



Broken Toys 30, another milestone issue, produced by Taral Wayne, who broods and plots in his apartment at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. For instant gratification, write me at Taral@bell.net Copies of BT30 are available for download from eFanzines.com. It is late **August 2014**, Canadian National Exhibition season, the best time of the year to be in Toronto! This issue is Kideldivee Books & Art 286 - or ExtraTaralitoriality 286 - or Taralble Mistakes 286.

A Life Misspent

Unless you hear the voice of God talking to you from your shoe, or you are D. West, you are probably having doubts about yourself from time to time. Even people who have no justifiable reason to question their self-worth, such as Bill Gates or George Lucas, must wake up some mornings and wonder if they have really made good use of their lives or not. Those of us who have not made billions of dollars or reshaped Hollywood have even more reason to doubt, especially if we are fans ... and have frittered away our years croaking as loudly as we can on a lily pad barely the size of the sort of obscure religious sect that practices polygamy and tries hard to stay out of the news.

Many years ago, a friend of mine who I regarded as having a rock-solid ego, once said to me that he had recently experienced one of those unsettling moments when he suddenly wondered if he had been wasting his time all along. Even geniuses, he said, sometimes look back on their symphonies, paintings or novels and wonder if it was all crap. He wondered if everything he had done was all crap. Wisely, I didn't attempt to answer. I had even more doubts about him than he did.

I certainly have plenty of doubts about *myself*. After all, if I'm such a genius, why did I have to write my own article for Wikipedia? I've filled 20 or 30 zip-binders of with art and fan writing that will be thrown in the dumpster when I'm gone. In recognition, I have a box of pins, indicating my also-ran status, which I never go any place to wear. But even at that, I've got more to show for it than most fans.

I have a repeating fantasy that comes to me in my bleaker moments. I have closed the door of life behind me, and stand in front of St. Peter's Registration Desk waiting to be admitted to the Otherworldcon. There is an overly busy, very minor angel at the computer in front of me, and I'm being chewed out for having had ambitions in life that I wasn't meant to have.

"You were only given a second-rate intellect, and talent enough to amuse yourself with wood-burning or painting model kits. This was so because you were meant to be a bus driver ... or postman. You were supposed to get married to someone equally humble, have two kids and live an ordinary, reasonably happy life.

"But what did you *do* with the attributes given you? You got the hare-brained notion that you were an *artist* and an *intellectual*, and pissed away all the opportunities to get a good job or meet the normal people that we guided in your direction! Worse, you tried so hard that you actually *did* manage to become an artist of some modest merit, and swotted up all sorts of stuff you were never meant to know. Who do you think you were, to rise above your allotted station and *almost* push aside worthwhile individuals we had fast-tracked for the arts and literature! Don't you think that if you had been meant to be an illustrator, painter, novelist or journalist of some sort, you would have succeeded long before your old age? Do you think we put obstacles in the way of your career just to make it more challenging? We wanted you to *fail* while there was still time!

"But you never caught on, sorry to say. Admission to the Hereafter rejected. You'll just have to do a thousand years of penance as a recurring FaceBook meme until your bad karma is wiped from the record. Now step aside. NEXT!"

Well, if that's the way it's going to be, what have I got to lose if I carry on wasting my time just the way I have been doing all my life until now? If you think about it, you'll probably agree it's the same with you.

THE MONTREAL SCREWJOB!

Schirm will sometimes call late at night, usually when he's feeling a little down ... as he has been lately. He certainly has enough reason. He'd been through a difficult couple of years, putting up with a roomie who was only supposed to have been in Schirm's place for a month or two, until he found his feet ... but who then up and died of cancer, leaving Schirm effectively the executor of a vast mountain of (literally) junk stored in Schirm's garages. As if that weren't bad enough, another of Schirm's many artist friends fell into similar difficulties – under-employment and nowhere affordable to live. So now Schirm's fold-out couch is occupied again. Worse, Schirm himself is a bit strapped for cash.

I could go deeper into it, but it's Schirm's business, really, and if he wants to talk about it, he'll phone *you* up in the middle of the night, too.

Sometimes I wish Schirm would phone when he *wasn't* depressed, but I don't mind when he does call. It's good to lend someone a sympathetic ear when they need it, and talking it out seems to cheer Schirm

up a bit. I get to touch base with him, and grouse and grumble a bit myself.

The last time we spoke, Schirm informed me that I had become infamous. He was a little vague about what he'd been reading, but according to Schirm he'd come across a reference to my appearance as the Fan Guest of Honour at Anticipation, the Montreal Worldcon, a few years ago. He said that my experience there was known as a "Montreal Screwjob."

A few of you will smile, knowingly. I beg you to sit back and let me tell the story for the *other* readers.

"What's a Montreal Screwjob, and what does it have to do with me?" I asked.

"You know... it's about how you were given the red carpet treatment at the Worldcon, and everybody was saying how it was finally *your* year to win the fanart Hugo. But then, at the ceremony, everybody saw you got robbed!"

Oh. That. "Are you sure that's what a Montreal Screwjob is?"

"Maybe not, but I can't think of anything else."

Actually, I was rather flattered. Paraphrasing Tiberius Caesar somewhat, "if they can't *give* me a Hugo, they can make *taking it away* into Fannish Legend." I've always wanted to be in fannish legend, but so far have done remarkably poorly in accomplishing that goal. The only certifiable myth that traces back to me is the lie that twiltone paper was discontinued because of the mercury used in making it. I made that up, published it in *DNQ* back in the 1980s, and to my surprise, people repeated it for years after.

But being the origin of the "Montreal Screwjob?" That's *class!*

Alas, fame is fleeting. You can't find *everything* on-line, but, if you don't look, you don't know what you will come up with. I typed "Montreal Screwjob" into the search line, and be damned if there wasn't a Wikipedia article! For a second, I thought I really had hit the big time.

But the reality was that a "Montreal Screwjob" has nothing to do with me, Hugos *or* fandom. I phoned up Schirm the next night to tell him what I'd found.

"It's wrestling jargon."

"Wrestling? Really?"

"Uh-hunh. A "screwjob" is when a match ends in an unfair or unpopular call. If it's scripted, it's a "*worked* screwjob." When one of the wrestlers doesn't expect the call, it's a "*shoot* screwjob."

In 1997 there was a much-anticipated match at the Molson Center in Montreal, between WWF champion Bret Hart and challenger Shawn Michaels. The match had been scripted for Michaels to pin Hart, then for Hart to recover. But the WWF manager, Vince McMahon, double-crossed Hart, by instructing the referee to call for the bell prematurely. As a result, Hart lost the championship ... just before leaving the WWF for a rival wrestling organization. I don't doubt this generated a lot of rhubarb among the fans.

That was the Montreal Screwjob. I am still neither famous nor infamous ... drat!

“I’ll be... Who would have known *that?*” said Schirm, and whistled.

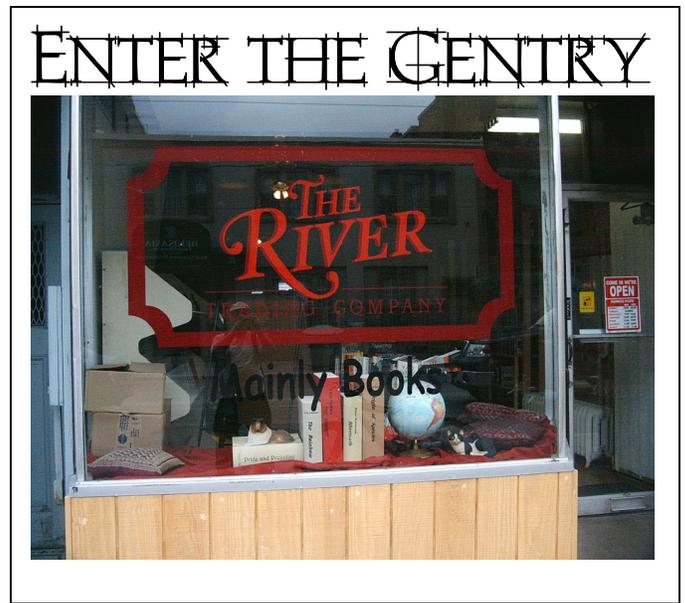
(Actually, I’m sure Chris Garcia knew, and as did Arnie Katz. I appreciate them keeping quiet while I told the story.)

Upon further questioning, I discovered that Schirm had come across the expression while reading something by Evan Dworkin, the underground cartoonist. I should have asked the night before. What are the odds that Evan Dworkin would care, much less know anything, about my disappointment at Anticipation? Almost zero, I’d say, and I would have realized that right away.

Now if only someone would tell me something that I *could* do to earn widespread fannish infamy? Preferably legal and non-threatening, but, as these are desperate times, I’ll consider anything ...

Not long ago, I noticed a restaurant opening up. It was a Korean sit-down with sushi and the newly fashionable “bibim.” What the hell was “bibim,” I wondered? Previously, the restaurant had been a Chinese place, The Phoenix, where my friends and I had often hung out for a cheap, filling meal. It had been there when I moved into Parkdale, 23 years ago. I watched the little girl who was obviously the owner’s daughter grow up into a young woman and become a waitress. There had been no sign of the restaurant closing.

