

BROKEN TOYS 34

The Christmas Issue Dec. 2014

Broken Toys 34 is brought to you in a bit of a rush by **Taral Wayne**, who lives at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6 Canada. You can e-mail me at Taral@bell.net to loc, or download all past issues at eFanzines.com, <http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/> or at Fanac.org, <http://efanzines.com/Taral/index.htm>. This is Kiddelidiuee Books & Art 293,

SEASONS CLEANINGS

Christmas is a helluva thing. It sneaks up on you like the June Taylor Dancers at a state funeral, and yet you somehow never notice until there's a spike-heel shoe in your eggnog. I had just e-mailed the last issue of *Broken Toys* when I realized that if I wanted the next issue out before Christmas, it was already nearly too late to start! And I still haven't finished work on the Halloween issue!

Truth be told, I've done very little work on it, having been distracted by other chores, including *Broken Toys 33*. One unscheduled detour was a final issue of *Lost Toys*. Number 8 was more or or less to have been the last, but it turned out that I had a few loose ends I wanted to tie up as I left Arnie Katz's digital apa, *TePe*. So you completist collectors out there should know that *Lost Toys 9* is now the *real* final issue. A second unplanned demand on my time can be blamed on Guy Lillian, who is editing the program book for *Sasquan*, the Seattle Worldcon next year. He sent out a call for fanart relating to the Hugo award, and I foolishly responded. In retrospect, I don't know why I did it. I have stopped giving a damn about either the Worldcon or the Hugos, so why am I wasting the sweat of my brow on flattering them in a publication that I've always regarded as something that goes unnoticed and nobody ever reads? For too many years, I've been eager for the opportunity to illustrate ... well ... *anything!* It has created a bad habit of volunteering, as though I had a huge "use me" sign pinned on my back that no amount of twisting and stretching can reach.

Still, I might have handled all this better if I hadn't felt tired a lot of the time of late. It's ridiculous. I can't even sleep unless I rest in bed for a couple of hours first, sitting up and letting my mind wander, so

that I'm relaxed enough to doze off. At times, the necessary rest period has stretched up to *four hours*. I read, of course, but that has the drawback of tending to keep my mind active. And only after I have rested long enough can I begin a necessary eight hours of real sleep. That this has played havoc with my daily schedule goes without saying.



But not all distractions over the past month have been unwelcome. I've had the final phone conversation about my Power Chair, and I'm pleased to say that it will be delivered on Monday, a mere three days from now. Its arrival will mark the end of a year-long effort to have the Ontario Disability Support Program to agree I was eligible and recommend my application to the Ontario government. Then wait longer until the government approved. That's all over with now, which means that shortly I will be on wheels. Just in time to need skis instead... Oh well, I'll be ready as all hell for next Spring!

T H E G A M E I S U P

I've had a minor affinity for games all my life. They didn't make much of an impression on me when I was very young – I was an only-child whose family moved often, and made few friends – but I admit to a certain fascination with games that came and went. When I was around 12, my parents went through a phase of playing Clue or Monopoly with their friends. I was never invited to sit in, but kept the boards and the markers for decades, finally giving them away only a few weeks ago! When I was in school, I met a few fellow classmates who were also into games. But we didn't play them so much as *invent* them. We spent all our time making up boards and writing rules. They tended to be gory fantasies, where a misstep could lead to falling through a hidden trap door into a vat of acid, or cannibals would turn you on a spit over a fire. After a while, though, the sudden explosions, man-eating plants, vampires, spring-loaded spikes and other forms of adolescent Hollywoodesque mayhem grew tiresome.

I remember a few years later, when I was a freshly minted science fiction fan, there was a fad going around Midwest conventions. Fans would sprawl on the floor, hunching over sheets of graph paper, consulting Xeroxed sheets of rules and rolling dice. Later, Dungeons & Dragons would have commercially printed boards, real cards, professional looking rule books and specialized, 12-sided, hexadecimal, low-friction, glow-in-the-dark dice ... numbered in Hebrew if you so desired. But I remember when D&D was still do-it-yourself.

I had little to do with gaming during the years D&D grew into a national pastime. Arcade games, when they came into fashion, failed to coax the dimes and quarters out of my pockets. *Pacman*, *Donkey Kong* and *Space Invaders* were merely an exercise in hand-and-eye coordination, with no sense of adventure.

Early computer games were somewhat similar, in that they emphasized targeting moving spaceships, trolls, tanks or lemmings in order to tote up a huge score. The graphics grew consistently more impressive with time, but the basic idea tended to remain the same – target practice.

There were a couple of games that caught my imagination, though. Both were adventure games that were set in imaginative worlds that could only be explored by solving problems from one end to the other. Some puzzles were trivial and amusing, others downright baffling, but solve them you must. One of the games was *The Neverhood*, whose stage was a vast, clay landscape of slapstick mountains, crazily constructed bridges, mysterious tunnels, leaning buildings and goofy characters who were animated by stop-motion. The soundtrack was a memorable mix of Yiddish folksong and brazen jazz. When I finally came to the end of the game, and was offered the choice of restoring “God” to his throne, or succumbing to evil by taking “His” place, I was sorry it was over.

