

BROKEN TOYS 41

Broken Toys 41 is a little late, but I'm good with **mid August**. © 2015 by Taral Wayne, who hasn't left 245 Dunn Ave., Apt., 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. Of course, that hardly matters as fewer and fewer fanzines and locs move by mail anymore. I can be reached at taral@bell.net. As usual, *Broken Toys* is a free download at eFanzines, Fandom.cor and the Canadian SF Fanzine Archive. This is **Kiddelidivee Books & Art 300** – a near-awesome number that I never expected to reach.

Editorial Jive

With this issue of *Broken Toys*, the total number of fanzines I have published reaches a new plateau – 300! This is not even close to the number of zines some fans have published, but it is more than I would have predicted when I began my very first fanzine, *Scicon 1*, in 1972 ... more than 40 years ago! *Scicon* and its second issue were partly fan fiction. The next couple of dozen zines I did were the monthly journal for OSFiC, the local club I belonged to. Following a blow-up of pygmy proportions in OSFiC, I dabbled in apazines for a long while, but also produced two or three zines of reasonable heft in that period. In the late '80s I published two issues of a personalzine, *New Toy*. Then there was a long hiatus, during which I subsisted mainly as a fanzine writer and artist. My publications, consisting of portfolios and digests, were mainly intended to generate income from furry fandom. Finally, in 2006, I produced a couple of fannish CDs – one a digital version of an anthology of Toronto fanwriting, and the other the complete *Energumen*. By 2010 I had clearly caught the bug again. I published the third issue of *New Toy*, and an expanded version of my Worldcon FanGoH report, *To Walk the Moon*. In January 2012 I launched *Broken Toys*. They say “the rest is history,” but not quite ... With issue 41, I have nine more issues of *Broken Toys* to go!

Disturbingly, the page count of *BT* continues to grow. Recently, there have been three issues longer than 30 pages, and the issue before this one was 40 pages! That's insane, for a zine that has appeared almost like clockwork every month. And yet as I write, this issue is threatening to exceed *42 pages!* To some extent, I am a victim of my own success – 27 of those 42 pages are letters of comment. Some readers have, in fact, claimed that the locs are their favourite part of *Broken Toys*. I'm not sure how I ought to feel about that...

Am I a “success” only after a fashion? One of my loccers rather painfully points out that I am not the *best* fanartist or fanwriter or faneditor ... merely a jack of all trades. Well, that's *his* opinion, he admits, and I hope not everyone's. Unquestionably, though, I do work at a disadvantage. The favourite reading of fanzine fandom is fandom. Very little of *Broken Toys* has ever been about Nic Farey's speeding

tickets, Claire Brialey's views on the Helsinki Worldcon bid, Sad Puppies, pub crawling at Corflu or Robert Lichtman's reminiscences about his hippie days. I know nothing about *any* of those things, so there's just no point in my being apologetic about writing about what I *do* know. That being so, let's just get on with it!



THE EXHIBITIONIST

Time Travels With Traveling Matt

My life certainly seems to be taking unexpected directions these days. Whenever the weather is inviting, I go for a spin with Traveling Matt. Some days I don't go far, but on a suitably glorious afternoon, I may spend up to four hours out and about. I don't usually have any specific destination in mind to go, but prefer to make spontaneous choices as I go along. I have discovered a good many peculiar nooks and crannies in my neighborhood that way, including a "dead end" sign at the entrance to Virtue Street, and an intersection of Clinton and Gore. A couple of days ago, it occurred to me that the opening day for the Canadian National Exhibition was rapidly approaching. The grounds are only about a 20-minute walk from my place – perhaps 15 minutes for Matt – so I decided to see if preparations were already underway.

The CNE once claimed to be the world's largest annual exhibition of its type, and it is certainly the largest in the country. It was launched as a yearly event in 1879 and has evolved through the generations.

When I was a kid, I loved nothing better than the Ex. One of the first things I saw once through the old Dufferin gates was the expansive Canadian Armed Forces display. I could climb on a Sherman tank and two minutes later peer into the cockpit of an RCAF Voodoo, or stare goggle-eyed at a ten-foot miniature of a Navy destroyer. Nearby, the lumberjacks competed in log-rolling contests every hour, or swarmed up trees with climbing belts and gaffs faster than most of us can climb stairs. A stop in the Food Building was mandatory. It just wasn't the Ex without back-bacon on a bun, even though it was too often fatty and served lukewarm. For a kid, going around the Food Building with a Nielsen's Chocolate shopping bag, the object was to fill it with as much exotic junk as possible. Every exhibitor had a

“special.” Nor was it *all* bad for you. There was hand-made fudge and Mennonite sausage, home-made jams and jellies, and donuts still warm from cooking in hot oil.



Next to the Food Building was the old Agricultural Building, a sprawling complex of structures that included a corral for horse events, displays of farm equipment and contests for prize pumpkins, sheep, chickens, dogs and cats. My mother doted on the animals. I only had eyes for the special butter sculpture, though. Every year, artists sculpted a theme or some celebrity in real butter, molded over a wire mesh. To this day, one remains fresh in my memory – the statue of Red Skelton laughing wildly at himself in the role of Clem Kadiddlehopper.

Other buildings contained Hammond organs that played themselves, sleek new refrigerators that needed no ice, reclining chairs, entire displays of modern-looking living rooms with broadloom carpets and huge *21-inch* television sets ... with *colour* reception!

Always, without fail I always filled in an entry blank for the drawing for a free set of the Encyclopedia Britannica ... not that I ever won. Across the way from the Better Living Building was the Automotive Building, where next year's models from Detroit were already on display! I remember watching, fascinated, as the hard-top roof of the 1957 Ford Fairlane folded up like a card table and disappeared into the trunk ... all by itself, over and over. But my real love was for the Hobby Building, the entire center of which was dominated by an immense HO railroad layout, with what seemed like dozens of trains moving at all times. There was every hobby imaginable at the time, but I made a bee-line for the booths that had plastic model kits on display. I could drool over them for hours, frustrated in the knowledge that I would never be able to open the box of one in a hundred of them.

I would have preferred to skip over the Horticultural Building, but the Victorian-looking glass domes housed Mom's pet hobby, house plants. Every year, she took home rubber trees and baby tropical growths that *always* died within a few weeks. I was usually asleep on my feet for the entire time I was dragged from one end of that building to the other. Actually, since the floor plan was shaped like a big letter H, it had *four* ends, which made the whole experience all the more tedious.

But then there was the midway and the sideshow. In those days, no one gave a second thought to gawking at people with exotic skin conditions, congenital abnormalities or self-inflicted mutilations. You called them “The Wolf Man” or “The Human Pincushion,” and paid your fifty cents without any sense of guilt. I suspect, though, that freak shows were already well on their way to being phased out of circuses and carnivals by the 1950s. I was excited by the colourful posters that boasted about “Seal Boys” and “Rubber Men” who could twist themselves into pretzels, but I never saw anything remotely

as interesting as that inside ... usually just a bearded lady and some guy with tattoos all over. Before I was half grown the freak show at the Ex was all gone.