Then one day I walked around the corner and noticed a dumpster, and men tearing out the fixtures. The Phoenix was gone without warning, and a week later there was a place that served “bibim” instead.



Directly across Queen Street was another Chinese restaurant called the Good Life House. It has a sign up saying it is closing. There will be no more chop suey or egg foo yung in Parkdale when it’s gone.

My neighborhood is going to hell, and there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s called *gentrification*, but all this usually means is that the sort of off-beat businesses that make a neighborhood interesting and livable, but whose owners can’t afford high rents, are being forced out by raising costs, and being replaced with a much less diverse assortment of up-scale retailers. Typically, the incoming stores consist of a row of sushi bars, fashion shops, cell phone sales centers and Starbucks ... repeated over and over. Meanwhile, the number of antique stores selling kitschy collectibles at unconscionable prices is growing. It’s called *gentrification*, but I just say the neighborhood is going to hell.

There had been a Blockbuster Video just across the street from the bookstore. Although it was nothing special in itself, I used to enjoy popping in to see what movies had been released on DVD,

and it was a reliable source of previously-viewed movies I wanted to own. Then, a couple of years ago, the entire chain was driven into bankruptcy by the American home office, and even the successful Canadian branch division went down with the ship. I knew of one other source of used DVDs, but it was much further away.

I should have seen the loss of Blockbuster Video as a sign of things to come, but at the time it seemed to be merely a fluke of bad business practices.

The pace of closures began to accelerate, however. A couple of pizza places disappeared recently, though they were a small loss – Pizza Pizza and a 2-4-1 are left. But then the junk store that also sold voodoo goods disappeared. I would no longer be able to buy love potion or moneymaking magic that also served as laundry soap and floor wash. Coffee-Time, a working-class donuts and coffee sit-down, is closed. Solid Grounds, an up-scale coffee place down the street, has also closed. It was cleared out so suddenly that I didn't even notice at first. The Internet café nearby has also shut its doors, and two or three storefronts on the same block have "for lease" signs in the windows. A generic dollar store I often patronized has posted a sign for its closing sale. And, inexplicably, the check-cashing joint that didn't charge me for cashing government checks has vanished, forcing me to open a bank account I didn't want in a bank that was much farther away.

Even the funeral home nearby suddenly closed up shop. Evidently, people in Parkdale won't be dying any more.

Four years ago, Parkdale nearly achieved apotheosis when a used bookstore opened. The River was run by an older man and his sister. David had been a biker in his youth, and shared with me an interest in historic cars and politics, as well as books. His sister Mary was easily his match for a good conversation. There was a dog that chased a squeaky toy, and a cat named Walter Kitty that didn't. Initially, The River was open until 11 most evenings, and hosted a number of literary events. Prices were low, but of course the other side of the coin is that they didn't pay much for used books, either. The River wasn't about collectibles, even though you might turn up a collectible or rarity with a patient search.

Gradually, prices crept up, but the prices they paid didn't. The literary events tapered off, and after a while the store closed at 9 most nights. Still, it was good to have such a place nearby. I often went in just to take a load off my feet and jaw with David or Mary.

Then last month, he told me The River was closing. Sales were neither better or worse than they had ever been, but his rent was going up. He thought he might re-open in Hamilton, the steel-town about an hour's drive from Toronto, where rents were much lower.

Meanwhile, high-rise apartment buildings are appearing over the horizon, menacingly close. For the moment, they are rising from the neighborhood just past the tracks, and from another area south of here, a turn-of-the-century industrial park. The more affluent are buying condos and gentrifying the areas faster than a new meme spreads through the blogosphere. It's only a matter of time before their money and their affected style of consumerism crosses King and Dufferin Streets, and begins to reconfigure my part of the world.

I'm sitting here, typing, and trying to imagine the Parkdale of the near future, when the gentry have

moved in. They buy their culture on-line from Amazon, so there will be nowhere to buy books or music. Instead of coffee and donuts, there will be espresso and carrot muffins. Or perhaps sports bars with phony English pub names that sell anemic chicken wings for \$11.98 a basket. Every block will have a store selling pink or chartreuse covers for your Smartphone, and the tablet of the month. And instead of the corner grocery run by a family of Sikhs, I'll have to shop at a farmer's co-op, where a 10 lb. bag of stone-ground flour costs \$26. The gentry who will have moved in don't plan to ever die, of course, so the funeral home will never be missed.

Who will support all this change, I wonder? The present residents of Parkdale cannot readily move elsewhere. There are no other cheap neighborhoods in Toronto. Unlike the bookstore, they can't relocate to a city where it is less expensive to live – they depend on social services and dollar stores that are concentrated *here*. They are the drunks, cripples, recovering drug addicts, crazy people, impoverished retirees, the friendless, familyless, jobless and recently immigrated, who fill the cheap apartment buildings build in the 1950s and the even cheaper boarding houses found on the dozens of streets south of Queen. Not to mention one habitual fan with bum legs. Have the street people taken up eating pickled seaweed or baked salmon instead of hamburgers and shawarmas? Are they wearing six-coloured athletic shoes with air pumps and optical fiber shoelace tips, instead of rags and cotton tennies? There is an interesting cultural war looming ahead.

I still haven't had any "bibim," whatever that is.



The River, Closed and Empty of Books



Wall Mural on Dunn Ave. Side of The Phoenix

So there's something to vampirism, after all? Imagine us oldsters in the third stage of life -- childhood, adulthood, vampirehood -- harvesting the under-30 for their blood. Should we do it in the traditional way, in murky back alleys? Or should the process be sanitized, the blood taken in modern, antiseptic hospital wards? Should young blood be covered by OHIP, or even guaranteed to the old as a basic human right? How would this be reconciled with the right of youth not to be drained of their blood like a lemon squeezed for juice? All these questions are too taxing for my aging brain -- I need a sip of fresh A+.

This story originally appeared in *Red Shift 7*, one of my better efforts, in 1980. *Red Shift* was my FAPAzine at first, but the final issue was by longest and most ambitious, prompting me to mail at least another 100 copies as a personalzine. Some of you may know the song this story is based on, but I won't give away the title or band here. The illustration was custom drawn.



These Goody Gifts I Will Give to Thee...

She said, “I am a witch, you know.” I didn't believe her.

A witch should be old, and stooped over, and have a big hooked nose with a wart on the end, and wear a long black robe with a pointed hat. But Allison LeGrand was anything but an ugly old crone. A Hollywood blonde, practically, but without the simpering, naughty-child look that is supposed (by producers) to look sexy. Allison had intelligence and determination in her looks, and that was far more alluring. What kind of witch was this, sitting on the floor in front of me in jeans and in a cream coloured, red-trimmed Ukrainian shirt? And most of all, what was a witch doing at Autoclave, trying to talk me into co-editing a fanzine?

I didn't believe her, and said so again.

“No, I am, and I'll prove it to you if you'll go in with me on this zine.”

“Don't tell me you think I'm cute,” I said.

“I know what you're thinking, but put it out of your mind. I'm being practical, not romantic. You have one of the meanest touches with the mimeo this side of *Carandaith*, and I like your fan writing. You can also illustrate my editorials and the letter column.”

“Whaddaya wanna call it, Allison, *My Aim is True*?”

“Don’t be gross. Maybe something faanish like *Snarf* or *Bulwark*, or maybe *Ba’al*. Yeah, we could get Langford to do a column called *The Ba’alful Eye*.” She shifted forward to catch her “familiar” as it slithered toward a dark cranny. What kind of witch kept a snake as a familiar?

“An old acquaintance,” she answered my unspoken thought. “I don’t have a familiar anymore, but I’ve had this oversize worm for ages... since way back in the 1700s, when I was a young lassie in the Lowl’ns. So long ago I don’t even have m’ burrrr enamoorrrr! He reminds me of an old infatuation that didn’t work out right.” She tucked the snake back into her blouse pocket and handed me a file folder.

“Wow! Where did you get this stuff?” It was fat with Atoms, and Kirks, and Barrs, and Bodés, and Austins, and all sorts of fabulous artwork that hasn’t appeared in fanzines since I don’t know when. There were articles by Terry Carr, and episodes of *The Goon Defective Agency*, and humour by Burbee, and installments of BoSh’s *Glass Bushel*, and (could it be?) chapters of a sequel to *Willis Discovers America*.

“All of this is unpublished,” I asked, stunned.

“Bergeron doesn’t even *know* about the Willis.” She smiled, inwardly counting Hugos. “I *told* you I was a witch.”

She’d have to be, almost. “I’ve seen lots of zines get impossible material with enough apple-polishing,” I admitted. I could name several examples, and they’re not all named *Fast & Loose*. However you got it, this is impressive stuff.”

“That’s just for the first issue,” she said complacently. “There’s lots more where it came from. We can choose from everything that every author didn’t write, and that every artist didn’t draw.”

“*Didn’t* draw?” I blinked. Gee, I thought, I wonder if that included me. Then I could give up doing the actual work, and just get the egoboo...

“You think up the ideas, you know – like the faux record you did for one of your zines, or reprinting that entire issue of *LeZombie* – and I’ll fish for the material from what-might-have-been.”