The other game was *Circle of Blood: Sword of the Templars*. It was a more serious, if less visually rich game, whose backgrounds were reminiscent of the best days of UPA animation. You played the game as George Stobbard, a journalist visiting Paris, who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time ... a lot. A clown passes George while he is having coffee in an outdoor café. The clown rushes out of the café again, seconds before an enormous explosion turns everything black. George comes to in the midst of a mystery whose solution he pursues all around Paris, as well as in Spain, Ireland, Syria and finally Scotland! One must be careful of Guido and Squid, though. If they kill you, you are really killed! The mysterious Templar who had been disguised as the clown-bomber is no less dangerous. But the real treasures of the game are the offbeat characters you meet along the way. Many are there to provide clues, but others just to pique your interest. I finally battled my way to the end, saving the world from a hideous conspiracy to use mystic forces to conquer the planet. It took a surprising effort to get all the way to the end, figuring my way through numerous failed attempts not to be sealed alive in a desert cave, or jailed for burglarizing a museum of antiquities, but when all was done I felt almost as though I had done all those things – raced along the top of a speeding express train, thrown knives in a seedy Middle Eastern bar, exchanged barbs with a rude French desk clerk, searched an abandoned archeological dig in a castle in Ireland for clues, been battered by a goat, chatted with a batty old lady who played piano in a rundown *pension* and many, many other things.

The game has become almost as much a real memory to me as some Worldcons.

LEFTOVER PARIS

WAHF: Reese Dorrycott, who likes to take the PKZW IV out for a spin. **Greg Giacobe**, who says he brought the last several issues with him on a USB drive and read them at work because the computers were down. **Oliver Coombes**, who is ever vigilant on my behalf for new British coins that pass through his hands. **Jacqi Monahan**, who apologizes for being the “Loc Less Monster,” and also claims she is collecting quotes about fans and food for the next installment of her trip report.

NED BROOKS, nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Thanks Taral! I've never published a lot by other people either. At first I was too slow to retype it, and even now to do it properly I would have to scan and OCR it.

For darkening pencil sketches, have you tried the gamma function? You must have it in Photoshop. I have it in ThumbsPlus, a much simpler software.

Sorry to hear about the lost cash! I would never put such cash anywhere but in a pocket. Well, here in the house there is some left from when we closed my mother's bank account that I was a signatory on.

I see that "A Way of Life" runs 22 pages in the **Fantastic Universe Omnibus** but because of the size of the book could be gotten out in 12 page-size scans, under 10 MB at 200 dpi. Is there a Robert Bloch estate that would care?

I dunno. But without a copy to scan from, does it matter?

Lord Dunsany says "A collection illuminates leisure, and almost gives a meaning to life." - I like the "almost".... I have never worried much over what "meaning," if any, my life had.

I was already too old for such stuff when bell-bottom pants were in fashion. Or any sort of slim-leg pants either. I am fashion-blind and all the trousers I ever wore were about the same leg width at the bottom as at the top.

I hadn't heard about Tanith Lee's needle-point fandom! I have almost all of her books, and particularly enjoyed the Flat Earth stories. I suppose you saw this week's news story about the fans at a furry con being forced out of the hotel by an apparently malicious release of chlorine gas. None of them were seriously hurt - the funny thing was that they were evacuated to a civic center where a dog show was in progress.

ERIC MAYER, groggy.tales@gmail.com

This will be an odd loc. I've already commiserated with you over losing all that money, and unfortunately it looks like no Good Samaritan showed up. It will make for a lousy month. At least you have the electric chair to look forward to. Oh wait....

What a shocking thing to say to me!

Also, nothing against Jim Mowatt, but I avoid TAFF stuff. You know the history.

Yep. Jim probably doesn't, though... I'm not volunteering to tell him.

However, you have a fascinating bumper crop of locs to talk about.

Kent Pollard mentions the sad fate of his dad's coin collection and the slighter better fate of his own Tarzan collection. Better he traded a set of ratty old books for brand spanking new ones (even if a savvy collector would've spanked him for it) than trading a complete set of Davy Crockett bubblegum cards assembled by actually purchasing pack after pack one summer, for some crappy toy trucks as I did. I assisted my dad with his stamp collection for a few years but never got the stamp collecting bug myself. Nor did I make a point of saving or collecting books and comics I read. One year, however, when I was very young, I cut out each daily Alley Oop newspaper strip and pasted them into a scrapbook, making a big graphic novel. At the time those strips seemed to stretch back an awesome distance into the past.

[I have thee or four years' worth of *Alley Oop* from the 1940s, reprinted by some outfit during that great period of comics reprints in the '80s. Great stuff ... though a bit fascistic at times. Oop is always right because he has the biggest club!](#)

I share Brad Foster's inability to remember names. My memory is so bad I can't even remember meeting people. But my poor recall is not particularly directed at people. I don't remember anything about movies I've seen or books I've read. At my age I'd be afraid Alzheimer's was creeping up on me, except I have been writing about what a horrible memory I have since I was in my twenties. Looking back, there is not much there ... a vast ocean of the forgotten with scattered highlights rising like islands, and most of those probably mirages created by my imagination, if the truth were known.

