

---

*In the last issue of Flag, Andrew Hooper reviewed a number of recent fanzines, including the issue of The Drink Tank in which I made my farewell appearance as a columnist. He said, and I quote, "the best single piece of work by any fan so far in 2013." Well, that sure put a smile on my face. While a later issue of The Drink Tank ran a couple of locs that commented on "100 is Not Too Many," I was afraid that it's appearance had had as little effect on fandom as the comet Shoemaker-Levy had had on the Planet Jupiter. May Andrew's fanzine Flag wave many issues more!*

# **WORK,** *A Four-Letter Word*

Most artists know what it is like to do five weeks of work for four weeks of pay. The forces working on an artist to pitch his rates too low are almost irresistible. You want the job, you need to pay the rent or buy groceries, and you convince yourself that doing the job will only take so long and no longer. Then “so long” is long over, the work is only half-finished and the rent is due again. What do you do?

If your intellectual mentor is Ayn Rand, you do what any Objectivist hero would do – move into the street, wash dishes for meals and complete your obligations while sitting on a curb. Most of us have far more common sense than that, however. We put the unfinished job aside, “just for a little while,” then seek new work to meet this month’s bills. The old job will have to be finished in spare time.

Unlike deadlines, however, there never seems to be any time to spare. . “Just a little while” all too quickly recedes into the distant past. Possibly all artists have a list of clients they would like to forget – fans to whom they’ve owed art for months, even years. Short of winning a lottery that the artist can live on for the next six months, it is all but impossible to ever catch up.

Last week I had e-mail from an old customer who I’ll give the fanciful name “Merlin Lüngpimpfer.” Merlin asked me about a job that has been hanging fire for ages – photographs of my place taken several years ago actually show the work pinned to a bookshelf in half-finished state. The problem was that I had just looked at some equally old notes that named the customer as “Grover Deppsche.” How could *that* be? A horrible suspicion entered my head that I had actually mixed up *two* neglected customers, and there was only one piece of work between them. Had I completely forgotten an old, old job, before I had even started it? It turned out that this was indeed the case!

In a delicate situation like this, there was little I could do but explain as best as I could and throw myself on the customer’s mercy.

Worse was to come. I discovered in my notes yet *another* job that has been owned for ages – and never, so far as I can tell, even begun. And here I am, two years after I formally announced that I was officially retired from taking commissions.

At present, I have three jobs I deem urgent. The first is unique. I’ve never done “inflation” art before ... and had no plans to, either. Still, someone came to me with a relatively straightforward idea – copy these drawings of a Disney character swelling up into a balloon, but make it *his* character, not Goofy. While there was little conceptual work involved, he did want 20 snapshots of the inflation, which was a fair number. I wrote back to warn him that if he wanted to buy time that I would otherwise spend goofing off and puttering online, he would have to bid against my natural laziness and profound apathy. I set a hefty price, then slightly discounted it if he didn’t require the originals. A bit to my surprise, he accepted.

About half the time I set a high price, the customer turns pale, swallows and stammers, “I can’t possibly afford *that*. Maybe someday, but not now.” Then I never hear from them again. The other half of the time they surprise me – agreeably – by accepting at once. Perhaps I could have asked for *less* without taking a loss. But then, women who speak in Blokee Ingeez who stand at cash registers in Korean groceries make a better hourly wage than I do ... even when I demand a seemingly outrageous sum. Also, with such low hourly rates as I had been asking, I was simply no better off *with* work than *without*

it! There was literally no point in committing myself for the next week to a job I had no interest in doing, just so that I could earn the cost of a meal out. Since that realization, I've been working up my nerve gradually, asking a little more each time.

Meanwhile, most of the artists that I know online seem to be trying to beat each other to the bottom of the rate sheet. It would not surprise me if, in another few months, artists will be offering to work for free. Perhaps they'll even be so desperate as to offer to *pay the customer*. Well, that's no business of mine. *I intend to continue to become more expensive!*

I'm currently working on a second job, which involves a "macro." This is another subject that I'm indifferent to, but not put off by. I've done two or three macros before, possibly all for the same customer. The last one was certainly for "Morton Philopolis." It was an unusual request. He wanted one of my own creations, Saara Mar, to step into the role of the giant. Much more typical, he had a very specific list of details that had to be included in the job. Heck ... he even had me write a short story around the previous job ... a refreshing change of pace, though I probably spent a great deal more time on it that I should have. The new work is a sequel, with even more gruesome scenes of carnage and destruction.

I have yet to start the third job. A friend of mine, "Gilbert Hüntz," has written a novel that takes place on a thinly disguised Barsoom (which, as every well-read SF fan ought to know, is the name given to Mars by Edgar Rice Burroughs). He wants a series of illustrations for the book when it is self-published. Actually, I look forward to this, as it will be a welcome change to draw dirigibles, Thanks, mysterious ruins, P-38 fighter planes and desert landscapes. I've dragged my heels long enough on this job ... but was loathe to start it until everything else was done.

I have an accordion folder that no longer expands. That's because it is stuffed full of half finished sketches. Not the least of them is one I had been prepared to colour as the cover for my farewell to writing in *The Drink Tank*. I was still penciling when I realized how long I had held up that issue already. Reluctantly, I put it aside. To save time, I began digitally colouring a piece that had already been inked. The sketch can be viewed here, if you've a mind to: <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/10342456/> . I have a number of drawings about Fraggie Rock in the folder, too. And several involving imaginary adventures of Scrooge McDuck. I have other unfinished drawings of Saara Mar and Tangel. As well, there are 20 or 30 other starts that have been put aside ... all demanding I complete them.