I was beginning to get interested, despite my disbelief. “Yeah, but how do we co-edit a zine with three thousand miles between us?” Allison lived in Acapulco, according to her name tag. “Do you type the stencils, or do I? Who does the layout? Where do we do the mimeo?”

“I know a demon who’s fairly fannish and will type stencils for a toad or mangy alley cat as blood sacrifice. I can also have them run off by the Prince of Darkness Himself, but he requires a whole neo. I guess that wouldn’t be too good an idea. We need them for egoboo.”

I thought she might very well throw Satan a neo or two, if it meant the difference between a Hugo or not. She looked that innocent of moral concerns. But what of it? There was no Satan, and Allison was only an attractive young woman with an angle I hadn’t figured out yet. I looked back in the folder at the impossible fanac. Did that Bjo look a bit odd? Yeah, and Freff didn’t draw *quite* that way, usually. A Bok dated 1966? Bok died in 1964... or did he? I shuddered.

Willis could *not* have written a second fictional trip to America and let it go unpublished and unknown. That isn't John Berry's Goon, but then again, whose else could it be? Allison *must* be a witch! But a fucking *witch*?

"I have places in San Francisco and New York that are closer than the one in Mexico," she said. "We'll have a printing party at whichever is most convenient, and I'll fly in everyone who's anyone to collate."

"Well," I waffled, "I'd really like to help you, but I'm already co-editing a zine. Wanna buy a sub to *DNQ*?" I fended off a sudden dark look with a copy I fortunately happened to have with me.

"How many do your print of each issue of those? Three hundred? Four hundred? Five hundred?" she demanded.

"Er... actually about a hundred and seventy, sometimes two hundred."

"We can print a thousand. Three thousand! We can give away issues as riders to *Analog*, if you want. I can afford to mail copies to every neo and fringe fan that ever as much as walked into a con, and only spent the whole time in a dark room watching video tapes of *Mork & Mindy*. Expensive offset for your covers, and coated stock? Money is no object with the black arts."

"Believe me, I can hardly bear to refuse, but I sort of have a good thing going with *DNQ*, and I can't just dump my co-editor, it'd be unfair to her," I whined. "And I don't have the time to do *another* zine. I have a deadline coming up, I wanna do a personalzine real soon, I'm supposed to be starting an apa, and there's that Toronto fan history that's only half done, and the reprint of the entire run of *Fandango*, and I really ought to get started again on *Delta Psi*." Was I laying it on thick, or had I actually got myself into fanac that deeply? Oog. "I don't have to sell my soul, do I?" *What was I saying?*

"What do you *think*?" The tone of her voice made it clear that I'd asked a stupid question. The trouble was, her reply still left me in the dark. She could mean, of course, how stupid can you be – only an ignorant savage would believe such superstitious twaddle! Or, *naturally* you have to sell your soul! How was I to know, from an answer like that? But I wasn't going to ask again. I was getting genuinely unnerved by the way this conversation was going.

Allison swallowed her temper and tried again. "Material isn't all I can get from what-might-have-been. I can get mint copies of old fanzines, almost identical with the real article. I can get you a complete run of *Hyphens*, all the *Quandrys*, the *Warhoons*, the *Oopslas* and *Voids*." She batted her eyelashes at me enticingly.

"Actually, I have a lot of that stuff," I quavered.

"But surely not all seven issues of Nydahl's *Vega*, not a complete run of *Kteic Magazine*, not the *unfinished* issues of *Lighthouse*, *Dimensions*, and *Void*? Not a copy of the "X" Document, or one of the three known copies of the Ghuly Bible? You can have the fanzine collection that Bruce Pelz or Harry Warner Jr. can only dream about. *All* the fanzines ever published. All of them! And lots that never were! I can give all these to you if you want them. See?"

She reached over with a fanzine and gave it to me. Be damned if it wasn't a sheaf of *Futurian*

Embassies! (Maybe I ought to've been careful saying I'd be damned.) But there was no question about their authenticity. Vol. 1 number 1 and on... 1949, Lowndes's puss on the front just the way I saw it in Damon Knight's book, *The Futurians*.

"Got any *Phantagraphs*?" I almost asked before I mentally kicked myself. Instead, I said, "The truth is, I was thinking about gafiating."

"Gafiating?" The dark look was back. And was I crazy, or did the snake in her pocket shake its head at me?

"You're disillusioned," she said. "Co-edit with me, and not only will I give you a complete zine collection, but we'll have the Hugo in no time. A fanart Hugo too, if you want it. It can easily be bought from the Dark Powers. It's been done before. Don't you want to spit in Glicksohn's eye? I won't ask again."

"Honestly. I gotta make a living, and start writing for money ... or something. I can't go on being into fanzines forever."

"Oh, can't you?"

Suddenly she got up. The file folder and fanzines had vanished, it seemed, and she had a silver wand in her hand. She cracked me smartly over the head with it, then turned widdershins on her toes.

"I don't believe in any of this, Allison," I babbled desperately. "You've got me freaked out, but I don't believe in witches!"

Crack! She whacked me with the wand again, and turned around some more, muttering in what would pass very well for some lost Celtic dialect. The snake gave me a resigned I-told-you-so look with its too-human eyes.

I looked up at her. She reached down and closed the cover over me.

You think this is an article, don't you? I wish it were, but as a matter of fact it's not. The words are appearing right on the page as I speak to you, and as you read them. You can't notice because, if you were to look ahead to the empty paper, the words would appear instantly at the touch of your eye-tracks.

It's not so very bad, really, and you at least have to credit Allison with the taste to not turn me into a crudzine. Close the back cover, eh? The light bleaches my paper.

If you didn't recognize the source of "These Goodly Gifts I Will Give to Thee," I'll give you a hint – what band was hugely popular with the Society for Creative Anachronism in the 1970s? Horselips? Well, yes, that one too, but it's not the right one. I became quite a fan of Steel Eye Span through my contacts in the SCA, and one of my favourite songs from the album, *Rocket Cottage*, was "Alison Gross." It was about a man who unwisely spurned the advances of "the ugliest witch in the North Country." Predictably, he regretted his decision when it was far too late ... as did "I" in this story.

LEFTOVER PARTS

WAHF: John Coxon, john@johncoxon.co.uk, Al Sirois, drjazzhead@yahoo.com

David Heren, turbolo@comcast.net, Bill Plott, wjplott@aol.com

Jefferson P. Swycaffer, abontides@gmail.com

David Redd, dauearedd@hotmail.com who is *also* annoyed with the modern world.

R-Laurraine Tutuhasi laurraine@mac.com who found it a little odd that I needed to explain who Saladin was, but conceded that many of the readers may well not have been paying attention in history class.

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Thanks Taral. Glad to hear the new A/C works. Do you know what breaker is on that circuit? Most residential circuits have either 15 amp or 20 amp breakers. Your cyber-voodoo (unless you still use a CRT monitor) down in the bottom end, 1 or 2 amps. A printer might draw more. If you are close to the edge with the A/C and the electronics, you might see some effect when the A/C cycles on, as it has a start-up current peak with the compressor motor. When the A/C here comes on I see a flicker in the lights, but the PC is unaffected because it's on a UPS so that it would run for 10 minutes if the mains power failed completely.

I can't put the AC on a different circuit than the computer, but it is on a different power bar, with its own breaker! The old AC used to give me constant problems. Half the time the compressor wouldn't start, just the fan, and the breaker would pop. So I had to put the AC on before the computer if I didn't want to crash the system along with the AC. But I've had no such problem with the new units! Modern ACs draw less power, for one thing. For another, it's not 20 or 25 years old and barely functioning. Even the computer likely draws less power than the old one.

Good luck with the new PC! I'm still using Windows XP in this 5-year-old Dell and have had no problems, but I am not using anything fancy.

If you're used to the speed and patient with websites coming up, then your system will probably do you fine for some time to come. Your 5-year-old Dell may have been better than my old system, however. I could swap numbers (like my old systems 1.5 GHz speed), but you may not have comparable figures at hand to compare. I find that the new Acer is way faster, though. Boot up takes only a half-minute, not three or four. Web pages come up immediately. Virus scans take two or three minutes, not 20...

The electric chair is no more than you deserve - oops, should I reword that? Will it recharge from the same mains circuit as the A/C?

Fortunately, the hall and kitchen are on different circuits. It's irritating how almost any home or apartment built before 1980 or '90 seems to assume no one would need more than two outlets in the bedroom, living room or kitchen, or that one circuit for both the bedroom and living room is sufficient! This inadequacy goes back to when

ordinary people usually had nothing to run on electricity but a floor lamp or two, a radio, and a lamp by the bed. Maybe a fan. Nobody imagined multi-component stereos, wide-screen TVs, DVD players, X-boxes, cable boxes, ACs, computers, etc. Even our kitchens are far better equipped with electrical gizmos than they used to be.

I have a vague notion that I met Hope Leibowitz at a con many years ago. Glad to hear Walter Wentz is recovering! He's one of the old fans permanently on the list to get whatever genzine I publish.

I never worried much about diet, and I never exercised regularly either - but at 76 I can still walk a mile in 15 minutes or shift 50 lbs. Not at the same time!

I remember Barry Kent MacKay! He used to send me excellent fillos that I got into mimeoed fanzines using thermal stencils and a \$10 ThermoFax.