[I can't remember people well either, unless I meet them again soon after, or have some previous dealings through mail or fanzines.](#)

Re: Jim Mowatt's loc, and your reply, about the less-than-salubrious effects of social media like Twitter and Facebook on what people write. I have steadfastly refused to get involved with Facebook. I was talked into trying Twitter, gave it a shot but have almost entirely abandoned it as totally unsatisfying and, to me, mystifying. Do I truly have anything useful to say in 144 characters? Does anyone? At least very often? No doubt, someday soon, 144 characters will be too much for people to bother typing or reading. Then we'll have something new with ten characters – called Grunt maybe?

What intrigued me about fanzine fandom was how it mixed the social with the creative. Back in the Seventies it felt, to me, like a social club for creative folks. Today the creative aspect has largely given way to the pure social aspect. See Facebook. Of course for a social misfit like me that isn't very enticing. Everyone, everywhere, all the time, socializes. There's nothing unique about it at all. And it is disappointing that, as you point out, many fans who used to be creative have largely given that aspect up.

Regarding *Title*, which you mention in your reply to Milt Stevens. The zine was mostly letters, but not a letter column. Donn Brazier artfully sliced his monstrous supply of locs into small bits and pieces which he arranged in various recurring departments. I don't know if it had been done before, or since. The effect was rather like that of an Internet bulletin board.

As I recall, there was a British fanzine that did something like that ... *Small Friendly Dog*, by the Charnocks. And guess what? Graham Charnock is back with a zine called *Vibrator* that is much the same!

I like the idea of the "Pelz dispenser."

Yeah, as you say to Bob Jennings, Thanksgiving has grown into a major event, having nothing to do with giving thanks, or stealing land from the Indians, or whatever the hell it was supposed to be about. Now it's pretty much about greed. Let's celebrate that we can stuff ourselves until we're sick while billions of people all over the world starve. Okay, so I am being a little harsh. People do employ the holiday as a reason to get the whole family together and stuff themselves until they ... oh never mind. I guess I am a cynic.

As well, letting the food rot on the store shelves won't feed anyone, anywhere, either.

Bob Jennings says: "I always reply to letters of comment I receive for my own fanzines, and I am usually a bit disappointed when many other faneds ask for LOCs but never bother to reply back." This is something I genuinely wonder about. I don't know the answer but would be interested in knowing what people think. Does writing back right away foster better communication than waiting to reply in the loccol? Or does it devalue the loccol?

Since only the letter writer sees my reply before his loc is published, I think it does no harm.

Back in the Fifties and early Sixties (I guess) they had great plastic dinosaurs in cereal boxes, with some varieties I hadn't seen at the dime store. I also recall a neat set of *Lady and the Tramp* figures. And the 3-D *Mighty Mouse* comic I sent a boxtop for was really neat as well!

There were any number of plastic dinosaurs, some almost museum quality, others cheap and molded in bright colours more suited to sports cars than reptiles. I still have some very nice ones, based on a Marx set, that I bought at the Royal Ontario Museum in the 1970s. The *Brontosaurus* alone is seven or eight inches long. All of them molded in a plausible pale green.

R-Lauraine Tutihasi reckons she "never tried to be anything." So far as work career went, that was me. I did what made itself available to make a living. Otherwise I guess I tried to be a writer, which I really wasn't. That's the problem with trying to be something. Like Popeye, we are what we are. In retrospect, the best way to live is to manage to do what you want to do, short of hurting others. The rest is, as has been so perfectly put, vanity.

Steve Jeffrey mentions *Lord of the Flies*. Oh my, that book horrified me when I read it as a teen. I mean, I was like a skinny Piggy. What a shock. I still have never reread the novel and probably won't. I was pretty weird. I never got picked on or bullied. I guess I was somehow a bit too disturbing to look like a victim.

The book was a powerful shock to me, too. But I didn't identify with Piggy ... a little more with Ralph, perhaps, but not all that much. Looking back on *Lord of the Flies* after so many

years, I have to say that Ralph seemed a rather useless individual, whose passivity had much to do with why the “savages” managed to dominate the island. But it occurs to me right this moment that perhaps that was William Golding’s point ... not that “evil” is strong, but that not standing up to it from the start allows it to grow strong.

You say: "... what I was thinking is that a great many people - such as myself - are dysfunctional in the sense that we don't fit into a nine-to-five environment and don't gladly defer to the authority of others." Absolutely agree. And the little cubicles the corporate powers insist of fitting people into get smaller and smaller and of more and more peculiar shapes. I was a terrible employee when I worked in-house. The bosses found me useless. Now doing the same stuff freelance, writing from home, my work is perfect. I am an exemplar. If I had to return and endure an office environment again...well, it'd kill me.

Makes an interesting picture, you communing with all those tiny plastic people. Heck, a lot of real-life humans seem to be plastic these days and not nearly so amusing to look at.

That great logo reminds me that one of the toys inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame in Rochester New York this year was "Little Green Army Men."

<http://www.toyhalloffame.org/toys/little-green-army-men>

The kind they show seem to be the three dimensional ones but we also liked the flat variety, which were total crap, but there were so many in a bag!

The ones at that site are of relatively recent vintage, made after the Toy Story movies, but based on much older molds that I remember seeing 40 years ago. The soldiers I used in the logo of Broken Toys 33, however, are older still. They are from the late 1950s Marx set, exactly like the one I used to have myself! I found a couple of pictures on-line by accident. The file named “Marx Germans” is from a set Marx made about ten years later, in the mid-1960s. I had them too! Alas, no longer... All the weird stuff you see in the photos was part of the set – barbed wire traps, landmines, flags to mark them, a pontoon bridge, ammo cases, a radio, tree stumps, sand bag emplacements, a recoilless rifle, an 8” howitzer that actually shot a pellet... missing are a helicopter I remember, and a case of medical supplies. One other object mystifies me ... no idea what it is.