One answer to my problem is, "write less." Easy for *you* to say, mind you. One reason I began to spend more and more time at the keyboard than at the drawing board was because it seemed less and less painful to write. What use was another drawing? I could post it online, and – if it were dirty – a few people would comment that they'd "do her." Very gratifying response, that ... *very*. Or I'd send it to a fanzine to be published on page 17, next to an article on toilet seats in Prague, and nobody would say anything about it at all. Meanwhile, I had created another original work of art that, after my demise, my sister would never think of anything better to do with than store it unseen in a drawer for another 30 years.

Now, I've just about reached the same point with my writing. More and more, it feels pointless. I spend a week on several thousand heart-wrenching words on wax fruit and my grandfather's mustache, and the only person who wants to publish it is the editor of a fanzine I have never had any inclination to read. All the locs responding to that issue will be about a party at Novacon, overlooking my masterpiece entirely.

Sometimes I wonder why I bother to do *anything*. There was a time when all that I needed to do was please *myself* ... and no amount of effort was too great. You know you're getting old, however, when you can't even do *that* anymore. When it takes too much trouble to please yourself, maybe it's time to lie down and become an actuarial statistic. I intend to please myself again, though ...

But in the meantime, I have work to do ... that most obscene of four-letter words.

---

## STEVE STILES:



## Worth Every Cent You Never Paid Him!

Frankly, this year's Hugo ballot looks so bloody awful that I can't even think about it without wanting to throw something fragile and expensive against a wall. (Something that belongs to someone else, that is.)

However, there is one candidate I'd like to promote, for whom you can vote with confidence, with satisfaction in a duty performed and with the knowledge that you have voted in style. Or with "Stiles."

I had *my* best shot back around 2009, when I was guest of honour at Anticipation. I'll not likely to ever have better odds ... even if my ever appears on a Hugo ballot again. With superb sportsmanship, Steve refused

his nomination that year, to better my chances. The least I can do is to urge everyone this year to vote for Steve. I'm not nominated, so this year the vote won't be split between us. This means that 2013 is likely the best shot at winning Steve has had in years ... or may ever have again.

So I want everyone with a membership or voting rights to step up and cast your vote ... with Stiles.

Why should you, you ask? You happen to think the other candidates are funnier, or you prefer costume jewelry to cartoons, or you don't see what difference there is between a fan artist and cover painter for small press magazines ... why vote for a guy whose art is mentally stuck in the underground comics movement of decades ago, and who illustrates for fanzines ... which hardly anyone reads these days?

You should vote for Steve because he is, *first and foremost*, an artist who has been consistently at the top of all fan polls. There can be no doubt of his ability or sense of humour. For more than half a century, Steve has generously made his art available to almost any fan. You should vote for Steve because he is one of the top artists who have ever illustrated in fanzines – because fanzines were what the fan press *was* when the Hugos were born, and fanzines have been the most important part of the fan press for most of the last eighty or more years. Steve has been donating his work and ideas for more than five of those eight decades.

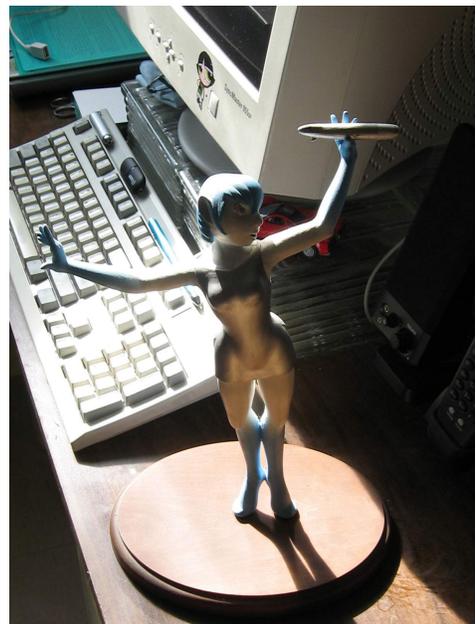
In recent years, we have seen artists win the Hugo who were unseen and unknown two or three years ago, never been seen. Others are being nominated for semi-professional work or handicrafts, or who have had only a tenuous connection with fandom. It's all well and good to talk about a bigger fandom and younger fans, but there are old debts that need paying first. Fandom is inarguably, deeply in debt to Steve Stiles.

---

# A DAY IN A MILLION

A little while ago, June 10<sup>th</sup> uneventfully came and went, even though it should have been a red-letter day on every calendar on the planet. On that day in 1732, Saara Mar was born on a planet 410 light years away, on the outskirts of the Pleiades star cluster. Her birthday is not actually June 10 however ... her planet circles the twin blue-white stars that are its primary every 95.4 Earth days, giving her a birthday somewhat more often than three times an Earth year. I doubt her birthday will fall again on a June 10 again for a very long time. I'm afraid that the last one I calculated the date was for July 17, 2006, which was Saara's 1060<sup>th</sup> "Parturition Day" – at the time, she was 286 by our reckoning. She is 293 today ... but doesn't look a day over 150!

You needn't worry if you didn't send a card. On Parturition Days, her people give gifts to their parents.



*The statuette of Saara Mar was sculpted perhaps 15 years ago by a California artist named Ruben Avila. It is about eleven inches tall, and modeled after a drawing of mine that I use as a sort of personal icon. The photograph was taken not quite as many years ago by another artist, Todd Sutherland. The computer monitor has been replaced by a flat screen since the picture was taken.*

# LEFT-OVER PARTS

Gregory Benford, [xbenford@gmail.com](mailto:xbenford@gmail.com)

Good issue. Indeed, *Locus's* shutdown of that April 1 piece shows how "sensitive" so many have gotten. Gone are the days when fans could joust with laughs & insights. Wiscon's driven many away already; Dave Hartwell goes no more. Sad.

So who was the "certain, opinionated someone on File 770"?

Bear, Brin & I wrote those Foundation novels at Janet Asimov's invitation, and 'twas fun. I like SF's continuing conversation, a clear difference from the other genres. Of more interest to me is a galaxy without FTL, 'cause that's where we live, and life seems to be sparse – so far.