I see people with more tattoos on their bodies all the time today, on Queen Street.

That still left the rides, though. Most were fairly tame, but one or two were vomit-inducing nightmares for a ten-year-old kid. I was never allowed on those, unfortunately, and had to content myself with Dodge-'Em cars and relatively dull caterpillar rides. Although they looked safe, in actuality there was some question about that. I remember the year the Octopus broke down and dropped a number of people about ten or fifteen feet to the ground, injuring several. I was myself in a covered caterpillar ride one time when the restraining bar broke, and the only thing keeping me and another kid from being flung out of the car was me hanging onto the bar to keep it across our laps. What's life as a ten-year-old kid without a little danger, though?

And at the end of the day, after you've eaten all the candy apples and back bacon you can stomach, and washed it all down with pints of Coca Cola from a wax paper cone? Fireworks! There were fireworks every night at the Ex, as soon as it got dark enough. Not just a handful of flares and a couple of starbursts, but a full half-hour of deafening bangs and eye-searing explosions of shooting stars! Finally, when it was all over, I had almost to be carried back to the Dufferin Gate to board a TTC streetcar, to half doze in the dim yellow illumination with bags of loot in hand, all the way home.

As I drove Traveling Matt through the Dufferin Gate a few days ago, I already knew this was *not* the same Canadian National Exhibition it had been when I was ten. I had continued going to the Ex up until my twenties, and it was changing even then. My friends didn't seem to think going to the Ex was particularly cool, and I began skipping it some years. By the time I was thirty, I think had stopped going altogether. In 1991, I moved to Parkdale and was so close to the Ex that I began to go again – at least in years when someone could be talked into coming along with me. And then I stopped going again, largely because it now cost more to do the Ex right than it seemed worth, or that an impoverished artist could afford.

The Ex had changed almost beyond recognition by the year 2000. The Armed Forces display had disappeared long ago, along with the lumberjacks and Scottish marching bands. The Automotive Building had lost the annual car show to another venue, and had been pressed into service for cows and chickens. The part of the Agricultural Building that had housed the livestock in past years had been converted to a flea market. The Better Living Building was also little better than a flea market, as was the International Building. The old Ontario Building, with its beavers and moose, had given way to the Carlsberg beer garden. And the Hobby Building was leased all year round to Medieval Times, an expensive theme restaurant where you watched knights ply their arms in the arena while you ate roast chicken with your fingers. The hobbies had been moved to another building ... but without the acre-sized model train layout, it just wasn't the same. In fact, most of the Ex had been turned into booths where high-pressure salesmen touted miracle kitchen knives, miracle car waxes, miracle fishing lures and miracle silver polish, *just like you saw on TV!*

There were other differences. In a different building, the emphasis might be on cheap glass jewelry and brasswork from India, stuffed alligators from South America, misshapen wooden effigies from Africa, leather belts from Australia, flimsy toys from China, gaudy shawls from Syria, huaraches from Mexico, mass-produced Russian Dolls with Yeltsin inside Gorbachev inside Brezhnev inside Krushchev inside Stalin... all the worthless junk made anywhere in the world, gathered conveniently in one place for the visitor to more efficiently waste his money!

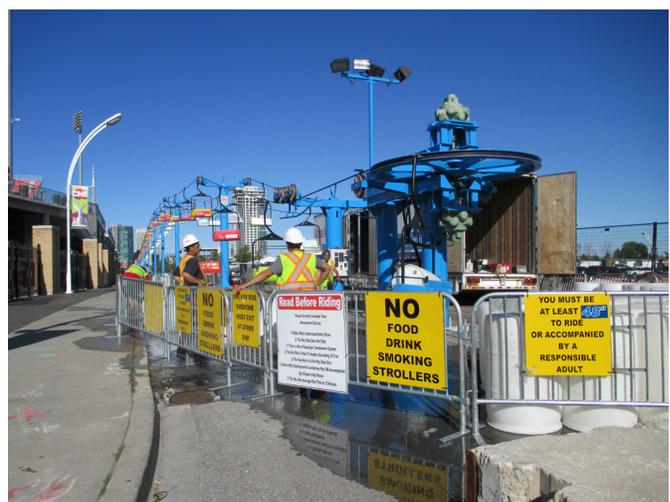
In short, most of the Ex has been converted into a huge K-Tel salesroom for small time businessmen with a screwy invention to sell, or a warehouse of barbecue aprons to unload. Not even the Food Building is quite the same. There are no freebies anymore, and hardly any real deals. Most of the food is less exotic, in fact, than what I can buy anywhere along Queen Street, just half a hundred yards from where I live.

It isn't really the Ex that's changed, though. It's really the world that changed over the last 40 years. People aren't wowed by new model stoves anymore, or impressed by home jacuzzi installations. They won't line up to see a new model sedan, or to watch scuba-divers in a tank, as they would when everything was new and ultramodern. Now everything is old-hat; obsolete before you can get to the end of the line to pay for it.

I miss the old Ex. I guess I miss the old world that it was meant to exhibit.

On my way around the grounds in Traveling Matt, I discovered that preparations had indeed already begun for this year's Exhibition. The parking areas were filling with trailers waiting to be unloaded. Some carried ride cars, others mechanical parts, and still others bore rows of ticket booths. A few snack stands were already in place, though not yet open. I found a work crew testing the chair lift near the stadium, and in another part of the Ex a man was busily painting his roasted-corn concession a bright yellow. I asked if he minded being posted on Facebook. He didn't throw the paint bucket at me, so I took that for a "no."

It may not be the Ex I knew, but after all that I've been through over the last few years, I'm glad to be able to go *anywhere*. Come hell or high water, I'm going to the Canadian National Exhibition this year! I won't be able to go on the rides or play games in the midway, but I intend to have a good time if it kills me!



Recent Reading: *Apacheria*, and *Operation Shatterhand*, by Jack Page. Fascinating alternate history tales, one about how the Apache Indians achieved independence from the US, and the other about the Navaho and Hopi defeating a Nazi invasion of the Southwest. Like Tony Hillerman, the author is an expert on the subject of Native Americans, and has written several non-fiction books as well as a series of mystery novels. As far as I know, there are only the Del Rey paperback editions.



Posterity for Today!

It was never my intention to get involved in another time-consuming project for fandom, yet that's exactly what has happened. It began on FaceBook, where a fellow artist named Alan White proposed an archival Website for SF fanzine art. His proposal was met with a resounding silence, which only incited Alan to push the project all the more fervently. The less interested other SF fans seemed to be, the more he dragged their indifference into the light to be examined and discussed. In the end, I noticed and joined his monolog, and somehow, we two found ourselves committed to trying to establish the site!