The flat soldiers were also sold from ads in the backs of comic books, as I recall. I've seen them, but never sent away for any. They were usually Revolutionary War figures, which didn't interest me much ... since the bad guys won.

RON KASMAN, ron.kasman@gmail.com

Hi, Taral. Again, thanks for the mailing. I am sorry about your financial loss. I am glad that you have the savings to weather it.

I didn't read the TAFF report except for the words "dildo" and "vibrator." They sort of jump out at you when you skim.

And when you know the people involved, there is also a certain inevitability about the choice of itinerary.

And, like the Marvel films themselves you left us a little bit after the zine seemed to come to an end. One problem I have with SF and Comics is that people will say they don't make sense. I guess we all have our own degrees of tolerance for what doesn't make sense. Occasionally, I am quizzed. "Did you notice what didn't make sense in the new *Spider-Man* movie?" some twerp will say who wants to demonstrate how much smarter he is than I am. I will respond, "There was a man swinging through the air on a web," thus showing who really is the smart one. He will come back with, "No, that's the premise we take for granted. What didn't make sense is that the lab was filled with test tubes but there wasn't a beaker in sight. The Bunsen burners were designed for beakers as any idiot can see." At that point I smile, say nothing, lest the moron responds with a half-hour harangue on how Sam Rammi doesn't know dick. Anyway, the point is that I have a high tolerance for stupidity in SF and comic films and never find a problem with any plot or other story telling points in any of them. Hey, I forgave George Lucas for using parsec incorrectly. Not in a letter but in my heart, where it is important.

*I'm aware of the perils of demanding too much internal consistency from a story – I love *The Fifth Element*, for instance, *Mystery Men* and *Galaxy Quest*, but can they hold up to close scrutiny? No, of course not. But at some point the illusion of reality begins to waver and you see through it. I felt Asgard was quivering on the screen like a desert mirage, so that I could not believe in that place even for the sake of a story.*

Also, it was an interesting article about toy collecting. I did collect one bunch of toys-- *LOTR* figurines when they went on sale at 6 for \$10. I have a bookcase filled with them. They look great. Many people assume that because I am a comic fan I just love the things and give me them on special occasions. This is not the case. But I can see the good in most things, when they are well done and I will give a well made figurine a second look every time.



There were a lot of *LoTR* figures ... I have a couple of sets of elf-warriors and those green ghost guys that are about three inches tall. They're pretty good, and go well with a pair of Burger King trolls I have. Are those the ones you meant, or some other? [In later e-mail, Ron confirms they are one and the same collectible figures that I found at a discount wholesaler's.]

SIEVE JEFFERY, srjeffery@aol.com

Thanks for sending *Broken Toys 33*.

I know exactly what you mean about the problems of scanning and digitizing pencil drawings. I often prefer the looser pencil version of drawings than the inked over version, but pencil is often too faint or subtle to catch properly on a cheap desktop scanner and you find you have to spend almost as much time as it took to do the original drawing adjusting the contrast settings and painstakingly cleaning up the resulting scan.

I've tried all sorts of dodges at one time or another, including re-tracing the original on an A4 graphics tablet, but I can't get the hang of using a stylus when the picture I'm tracing appears elsewhere on the monitor than where my hand is moving. That feels really unnatural to me, even more so than painting with a mouse. I don't know if it's any better on a tablet computer. I have a tablet, but it doesn't have a stylus and after a brief period of playing with it for about a week it went back in the box, where it's remained since.

We do have some seriously upmarket HP scanner printers at work (when they work) which are good enough that it's often difficult to tell the copy from the original, but the default scanner output is Adobe pdf format which can be difficult to convert back into PhotoShop (or in my case Serif PhotoPlus or GIMP, the GNU freeware clone). GIMP also has some interesting plugins, one of which breaks an image into layers based on the fineness of detail (really good for removing scratches and blemishes from old photographs), but I haven't tried that on a scanned drawing yet.

I tried GimpShop (a variation of Gimp that works like Photoshop) before trashing my old system. It had gotten so bugged up that PS no longer worked on it! That version of GimpShop had some nice features, but in some other important respects, it was cumbersome in the extreme – I would not draw a straight line between two points, for example, so you'd have to do it by hand. I went back to PS 5.5 with glee when my new system was running. (I

believe I have a bootleg copy of a higher build of Photoshop around somewhere too ... just in case.)

Odd to see your reference to Burning Man in your reply to Joseph Major. I only know about this in passing because I use a bit of music software (KeyKit) that was originally developed by Tim Thompson as a platform for performances at Burning Man festivals. I've only seen videos of the event, but it comes across as a rather more pagan version of the Glastonbury festival villages.

Brad and Jim both comment on the level of engagement and response to *Broken Toys* and they are right, I think, in supposing that this comes from the fact that you email each issue personally to recipients, and that provokes more of an obligation to respond than just downloading something off eFanzines.com. Plus, you engage with your readers (always the sign of a good fanzine) both through the letter column and – which I suspect is rarer still – by personal reply to emails. That, and the familiarity and recurrence of names in the letters column, builds a sense of community.