*Fandom does seem a lot less fun than it was even in the 1970s. "Why so serious?" said the Joker in one of those Batman movies, and you'd think that, like the Joker, a fan with a sense of humour was going to cut your throat a moment later.*

*The "certain, opinionated someone on File 770" would be Gary Farber. Mike and I sometimes exchange our opinion on Mr. Farber -- who is a nice enough guy in some ways, but who delights in taking unpopular opinions, then fighting tooth and nail to quiet all opposition. He never gives up, never comes to the point where he understands both positions have exhausted themselves and there's nothing left to say, never agrees finally to disagree and get on with his life. Worse, he is impressively verbose. A few concise words will never do when it's possible to run on for 800 words for a simple "yes" or "no." Gary isn't above distortions of the truth or innuendo, either. "If you had ever bothered to consult with anyone who knew the facts, or spend two minutes accessing the internet, you would know ... etc." Of course, he probably spent all morning reading Wikipedia himself, before suggesting it would only take a minute. The sad thing is that the issues he takes on are almost never important.*

*I didn't want anyone who happened to have written a Foundation novel to take offense. I enjoyed all three for what they were ... but each was almost violently different from the others in style, and all changed the Foundation future in ways that, for me, lessened the originals.*

*We do indeed seem to live in a STL universe ... for beings of matter and energy, at least. I've been casually watching for articles on the warp idea – toruses of "exotic matter" of astronomic mass – with interest, but I don't expect to see anything practical emerge in the near future. When some practical application is, perhaps, found, it's likely to be completely unexpected -- a better communications theory, maybe, that allows infinite data through a limited data gateway. Who knows? Is there knowledge that will never have a use? That's one of those bits of knowledge we don't have.*

---

Bill Patterson, [bpral22169@aol.com](mailto:bpral22169@aol.com)

Sorry for the silence on this end for the last few months: the next and hopefully last batch of editorial revisions for volume 2 of the Heinlein biography came through earlier than I expected – and it's always all oars in the water, as I hope to avoid this volume also taking 3.5 years in preparation. You know, that thing was written entirely in 2005. It's been cut, expanded to editorial demand, cut again, expanded again, and cut again. The roller coaster is making me queasy.

I think the only April Fools joke I noticed this year was the announcement YouTube would be shutting down -- which, if they keep loading in a superfluity of ads, might be a good thing. Trying to get through a playlist of Debussy in which every single number is preceded by a blaring ad for Hangover III or cars (the bane of Hulu's disgusting forced advertising) is very trying. I've already pronounced anathema upon HuffPost. I'm a little tired of the spiritual-material "debate," for of course it's one of those things that really doesn't mean anything at all and is a way of not talking about important things but getting sidetracked in discourse about nothing, so that nothing real ever gets addressed. Welcome to the 21st century. People who are bent towards religion (emphasis on the "bent") seem particularly prone to this meaningless dichotomy -- because it's been a Christian staple for a couple thousand years now, I think as a result of trying to reconcile classical era Platonism with Christianity.

Hit the send button too soon. I meant to say the next and hopefully last batch of editorial revisions for volume 2 of the Heinlein biography came through earlier than I expected -- and it's always all oars in the water, as I hope to avoid this volume also taking 3.5 years in preparation.

*I had a debate online about two weeks ago, with a guy who said that there must be an afterlife because matter cannot be conscious! We are conscious, so there must be spirit! Ay-yi-yi! How do primates who can learn relatively complicated things like tying a shoe not understand circular reasoning?*

*I don't have much use for YouToob myself. Not only do the ads take up more time than many of the videos, but the sound and image start and stop all the way to the end. Who can stand it? YooTube has also changed something so that it's impossible to save a file from them unless the file is especially meant for downloading -- which isn't often. So every time I want to show a bunny chasing a St. Bernard to someone, I have to go online, wait through at least one ad, then expect my friends to put up with the rotten stop 'n go delivery. I don't go to YuTewb unless my life depends on it.*

*Nothing worth doing is ever worth doing well ... You do it because you must.*

---

Ned Brooks, [nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

Hi Taral - Thanks for the zine. I had not heard about *Locus* and the burqas - don't neos these days get any instruction in the use of the Shield of Umor? Or as the Church of the SubGenius advises, "F\*\*k 'em if they can't take a joke." I don't know why you suppress the name of the "certain opinionated someone" - I would probably recognize it, but I haven't seen *Locus* or *File 770* in years.

My problem with the Three Stooges had to do with the utter pointlessness of their routines. I like Laurel & Hardy and the Marx Brothers - they were idiots, but there was always some direction to the process. Any plot in a Stooges movie was just a setup for them to abuse each other in ways that if it wasn't cleverly faked, would have put them all in the hospital or the morgue. No doubt it requires some talent to reproduce cartoon violence in live action - but it was just the same thing over and over.

But my favorite style of humor is the surreal, as with Monty Python.

I quite agree with you about "materialism." I think that "spiritualism vs. materialism" is a false dichotomy. Memories of facts are unreliable, and memories of emotions are evanescent. The world is a physical object, and the bits of it that we like to keep around are convenient reminders or objects of intrinsic interest. I have 300+ typewriters that I keep because I find the various solutions to the problem of how to put text on paper interesting. Some of them worked fine when I got them, some I have been able to restore, a few will never work again but for more interesting reasons than gross physical abuse.

I have been a completist of sorts with only a few authors -- Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Tanith Lee. There are others that I have almost everything by -- but they weren't that prolific. Of the SF authors you mention, I liked Bradbury the best but felt no need to have everything of any of them. I liked Heinlein's early short stories. I liked

Clarke's short stories too, and some of his novels - others I found unreadable. The most prolific author I have read most of is probably Jack Vance. What I remember of Asimov is mostly his science columns in F&SF. But do you have *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man* as by "Dr.A"?