Despite a foreboding that very few people would ever return to the site after a single visit, we have made amazing progress. The home page features a 1,700-word introduction I wrote, titled "The Twiltone Slide Show," and an easy-to-navigate side bar. So far, we have posted the work of ten or a dozen artists, including Ken Fletcher, Brad Foster, Marc Schirmeister, Steve Stiles, ATom, Dan Atkins,

Alan White and myself. We should have a number of other artists on board in short order, as we approach them for their permission.

A word of explanation is in order. *The Zine Artists* is an archive of a specific community of fan artists – the fandom that grew up around the science fiction and fantasy genres in the 1930s, and continues to thrive to this day. This limitation implies no judgment of anime, comics, gamer, Trek or My Little Pony fanart ... but if we expand the focus of our site to every kind of fan art that has ever existed, we might as well just copy *FurAffinity* or *DeviantArt* over to it. *The Zine Artists* is focused on the one particular social expression of fandom which we refer to when we point at it.

This is a Work in Progress that will probably never be finished. So many fanartists of the 1940s, '50s, '60s, and '70s are already dead. Other artists, some from as late as the '90s, have disappeared and may be impossible to trace, so we may have to go with gut instinct as to whether or not their art can be posted – yes or no, depending. As well, we need sources for the work. Much of the progress we've made on *The Zine Artists* site was due to my possession of bulging folders of art. It is not enough, however. We need to digitize art by dozens of other artists who dominated the fanzines of the past. I have a great many of those fanzines in my collection, but not the time to scan hundreds of pages from them.

It is very likely that, as we acquire it, new material will appear as in *The Zine Artist* on a semi-regular basis. Now and then, some may even be deleted if a supposedly dead artist turns up to ask that his or her work be removed. There is already a chat page for visitors to comment on the art, but a useful addition would be an option to post comments to each illustration, as is done in *DeviantArt*. Another feature we would like to see incorporated in the future is a means for artists who are registered to manage their own folders. We shall see. But I suspect it is vitally important for the site to be a living, breathing, changing attraction, not merely a static archive ... or else the prediction of viewers visiting once and never returning may well come true.

Here, then, is where you can get a look at *The Zine Artists* for yourself, **at the end of August:**
<http://www.thezineartists.com/>

This entire project may be totally ignored by fandom, and allowed to quietly die when the time comes that Alan has to pay another year's fee for the domain. In spite of my doubts, hopefully, it won't come to that...

As I paraphrased to Alan: in fandom, "there is no why. There is just do."

Recent Appearances:	“Have Coin: Will Travel,” in <i>The Pleasure of Ruins 3</i> , ed. R. Graeme Cameron
	“The Shape of Space,” in <i>Askance 34</i> , ed. John Purcell
Upcoming Appearances:	“Red Letter Days,” <u>and</u>
	“Rotsler Winners, Updated” <i>File770 165</i> , ed. Mike Glyer
	“When Willowdale Burned” in <i>Banana Wings 59 or 60</i> , eds. Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer

FIRE SALE!



It wasn't my idea.

It was the fire inspectors who came to my home uninvited who told me to get rid of things. Why they came, I'm not sure. I suspect it was because of the bedbug inspectors...

They had been in my apartment a few weeks earlier, on a day when I was unable to be home. To ensure they could get in, I was ordered to unlatch the door chain, lock up any pets, and leave any bribes in a plain envelope on the kitchen table. I made the terrible mistake of leaving no bribe, just a scribbled note that they were wasting their time – as I had eradicated any bugs in my place three or four years earlier, *with no help from them!*

Apparently the bug inspectors lodged a complaint with the fire department, citing me for “clutter” that prevented them from inspecting my baseboards ... and constituted a fire hazard. Thus they satisfied their need for petty revenge. Had I been there, I might have soft-soaped them out of it, as I had every other time bug inspectors had come to my door, but it was my bad luck that I had a doctor's appointment downtown that day.

To make matters worse, the fire inspectors arrived when I was already in the midst of trying to remove unwanted property from my apartment. Over the years, I had acquired quite a lot of stuff – books, naturally, in the neighborhood of two or three thousand. Also a large fanzine collection that took up a wall in my bedroom, a couple of thousand comic books and magazines, records, toys, my artwork and a lifetime's accumulation of art supplies. The list only suggests the cornucopia of wonders which is my apartment. But of late, I've been aware of how much of it no longer interests me, and I've realized how much of it I will never use again. Why am I keeping mimeo paper? A sleeping bag? A laundry cart? Extra window blinds? A movie screen (without a projector)? An armload of mailing tubes? A mimeograph, for gawd's sake! Who uses a mimeo anymore? Not me!

Over the last few months, I've been slowly sorting through my closets, pulling stuff out from under the bed, peering into plastic storage boxes, releasing the logjam of possessions that have been carefully packed into every nook and cranny of my apartment over the last twenty years.

Naturally, it wasn't a tidy operation. There were boxes of books on the floor, my big roller-board suitcase standing in the middle of the living room, piles of unwanted audio tapes, unneeded kitchenware and just about everything else imaginable, all on the floor. In my condition, I work slowly and for only a limited time each day. Moving the discarded goods out of the apartment was also a slow process. So,

naturally, it was the best of all possible times to be at the mercy of a team of bureaucrats sniffing out “hoarders.”

The inspectors eyed the chaos and took no pity on any of it. They said, “It has to go.”
“What? Why? The stuff on the floor is all leaving as soon as I can haul it out of here. Did I mention I’m crippled?”

“It’s a fire hazard.”

“Surely not? Look how orderly I keep everything on their shelves. Apart from the stuff I’m removing, everything is neat and tidy!”

The wrinkled up their noses, as though it shouldn’t be necessary to repeat themselves to the lower orders. “It can burn. This much stuff exceeds the ‘fire load’ of this unit.”

Fire load? It was the first time I’d heard that term. Did they really mean that if you can’t afford a humongous home, you’re not allowed to own as much property as you want?

They went on...

“You don’t really plan to read all those books again, do you? Or watch all those films a second time? There must be plenty of them you can get rid of, now that you’ve seen them. And all that plastic ...”
One of the women waved her hand at the unbuilt kits I stored on shelves put up in over the doors. “And vinyl albums. When that burns, it’s toxic! Why do you have so many?”

I tried to explain that I was a collector, that I sought complete works by my favourite authors, and that many of the books were rare, and had at least some value. They weren’t just any old disposable Danielle Steele or Lee Childe that you ruined in reading, and then threw away.

Obviously, these soulless bureaucrats were not book people, and had no conception of keeping more than a dozen or two novels by Leon Uris or Philip Roth to make your living room look respectably sophisticated. It was equally obvious they were not music people either, if they regarded three or four hundred LPs as “excessive.”