That's him. I'm probably the only fan in the world that stays in touch at all.

My sister and her late husband apparently felt compelled to name their sons Joseph and Charles in spite of his surname being McCarthy - I told her that Joe McCarthy and Charlie McCarthy were two of the most famous clowns in US history, even if Joe was a bit vicious and Charlie was a bit wooden. Charles however does not look like the puppet but is quite as silly - he goes by "Chuck" and looks more like Hagrid in the Harry Potter movies and can be seen in comic short films on Facebook. Joe is getting married this month and fortunately is not nearly as ugly as the late senator.

Interesting about Huckleberry Finn coins. I'm told that, as a toddler, I carried my mother's half-dime away and lost it.

A worn replacement could easily be found, I think. Mine is pretty worn, but I didn't want to pay more than about five bucks for it.

Robert Lichtman, robertlichtman@yahoo.com

Congratulations on your new air conditioner! I know how much my life changed for the better when I got one in my Glen Ellen apartment, and I wish you years of happy coolness.

Good, also, to read about your new computer. You describe it as having "an i5 processor, runs at 3.0 GHz, has 4 GB of RAM, and a .5 terabyte hard drive. It was advertised as coming with Windows 7 installed." This is *exactly* like the new computer I got last October. Which version of Windows 7 do you have? Mine is "Home Premium." My computer was an HP, and so far it's been working perfectly.

And finally, good news that you got a *free* power chair! That will certainly also make life easier.

Enjoyed your account of A Visit From Hope, even though it led off with sad news about the bookstore closing.

And as always, I enjoyed your two short pieces involving coins.

It may be 3.1 GHz, but my friend Steven says that the processor itself has a big effect, so that a 3 GHz speed may actually perform quicker than one that is 3.5, if the processor is an i5 instead of an i3.

Anyway, who's clocking it? Not me! I'm too blissed out by pages that come up immediately, not 10 to 30 seconds later, by booting up in half a minute rather than two or three, by virus scans that only take five minutes, not twenty... I run Windows 7 Pro, 64 byte.

I won't get much opportunity to use the chair when it arrives. I'm told it probably won't be any sooner than September, maybe October. Not only that, but it's been a crummy summer so far anyway -- generally damp and only a few hot, sunny days. I haven't been missing much. Maybe the Fall will be much nicer, though!

Ron Kasman, rkasman@rogers.com

Thanks for the mailing, Taral. I enjoyed reading it as always. I think you tried out most of those topics in our conversation a couple of weeks ago.

I am one of those exercise enthusiasts and I think I can tell you a bit of what I got out of it. First I was good at those things. I got a sense of accomplishment of lifting heavy weights and running long distances. I was better than average in the schoolyard at playing hockey, throwing a football, hitting a tennis ball whacking a baseball. I was a very, very good lacrosse player, one of the best on the high school team. Other enthusiasts looked up to me. I was, and remain, a very good swimmer. I was accomplished enough to teach courses in lifeguarding. Through the swimming more than the other things, I became qualified as a Phys Ed teacher, which is part of the reason I was able to land a job as an art teacher.

Today my knees are shot and I have a pacemaker. But I still cycled downtown today, giving my sixty-year-old body a workout. I can't keep up with the kids anymore but when I go down to the Y I still think I look pretty good. They have full-length mirrors down there, you know.

Fate has often thrown me in with other schoolyard-level athletes and we will have something to talk about.

I did it enough so that I actually looked good from the exercise. Now, as you know, I am not a handsome guy. There were three months after my acne cleared up and before I started going bald, but that would have been my peak. Still, I posed for a lot of comic book covers and interiors. I modeled for photographers professionally once, when they needed a muscular guy. And with my Jewish nose and "Jewfro," I was told several times in art school that I looked like Michelangelo's David. That sort of makes a person's day.

Now, I draw, paint, do math, play guitar, cook, comment ingeniously on the history of film, do construction around my home, have brought up two kids, neither of whom are messed up, and was once a good husband and hope to be again. But the athletic stuff is part of the whole thing. It remains something I have fun with and a have an appreciation for in others.

Free time helps as much as money. I have joined the Y, which is about \$500 a year. It costs to rent a rink for an hour or be admitted to a pool. I was able to run, though, and do push-ups before that. As for food, again I can't deny a word you say. But like the Python skit where the wealthy Yorkshire men sit around drinking Chateau de Chasse (I think) bragging about their humble beginnings, one of my friends loves to

remind me about my diet of chicken livers, rice and Red River cereal, when I was on my own and had a part-time job while attending school. You did bring back to me that all the great fruit I eat this time of year has a cost. But, to a degree I know how lucky I am. This will sound like baloney but it is absolutely true – I bought a watermelon today, two plums and a bag of cherries, the last item on sale at \$1.88 a pound at Freshco. I then drove out to Lakeshore where guys who don't have much "spare change" the traffic at red lights. I was gnawing away at the plums at that time. When I got "spare changed" I passed on the bag of cherries. Boy that guy was grateful. He told me he loved cherries, going on and on until the light changed.

Last year, or the year before, one of the small groceries usually had cherries at around \$2 a pound. You can bet I bought as many as I could eat! But this year, they're \$5 a pound, so I probably won't have any at all. I've been getting Granny Smith apples, though, at \$1.69 a pound, and they help by providing a snack when needed, or by rounding out dinner.

But what I've noticed about fruit is that it is mostly not very filling. It's fine for about an hour, then you're hungry again, like Chinese food is said to be. I figure it's because fruit is mostly water. I could easily eat \$5 of fruit a day! And actually, that much fruit would probably just contribute to weight gain, since most fruit is high in sugar. The ideal diet is bitter and bland. You could live on a handful of rice or oats, a mound of mixed peas and beans, and, alternately an orange and half an onion a day. Twice or three times a week you could have a piece of chicken the size of a deck of cards. When you get old, you might want to add a bit of cheese for calcium. That's all you really need to live on. We evolved to survive chronic starvation, not plenty.

I just didn't play sports, so naturally I wasn't good at them. There are hints that I could probably have been much better, maybe above average. I creamed some guy in wrestling, once, for example. And one time I was so pissed-off that I made a touchdown while dragging two or three guys. But it just didn't interest me, so I never developed the skills. It was later in life that I discovered I loved biking and walking. Unfortunately, the city is not a good place to bike – I had one for years, but the tires were always flat. When I had them repaired, I found that the biking experience was mainly pedaling at a modest pace, watchful for traffic and pedestrians, then stopping every two blocks. It was nothing like the carefree biking when I was a kid, and you could ride in the suburbs for blocks and blocks and blocks without having to stop, and you saw a car coming at a quarter of a mile away. But at least I was able to keep up with walking.

Unfortunately, none of that kept my weight down. My father was slim and muscular. My grandfather was fat and muscular. I seem to have taken after him. And then the problem with my legs ... evidently nothing I could have done when I was younger would have made a fig of difference. I'd still be where I am today.

Eric Mayer, groggy.tales@gmail.com

Man, all that new stuff. You're living in a Price is Right showcase!

And, Taral, while you're working at your new computer, you'll be keeping cool thanks to your brand new air conditioner! And that's not all. When you're done working and ready for a little recreation, you'll be able to hit the town in this power chair!! Yes, all this can be yours, if you're the successful bidder on *The Price is Right!*

All you need is a gorgeous presenter to grin and point and an oohing and ahing audience. Oh, and you need to hug Bob Barker.

That was a funny and rather affectionate account of Hope's visit. I hope she sees it that way, if she sees it. The stir-fry reminds me that I am not much of a fan of tofu. Or health food. Actually Mary and I maintain a pretty healthy diet with lots of fruit and practically no red meat, but by preference rather than for health reasons. My problem, all through my life, has oddly enough been to put weight on rather than take it off.

It was interesting to hear about Walter Wentz. So that's how you got to know him. The *Ruralite* sounds like some of the magazines I wrote for during the couple years I tried my hand at that. (Which is to say I assume it isn't a huge circulation magazine. Although, having said that let's remember that the circulation of *F&SF* is what? 15,000?) The problem with such work, I found, is that it is thoroughly professional and the editors demand a high standard of writing and research (and why not, readers are paying for the magazine...) but the pay is really not in line with the effort that is required. I hope Walt recovers from the heart surgery without complications. That seems to be the catch. The danger isn't so much in the surgery itself (dangerous though it may be) but in the problems that can arise afterward, especially in those of advanced age. You don't say how old Walt is.

I'm not too sure what Walt's age is. He's said, but I don't remember. He's older than me by a few years ... not really old, but no Spring Chicken. [My proofreader broke in to say he is 72 ... but a young 72.]

On the contrary, Ruralite's circulation was around a quarter of a million. More readers saw my illustrations than saw Frank Kelly Freas in the average issue of Analog. The magazine was a give-away, though ... a customer perk of the subscribers to an electrical grid in the Pacific Northwest. How many of the customers ever looked inside their monthly issue, I couldn't say. In any case, it was no showcase from which anyone was ever likely to be discovered and become famous. The pay wasn't too bad, though. It began at around \$65 or \$75, back in the late '80s, and I was paid \$150 for the very last piece, as I recall, in 1991. But Walt couldn't buy more than one piece from me a month, and in practice bought less. It was no way to make a living. I needed another several such magazines to work for, and never found a single one.