Obscure books are usually unknown for good reason, but some turn out to be interesting. I don't see much improbable about "L. A. Morse" as a name. Well, it does hint at "lame horse".... But suppose his parental units had chose "Robert" and "Edward" as his given names....

*I just got a loc from Greg Benford saying something similar about the "Shield of Umor" and fans who will no longer go to Wiscons because the con is so grim.*

*The Stooges are in many ways a poor man's Laurel & Hardy. But they had the advantage of being on TV every Saturday morning, and often just before dinner on school days. Despite appearances, you came to like "the boys," as they were usually victims more often than victimizers. Even other vintage comics praised the Stooges for hard work and perfect timing. Not all those stunts were faked, either ... they got their share of sprains, bruises and busted ribs. Much of the damage was done to meet breakneck schedules and miniscule budgets.*

*I read a lot of vintage fantasy back in the 1970s, but after a while lost my taste for it.*

*I did have it. But I didn't think it was funny at all, and got rid of it eventually. Asimov must have thought it was a scream, though -- I've heard there were sequels.*

---

Robert Lichtman, [robertlichtman@yahoo.com](mailto:robertlichtman@yahoo.com)

Got this one from efanazines and have been turning pages -- and immediately wondered if the acquaintance you refer to on the top of page 3, to whom you wouldn't lend books and CDs, was Our Hope. As for materialism vs. spiritualism, I basically agree with your statement that "the value of possessions is that they can serve our spiritual needs." Other than having a large fanzine collection and more books than I probably need, I live quite modestly. I spent a decade on the Farm commune investigating whether or not "voluntary poverty" (which with the passage of time became more and more involuntary) was a Good Thing. In the end I determined that it wasn't -- loop back here to my quote from you up above.

Enjoyed your article on completism and Isaac Asimov. Yes, there's perhaps no way to determine whether you can have everything he's sold and has been published over his long career. In connection with this you mention how Bob Silverberg has "rewritten and expanded upon three of Asimov's stories." This leads me to speculate that it might be even more impossible to complete a collection of Agberg's writing, especially given all the softcore stuff he wrote under numerous pseudonyms. You also mention Phil Dick's "thousands of short stories." Actually, according to the Levack bibliography, there were 152 -- but that was published in 1981, when Phil was still alive, and perhaps there are a few more. Whatever, they were all collected in a 5-volume Collected Stories back in the late '80s -- originally it was a set of hardcovers, but they were eventually in non-small press trade paperbacks and not especially expensive.

Eric is right in the second paragraph of his letter. I \*do\* define fandom that way, so far as what I mainly pay attention to, but at the same time I'm aware that there are far more people beyond "me and my friends" that are also part of fandom. One such who turned up in your letter column this time is Fred Patten, who, I was pleased to read in the last sentence of his second paragraph, is in decent stable shape. Fred is someone I met in my first year in fandom, because once the LASFS was revealed to me (I entered fandom in L.A. and published my first fandom unaware of the club), he graciously gave me rides to and from the meetings, since we lived in the same zip code.

Well, all for now....

Voluntary poverty would also include eschewing things like exotic foods, travel, novel experiences, challenging activities ... in other words, living like a 10th century peasant on gruel on onions, never going further than a day's walk from home or doing anything but hoe dirt. What's good about that?

Yeah, the "borrower" I didn't want to name was Hope. She tries to borrow books and CDs from all her friends. Neither Bob Wilson nor I will lend her things, as a rule. Not that we don't lend to each other, but because Hope uses it to save money that she can spend on eating out instead. I hardly ever get to eat out, because of the expense, so don't take kindly to making it easier for someone who does it routinely. Anyway, she never has anything interesting to say about a loan – "it was wonderful," "it was great," or "I didn't like it" ... that's about it.

Still, I've been okay with Hope the last couple of years. I think she's absorbed certain facts about herself, and can laugh if I remind her that we've been talking for the last 15 minutes about what she ate at Corflu ... so how was the con? Not that she didn't also spend 15 minutes telling Bob what she ate at Corflu, and probably everyone else she knows.

---

Eric Mayer, [groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com)

I'm going to echo Robert in that it is sometimes a little difficult to write you a decent loc when I've already seen and commented on much of the material. I don't want to repeat myself and if I try to find something new to say I'll probably end being even more boring than during my first comments. Of course you could always lift some of my initial comments to you for the loccol if you wished.

Hard to say where one draws the line when it comes to humor on sensitive subjects. Let's face it, humor is often used by people – racists are a prime example – to say things they know are not acceptable by pretending they are simply being humorous. Consider all the "jokes" about Obama. But then again zealots have no apparent sense of humor at all, so a lot of people today seem to suffer from "Mohammed's Face Syndrome." I'd like to see Moe give Mohammed two fingers in the eyes.

I am definitely not materialistic. But I wouldn't categorize collecting relatively inexpensive items as being particularly materialistic. To me, being materialistic means allowing one's life to revolve around accumulating things and/or amassing money. Would you say your collections or your creative endeavors are central to your life? Long ago I had accumulated all sorts of junk, especially books and record albums. My ex-wife, aided and abetted by the family courts, made off with the lot. And I mean *everything*. Even books and records I had bought before we were married! (Yeah, family courts are accessories to endless crimes.) However, I found it wasn't really any big deal in the end. I rarely missed any of the stuff. So I decided to just stop accumulating anything again, period, and have been perfectly happy living totally without stuff.

Great article on Asimov. It's a bibliographical sort of piece, but the way it's written makes it readable. Amazing. I can hardly recall reading Asimov, but I must have. The local library was a former white-painted wood-frame house and the Science Fiction collection was on the second floor, at the top of the very worn stairs, in what must have been the smallest bedroom. I had to have read every book in that room, and there must have been plenty of Asimovs. But then again I barely remember anything I read specifically, even though from grade school into college I read SF constantly. It all congealed into one big gooey lump of sensawunda that has clogged up my thinking mechanism ever since.