But then they waved at my shelves of die-cast metal, and repeated the phrase, “they could burn!” I had had enough. I fought back.

“They’re metal. Metal won’t burn, you know.”

For an answer, they peered out onto my balcony. “Why do you have all that trash out there? The balcony is not a warehouse for storing things.”

All I had on the balcony, actually, was a bag of kitty litter next to the door, and at the other end were five or six plastic milk crates, and a pair of waterproof plastic boxes. The only things “in storage” out there was a soiled quilt, that I intended to launder when I got around to it, a couple of metal props from the air conditioner, two pieces of wood and a dustpan with brush to sweep up. To them it was a junkyard.

“All you should have on your balcony is a folding chair and table, so you can sit and watch the beautiful clouds go by through the pigeon net the city so generously provided.” Actually, I hated that net, because it had forever spoiled my view.

Then they whirled about and marched through the living room to my bedroom door. I had been hoping they wouldn't go in there ... but they did.

I had hoped my bedroom would be inviolate, not out of any sense of privacy, but because nothing on Earth could possibly burn with more glee than a fanzine collection! It was also where I kept my comic books, another potential conflagration.

“What are those?” They asked me.

“Fanzines. Sort of amateur magazines, published not for profit, but for the creative satisfaction, by science fiction fans going far back into the distant mists of time ... the 1930s, in any case. Most are very rare. There were never more than a couple of hundred hand-printed, and now, after 50 or 60 years, there may only be a handful remaining. This is, in fact, A World Class Fanzine Collection.”

“So why don't you sell it? Can't you use the money?”

My heart went thud, the blood in my brain froze, and for a moment I thought perhaps I had left this mortal plane behind.

“Sell... my... fanzine collection? That I have spent all my life acquiring? Much of which contains my own personal contributions to the microcosm of science fiction fandom? Can't!”

“Why not? It isn't any use to you.”

Grasping for straws, I explained that while the collection was worth a good deal of money in total, in practice I could only sell it one item at a time, that other collectors would only be interested in cherry-picking my collection for the best items, leaving me with the dross ... which was by far the larger part. Even that desperate act of wounding myself would take months to accomplish on eBay.

Their reply was another sniff. I let it go ... after all, they hadn't looked in the closets or under the bed, and I was in enough trouble already.

The rest of their inspection has somewhat blurred in my memory. They gave no specific date to return, but suggested they would, and that if not satisfied they would Report Me to the Fire Marshall's Office, which could lead to fines, beatings, imprisonment or immediate seizure and destruction of my entire worldly goods. Oh, yes, and as they made their way out, “This is all for your own good, you realize.”

Dear ladies, I thought while I closing the door behind them, thank you for your kind concern, now go fuck yourselves good and hard. Suppose I inspected *your* homes, and told you *nobody* needs that many shoes and dresses. Get rid of them. You only sleep in one set of bed sheets and blankets at a time, don't you? Get rid of the rest. Why do you have curtains and wall-to-wall carpeting? Don't you realize they can burn? Pull them down, pull it up, and get rid of it all! No need for that maudlin wedding album, your useless macramé hangings, the tasteless sofa and chairs. They all have to go, too. And you know what? People burn, too! Why don't you go sit out on the curb, and wait for the garbage truck to carry you away, along with the rest of your narrow-minded life?

I was fuming.

I was fuming not only because I had been doing the very thing they wanted done before they came – trying to cut down on my unnecessary possessions – but because they made a threat I may not be able to ignore. What if the Fire Marshall came and flatly said, “I want three quarters of this stuff out of here by the end of the week and I don’t care what it means to you or what it’s worth. We’re ruining your life to *save it!*”

I prefer not to think any farther down that road. It’s a dead end.

In the meantime, I’ve continued with my program to rid myself of the things I don’t need or want, and it has been truly astounding how much stuff I’ve removed from obscure corners of the apartment, and had hauled away. I haul what I can by myself. For the rest I find Winston, the building’s handyman, and ask him to take it away. Time after time, he’s been here and wheeled away a cartload of old VHS cassettes, an artificial Christmas tree that was too large for me to dress, or a card table I hadn’t used for folding laundry in almost 20 years. You wouldn’t believe the things that I have not even begun to shift out of their hiding places – an entire professional drafting table, for instance. Several cardboard movie stand-up displays that I thought I could sell as collectibles. A machine for laminating cards. A crock pot I don’t use. A stationary bike for exercising. The list seems to have no end...

I told myself to be ruthless with the books. If I didn’t enjoy it, or don’t want to read it, why keep the book? Indeed. The difficulty is that for every *one* book I discard, I have thirty editions of Philip K. Dick or Robert Heinlein that I feel obliged to keep. Getting rid of the odd Connie Willis or David Gerold doesn’t really make much of a difference if I’m keeping thirty others.

For instance, I have filled two bankers’ boxes with discarded SF and fantasy. Many of the books have never been read. But what do you do with hundreds of books? Most used-book stores won’t buy them anymore. It’s as though all the used-book emporiums in the city bought a lifetime’s supply of books years ago, and will never need another single damn one! The situation must be particularly dire with the city’s only SF bookstore. Every fan in Toronto has probably had a box of Poul Andersons and Gordon Dicksons they’ve outgrown, and tried to sell. The owners of Bakka-Phoenix are not philanthropists, however, and have announced a moratorium on buying old books that I doubt will expire any time sooner than 2047. I think it says so right on their business card.

To my surprise, I found a relatively little-known place right in Parkdale that seems willing to take books in trade value, rather than for cash. It means coming home with a few books, even though I was trying to get rid of them ... yet I end up with fewer than I started with, so I’m still ahead of the game!

Two bankers’ boxes of books, however, are nothing. It has emptied perhaps four or five of my living room shelves. I have over fifty shelves in those particular bookcases, however ... and another thirty-two selves in different bookcases. When I finish editing my SF collection, I expect perhaps to empty ten shelves in all, but that’s still nothing.

That’s the hell of it. No matter how much I banish from my humble abode, there is what seems to be an endless amount more that must be excavated, identified, classified and then either returned to its place or be ticketed for removal. No matter how many books I sacrifice, those remaining still rival a moderate-size public library. And when I’m through sorting at the end of the day, there is almost no visible change. I despair that in any future encounter with fire inspectors, I will be unable to convince them that I have done anything at all!

I can only persevere. Perhaps when I come to the non-SF and non-fiction, the last vestiges of mercy I possessed will have been used up.

In the end, I hope to be able to show at least somewhat more empty space to whatever bureaucratic busybodies come snooping around again with a remit to interfere with my life. Then again, I may only end up filling that space again with toy motorcycles, die-cast airplanes, toy guns and other claptrap that I've had to keep in closets up to now, for lack of space to display it.