For a few years I loved running until my back (which was bad long before I began running) decided it didn't want to cooperate any longer. I never ran for long enough to get any sort of runners' "high" but what I enjoyed was the feeling of being in motion, pretty much effortlessly, like when I used to race around the yard as a kid without ever wearing out. I also enjoyed the stamina running gave me for tasks like lawn mowing or snow shoveling. When I was running I'd clear my driveway of snow faster than my neighbor with the snow blower cleared his.

Unfortunately I despise all other forms of exercise, which I find both physically painful and painfully boring, not to mention reminding me of gym class, and so without being able to run I have slipped back into dreadful shape.

As for food, I have always been embarrassed by my almost sideshow level ectomorphism. (Usually 5'11" and 114 pounds, though recently I am way up to 125 pounds) However, at least I don't have to watch my diet so there is some solace there. Admittedly I don't eat much red meat but I've never liked red meat very much and I do eat a lot of fruit, because I like fruit. And I believe you when you say the best thing you can do for your health is to be rich. I am sure there are studies proving that. Also, being rich you have all the spare time you want to exercise.

Studies HAVE proved it. Wealthier people live longer ... the top 10% as much as 10 or 15 years longer, on average, than the urban poor. As for the homeless, it's Third World Standards for them.

I'm sorry to hear from Barry Kent MacKay in the loccol that Lucille Ball was a right-winger. Sheesh. I'd rather not know about the politics of artists. It can interfere with my enjoyment of their art. Damn you, Clint Eastwood, for your ridiculous convention performance. (Hard to believe that a Republican right-winger could have made *The Unforgiven* or would have made matching movies showing both the American and Japanese side of WWII.)

People are stranger than you imagine! During the McCarthy scare, Lucille Ball was accused of being a Red! Her father had been a Wobbly or a socialist of some kind, with a card and everything, so therefore his daughter must be tainted too. She had to eat dirt and use studio influence to quash the critics ... which may be why she was such an ultra-conservative later. And have you seen Gran Torino, directed by Eastwood and starring Eastwood? It's a very odd mix of a commonplace working man's traditional conservative values, and a surprisingly liberal view of the hard-working, non-American immigrants who moved into his neighborhood!!

You mention to Lloyd Penney that not only your passport and driver's license photos are none too flattering. You ought to see my driver's license. As always I look like a thug, or at the best someone totally reprehensible with a shifty look and something to hide. I just hate having a camera pointed at me and it shows. But I really don't care because anyone looking at that snapshot is not going to be doing so because they're a friend. Let 'em suffer.

I enjoyed your essay on *Huckleberry Finn*. I loved that book, up until Tom Sawyer shows up. I can't understand why Twain grafted such nonsense onto the end of an otherwise truly great novel, except for commercial reasons, because he figured readers wanted more of Tom Sawyer. Kind of like showing a really bad cartoon after a classic movie.

Twain abandoned the novel about halfway through, and only completed it more than ten years later. I believe I've read that the break happens about where Huck and Jim meet up with the Duke and King, or when they finally get rid of them. When Twain resumed writing, he seems to have reverted to an earlier conception of his memories of his youth, and continued the novel as though it were Tom Sawyer. It is a terrible ending to an otherwise great book.

It was also interesting to see the coin minted by Saladin, since recently I read a history about the crusader states. I also read a Robert E. Howard story in which the protagonist, Cormac Fitzgeoffrey, meets Saladin, who is depicted as an honorable warrior in contrast to most everyone else in the story.

Mark Manning, tandmark@outlook.com

Yo! Just finished *Broken Toys* 29. Didn't notice it was any more full of bitching, hysterical raving, and gloom than any other fanzine. So if you want to load #30 up with more of the same, that'd be OK with me, as I'd probably experience it as being bubbly natter.

According to Andrew Hooper, I am a fount of depression and discontent. Who am I to disagree?

I don't think I ever exactly loved Lucille Ball's comedy, but the fact that she's said to have been politically conservative doesn't bother me much. I don't recall having seen any of her televised work in which she was being obnoxious about her politics or anything. I've heard that she'd been in or around the Communist Party in the '30s and quit them during the anti-war crackdown on such things, denying that it had ever really happened. That was pretty common among Hollywood lefties. If she went out of her way to get anyone blacklisted, which is for sure something I'd find offensive, I've never heard tell of it.

Her right-wing proclivities never intruded directly into her work. What strikes you about her, though, is what she leaves out. There was never anything remotely contemporary about her comedy much past around 1960, when I Love Lucy had run its course, and she returned to the air with various incarnations of The Lucy Show. The background was always some idealized small-town America, without the sophistication and multi-ethnicity of New York City. She idolized her Hollywood guests in such an obsequious way that I found it embarrassing, and they were such square Hollywood stars too! Never Woody Allen or Sidney Poitier or Peter Sellers, but middle-of-the-road types like Tennessee Ernie Ford, or Wayne Newton, who oozed the sort of wholesomeness and orthodoxy that had half the under-25 generation up in arms at the time. Nor were Lucille Ball's off-stage opinions ever any secret. For instance, after the downfall of Senator McCarthy, the career of Walter Winchell, radio and newspaper personality, and vocal supporter of McCarthyism, fell into decline. Lucy and Desi were producers of The Untouchables, a heavy-handed and violent cop show. To help their old friend, they hired Winchell to do the voiceovers for the show. Lucy may never have used her influence to harm any of her show business associates for their left-wing sympathies, but Winchell was notorious for it!

Interesting article about that Saladin coin, which reminds me that I once had a roommate who had adopted the name Saladin when he became a Black nationalist in the '60s. Baybars would have been more militant, but it just doesn't have the same ring to it.

"Baybars" sounds like it ought to have hazelnuts and a foil wrapper, doesn't it?

My father loved Tilly hats, so I've certainly seen them a lot over the years, but they never made me think of Huck Finn. (As for me, the Tilly Fedora made me look even more goofy than I normally do, so I donated mine to Goodwill. My deepest apologies to the leading lights of Canadian couture who designed the thing.)

You were lucky to score a computer this late in the game that has Windows 7 pre-installed. The only way to make Windows 8 work, IMHO, is to trick it into always booting straight to the desktop, and to never install any Metro apps.

Windows 7 was one of the criteria I had for picking the model I did ... and the main reason I bought one earlier than I had planned. I was certain I'd be screwed in some way if I had to settle for Windows 8.

Broken Toys 29 without proofreading only had one typo, from what I noticed. Not to put Walt out of a job or anything....

The worst was mis-typing Barry Kent MacKay's name as "Ken," right there in 24-point font at the top of his letter of comment! I subsequently corrected it, but not before mailing the issue to all my regular readers!

I haven't seen Murray Moore's *Fanthology*, which only shows how out of touch I've become in my dotage. He refuses to consider fanwriting in e-zines? It is to shrug. My impression of him, based on meeting him at the most recent Corflu held here in Seattle, is that he's a decent, energetic guy who's at

least as neurotic as I am. Just as I neurotically and dishonestly insert Oxford commas into quotations that lack them, he neurotically refuses to legitimize PDFs. It is, once more, to shrug. You're right that there are a terrifying number of fannish obits these days. That's why it was nice to see from your Loccol and the rest of your 'zine that various people who were on the *Tand* mailing list in the '80s are still striding the earth. May you continue to do the same! SFannishly,

The physical copies were only available at Corflu, I think ... which would be consistent with Murray's hard-copy philosophy. However, there is a .pdf version available at eFanzines. I'm glad of it, but puzzled. Why is it available in a form that Murray himself refuses to read? And why are so many of the contents from blogs or groups he reads on-line that are no different in format from the digital fanzines Murray ignores? I know it's a bit much to expect logic in fanac, but ... but ...

Bob Jennings, FabFicBks@aol.com

Received *Broken Toys* #29 a few days ago, thanks for same. I'm glad to hear things are going better for you. I was slightly surprised that you needed an air conditioner on the 21st floor of your apartment building in balmy Ontario, but lots of things surprise me. Down here in balmy Massachusetts the summer has been rainy but otherwise wonderful. Summer in New England is generally a delight, with only a few high temp days during the season, days I will cheerfully endure after the truly horrible winter we went through this year. Anytime the temperature hits the upper eighties, (not very often, but it does happen), I just think about last February and resume my normal activities.

It depends on the summer, but temperatures in the high 80s in southern Ontario are not uncommon, and it can go over 90 for days on end if it's a hot summer. And we're getting more of those as I get older. Also, the building gradually stores more heat, day by day, as the summer progresses ... and it all seems to rise to the top floors. I've endured summers where I thought I was in Baltimore or Washington, not a 12-hour drive from the nearest polar bear! (If you could drive the whole distance. Actually, the roads don't go that far north, but bend around Lake Superior instead. I mean, who wants to drive to James Bay?)

I'm no big fan of exercise myself, but it is easier to eat right if you make up your mind to do it. One of the reasons movie stars, singers and successful company execs are thin is because it happens to be a major asset to their business. The well-known, but hardly ever discussed reality is that people are wary of fat folks. Numerous business surveys have shown that business-hiring personnel are generally reluctant to hire fat people, and will go out of their way to pass them by even if they happen to be qualified for the job. Fat people get hired last, if there are no other qualified applicants for the job. In addition, in the game of romance and mating, thin is in. Fat people generally find it much more difficult to land dates or to secure mates, again, often a situation of being accepted because no better choice has ever come along.