You did convince me to read (or probably reread) Asimov's robot mystery, *The Caves of Steel* and I enjoyed it. I liked how the solution to the mystery depended on the Science Fiction content. It wasn't simply a mystery story given a Science Fictional background. Science Fiction authors knew how to write back before too many decided they needed to appeal to literary critics and the field degenerated into pretentiousness.

It's interesting that Asimov, in *Caves of Steel*, postulated that there would have to be huge changes in society for the human race to survive well before population reached the 8 billion mark it is at during the book, but we have surpassed that mark with no such changes occurring, and none even hinted at.

Can't say the Aurora awards sound very sensible. One category for all forms of fanac aside from publishing, and a separate category for filking? Sheesh.

That *Old Dick* book, on the other hand sounds amusing. Most mystery readers are older (older women precisely) so I'm surprised there aren't more elderly detectives. There are some.

Finally, I shall refrain from the discussion of what/when/where/wither/whether is fandom. Alas, in my second venture into fandom I failed even more miserably than the first time to find any way to make a valued contribution.

---

Steve Jeffery, [srjeffery@aol.com](mailto:srjeffery@aol.com)

Thanks for sending me the latest issue of *Broken Toys*, 17th of that ilk.

Re. "What Does it Take to Get a Laugh..." As for political correctness, did you hear about the furore over comedian Reginald D. Hunter's booking at the UK football association awards ceremony? There's an entertaining, and provocatively thoughtfully comment on this in *The Independent*.

(<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/comedy/features/game-for-a-laugh-the-pfa-awards-furore-was-a-joke--and-reginald-d-hunter-makes-the-most-of-it-8603424.html>)

It's not as if Hunter hasn't used the n word before, even on UK mainstream television, and it would be a given that his live show would be bound to be even edgier, but as the Independent points out, "... the ironies, I would suggest, go deeper than that. An organisation in charge of a sport that is not exactly renowned for its freedom from racism (either on the field or off) hires a black comedian only to disown him and to wax censorious because his work refuses to be pious about the subject of race or to eschew the N-word."

And comments later, "Political correctness – at its best a voluntary code of sensitive, verbally watchful respect for the otherness of people who are different from ourselves – can itself be guilty of discriminatory bad faith, along the lines of "I'm right-thinking. You're politically correct. He's a language-fascist." And its obsession with linguistic purity can all too easily become a substitute for lifting so much as a finger where actually promoting cordiality, whether interracial or between mainstream and minority cultures, is concerned."

"Gotta Have Them All. I started being a bit of a completist with certain SF authors when we has less books and more wall, but it's not longer a viable option and hasn't been for years, where we really need to impose a "one in, one out" rule on new acquisitions before we end up living in a tent in the garden, outside a house full of books. The real trick is to pick an author with a very slow work rate, like John Crowley (one volume every seven or so years -- it took me decades to finish the *Aegypt* sequence).

I was interested in Hunter's response that he wasn't trying to "reclaim" the N word, since he regarded it as a word imposed by whites on blacks. I don't know when it made the transition so that black/coloured/African Americans (another constantly changing politically correct minefield of terminology) began to use it to refer to each other.

The four books in Crowley's *Aegypt* sequence, from *Aegypt* (1987) through to *Endless Things* (2007) were spaced so far apart that as each new book came out I had to re-read the whole series again to pick up where I had left it. This is the only time I ever done this. George R.R.Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* almost rivals Crowley's output in the glacial release of the last couple of volumes (I'm about halfway though Book 5, *A Dance of Dragons*), but now there's a whole Wiki devoted the series, so I spend a day catching up the synopses of the previous two books to remind myself of who was still alive and where they had ended up.

*I used to be a John Crowley completist too! I had all editions of his books that I knew about, up to a certain point. Then I realized that I didn't especially enjoy reading his books. This is a common experience for me. I read one novel by an author*

*new to me, and it's completely different from anything I've read before, so I get a kick from it. But then the second novel doesn't seem quite as much of a kick, and the third is just a drag to read.*

*In an ideal world, the N-word would be no more offensive than the C-word (Canuck ; ). Neither is the formal word for "black person" or "Canadian," so both have potential for insult. Yet Canadians are never insulted when called Canucks. (We're insulted if called Americans, though.) Clearly, intent has much to do with how loaded a word is, but intent is also hard to judge. Zealous people are apt to presume all uses of a loaded word are meant to injure, even when they are not. But the relationships between groups is also likely to be as instrumental as intention. Canadians, as a whole, have no emotional baggage about being Canadian -- we were never anyone's underclass, nor are we accustomed to being spoken to disrespectfully. So "Canuck" carries no offensive meaning in anyone's lexicon. The N word, on the other hand... Who can possibly blame a Navaho for being suspicious when the N word is used?*

When I started collecting sf/fantasy books seriously in my teens, I made the classic mistake of starting with Moorcock and Aldiss, two of the most prolific writers in the UK at the time. I gave that up as a lost cause a few years down the line (Moorcock could probably write faster than I could read), but it means I still have about a yard of shelf space for each of those two, and that's not counting the many anthologies or critical works edited by Aldiss, on his own or in collaboration.

When I joined the BSFA, first as a reviewer and then for a while as reviews editor, my own collection concentrated more on British SF authors, so the shelves show reasonably complete runs of works by writers like Iain Banks (with and without middle initial), Rob Holdstock, Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Colin Greenland, Mary Gentle, Ian McDonald, Ken Macleod. As I mentioned, as shelf space ran out (new books now sit in a pile on the floor) and as my reading tastes changed so that SF no longer completely dominated by reading, I stopped attempting to maintain complete runs even of favourite authors.

Sometimes I will start a series, enjoy the first couple of books, but find the third or fourth no longer holds my attention. I have no great brand loyalty – I am especially fickle when it comes to shopping – and as I get older (or perhaps more well-read outside the genre and/or with less time to read) I find that I am less patient, and will give up on an author after a disappointing read, or if I suspect they're dragging things out.