I suspect that it is futile to order a collector to reduce his possessions to a reasonable number. A true collector will have an almost unlimited assortment of things that nothing short of an act of nature can cut down to size. Whatever space is liberated by self-discipline is immediately filled again, from unseen resources in closets, under the bed, from basement lockers, or strategically outsourced to rented storage areas. No "normal" person will ever understand. I pity them. But I must obey their petty rules, it seems, and for that I despise them.



LEFT
OVER
PARTS
Session forty-one

We Also Heard From: **The Nameless Benefactor** who sent me *Men Into Space* and *Space Patrol*. He has begun collecting re-issues of Hawk "Weirdo" Model kits and a cute little XB-70 Valkyrie bomber by Lindberg Models that I remember building myself when I was a kid. **Paul Skelton**, who says, "I just splashed out £350 on a 10.5" tablet so I could read eZines conveniently (well, OK, for a few other reasons besides), and your zine will be the one that christens it." Hope it doesn't cause Paul's expensive new toy to crash. Oops... according to breaking news, *it did!* **Mitch Marmel**, who is reminded by Traveling Matt's flat of a scene in Pixar's *Cars*, where the diminutive forklift character changes Lightning McQueen's tires. He suggests I take a Traveling Pit Crew with me. Actually, I do have a multi-head screwdriver, a jackknife, a flashlight and some other useful things in the backpack slung behind the seat. **Jerry Kaufman**, who I hadn't heard from in quite a while. "Forty issues – how did *that* happen? Time, from my side, has just rushed by." He says he will help

run the Lost World Fanzine Lounge at Sasquan, and will print out a few copies of *Broken Toys* for the curious to read. Ironically, they may be the only copies there are on paper – I have *none*. **Sam Long**, who regaled me with a personal note on FaceBook to say that he, “enjoyed *BT40*. Jeff Swycaffer's ‘memorable weddings’ remind me of one that I heard of but didn't attend, where the organist played ‘The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba’ from Handel's oratorio ‘Solomon’ when the Mother of the Bride came in. (That piece is rather *presto*, so the MotB has to hasten down the aisle.) And—re: Eric Mayer's LoC, I wore a sport coat and slacks at *both* my weddings.” **William Earl Haskell**, who, after reading the entire 40 pages, thought of nothing worth commenting on except that the proper article for “Casa Martin” is “La” rather than “El.” **R-Laurraine Tutihasi**, who indicates she has just read *Broken Toys* 37 and that everyone in the southwest uses lip gloss. I presume to prevent lips chapping in the sun, not as a lubricant. **David Redd**, who prefers manhole covers to roofing nails, and thinks I should write the article *about Magnus Robot Fighter* anyway. Maybe next issue?

Bob Jennings, FabFicBks@aol.com

Received *Broken Toys* #40 today via email, thanks for same. I see by the issue numbers that for some reason I never got issue #39. [Wonder how that happened? Easily repaired.] Maybe the winter weather was to blame. I find a lot of my own personal problems can be blamed on the past horrible winter weather. It works out well, too. I think maybe I'll start blaming all my problems on the horrible winter weather. The registration stickers for my auto are late; even though I mailed out the registration renewal more than two weeks ago. Yet the registration slip and the plate stickers haven't shown up yet. Must be because of the awful winter weather.

Maybe I can expand and include all my personal foibles and failings as well. The jerk-ass kid at the supermarket today handed me the bag of stuff by the wadded-up top instead of by the handles, so naturally it slipped out of my grip and crashed to the floor. Luckily nothing got broken, but for some reason I didn't explain to the teen genius, in my usual quiet and calmly reasoned manner, that he may have a grip like Hercules, but most people don't, and he should hand customers their bags either by the handles, or with a hand on the bottom, so accidents wouldn't happen. But for some reason I didn't. Obviously this was caused by the horrible winter weather.

I also blame the winter weather for the fact that I haven't gotten around to launching pre-emptive drone strikes on the town assessors' office before they set the new property tax rates, also for the fact that I haven't finished that comprehensive article on *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* I've been working on for over a month. The winter weather; it's to blame for everything!

This works really well, now that I think about it. The reason ISIS is still winning in the Middle East is because of the recent hideous winter weather. Fifty people running for President from the Republican Party? Clearly brain damage caused by the awful past winter weather. The latest Hugo Awards snafus? What else could have caused something like that hideous train wreck except the awful winter weather? The miserable winter weather is probably also to blame for that massive intergalactic armada headed our way at ten times the speed of light from Rigel 7, too. What else could it be?

Donald Trump, perhaps? But that may be simply confusing cause and effect, and Trump too is caused by the inclement winter weather.

You have a lot more patience with errant readers than I do. Of course, my fanzine *Fadeaway* is primarily a print publication, so the cost factors are considerably different. But my rule is if I don't hear from a person in some way after a couple or three issues, either with an LOC, or a fanzine in trade, or articles/art that I can use for the upcoming issues, then I send out a word of warning, and if still no response, I drop them from the mailing list. Clearly, there is no use sending the publication out to somebody who doesn't even care enough to generate a minimum response. It is a waste of my time and resources, and a waste of their time as well.

I think in your case that if somebody hasn't bothered to acknowledge your zine in 40 issues that you must conclude, however damaging the blow may be to your fragile ego, that the person(s) involved don't give a rat's ass about *Broken Toys*, and you should stop burdening their email in-boxes with any future issues. Ghu knows how difficult it is for someone to reach over the computer keyboard and hit the delete key, and you wouldn't want to be indirectly responsible for causing one of your non-readers a heart attack or apoplexy or whatever. Not to mention the problem with pixel pollution on the ether-ways these days. Be a good citizen; clean out the deadwood from your mailing list. The world will be a better place because of your simple humanitarian actions.

Could be ... but as you've realized, it doesn't actually cost me anything to "mail" a deadbeat a copy. If my delinquent readers were just strangers, I would happily drop them. In fact, I have erased quite a number of names from my mailing list after several issues of no-response. The readers I bitch about, however, are most often people I've known for a very long time, old friends, and I'm sadly disappointed that they cannot find a few moments for kind words ... not even excuses. Just silence, as though the arrival of yet another chapter of my triumphs and tribulations was a matter of indifference. In some cases, I know them well enough to make allowances – a professional writer, for example, probably doesn't relish an obligation to write more ... *gratis*. In other cases I don't know what the problem is, and can only wonder whether I ought to downgrade some of my old school ties.

Glad to hear that your health is generally pretty good these days, despite the recent awful winter weather. The problem with your mobile scooter was probably caused by the recent hideous winter weather we had to endure. Have I mentioned how the recent awful winter weather is the cause of the recent explosions of all those rockets that were supposed to re-supply the International Space Station?