Which would explain why so many, um ... generously proportioned fans are married to other fans who are similarly endowed.

Add in the health problems associated with being overweight, and there are some pretty strong incentives to not become fat, or if one is already fat, to shed the excess poundage. Some people can adopt mild exercise and suffer through it, but it is easier to change your eating habits. Nobody has to become a total vegan unless he wants to; but on the other hand, eating more veggies, less fatty meats, smaller portions of deserts, eating fresh fruit, cutting down on the salty snacks and the alcohol, maybe

switching to no-sugar drinks, are easy to do steps that will not leave you hungry, but will melt the pounds off over the months. Slow and steady is a better alternative to fad diets or starving yourself, or, in my opinion, to doing two dozen jumping-jacks twice a day.

Nobody is thrilled with dieting, but healthy eating habits are not that hard to cultivate. As I understand it, when your body notices a drop in calorie intake, the first thing it does is try to take nourishment by breaking down muscle tissue. That's one of the reasons doctors and health advisers tell people on a diet to exercise, in order to retain muscle mass and force the body to go elsewhere to get the extra fuel, specifically to the body's fat reserves. Fat storage in humans is the ultimate emergency reserve; it's always tapped last. No doubt millions of years of almost starving to death during the winter months while trapped in those caves by marauding saber-toothed tigers has a lot to go with this. On the other hand, a steady diet with lower calorie intake will force the body to adjust, and tap the fat reserves. A slow, steady weight loss works best and because the body adjusts to a lower daily intake, the weight loss achieved this way is more likely to stay off.

But yeah, it's an aggravatingly slow process. Most people want rapid weight loss, not a pound off a week. Plus the temptations of modern processed foods, aided by unrelenting advertising over all the media, particularly for snacks and sugary dessert items, can sorely test anybody's resolve.

It never really worked for me. I eat chicken often. If I use lean hamburger (for pasta sauces, and chili) I partly cook it by microwave, then wash the grease off under hot water before throwing it into the pot. The only fat I retain is on pork butt chops, which is delicious when fried a bit crispy – most of the fat is cooked out and poured out of the pan. When I need oil for cooking I use canola, and only olive oil to add to pasta sauce and chili. While most veggies are a problem for me, fortunately I like big garden salads with Caesar dressing. The dressing is a dietician's nightmare, but at least the veggies are good for me. Lately, with more money in pocket, I've been trying to keep Granny Smith apples around the house, for snacks and dessert. There are really only two weaknesses in my diet. For one thing, I eat a bit too much for a sedentary person. It's not my fault I'm sedentary, but my appetite and appreciation of meals doesn't just conveniently go away. Also, I rely on a lot of carbs – home made bread, primarily, but to some extent noodles/pasta. I'm cutting back on noodles, but only to find rice taking their place. My bread, at least, has lots of fiber. At least I don't gain weight anymore.

In the bigger picture, though. It doesn't work for most people. True, if you can force people to behave like a ration automaton, dieting works perfectly. But people aren't automatons, and usually fail badly at trying to act like them. The statistics show that 90% of people who lose weight only gain it back again – never mind how it would be in a perfect world, in the real world we live in that spells F-A-I-L-U-R-E. And the medical profession is finally beginning to realize it.

There have always been jerks and insane dorks in SF fandom. I try to get along with everything, but there are some people and some fanzines I just don't want to interact with, at all. In the case of fanzines I usually send a polite note telling them I have no interest in the material they are presenting, and could they please stop wasting their resources sending me copies of the thing. For people it is a bit more tricky, but absence does not make the heart grow fonder in fandom. A few times people have decided to scream at me in print or in letters, but trying to scream back or even argue with an angry, irrational person is completely useless. It not only brings you down to their level, but it also wastes your valuable time. A few weeks or months without bothering to reply to messages, or ignoring that person in Locs or in apas, is usually enough to settle things. Fandom is a hobby, but even if fandom is a way of life, nobody should spend time trying to appease or deal with jerks.

I am one of those people who generally does not have much interest in learning how a modern movie was made, so all those special features on DVDs generally never even get turned on here at all. In my opinion too much of that stuff ruins the magic of the movie. Do I really want to know that the brilliant special effect was filmed with roman candles and old tomato cans, or however they did it? Not me. I am also disinterested in interviews with the actors telling how they managed to get into the part and bonded with the deep psychic spirit of the presentation. Those things always sounded pretentious and self-serving to me. I also suspect many of those intimate interviews are actually scripted in advance by the studio publicity people.

I want to get involved in the movie, not dissect it and perform an autopsy on the body of the work. General background is more interesting; how the thing got written, why actress A was selected for the part, or how well it was received in first release theaters vs. foreign releases. But that is the kind of stuff that generally does not get presented on those background tracks.

You are bitching at Disney for producing a big hit in *Frozen*? *Frozen* is another cookie-cutter film using the exact same formula most of their other recent successful animated films have utilized. They have been Broadway romantic musical adventures aimed at the slightly pre-teen female audience for quite a long time now. This formula has raked in a lot of money for the studio, so I doubt they are going to change it just because grumpy adult males find all the stereotypes insultingly trite.

Disney is the worst for self-serving special features, where everything the studio touches is a “masterpiece” or a “classic.” Yet the technology behind their modern animation is not substantially different than it was for Toy Story – only the software gets better.

So far as aggravating people, a subset for me comes because I review books in many different venues, so I get review copies and copies from authors who want me to discuss their latest effort. The problem is that, in the absence of generous gratuitous bribes, I feel obligated to write honest reviews of the material. I try to let people know this in advance, but this often does not sink in. Just because I felt Sally Scribe's latest novel wasn't very good, and say so in print, does not mean that I no longer like Sally herself, or even that I think her writing is all bad; just that this particular item wasn't so hot. Unfortunately more often than not, the author takes this as a personal attack on their character and the entire creative body of their work. At best it leads to an icy reserve in future contacts, but more often it results in nasty comments made in print either in the same venue or on some other platform the author knows I also read ... often multiple snide and disagreeable insults, followed by never speaking to me again in person or in print. Constructive criticism should be a learning experience for creators, also no matter how wonderful something is, there is always going to be a percentage of consumers who don't like it. Unfortunately accepting these realities of life usually do not seem to be qualities most writers or artists possess. There's not much I can do about it except to move on. Although, as mentioned before, lavish gratuitous bribes would smooth over the entire situation.

The next issue will be #30 eh? In ye olden newspaper jargon –30- used to mark the end of a story, or the wrap-up of the bulldog edition. I trust it will not mean the end of *Broken Toys* though.

I plan to go at least as far as issue 35. The greatest number of issues I've produced in the past was 34, for DNQ. It would be nice to at least break that record ... but I have no plans to discontinue at all, so who knows how far I'll get?. When I run out of the desire to write is when I'll stop.

Milt Stevens, miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Broken Toys 29*, you voice the common dislike for Windows 8. I agree with you. I don't like Windows 8 either. I'm going to keep my current computer with Windows 7 for as long as possible in the hope that Windows 9 may be more tolerable. Recently, I was told there was a product on the market that made Windows 8 look and act like Windows 7. It's strange there are software products on the market to avoid "improvements" to other software products.

And I've discovered that Windows 7 has a feature enabling it to operate like Windows XP! Adapting to Win7 was easy enough, however, that I didn't resort to the retro look.

Speaking of wheelchairs, I may be using one for future trips through large airports. I had a little problem in the Las Vegas airport on my way back from the Westercon in Salt Lake City. OK, so it was more than a little problem.

I might mention that I've never been one of those people who get misty-eyed about the idea of life in the state of nature. I know it was brutal and brief. I also know that when you can't walk any farther in a hunter-gatherer society, you sit down and die.

So there I was in the Las Vegas airport. My ticket said there was a change of planes in Las Vegas. It didn't say the two planes would be about a mile apart. In the Buddhist universe, there are thousands of heavens and thousands of hells. I'm sure the Las Vegas airport is one of the hells. I made it halfway to the other plane. At that point, I had an overpowering realization. I couldn't take another step. In a primitive world, I would have had to sit down and die.

Luckily for me, very few primitive hunter-gatherers have died in the Las Vegas airport recently. As a 21st century man in a more-or-less civilized country, I waved down a passing wheelchair and told them I needed a wheelchair here and now. They were actually prompt and polite in providing one. If you are on disability, you should be eligible to use the Braille audio book library. I imagine it works the same way in Canada as in the US. They give you a special book player, and you can download books to a flash drive. They have a wide selection of books, and it's free. The only disadvantage is that it takes longer to listen to a book than to read it normally.

Now if only convention centers would imitate airports so you could flag down a passing wheelchair on the way to an author signing or a panel discussion you want to attend. There were several times at the Reno Worldcon when I felt as though I was a legionary on a doomed retreat across the Mesopotamian desert.

What gave you the idea I wanted books read to me? The brief mention I think I made of how blindness would affect me? Or was that only in my apazine? Cheer up ... I seem to be in no real danger of blindness. Neither would listening to a book be anywhere as satisfying as reading it. It's almost the difference between playing guitar and listening to someone else play it.