Of that list above, Holdstock sadly is no longer with us, and Banks by his own admission may not be for long, Gentle and Greenland seem to have stopped writing altogether. In a way this makes collecting – or at least maintaining a collection – easier, although not for reasons that should be welcomed. Authors I still automatically add to my Christmas and birthday list are Graham Joyce (a hugely overlooked writer outside the UK), Elizabeth Hand and Charles Stross, who keeps things fresh and unexpected by constantly swapping and mashing up genres.

Similarly, through the 70s I used to be a music completist for several artists back when records were records and came on flat bits of black plastic, principally for Yes, Fairport Convention and John Martyn. Lugging a record player and 4 or 5 cases of vinyl between changes of digs every 18 months, as well as those artists going off in directions that I wasn't that enamored of, put paid to that sometime in the early '80s. Now I backfill or catch up with new artists from CD anthologies and collections on a sporadic basis, but I now tend to go for breadth than depth, hopping from jazz to folk to rock to electronica or choral, so I can follow Palestrina with Thelonious Monk or Faithless, and Eliza Carthy with Television or Muse as the mood takes me.

Bob Jennings, [FabFicBks@aol.com](mailto:FabFicBks@aol.com),  
29 Whiting rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035

Your long dissertation on the merits of materialism vs. spiritualism indicates to me that you may have some secret misgivings about your dedication to the joys of collecting Things as opposed to the practice of devoting more of your time to human interaction and the joys of sensual experience, the kinds of things you experience by traveling, eating out, going to dances, meeting friends, joining discussion groups or engaging in other social activities.

Aesthetics have long touted the advantages of the spiritual life as having more significance, meaning, depth, outright lifelong satisfaction than devoting one's existence to accumulating wealth and material objects. It seems to me that there is something to be said for both sides of the coin, and that maybe standing the coin on edge and enjoying both things at once might be the best of all worlds.

The situation for most people is that their lives are made up mostly of memories. The best part of love is the great memories. The great memories generated by happy moments are especially cherished by a vast portion of the population. But it seems to me that most of the good memories also revolve around material objects. Starving people are unlikely to have fond memories of scrambling around trying to eke out a bare existence, scrounging for every morsel of food, than somebody who remembers a great Thanksgiving dinner with the whole family there pigging out on a monster feast.

The problem with materialism is that it often leads to conspicuous consumption. Too many people buy stuff not because they particularly enjoy it, but because they are expected to have it. In modern North American society, it is expected that everyone should get married, acquire the auto, the nice house/apartment/condo, the 2.3 kids, the giant screen TV, the smart phone/computer and whatever other currently chic trendy gadgets are available, and take luxury vacations, whether you happen to be able to afford those things or not. And often, whether you particularly *want* them or not.

Balancing the two sides of that spiritual/material coin on edge is not likely to be easy, but it still seems to me to be an ideal worth working for.

Nice write-up on your appreciation of the writings of Isaac Asimov. I'm surprised you overlooked *The Naked Sun* and *The Caves of Steel*, which I personally consider to be two of his best novels. I am also somewhat surprised by your statements that you never got into Robert Heinlein's stories. I always felt his conversational dialog was some of the most modern and best in the field, certainly a lot more realistic than the majority of writers in the field. I sure didn't see that "family television" style you alluded to. Still, everybody to his own personal reading tastes.

*Heinlein's prose was modern in 1940. But he achieved some of the modernity through affectations that haven't aged as well as the story itself. I thought I'd covered the two Asimov "R. Daneel Olivaw" novels by implication, though I may have not mentioned them explicitly. They are two of the three Asimov books I would most recommend to anyone who had broad tastes and could put up with the 1950s anachronisms. The other is "End of Eternity."*

I feel that Asimov's shorter fiction was often superior to his novels. He was a master of the short story with a little twist at the end. I was also surprised you did not care for his "Black Widower Club" short stories. Eleven volumes of those are out. I checked them out of the library to see what they were like and enjoyed them all thoroughly, but due to a lack of physical space around my house I didn't choose to buy copies of my own. I happen to enjoy problem stories that can be solved with a unique twist, but clearly you don't. Again, everyone to his own personal reading tastes.

*Some of his short stories are classics – though I would imagine the prose is the same work-a-day language as the novels. That never bothered me much. But the Club mysteries never seemed like stories to me – just propositions with a trick*

*explanation at the end. I know some mystery readers dote on the stuff, but I never cared for it. Give me Raymond Chandler over Agatha Christie any day.*

I dunno, maybe you'll win a few Aurora Awards anyway. Dumping on the award and the committee and the people who won and all their supporters will certainly get their attention, if nothing else. Like it or not, curmudgeons do get noticed. Being a consistent publisher/writer/producer of an online fanzine that comes out really, really often will probably be more important tho. Do they give an actual award, or just a warmhearted e-mail of congratulation? I would hold out for a gold-stamped embossed letter certificate, if nothing else.

*There is an actual award. It looks a bit like an Aurora Borealis ... or a rasher of bacon done up in chrome. My low profile with the voters is probably not due to my problem with attitude so much as the tiny size of Canadian fanzine fandom. By my count, there are only about a dozen members spread out across the country, from Vancouver to the Maritimes. The number is somewhat greater if you add people who contribute to their local clubzine ... but they are usually uninterested in other fanzines. So almost any Aurora nominee is likely to have more support than one who is nominated for what they've done in fanzines.*

Oh, one other thing—why do you not print the addresses for the people in your letter column? The point of SF fandom is communication among fans. If you ever print anything I ever write, I'd sure want my address included. I welcome contact with other fans, I want them to send me fanzines and I am still old-fashioned enuf to believe that communication among fans is the basis of this hobby. Yeah, yeah, what a Ludite. I still put out a print fanzine too, just to prove the point.