I do work at it... Another trick I use is to keep an open Word Doc just for the letter column. When a new loc comes in, it (and my response) is immediately added to the open document. That way, I have almost no work to do when assembling *Broken Toys* around the end of the month. I just open a new Word Doc, plug in the logo and add articles and the lettercol, one after the other, until I get to the end. It takes a bit of adjustment here and there, but almost all the pieces are prefabricated by that point.

It's true, as you say in reply to Ron Kasman, that we probably wouldn't recommend *Dune* or *Foundation* to new readers of sf, but what I wonder would take their place today? The field is a lot wider and more disparate than it used to be in the '50s and '60s. And my own reading has slowed to the point that I don't keep up with even the major award winners and shortlists anymore, in the way I made an effort to in the Nineties and Noughties. Even back then I could point to the main writers of hard-sf as a reasonably identifiable group (Bear, Banks, Baxter, Egan, McAuley, McCleod, Reynolds, Robson, Robinson, Nagata, Vinge - I freely admit my list here is somewhat UK biased as well as being predominantly male; a US reader might include Benford, Bujold, Card and Scalzi) as recommendations to where the field currently stood, but no longer. Even cyberpunk was a whole generation ago, which must seem almost as ancient and dated to newbies as Heinlein and van Vogt.

Where is the cutting edge that are destined to become tomorrow's classics now? Or perhaps (as I suspect) I am asking the wrong audience, as one of the few fanzine fans who still reads the stuff that got me into this in the first place.

Most of the fans I know are 50 or over and probably can't answer that question ... or would cynically say that the future belongs to the Disney-Lucas-Marvel synthesis. My friend Bob Wilson might be able to suggest some of the newer names coming up from the magazines, but he's not as familiar with on-line publications as he is with F&SF or with original anthologies. He seems to think that there is a future generation, though, even if he's not sure who it is or what its future will be like.

DAVE HAREN, tyrbolo@comcast.net

I enjoyed this issue in a very low key way. I'm glad to see your art back again. I am not sure what the connection to Holy even is but then a lot of people are befuddled by the conflation with Heathen rituals. Amanita fest is about on us again with all of its arcane references to the mushrooms of the Yakut basin. When a Japanese department store crucified Santa it seemed to be the most appropriate form of the seasonal fest.

Holy? You mean as in Halloween? Ah, but you see it *wasn't* the Halloween Issue after all! Love the idea of the Passion of Santa Claus, though. It's perfectly natural the Japanese might make that mistake, just as we might mix up stories about Buddha and Confucius.

I also have too many odd things in the way on shelves. My figures of the big variety are a nice mixture of oddity. Spawn, one of the KISS band, A skeleton giant, a Luftwaffe pilot, and some weird Chinese girly figure with swords and ribbons. Most of the rest is odd junk I may use to make something once the impulse hits me again.



Did I mention my 8" Devo figure? The store I bought it from burned to the ground, shortly after, so I figure I saved Mark Mothersbaugh from turning into a carbonized blob of melted plastic.

It's all cyclic ... sometimes paper models, then plastics, then wood, then HO scale and once in awhile something original or imitative.

I seem to lack the capacity for indulgent boredom.

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL, johnsila32@gmail.com

Its been kind of you to keep sending me *Broken Toys* despite my non -response these many months ... maybe a year, I don't remember. I have excuses for my inadequacy as a LoC writer – I have been a very sickly boy – but excuses are just boring. I am not sure that I will ever be able to return to my previous

level of already inadequate fanaticism, but I do read every fanzine I get and that includes *BT*.

I don't mind. Actually, if everyone wrote a loc, I'd have a 90-page fanzine every month, of which very little was my doing... You *have* replied in the past, which is more than I can say for, say, Moshe Feder, Leah Zeldes, Marty Cantor, Murray Moore, Dave Langford, Dan Steffan, Avedon Carol or tons of other supposedly die-hard fanzine fans. And it's not as though mailing *Broken Toys* costs me anything. I like to hear from people now and then, even if it's just a few words, just to know that *BT* is being read and enjoyed.

I was thinking about your collecting obsessions. You didn't mention your model cars. If you decide to get rid of your cars, keep me in mind. My wife will not be best pleased, but I wouldn't mind cluttering up the gaff with some models like I used to have many years ago. I often look on eBay for car kits and stuff and wonder about doing such things again. But probably I wouldn't do them, if I bought them. At least I could look at a fully made-up one though.



Don't forget opening and closing the trunks and doors, admiring the detailed engines, and turning the front wheels with the steering wheel! I do, in fact, have a few spare 1/18 cars that I haven't space for – a Jaguar XJ220, for example – and there's a Lamborghini Murcielago I could spare. A "woody" surf wagon also comes to mind. There are probably a couple of others that I wouldn't mind finding an adoptive home for, but we'd have to reach some sort of deal. That goes for any reader who fancies a foot-long, detailed replica of a Corvette C6, perhaps. I also have extensive 1/24 diecasts that are about 8" long. Write for the free catalog, today!

JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER, abontides@gmail.com

Howdy! Oops, I got caught up in the Thanksgiving rush and never sent comments on issue 32. Oh, well ... I guess Congress can hold impeachment hearings... I sling a wicked "On advice of counsel, I decline to state, on the grounds of preserving my rights against self-incrimination." Some days, that's all we got!