Steve Jeffrey, srjeffery@aol.com

I think I've missed a couple of issues. Apologies for that, but mundane life has mutated into a 24/7 race against an impossibly tight project launch deadline to the point where I'm even dreaming in code. It's

quite surreal.

But success and a brief respite - my program has survived the rigors of QA qualification testing (as of 5 p.m. Friday) after some 411 pages of test documentation, and I have a whole weekend where I don't have to fix anything before we throw it at real users. Who will promptly break it in all sorts of unexpected ways, and send us back to square one.

I got to the second photograph in "Sailor's Last Voyage" and stopped reading. That is almost exactly the way Enki died, and that photo of Sailor lying on the kitchen floor brought back too many memories. I'm sorry.

I guess I'm glad I didn't publish the last photo, taken just hours before she passed – she looked really awful. I had the good sense not to take an "after" photo.

Bill Patterson mentioned *The Bridge* as set in Toronto and a remake of a Swedish show. Actually a Swedish/Danish collaboration, *Bron/Broen*. We watched the second series at the beginning of the year, having been completely hooked by the first. I'd be intrigued to know how the Canadian remake handled the personality of the main protagonist, Saga Noren.

Agree completely with Brad about *Lost* and that I'll never get those hours back before realizing the writers didn't know where they were going, and gave up feeling completely conned. Which has happened more than once, probably most recently with *The Dome* (you'd think Stephen King would know better, but perhaps he got rewritten or overruled in the attempt to spin this series out over far more episodes than its plot line could reasonably support.) And *Agents of Shield* was just silly, and had only one good line,

Hill: 'What does S.H.I.E.L.D. stand for, Agent Ward?'

Ward: 'Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division.'

Hill: 'And what does that mean to you?'

Ward: 'That someone really wanted our initials to spell SHIELD.'

OK, four lines, but it was a good joke. After that, though, it just seem to fall apart in silliness with everyone behaving like stereotyped idiots doing precisely what they'd been warned not to 30 seconds ago so they could put themselves and the rest in danger and be rescued. Yay. *Vita brevis*.

In my opinion, Marvel is grasping at straws with material like SHIELD. It's terribly transparent how they'd like to ditch comic books and just make 12 or 15 movies a year, one for each character and a couple of team-ups like The Avengers. That they produce good superhero movies at all must be more or less an accident, because they're just as likely to produce a stinker.

Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net

Another pile of *Broken Toys* is on my desktop, issue 29. I will once again attempt to write up some comments on this issue, and if memory serves, do it better than I did last time.

Pile? I thought there was only one issue since 28?

I am glad you've gotten the improved funding, for in this potentially hot and humid city, air conditioning is becoming a necessity. We haven't had much in the way of heat so far this summer, but August is at the doorstep, and we should have some scorchers. Last year, though, we only had two or three days above 30C, but that was a fluke. The heat is coming, and we always keep in mind that September is the third month of summer, so that could be nice and warm, too. Bless Steven for his willingness to help out. Feels good to be able to treat yourself, doesn't it?

I feel nearly human, in fact. Now if only I was up to going places, I could afford dinner now and then. But apparently you can't have everything. Next on my shopping list are a new sofa, an indoor grill and a waffle iron. How did I ever get through life without a waffle iron?

We had to get ourselves a new computer too, with our Frankenputer slowly dying through using Windows XP in a newer software universe. Desktop computers are still quite available, and we got ourselves something brand new with Windows 7 for a nice price, and we are roaring all over the Net again.

I never made it in to The River, but we'd been past it a few times. I still love bookstores, but not in this financial age. The old joke, "How you make a million dollars running a bookstore? Start with two million." isn't so funny any more, and like some of the comics I see in the paper, like *Dilbert*, it would be a lot funnier if it wasn't so damned true. I used to know where all the used bookstores were in Toronto, and I still do. It's just that 75-80% of them aren't there any more. I have no idea where the nearest used bookstore is to my address.

What bugs me is that there's nowhere to dispose of books you no longer want. You can give them away – to the Sally Ann or friends – but there are few used bookstores buying. Once you pay your \$19.95 for a cheap paperback edition, it's worthless.

There are times when I have to be a diplomat, just to make life a little easier. All I will say is that I agree with you about Hope, and end of statement.

I've conversed via e-mail with both Mike Glycer and Dave Langford about their respective newszines, and the fact that they are of mixed minds when it comes to an expanding obituary file for each zine, most issues. I get *Ansible* regularly through an e-mail notice, but I admit I must do some catching up with *File 770*, given it seems to have settled down into a blog format. (There are a thousand blogs out there I am told I must see, and I don't must see any of them.)

You're not kidding about don't must seeing them. Far from expanding the potential readership of an ambitious fanwriter, it has thrown us into competition with the entire planet ... especially with professional SF writers.

We all wish we were in better health, but admittedly, we have chosen a rather sedentary lifestyle. If reading were exercise, we'd all be Schwarzeneggers by now. Yet, we're mostly of an age where we will have those aches and pains, and we'd best try to remember what our parents did for those. At least we have better medical tech, and those little problems can be mostly solved.

The loccol ... my greetings to Barry Kent MacKay, a name long missing from fanzines. It would be wonderful to see his works here again.

Yvonne and I don't have pets, mostly because we wouldn't be able to take the time to look after them, and our lifestyle wouldn't be fair to them. We borrow everyone else's cats when we visit, and like a typical aunt or uncle, we enjoy them, and give them back when we're done. There have been a number of cats who have meant much to us over the years; and they all belonged to someone else.

My loc...I have won five FAAn Awards, all for letter-writing, and I have won two Auroras, one for fan writing and one for chairing Ad Astra 13 in 1993. Then, there's the Canadian Faned Awards, of which I've won two of them.

I don't know whether to count the Canadian Faned Awards. I've won two myself, so something must be dubious about them. Also, a kind word to Graeme (or a five dollar bill) is just about enough to ensure you will win the award Graeme created ... assuming he can tear himself away from writing for Amazing Stories to run them for another year.

Over to the second page, and I think I've done enough for now. I'm starting to see a little double with fatigue, and there's only so much I can blame on the computer. Take care, hope you're getting out into the summer, and see you next issue.

Keith Soltys, keith@soltys.ca

I saw your announcement of *Broken Toys 29* on Facebook a while back, but it never showed up in my email. Perhaps my spam filter ate it. But thanks to eFanzines, I have it now and this time, I am going to get a loc off to you promptly.

It's possible I skipped by your name while addressing the outgoing mail ... accidents do happen.

I'm glad to see some good things are happening in your life. I can't imagine living in an apartment without decent air conditioning, so I'm glad you got that straightened out. We keep ours on pretty much constantly in the summer; living as we do in a townhouse with no windows on two sides means natural ventilation is limited. I hope you get your power chair in time to get to the Ex. I'm not sure if we'll go – we didn't last year, but it's probably time to visit the old lady again.

The impression I have is that the chair will be too late for the Ex this year ... but you never know. The air conditioner has certainly kept my apartment cool so far ... even chilly. But there have only been brief spells of hot weather, so far, rarely lasting longer than an afternoon. The AC has not yet been put to a real test.

Having lived in Hamilton for 5 years, I can assure you that lots of people want to live there. It is a lovely city and has an undeserved reputation for being rough and dirty. The steel mills are mostly gone now and the city's cultural sector is a prime attraction. It has an excellent gallery, a fine modern concert hall, a first-rate university and medical school, and many thriving galleries and restaurants. If I could get decent GO service to Toronto, I'd consider moving there again. Unlike Toronto, I might even be able to afford it.

That last line is probably the telling one ... who can afford to live in Toronto? It's almost as expensive as Vancouver or New York, and not even the bedroom suburbs around it are significantly cheaper.

I can't share Lloyd's lack of interest in SF, especially modern SF. I've always been an avid SF reader and I'm constantly on the lookout for new writers. The last book I read was Ian McDonald's wonderful *The Dervish House* and the next will be Charles Stross' new book, *The Rhesus Chart*. After that, I plan to dive back into Iain M. Banks' *Culture* series, which sadly I didn't discover until after his death. Meanwhile, I'm working my way through Gardner Dozois' *Year's Best #30*, currently reading a superb story by the late Jay Lake. Sure, the classics are great, and I'll pull one off the shelf occasionally, but we are in a new golden age right now and I'm faced with a surfeit of riches.

I don't read much modern SF myself. I'm don't doubt that the genre has as much to offer as it ever did, but I'd been reading it for 20 years by 1990, and whether or not it was well written it seemed rather stale to me. The Varleys and Willisies and Turtledoves had added a few new wrinkles, but it really didn't seem to stretch my imagination the way the first 20 years of reading SF had done. Probably it was me that changed ... or that SF hadn't ... whatever. In any case, I began to enjoy historical fiction and historical mysteries more. They gave me a better sense of unfamiliar landscapes being created as I read, and more believably lived in as well. I also read more non-fiction than fiction. Since the '90s, I have lost track of what's even new. Gardner Dozois is certainly not new, nor Ian McDonald. If the author has appeared for the first time in print after 2000, I'm hardly likely to have even heard of him or her. Living in a neighborhood without a decent bookstore is no help.