*In many cases, I don't actually have a physical address for the letter writer. Even when I do, I'd have to look for it, while the e-mail address is right under my nose. I also publish e-mail addresses to help others who want to distribute their zines as I do, not just by posting to eFanzines.com but by direct mailing. By the way ... I had to look up **your** address, above.*

Didn't mean to ramble on and on. No doubt I'm boring you to tears.

*Not at all ... besides, I edited your loc to about half the original size. ;)*

---

## Lloyd Penny, [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

Issue 17 of Broken Toys is on my monitor, and has risen to the top of my list of e-zines to be responded to. Friday nights are usually quiet for us, so time for a little writing, let's see what comes out.

I have always seen certain parts of fandom as being totally humour-free. Others are almost eager to be offended. I am sure they could have a humour transplant, but I am equally sure that the transplant would reject them. There's a disclaimer on some comedy shows that say that not all will share the same sense of humour, but that's quite an assumption. Oh, well, these days, I'd rather be informed than entertained.

We enjoy a cozy clutter of possessions at home...books, toys, stuffed items, fanzines galore, more books, souvenirs, you name it. I quite understand that at some point, I may have to get rid of the lot should we have to move to smaller digs. Sometimes, I wonder if I should get rid of everything and live simply, but then I lie down, and the urge goes away. Sure, things aren't that important, but we do imbue them with meaning in our lives, and they represent opinions, experiences, occurrences and values, among other things. When it comes to books, I can't afford new ones, and I can't expect free reading all the time, so I purchase what I can afford from the used section, and will probably continue to read from familiar authors from the '60s, '70s and '80s until I can't read any more. Asimov was my favourite, too, and I met him twice.

The local...I always saw fandom as a loosely-based community or network of people with similar reading tastes and attitudes. I think a lot of that community is going away because social media can spread your interests further, and it is far too expensive for many to travel any more. We can see the network declining now, and we're doing an awful lot of reminiscing, as if it was already gone.

I would always refuse to shop at Wal-Mart, but when Zeller's crapped out, generally replaced by Target, not nearly as good here as in the US, I needed to buy some new jeans, and the only place I could find my size was at (ick...sigh) Wal-Mart. I bought them, and got out. If I could have found them anywhere else, I would have bought them there, but...

I was one of those *Star Trek* brought into fandom. There's not exactly any fandom recruitment station in major cities, so there was little if anything available to me to tell me about it, but after the three years of the original *Star Trek*, I bought many of the associated books, and the books by Gene Roddenberry and David Gerrold told me of fandom, and when the family moved to the West Coast, I found a Star Trek club there. It was the Gold/Wollheim/other editor anthologies that told me there a non-Trek fandom, and it took me moving back to Toronto for school to find it. Fandom does change, but we stay rooted. Our moves into steampunk and Murdoch Mysteries have kept things fresh for us, but our involvement in SF fandom seems to have stagnated. When we announced that we were retired from running cons over the past 30 years, some thought we were gafiating.

My loc ... I did not get the job I referred to, with an advertising agency in Scarborough, but I do have another interview with Sears Canada downtown. I need something very soon, or getting rid of most of possessions may become a real possibility.

I am on the Aurora ballot, too, and I may have some hopes for it. The voting fee pays for the silvery wooden trophies and prevented block voting, which two groups – one in Toronto and one out west – were doing, even with pre-filled-out or photocopied ballots. Unfortunately, the fee also pushes out those who would like to vote, but can't afford it. I have a few trophies on the shelf, and if the pros continue to horn in and grab what fan Auroras they can, I may just call it a day, and be pleased with what I do have.

All done for the time being, and thank you for a zine good enough to get a page and a half of comments out of me, not bad at all. I hope you have a pleasant weekend, and I may have to see if I can put my feet up at all this weekend. Not expecting it, but you never know. Take care.

*I've been almost desperate to get rid of things, but can't bring myself to actually throw anything away -- it's a waste! I'll give things away, and, best of all sell things. Use- book stores aren't paying much these day, though ... when they buy books at all. If I could only get to Bakka, I could probably weed a hundred or more books off my shelves. What in the world did I want all those J.G. Ballard novels for, anyway? I never liked them much. Mostly, I have them because other collectors valued them. Yet, in spite of selling hundreds of books that I could, I still have trouble shelving those that are left. I've bought almost as many replacement books as I managed to sell, you see!*

*Then, there are other things that I can only store in plastic "shoe" boxes. I'd love to have shelf space for my plastic dinosaurs, toy motorcycles, model airplanes and all sorts of other junk ... but until I can reduce my book collection by at least 20%, fat chance of that.*

*Evidently you're seeing well enough to be sitting in front of a monitor. That's good news. Some days my eyes bother me terribly, but I'm not sure why some days yet not others. I usually do better in the evenings, possibly because the sun isn't in the corner of my eye.*

*Know anyone who collects vinyl 8-inch hockey players? I've some to spare...*

---

**We Also Heard From: Peter Halasz, [peter@halasz.ca](mailto:peter@halasz.ca) – Dave Haren, [tyrbolo@comcast.net](mailto:tyrbolo@comcast.net) who said, “I see someone has been using Chinese ammo in their 44 Mag. For some reason those tend to attract the power-happy shooters, who decide it needs to be overloaded. Probably an exhibition of *Machoitis*.” *The blogger who posted the original photos of his exploded revolver also took full blame for packing the cartridges with powder that was too powerful for a magnum round. He didn't sound like a rural militant type, who wears an orange vest and cammie pants***

*in the woods ... but obviously he took his sport seriously. Also, "Toronto has become a celebrity ... over the Mayor and his amazing collection of interesting people." I presume Dave means the Somali drug lords that Hizzoner Rob Ford appears to hang out with. At this point, I suspect the only way Ford can gain a majority of votes in the next election is if he runs for "immediate cardiac arrest." Greg Giacobbe, [ggiacobe@optonline.net](mailto:ggiacobe@optonline.net), who admits to being a closet statuephile, but I don't think really means it. He also remembers fondly the con reports that Fred Patton used to run in Rowrbrazzle, back in ye olde days.*

**We'd Like to Hear From:** Victoria Vayne, Arnie Katz, Claire Brialey

## First Names

It was the first morning in the Garden of Eden. Something very bright and round rose over one corner of the Garden, and it occurred to the First Man that his lexicon was inadequate. He gave himself the First Name. Then, in a spell of wonder, he strolled around the garden to bestow Names on everything he found. In the first minutes he named the Creek, the Elbow, the Moose, the Moose Patty and many, many other things. Finally, he came to a roundish, brown, scabby Something about the size of his fist, and nearly, but not quite, buried in the ground.