Nice capsule overview of the Gnostic field of thought, much more common in ye olden days than these days. The basic tenets of Gnostic philosophy were not too terribly far removed from the assorted Mystery Cults, or Mystery Schools that believed they had special secret knowledge that allowed them a clearer understanding of the Gods and how they operated, and gave them a big leg-up when they wanted favors from the gods as well as divine salvation. These days there are thousands of independent cults and sects that claim they have discovered the true path to universal knowledge and inner peace that fill the same niche in society. All these modern groups demand is total belief in their program, generous amounts of your worldly wealth and total obedience to the dictates of the Prophet/guru/Leader who heads the band. Poisoned Kool-Aid and spiritual trips aboard visiting comets to reach Paradise may be additional.

I am personally thinking about writing up my recent spiritual revelations regarding the perils of miserable winter weather and its effects on the life patterns of the human existence as a pamphlet, possibly a whole book. I think I can find enough like-minded individuals that we can begin sponsoring a program to investigate the ultimate meaning, and possibly even the mystic causes of awful winter weather systems such as we have recently endured. Is suffering cold weather bad for us, or is it an

excuse for eldritch forces to manipulate the cosmic fabric for their own fantastic motives? I think the answers can be discovered, with enough proper funding. Certainly the benefits to individuals who know the inner workings and motivations of the winter weather weilders would be considerable. Donations toward the research effort would be gladly accepted in any amounts (although larger amounts, in cash, are naturally preferred).

I will gladly donate all the free copies of *Broken Toys* for resale that you need.

Also a nice overview of the *Magnus Robot Fighter* comic book, one of the best SF comics of the Silver Age, or any age of comic book-dom you might care to name. I personally thought the 1991 reboot of the title by Jim Shooter was excellent. His initial story arc; “Steel Nation” was brilliant, raising the issue of robots with freewill sentient intelligence and how they would win full citizen rights in a future society. The second story arc, dealing with an invasion from the stars was also pretty good.

Unfortunately Shooter then left most of the rest of the writing to lesser talents, and the series, although good enough, did not reach the heights he had achieved. This is, alas, a recurring problem with Jim Shooter; a brilliant writer of comic book stories who cannot seem to keep his attention focused for very long. He has since done other great work in this century with other old heroes, including an excellent *Dr. Solar* adventure, and a handling of *Turok* encountering a mix of modern humans, some future characters and Aztec warriors that was good, but not quite as strong story-wise. It was still far better than most of the other comics being turned out over the past fifteen or so years.

Well, I was still irritated that Shooter made Senator Clairburne corrupt! The voluptuous robot he added to the cast of characters made up for it in part, at least.

Broken Toys seems to have evolved from a zine devoted to your personal ailments and medical crises to being a letterzine. What could be more fannish than that? How can you plan to fold the fanzine after fifty issues? Can you really look that far into the future? Do you anticipate some dire calamity associated with upcoming awful winter weather? I think you should just wing it issue to issue and see what develops. You may decide to close up shop after forty-five issues, or you might decide you have plenty of things to say and keep the fanzine running for another ten years. Arbitrarily setting a shutdown date strikes me as unrealistic. Are you throwing your lot in with those who believe in predestination? Counting down to a fannish Armageddon-like cutoff date is so 20th century. Give free will a shot; keep going until you feel you don't want to do the mag any more, then say goodbye and wheel off into the sunset; or snowbank, as the case may be.

It isn't really a matter of predicting a particular issue number at which I finally become fed up. Imagine a scale, at one end of which I experience full satisfaction, and the other end of which represents no satisfaction. I never been at the full end and I will never reach the zero end. As I approach the zero end, however, it becomes more and more obvious that a final issue is near. So I picked number 50, a good round number that I will be able to remember in my dotage.

Nor am I giving up publishing a fanzine. I intend to adjust my goals a little, change the style slightly, and publish less often – perhaps two or three times a year instead of monthly. I could still call it *Broken Toys*, but the “new” zine will strongly resemble my previous one, so I want to revert to *New Toy*. Yet who knows? Someday I may restart *Broken Toys* again, with issue 51.

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Hi Taral - Thanks for the zine! Glad to hear you get around so well. Here we have been having ferocious pop-up thunderstorms - last night I was trying to get gas in the middle of one. The pumps are under a roof, but the cyber-voodoo only pretended to work. After swiping my card five times in two different pumps I gave up. Everything would seem normal until I actually tried to pump gas.

I had been fairly lucky until recently, and missed such pop-up storms by the skin of my teeth in some cases. However, last Tuesday I finally came a cropper. An unexpected visit to my neurologist drove me out on a day that thunder showers were expected in the afternoon. The appointment was for eleven, so I had hoped I might be lucky one more time. I nearly made it home again, but three or four blocks from Dunn Avenue, the sky ripped open like a paper bag full of water. I had planned for this, however. I always carry an umbrella in the backpack behind my seat, and simply popped it open. It kept me reasonably dry for the next three or four blocks. I popped into a corner store for a few minutes, to buy some things I needed, and discovered that the worst was over when I left. I got a little damp, but had effectively cheated the weather gods once again.

So you did get the foam-filled tires? Makes a lot of sense for a tire that never goes fast enough to even get warm. They have experimented with non-pneumatic tires for cars, but handling at high speed apparently introduces other problems. The foam filler cannot recover from deformation as fast as just air. My sister's wheelbarrow has an inner-tube - absolutely asinine when both the load and the speed will be trivial.

The foam tires were on hold until Ontario Disability could approve. But a couple of days ago I got word that ODSP had. An appointment for the equipment supplier to pick up the chair and replace the wheels hasn't been set, but I should know by Monday. Essentially, it's a done deal, though.

I would certainly be suspicious of the notion that a religion had secrets that the laity could not know, like the Masons and the Scientologists.... I was raised as a Methodist, and if I wanted organized religion at all would probably be a Quaker.

Nixon was a Quaker. Apparently they aren't as fussy about membership as they once were. I would probably have to make up my own religion, something rather Deistic but not anthropomorphic. But I've also been toying with a Eusatanist Church. Its central tenet is that Satan was not fallen, just not in God's good books at present, and had been given Eternity's shittiest job. This Satan is grouchy and cynical, to be sure, but doesn't especially enjoy what he does. He would rather not be doing it, if you must know, but someone has to. The other main tenet is that Heaven evolves. Neither God nor Satan are as bloodthirsty, nor ambitious, as they once were, and prefer to let things slide as far as they can. The trouble is, a contract is a contract. While Satan would probably just chuck a routine murderer or rapist who died today into a cold cell with some boring "how-to" books by Dick Loudin to kill the time, he still has to be sure the coals roasting Genghis Khan are kept red hot, and that the Mongol mass-killer doesn't slip off the spit. He was condemned to roast by the Word of God, and we can't go back on the Word of God, now, can we? No, not even if God couldn't give a damn...