Re: scanning and Photoshop, any opinion on GIMP, the relatively cheap graphics and drawing program? Me, I usually just use Microsoft Paint/Paintbrush. GIMP is free, anyway, and that's always a nice thing in this day and age.

I've used GimpShop, a version that mimics Photoshop's user interface, and it's a very powerful tool in some respects, though it used a shitload of memory on your hard drive. It also fails to do some simple tasks, such as draw a straight line between two points, and it's type tool is primitive. But it *is* free! Fortunately, I was able to go back to Photoshop 5.5 on my new system and Windows 7.

Joseph T. Major has a good point about the exponential growth of vampires leading to the extinction of humanity. And not too long after that, the vampires would waste away too. Bu ... maybe the vampires are **just** clever enough to limit their own numbers (by violence, of course) so that they don't over-predate. If they can exercise that manner of self-control, they might beat the game, and work out a stable population level. It **could** happen.

[And supercomputers might already be running the world while concealing the New Order from us.](#)

Brad Foster displays marvelous wisdom, in saying, " I usually talk to people as if I've known them for years. It may even be true. If you act as if you know them, they aren't likely to point out that they don't know you ... And most of the people who I have met in fandom are so freaking nice that they will start talking with someone out of the blue ... So I just treat everyone like they are my old friends. And, you know, treating everyone like an old friend is actually a nice way to get through a convention!"

I applaud this, admire this, and ... I do the same thing! It's a happy way of life!

[Always good to act friendly in any case, but unless the meeting is only brief, I like to bring my ignorance out into the open eventually.](#)

Bob Jennings writes, "My own Bucket List used to include things like setting foot on the planet Mars, or writing the Great American Comic Book Saga, but these days it's more focused on avoiding medical problems, and somehow managing to sell most of the accumulated crap in my warehouse." Worthy goals, to be sure. My own personal bucket list only has one item on it at the moment: I want to hire a small plane and pilot for an afternoon (should be under \$300) and have them fly me around the Cuyamaca Mountains, my ol' stompin' grounds, so I can groove on Cherry Flats and Airplane Ridge and Stonewall Peak and Rattlesnake Canyon from an eagle's perspective. I've flown on big commuter jets, but I've never yet been up in a small plane. Mars will never know my touch, and I'm content scribbling an somewhat-below-average American Novel, but at least once in my life, I want to soar.

[In a way, I've already done these things and more ... in my head, and put down on paper.](#)

R-Laurraine Tutihasi writes: " I feel a bit guilty about not having tried harder ..." Strangely enough, I don't ... I've taken the view, most of my life, that "Good enough is good enough." I'm a C+ or B- kind of guy, and that's respectable. Given the number of people who fail utterly at life, I think we deserve

to be proud of ourselves for *not* screwing it up totally. Let Steve Jobs be Steve Jobs: I'm content to be the guy who writes embedded code for his devices.

(That's in the abstract: at present, I'm still unemployed, and not enjoying it.)

Steve Jeffery writes: "I distrust people who claim they don't read as if it's something to be proud of. Ditto for people who appear to have no hobbies. My first thought when I see a picture of one of those austere minimalist house interiors is, 'but where do they keep all their books?'" Total agreement! I like home decor that *says* something, that makes a really positive statement about the personality of the people who live there. There ought to be some sort of *presence*. Art on display. Musical instruments. Books. (Oh, God, yes, BOOKS!)

I love the distraction of physical clutter. I adore being surrounded by a very rich visual texture. Minimalism is too bare, too austere. I want the Emperor to be in a royal outfit that competes with Hans Holbein's portrait of Henry the Eighth. (I do, I do!) He just loses all his *gravitas* when he's naked.

Say... when did I lose control of my letter column, letting it become a substitute for mailing comments? Loccers seem to be commenting on other loccers more than the original content of the issue!

Re: plastic toy figures, yeah! That's the kind of visual clutter I mean! It's *declarative*! It says something about you as a collector. And it's full of detail! My place has action figures on most of the shelf-spaces: I push the books back an inch, and line the figures up in front.

Le Sigh: I've taken to printing them out on glossy paper and cutting them out, standing them up as paper dolls. They take up less space, and they don't cost anything. Being in the throes of poverty really, really reeks, my friends!

Keen Captain Amelia from *Treasure Planet*. And, yeah, the movie really was lackluster. They gave it a good try, but it didn't gel. Or jell.

Fun closing illo of a happy skunk running through the autumn woods! As always, I adore your line-work. I've never seen anyone successfully imitate your drawing style. Bless your ink-stained drawing board!

Technically, I haven't inked anything for years. I boost contrast in Photoshop to accomplish much the same effect.

MILT STEVENS, miltstevens@earthlink.net

I encountered something strange in *Broken Toys #33*. Since I use software to read *Broken Toys* out loud, I may be the only one to notice this strangeness. Even though Jim Mowat's trip report and the letter column appear to be in standard English, the software interprets them as an apparently random stream of letters and characters. However, your comments in the letter column come out as English words. I had initially been using Acrobat Reader XI, which I usually use for pdf files. I next tried Jaws,

which I use for text and Word files. I got the same results. Finally, I tried pasting some of the problem text into another program. I knew my LoC had originally been composed in Word, so I pasted some of the text back into Word. It came out as an apparently random stream of letters and symbols. The effected sections of the zine must come from some other sort of word processing program, but I have no idea what it is.