"Hi. I'm the First Man. I call myself Adam, in case there's ever another Man. You are a ... let's see... a Potato!"

"Hi, there yourself! I'm ... oh, um ... I'll call myself Spud! Spud the Potato ... in case there's ever another one."

"What about that one over there?" Adam asked. "He looks mighty like another Potato to me?"

"Who? My next-door neighbor? He's no Potato."

"What is he, then, I wonder?" Adam stepped over to the other tuber, and said, "Hi. I'm the First Man. What are you?"

"Me? I Yam what I Yam."

# In Defiance of the Received Wisdom of Ayn Rand

*Warning: don't read the following if you oppose taxes in principle, if you are a Libertarian, if you admire the works of Ayn Rand, or if you happen to be a member of the government of George III. It will only convince you that you have been too soft with slackers and parasites like me.*

I have a healthy disregard for people who run down taxes. Nobody likes to pay them, of course, not even I ... and I don't pay income taxes. On my restricted income, sales taxes of 13% are quite enough. But people tend to forget that they depend on all the things that taxes pay for – everything from paved roads to police protection, from educating children to maintaining National Parks, from the certification of surgeons to filtering tap water. Taxes even subsidize their churches ... by exempting them from the taxes *everyone else* pays. People want, and depend, on the things that taxes pay for ... but then complain that taxes are the work of the devil ... or worse, Socialism. It's short-sighted, senseless and even selfish.

Randists and Libertarians argue that taxes are wrong because they *compel* you to use city streets and rely on the purity of blood transfusions. Better these services be offered privately, and that it is the responsibility of *you*, the consumer, to check on their safety yourself. If it's a hardship to check on all the thousands of ways you might be cheated, tricked, swindled, blown up or injured, that's the price of liberty, they say – as though closing the door of the barn, after fire has gutted it, was the same thing as prevention. It is only *moral* that you have the right to fall for some mountebank's scam or poison yourself to save a half-dollar. Your life or health apparently has no value in itself – not compared to the right to make mistakes you would, no doubt, avoid if it was possible to be aware of them all. (It isn't.)

But I analyze it differently. The Libertarian hatred of government is simple envy.

A Libertarian looks at a government service and sees it as an opportunity for someone like *him* to provide it ... likely at a higher price, and certainly not to people who can't put up the money. (Discount his argument that he can do it cheaper – he *may* be able to, but only by lowering wages or outsourcing to a third-world nation that employs unfree labour. One thing you may be certain of is that his *profit margin* will be higher.)

Private ownership these days is rarely what it seems, however. In almost all cases other than the corner grocery or a used-book dealer, business is run by corporations. Big ones, little ones, but, either way, a corporation is nothing but a different form of collective ownership, where possession is shared among "capitalists" instead of "citizens." Ultimately, then, the Libertarian argument is that some collective ownership is good, and some collective ownership is bad. They wish to eliminate the *bad* collective ownership that is in competition with *good* ownership ... *their* ownership.

Put this way, Libertarianism is also an argument against democracy – it is a declaration that *the public* – that is, you and me – have no right to own property or provide a service. It is only alright for *them* to own property or provide a service. Libertarianism is a renunciation of the very idea of civic action or the public interest. Only capitalists, *investors*, may own property or operate a business, and – as we all know – not everyone has money to invest, and therefore would not have any say in how a pure Libertarian society is run. Those without money to invest are only there for the ride, and do what they are *told* by the actual ownership class. So much for the argument that Libertarianism is about eliminating compulsion. Far from a progressive philosophy, Libertarianism is a return to how matters were in the 18th. century – let us say, Georgian England ... the very state of affairs that the fathers of the American Revolution rose up against.

Libertarians are rank *Tories*.

Libertarianism is an anti-democratic movement in opposition to the very idea that, as citizens, we *all* have an inherent say in our common interests. It advocates the replacement of democracy with a system in which people only gain a say through ownership. In this system, rights are property, and, like property, are bought with money.

A more accurate name for any such system of ideas is **Propertarianism**. I am agin' it.

---

I think it was George Orwell who said that anyone who isn't a socialist when they are 20 has no heart, but anyone who is still a socialist when they are 40 has no brains.

It could as easily be said that anyone who isn't a Libertarian when he is 20 has no brains, but who is still a Libertarian when he is 40 has no heart.

---

Explanation: Late in 2012, I wrote a compendium of Fraggile Lore that would no doubt have greatly surprised Jim Henson and his associates. But I've become much enamoured of the world inside The Rock, and in my daydreams have been adding to it many features of my own, including places, things and, of course, characters. The Fraggile to the right is Kiki, by the way. She is odd because she is curious about the Doozers and watches them build. No need to tell me that I'm wasting my time ... the Fraggiles belongs to the Disney corporation, and it will *never* let go. Nevertheless, I think I have a thought about how to get around that. The Fraggiles are rather similar to creatures I independently created before the TV series, called House Gamins – the two can probably be blurred together. Someday, I may try my hand at writing stories – but until then I just add lore about the Rock as it comes to me. Will I publish my notes in a fanzine? To be honest, I doubt that anyone wants to read them.