Death, Supply & Demand

In the past, I've been quick to bitch and moan about other artists whose journals are exclusively sales pitches. They irritate me because they never seem to have anything to say other than that they're taking commissions, they have a sale on nametags, they'll be at Whatevercon doing sketches, or they have two openings this month for additional jobs. If it isn't that, it's their price list, or the subject matter they're willing to accept. The impression I get from most of these artists is that they would paint their little sister blue, stick a feather in her ass and sell her for five bucks.

Now it's my turn.

Actually, I don't so much want to *sell* my services as to explain why they *aren't* readily available. When I was approved for a disability pension last year, I suddenly found myself with an embarrassment of riches. Compared to when I was on community assistance, otherwise known as welfare, or the poge, being on disability is like being promoted from the production line to management. There is much less work, and your paycheck takes a big jump upward. I won't go into the whys and wherefores of this ... it is just so. The bottom line is that I really don't need to do piddly-assed little commissions any more.

For that matter, even while living on welfare I was better off than when I supported myself as a freelance artist. So much for the work ethic. Like so many things in modern life, it's a con.

Strangely, now that I don't need them anymore, I get more nibbles from potential customers than ever.

It reminds me of a movie I saw on TV quite a few years ago. In the 1965 film, *The Art of Love*, Dick van Dyke plays an American painter named Paul Sloane, who is living and working in Paris. As you might guess, he has trouble selling his paintings. But his manipulative and cunning friend, played by James Garner, convinces Sloane that *if he were dead*, demand for his paintings would skyrocket. The only difficulty is that Sloane *isn't* dead and has no intention of becoming so in the near future. So, with his pal's help, he merely *pretends* to be dead, and naturally his paintings start to sell like worthless mortgages before the bank meltdown of 2008. Of course, the scam doesn't work out as planned at all, and nearly ends with one of them going to the guillotine for murder.

I'm no Paul Sloane. The point of this isn't about double-crossing pals, or the French system of justice. It's about the perversity of the art market. Perhaps it is only a cliché, but it has been said in many ways that while an artist is alive, he can always produce more work, so there is no great demand for it. But once there is no more to be had, the demand becomes nearly insatiable!

I think the same applies to my own case, though I am far from dead yet. Now that I have made it known that I'm finally independent of the grind that is freelance art, people have realized that they may have waited until too late to commission me, and are hurrying to take a number!

Since that appears to be the case, I thought it would be good to establish the ground rules here.

First, my starting price is \$75. This is considered high in furry fandom ... but only in comparison to other artists who are *not* in furry fandom. But furry fandom is a totally unrealistic comparison point, with a ratio of artists to customers that approaches 1 to 1. Too many of those artists are still living in their parents' home, and only want to earn enough by their art to buy hamburgers and fries over a convention weekend. Since they aren't making a living from their art, they'll work for next to nothing. In the real world, hiring an artist can cost you anywhere from \$500 to \$5 *million!* So I think I'm being *quite* reasonable with a starting price of \$75.

Even so, I can be negotiated downward if the job is simple enough, or if the customer is satisfied with a high-resolution file and I don't need to mail him the original.

My next rule is harder to define. It involves content, or subject matter. I have no hard and fast guidelines, but in general I don't care for drawing sexual subjects that are too explicit. Nudity, even intercourse are fine, but I draw the line at those artificial poses that show every throbbing vein and fold of moist flesh that you see in porno magazines. Apart from aesthetics, I'm just not that good at it. I'm also less than keen to draw male gay erotica. The more moderate it is, the more amenable I am to it. This shouldn't be taken as a judgment, but as what I, personally, am comfortable with. I feel similarly about some fetishes. If your thing is disembowelment, torture or degradation, the only way I can approach it is with some degree of humour. A cartoony beheading is quite different from one that is photo-realistic. When you come right down to it, though, the best way to ascertain what I will draw is tell me what you want ... then I will tell you whether or not I'll do it.

Come on, don't be shy! Step right up and tell me your innermost desires, and I will pass judgment on them!

Well, no. As I said above, this is only about what I would take pleasure in drawing, *even for money*.

Finally, there's the question of whether I will use any of my own fictional characters in the art. The answer is yes ... but only if they remain in character. I'm unwilling to depict them in circumstances that are implausible or uncharacteristic of them. For example: Saara Mar being gang-banged by the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Regardless of whether the TMNT would ever descend to such creepy behavior, Saara would paint the walls with their guts if they tried. A few martial arts moves and a Japanese biscuit tin opener would be no defense against her. Similarly, I would be unwilling to show my new Fraggles characters in an open orgy, or pleasuring a Gorg. They just wouldn't, and that's the end of it. However, I can do the merely improbable, and show Saara having lunch with the Teen Titans; no problem. In fact, it sounds fun. I also don't mind involving them in certain offbeat activities, such as burrowing naked through a vat of butterscotch topping, or wrapped in Christmas paper. I'm not a prude; I just know what I like.

Now, with all that said, I may still not be available. I'm slow, and if I have more than two or three jobs on the drawing board, I may never complete any of them! And so, if in spite of all this you still wish to commission me, I wish you the best of luck!

Fortunately, death is not all it's cracked up to be.

WHAT THE PAST BECAME

A while back, I wrote a letter of comment to Flag, on the subject of Isaac Asimov. What exactly inspired me to do, I don't recall. Perhaps it was something to do with the Good Doctor's reaction to the "future" as it's come to be? The letter wasn't printed, which was no tragedy, but when I saw that it wasn't even mentioned among the WAHFs, my eyebrows rose a little in surprise. That sent me to my folder for locs written this year, to see whether I had said anything worth repeating for Broken Toys.

Despite some initial skepticism, I've decided to run it more or less as it was submitted.

Interest in Isaac Asimov does indeed seem to have enjoyed a small resurgence of late, including, in its own modest way, a piece on collecting Asimov that I published a few issues back. Despite often being derided for wooden prose and sentences – such as, “Pensive, Alton Gern sat by the telecaster, waiting for the mandatory summons to the Galactic Science Council's penultimate session” – the fact is that Asimov was hugely influential in a quieter way than either Robert A. Heinlein or Arthur C. Clarke. Perhaps it just seemed quieter, because his fiction more demure than the raucous character of the Good Doctor himself.

It seems true that the most unexpected change between Asimov's youth and today is the modern attitude we have toward science. It has brought relatively little that is revolutionary in obvious ways to our lives since the 1960s, the home computer and Internet being the *big* exceptions. Almost everything else is a logical extension of those two innovations – smart phones, tablets, e-books, video games, DVDs, GPS, cyber-war, Bitcoins, Wikipedia, Amazon, Google-glasses and all the rest. Just how much those additions

to our lifestyle will *fundamentally* change the way we live remains to be determined. Doubtless, we may see bookstores or recorded music disappear. But will the changes be as sweeping as those brought by radio, electric light, home refrigerators, the automobile or heavier-than-air flight? Our children or grandchildren will say.

It seems a truism, though, that people have come to believe that science has nothing really new to add – just more iGizmos or Gameboxes. Much of the public looks askance at fracking, GMOs, and nuclear power ... sometimes with good reason. However, even old, well-proven advances in science such as vaccines are under suspicion, while the confusion around vitamins and diet baffle even the levelheaded. The lunatic fringe has always questioned such things as whether the dinosaur was extinct before Adam, but nonsense of this sort is now being given more serious consideration than ever before.

Science Fiction itself leads us to expect a global environmental collapse as a result of our scientific progress. So can the general, abysmally educated and terminally distracted public be expected to be more optimistic about the future than the time-binding few?

It is *that* change about 2014 that I believe that would have most surprised the Isaac Asimov of 1950 – that science no longer holds the promise of a better world for us, but the threat of extinction, totalitarianism or at least an all-encompassing corporate blandness. But, as Andrew Hooper wrote, the 30-year-old writer in 1950 was near the end of a period of an unprecedented leap of understanding of the physical world, and a manifold increase in the standard of living because of it.

Even then, the pace of change in the immediate post-war era was nowhere as rapid as it had been during the period from 1890 to 1920. Those 30 years inaugurated what we think of as the Modern World, with refrigeration, television, cinema, flight, the electrification of the cities and countryside, the construction of a continent-wide highway system for accommodate the geometrical proliferation of automobiles, the switch from sail and steam to diesel, skyscrapers in the modern sense, effective surgery, sanitation, “miracle” drugs, and on and on and on. By comparison, 1950 was pokey. But 1920 – the culmination of an era of rapid progress – was precisely when Isaac Asimov was born.

The doubts that came in the aftermath of a World War had not spread beyond the intelligentsia, yet.

It might be said that modern Science Fiction was born in that era as well. Admittedly, it had its antecedents before Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, but it is with those two late 19th century writers that we see the birth of SF, as we know it, not as philosophical-romanticism or pseudo-medieval fantasy. SF was born in the era of what was probably the most rapid technological change the world has ever known. And perhaps it will fade from memory along with our air conditioners, wide-screen flat TVs and e-books when the oil runs dry, the crops fail and the lights go out...

I don't think that disappointing end to technical civilization would be surprising to the Isaac Asimov of 1980, at all.

Next issue will be Broken Toys 31... duh!