Math is a very recent addition to the human skill set. Even music is much older – and we all know people who have no musical talent. So it's not surprising that there are intelligent people with no talent for math. Mervyn Peake was a great artist and writer but could not do even simple arithmetic.

I'm not actually bad at math ... just lazy, and never did the work for advanced studies. Musical talent, however, I have none.

Gruesome tale of the excess water in Brad Foster's area! I sent my *Slanapa* zine to Dee Beetem in Houston and then had to worry of the USPS delivered by boat. But it turned out she was above the high water line.

What a witch's brew of medication! And with so many possibilities of unwanted interactions. If your immune system is compromised, you should take care to use the ethanol-based hand sanitizer whenever you have been where you could pick up germs. I use it whenever I have been out, and snort the fumes as well.

My immune system isn't compromised – it's too strong! It attacks my own muscle synapses. One of the drugs I take helps tame my immune system. Whether or not that makes me more likely to contract infections is hard to say. I've been cautioned against it, but I worry more about respiratory ailments than I do cuts and punctures. I've only once ever had a wound infected, and it was a surgical stitch! Since starting on immune suppressants, I've been stabbed or cut more than once. I dabbed on some Detol and so far nothing has dropped off or turned green. That's a *good* thing!

Brad Foster, bwfoster@juno.com

I see that, as a creature of habit, I am easily confused when things I am used to being one way suddenly change. When I opened the file for *Broken Toys #40*, I at first thought it was, instead, a new issue of *New Toy*, what with the full-page "cover" art and all. Yes, the actual name of the zine was huge and right there in front of me, but there was, still, that moment of confusion, because things were "different." What this says about me is probably less important than taking this entire paragraph to go over it, so I shall move on...

Setting a goal of 50 issues is actually pretty damn good. A nice number to wrap up a series at. And, better to plan the final issue, than to simply realize at some point you have not done "another" issue, and so the last one you did is, indeed, the final one. (Reading back over that, it seems kind of convoluted, but I think you get the gist...) Anyway, one title ends, another might start up. Pubbing is in your blood, Taral. Or, these days, in your pixels.

Your confusion is understandable. I've only done one previous issue with a cover – the Halloween issue with the *Fraggle Rock* fiction. Indeed, the cover was a last-minute addition. I had briefly considered then discarded the idea of a cover for issue 40, but then when I realized that my 40-page outline had shrunk to 39 pages, the cover idea was quickly revived. Fortunately, I had one I had done for Edd Vick's apazine (in *Rowrbrazzle*) that I could simply re-title. Otherwise, I might still be working on the last issue.

I like that this is a "perzines," as you make the things you write about interesting to read. You have style. I read a lot of nonfiction, and I like the ones where the author is part of it. Is that the "gonzo" stuff of Hunter S. Thompson? I'm sure writers were doing it before him, he just added more drugs. In any event, you are one of those writers where I am less concerned with *what* you are writing about, and simply look

forward to reading whatever you write because I enjoy reading your words. However you decide to put them down.

Most fans are very articulate, even when writing. Yet I long ago noticed that few fanwriters are stylists. You can usually put the name of any fan you like at the top of an article and few will ever know he didn't write it. So the ambition germinated in me to be a "stylist." Of course, I had no idea what that meant. Was style that sort of poesy writing you find in some mainstream literature that almost demands to be sung on a stage? Or was style the kind of experimental writing, furtive obsessions and deliberate obfuscation the New Wavers championed in the 1960s? I didn't know how to write either way – attempts failed miserably – so I just wrote. And wrote. And wrote, without trying to do anything but tell the reader how I felt, what I saw and what it was like to do what I did. I seem to have managed to find a style of my own, but here's the amusing thing ... I still don't know what style is or whether or not it matters.

I have often assumed that while I've gotten much better than I was, that I am still not a good writer. A number of people have encouraged me to think so, but at the same time I always blanch when I get my proofread copy for *Broken Toys* back from Walt. An article I had gone over three times and thought must be perfect will be lit up with red highlights like a Christmas tree! Missed commas, other incorrect punctuation, words dropped out, words duplicated, logical omissions, awkward constructions, wrong tenses, sometimes Walt will even suggest a better choice of words. It seems that I just can't get it right. And the rules are often capricious, to say the least.

A friend of mine, who writes for a living, once told me that I had considerable ability – he sometimes discovered *entire paragraphs* in my pieces that he admired – but it was as though I was writing in a second language I had recently learned. I'm still thinking about that...

Ha! Gave me a snort of self-realization at the opening of "A Little Time in Little Italy," where you wrote: "I didn't owe him any money, so I returned the call right away." When we do the street festivals, I've gotten used to people looking at the work for a moment, then asking "Are you Brad Foster?" to which I will usually reply "I don't know, does he owe you any money?" Then we all have a jolly little laugh, they back away slightly from me, and I admit that I am, indeed, he.

Can't say I ever, up until your story, thought of the problem of having a flat tire on any sort of wheelchair conveyance. Now, of course, it seems obvious that -all- of them should come with a spare tire attached to the back for just such emergencies, like most motorized and wheeled transport.

You'd need to carry a socket wrench, and a jack of some sort as well. Traveling Matt weighs about 200 lbs, and is difficult to lift up to free the wheel. It isn't hard to keep balanced, once lifted to the right angle, but you need a second person to deal with the lug nuts and change the wheel. A two-seat, electrically driven wheelchair would be a golf cart!

Interesting typo in the third paragraph of my loc, where it says "...not quite so lucky with our fan." Now, -I- know that what should be there is the word "van", not "fan". But I also figure, if I was reading this cold as someone else, my thought at that point was: "What? I had no idea Foster had an actual fan. If it turned unlucky, maybe they are more of a stalker than a fan ... " Of course, being me, and not someone else, I did not actually think that. Also like that later in my loc, instead of looking for a place to get the

van fixed, I was evidently "...trying to find a palace to get it looked at....". See, even my mundane locs get much more interesting when they show up in *BT!*

A typo, in spite of being proofread by both me *and* Walt – and sometimes Walt gives it a second going over too! Typos could give the HIV virus a lesson or two on how to hide.

Short ending to all of the above: the insurance company declared the van a complete loss. We shopped around, and now have transport again, and through negotiations with various entities with more money than they know what to do with, will only have to spend the next six years trying to pay back the loan. But now have a new (for us) used (by date, 2013) Mazda5. It's a little mini-wagon/large station-wagon kind of thing. Won't carry quite as large of a load as the van could, but was the best we could afford. One good thing out of all the adventures of having to rent various vehicles was the realization that, rather than the extra expenses of owning a large van, just for the few times we would need it each year, having the smaller vehicle costs less, and we can just rent a cargo van or truck for those various times in the year when we need more storage for some of the larger street festivals. That is, at least, the plan. Will see how it goes.