You mention you are going to be getting a Power Chair in the near future. There is something you should know about how they estimate the range of mobility scooter type vehicles. The estimates are based on tests conducted in laboratories with the vehicles carrying nothing whatsoever. Under those conditions, the vehicle should be able to go 20 miles. If you take the same vehicle outside and load it with 200 lbs. of mass, it may go 15 miles.

If you were using an optical reader, it may not be able to parse Candara 12, the font I used for Jim's trip report. The lettercol was in Calibri 12.

Broken Toys opens in Adobe Reader X at my end. The original document was composed in MSWord (from Office 2000), pasted into Adobe Acrobat, and then transformed into a PDF by Cute PDF Writer. Nothing exotic about that. I suspect maybe the copy you downloaded had been corrupted. Did you try to download a fresh copy from eFanzines?

The brawl at the end of the most recent *Thor* movie did impress me. Hollywood has been doing barroom brawls since the silent era. Based on the standards of previous brawls, that was one heck of a brawl. One guy doesn't just toss the other out a window. He tosses him into the next universe. Impressive.

Superheroes exist in other universes that aren't as reasonable as our own. Thor lives in one of the least reasonable of those other universes. Maybe Loki has convinced them all they have to dress that way because it is cool. People have done stranger things in the name of cool. At least, they don't seem to burn fossil fuels.

I hate to say it, but Milt was right. Jim's TAFF report befuddles Adobe Reader's "Read Aloud" feature. There appears to have been hidden commands in Jim's text that I imported into my Word Document when I pasted the text in. I had to prepare a Special Edition for Milt that had been cleared of hidden commands by pasting as Plain Text into an e-mail before returning it to a Word Doc and converting to PDF. This had never been a problem before, but then again I had not known that Reader *had* a "Read Aloud" feature! Fortunately, my "fix" worked.

There was another note from **Milt Stevens** that I might as well quote to fill the space below: "Jim Mowat's article reminded me of some of my own experiences either entering or leaving Canada. On one occasion, I was getting off the plane in Vancouver. The official-fellow asked me why I was entering Canada. I had a momentary urge to reply, "I come to collect welfare, man." On second thought, I realized that wasn't such a hot idea. Instead, I replied "I'm attending a conference at the University of British Columbia." Strangely enough, that was true. Westercon is officially the West Coast Science Fantasy Conference, and I was attending the Westercon."



A CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

Christmas is coming around again. It does that every year, unsurprisingly. What does catch me off guard every time, though, is how soon the Holiday Season arrives. No sooner have we finished the arguments over whether Thanksgiving is in November or October, and whether we ought to celebrate Columbus's discovery of America or not, than the annual round of complaints about Christmas begins.

“Oh no, the decorations are going up already!”

“I'll wish people ‘Merry Christmas’ instead of ‘Season's Greetings,’ and if they don't like it, fuck ‘em!”

And *my* personal favourite,: “There's too much materialism – we've forgotten the spiritual meaning behind the holiday.”

Well, maybe the stores and malls do jump the gun a mite. Putting up the lights and trees to create a festive mood before December first risks turning them into background static that is no more “joyous” than advertising throughout the rest of the year. It could be argued that putting them up any time before December 10th ruins the “specialness” of the holiday.

In recent years, hysterical religionists have seen the absence of “Christ” in several traditional expressions as a secularist plot to remove the divine from their religious holiday. In a response that is short enough for a Hallmark Card, “Bull Shit.” When I was a kid, more than 50 years ago, people said “Happy Holidays,” “Seasons Greetings,” “Merry Christmas” or “Joyous Noel” without distinction, usually followed by “and a Happy New Year.” Nobody stopped to parse exactly what was meant by it. No one concluded they were short-changed because their belief in the divinity of Jesus wasn't acknowledged. What kind of Grinch would mess with your head like that, anyway?

Similarly, religionists have tried to claim Christmas as their own by objecting to the commercially-stimulated materialism of the season. It must be conceded that Christmas certainly was a religious holiday once – literally “the mass of Christ.” But for the last century, the holiday has grown a secular identity as well, which appeals to those of us who are not Christians – atheists, Jews and others. This

side of Christmas is wholly materialist? What else *could* it be? Take away our holiday materialism, and what's left? Hymn. Prayer. The bible. Hell, even staying at home with the family and over-indulging with turkey is a pagan tradition, and no less materialist than ordering in all the pizza you can eat.

Personally, I revel in the material culture that surrounds Christmas. I love the lights, the trees, and the wrapping paper. I enjoy fretting over what to get people and wrapping it all up at the last minute. I treasure the hokey, sentimental, insincere holiday movies. I even cheer up hearing cheesy songs like "All I want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth," "The Chipmunk Song," "White Christmas," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Silver Bells," "Good King Wenceslas," "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" and dozens of others. I draw the line at "The Little Drummer Boy," though.

But most of all, I used to love lying on the living room floor with the new Eaton's catalog, meticulously examining each and every new toy the department store had in stock. I would compare the cap guns and wind-up cars, or measure one HO train set against another, consider the actual-flying-helicopter, even look at the goalie's pads and skates briefly before deciding that a board game was more to my liking. In short order, the sheet of foolscap I was writing on would fill up. Then I'd start over, eliminating the genuine usable microscope as too expensive, or the spring-operated rocket launcher as just a whim. Eventually, I would get my Christmas list down to a manageable length ... and bloat it up again with books and model kits that I thought of later. It was hours of fun ... almost more fun, in fact, than the toys themselves would turn out to be.

I was a little old for that by the time I was 40, but got to relive the pleasure of Christmas mornings when I was a kid by spending the day with my sister's family. Her two boys, Matthew and Michael, tore through the mountain of gifts under the tree like an out-of-control Renault through the crowd of spectators at a French road race. Only a small number of those gifts were from me, but it gave me pleasure to add what I could.

It was too brief a time, however. The boys grew up and no longer wanted Hot Wheels alarm clocks or model jet planes, but adult things like power tools and game boxes that I couldn't remotely afford to give. In fact, they are now old enough to have jobs. One or both have to work on Christmas Day, so that the family get-together has to be on another day.

This shouldn't really matter, since one day is much like another most of the time. But when I celebrate Christmas on the 23rd or 27th, I'm at home by myself on Christmas itself, and feel a little blue. This year, I'll open a couple of presents that came by mail, and I'll eat the Christmas pudding I have put aside. I have a cake, too. Maybe I'll buy a bottle of sherry if I get the opportunity.

The days remaining before Christmas are few. I have yet to put up a tree, indeed cannot put up my usual tree because it is too big and I can't decorate it before total exhaustion forces me to stop. I've bought a tiny, plastic tree for this year that only cost me \$3. The tree is under two feet tall, so it shouldn't be too difficult to decorate it – assuming the cheap construction doesn't collapse under the weight of even a single string of lights.

While I won't have a huge pile of gifts under my miniature tree, I'll have a Big One in the hall. The last 't' has been crossed and the last 'i' dotted. My power chair will be delivered on the 22nd. If I put a bow on it, I can pretend it's from Santa.

But I'm thinking it wouldn't hurt to revert to a childhood practice this year. I don't have an Eaton's catalog and there isn't a pad of foolscap next to the keyboard, but I can pretend...

Dear Santa,
Here's what I want for Christmas.



A silver denarius – I saw this at the last coin show. It isn't just any old Roman Coin from 2,000 years ago. This one was minted by Gnaeus Pompeius Junior, who was the son of Pompey the Great. His father had been murdered in Egypt and Julius Caesar was mopping up the last resistance to his sole rule of the Roman Empire. One of the last bits to be mopped up was Junior, who was confronted in battle at Munda, in Spain, in 45 BC. Junior lost and was subsequently executed, ending the Civil War.



Car 54 Where Are You? (Both Complete Seasons) – This is a landmark situation comedy that ran on television from 1961 to 1963. It was created by Nat Hiken, who had previously created *The Phil Silvers Show*. *Car 54* starred Fred Gwynne as officer Francis Muldoon, and Joe E. Ross as officer Gunther Toody. For cornball humour, it could sometimes be amazingly funny, even a little surreal. Two of the cast, Gwynne and Al Lewis, went on to star in *The Munsters*.



Grand Marnier – The liqueur made from orange peels and Cognac. Not a small bottle. Not a *large* bottle. A HUGE bottle. **Cointreau** would do as well.

An Indoor Grill – something to do hamburgers or a steak on that doesn't mean standing out on the balcony in the snow. I used to have a tiny electric Hibachi, but the coil burned out and that was that.

A Couch – Anyone who has sat on my present couch knows that it is less comfortable than a stack of riveted boilerplate. The one I have is a heavy relic with a cast-iron folding bed inside. The cushions are shot, the material threadbare and the corners bared to the wood by years of cats sharpening their claws on them. I no longer expect to need a foldout bed, so what I'm looking for is a simple wooden frame that is light enough to move, and permits storage underneath. Something *Ikea-ish*.



The Complete *Invader Zim* (Two Seasons) – One of the most outrageous adult cartoon series ever made. Zim is the shortest Irkon from a planet where your position in the hierarchy is determined solely by height. Zim, however, has an ego entirely out of place for his miserable stature and is a constant pain in the ass for The Almighty Tallest. So Zim is sent to the most obscure and undesirable planet known, under the impression that he is being dispatched as an advance scout for an invasion. In reality, it's just a ploy to get rid of him. That planet is the Earth, naturally.



8-Inch Figures of Hockey Players – These sports figures made by McFarlane Toys are superb, and while I don't watch NHL hockey, they evoke pangs of nostalgia for the days of the Original Six, when the game was always on TV and the Leafs were able to win the Stanley Cup. I especially want Phil Esposito (Bruins), Tony Esposito (Blackhawks), John Beliveau (Habs), Yvan Cournoyer (Habs), Tim Horton (Leafs) and Frank Mahovlich (Leafs), all from the 1960s.



1961 Lincoln 1/18 Scale Diecast (by Welly) – One of the most elegant classic American cars from my youth. Yat Ming's 1962 Oldsmobile Starfire would be a good alternative, as would the 1958 Studebaker Golden Hawk, also made by Yat Ming.

PS And by Christmas, I *do* mean the 25th.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

Hope you start
next year with
a real **BANG!**

* from Saara, Taral, Tangelwedsibel,
Rocky and the rest of the gang*