Oh, and since it is all black, with little windows on each side in the rear, has a nice little "mini-hearse" vibe to it. Cindy said we should call it Morticia, and so Morticia it is.

You need to do some spider-web pinstriping at the corners of the windows. Failing that, you might get some similar decals for the glass itself from a hot-rod auto supply shop.

Your piece on Doug Winger was an interesting, if slightly sad, read. Had me Googling for more info. The guy has quite a presence on the Web. And led to some furry Wiki stuff, with all sorts of offshoots. Furry-fandom is complicated!

Complicated, yes, and not as well interconnected as SF fandom. Most furies are in their own camp – macros or wolf-tribes, a certain web page or con – and have limited contacts outside. You might say that instead of SF's block party, furry fandom is a neighborhood where things go on behind closed doors. Not only that, but it's huge! It grew from nothing in the mid-1980s to a size that I imagine rivals SF fandom. But because of its somewhat more private nature, if you're not a furry you're unlikely to know you've encountered one.

Cindy and I took our shot at the TAFF thing a couple of years back. We've always loved the idea of being able to visit England to get a look around in person at a country we've seen and read so much about. We know that, barring a lucky lottery win, we could never justify the expense on our own. Seems like TAFF was the one chance to be able to do that. Now, I have no problem pushing my artwork and such on folks, but am always kind of amazed that anyone would be interested in me as a person outside my art. So it felt kind of odd having to "campaign" as it were as myself, rather than on the art. And I wasn't even sure what was supposed to be done as far as "campaigning" these days. In the things we did put together, I always emphasized that, while I might not be that interesting of a person to meet, Cindy was wonderful and charming, and thus would make up for my lackings. We didn't make it, and not sure if we would give it another shot or not in the future. Still would love very much to get to visit England, but not even sure how much time we could give over to such a trip. Maybe have to wait until Cindy is retired from work, and we're both old and grey, then try again on the "feel sorry for the old folks" ticket. We'll see...

I'll let you know how the "feel sorry for the old cripple" play I used in the last issue went... I'm not hopeful.

Off to blink at the drawing board for a while now, and see if I can get some work done. Pub on!

Eric Mayer, groggy.ales@gmail.com

Like the cover. Has a kind of a Fifties vibe to it, I think.

It was definitely intended to resemble those UPA-style jazz album covers of the day. All the more appropriate, I thought, given the retro band on the 45 rpm disk.

That *Broken Toys* will likely not make it past fifty is not exactly good news. It remains on the rapidly dwindling list of fanzines I read. On the other hand, it seems to be steadily morphing into *New Toy* anyway.

I'm glad that *Broken Toys* has turned out to be more a personalzine than a faanish zine. At one time faanish zines were creative and playful but they've become pretty much calcified, inspired not by a sense of faanishness but by ancient zines that *were* actually inspired. In fact, I'm not even sure you can say faanish zines these days are "inspired" by what went before so much as simply copying the form with none of the feeling. Not surprising, perhaps, because there isn't much of fannish fandom left to be inspired by.

Despite my initial designs to publish a "snappy little fanmag," along the lines of *Pong* or the original *DNQ*, I'm not the same fan I was in the 1980s, and fandom has probably changed just as much. However, I have no doubt that *Broken Toys* is exactly what it ought to be. No one has given me the slightest hint that it ought to be anything else.

As I've repeated too many times -- but hey, us old geezers are expected to repeat ourselves -- my favorite zines in the Seventies, what kept me involved in fanzine fandom, were the personalzines that proliferated. An admirer of personal essays, from Montaigne, to Robert Benchley, E.B. White, James Thurber and on to Russell Baker, I was thrilled to find nonprofessional essayists working in the same form. Back then that was rare, so far as I know. These days, of course, everyone blogs, and Facebooks, and tweets and tumblrs and who knows what. So the argument for personal essays in fandom is...well...probably nonexistent, but that's still the form of writing I prefer. If I choose to read personal essays by fans rather than random blogs, I know that at least I am reading essays by people with whom I share something in common, if only a liking for little, amateur magazines.

While it is no doubt true that many fans are not interested in personal essays, and that probably contributed to the failure of my zines, you have garnered a very nice response -- far better than mine -- so my penchant (or necessity) for filling my zines with mundane stuff wasn't the entire problem.

Perhaps the trend for fannish natter to migrate to Facebook is the major reason there are so many tedious fanzines, now, that publish almost nothing but book reviews, articles on writers or the genre, and bibliographies. None of which I have any interest in reading. I'd rather read science fiction than read *about* it ... and I barely want to read any science fiction.

At one time I did speculate that it was the lack of fannish context in *E-ditto* and *Revenant* that was to blame for the poor rate of reader feedback, but that seems far less likely to me now. I think that the likely cause was that you were too passive in promoting your zines. It wasn't enough to just post the issues to eFanzines and forget about them. A direct mailing list would probably serve you better, even though all you distributed were .pdf files.

I appreciate you mentioning *E-ditto*. Look, here's the plan, keep telling people how good it was, and I'll ask Bill Burns to take it down from eFanzines so no one can check, and eventually it will become Legendary.

Sometimes I think that was what was mostly going for actually legendary zines of the past. *Hyphen* mostly holds up, but *Quandry*, *LeZombie* and many others much less so. What really stood out about them was how abysmal most other zines of the time were, and that it was impossible for most fans to see for themselves what the legends were like. What little we did see was carefully cherry-picked for us by those with access. When I collected fanzines myself, I began to see the fan history for what it was ... and grew increasingly disillusioned. It remained interesting, but mainly for how displaced we are from it today ... not for any innate greatness.

What's the old saying? I'd rather be legendary than good?

What a distressing journey you had with Traveling Matt. A one-wheeled mobile chair would ruin anyone's BBQ. At least you have proper foam tires now. I had two flats on the car in three weeks. The first one was discovered when I took it in for inspection. Since it hadn't been noticeable before, I suspect it picked up the nail on the way, in front of the house nearby that's been under reconstruction for months. Then a few weeks later, as I drove to the grocery I realized the car was not riding smoothly and heard that old flup flup flup noise. Luckily the garage I go to is not far and on the way to the store so I went there instead. Turned out the used tire they'd put on the last time had been defective. There was no charge.

There's talk in the loccol about hats and a photo of you in your hat. Oddly (or not) I have never worn a hat in my life. Baseball caps occasionally, various winter caps to keep my head warm, but never a "dress" hat, if that's the word. My grandfather never went outside without his grey felt hat. Had a smaller brim than yours. A typical hat every man wore during the earlier part of the Twentieth century. By the end of the Fifties my dad had abandoned hats. They seemed to me, as a kid, to be only for old men. Now that I'm starting to get bald in the back I am almost tempted. The usual coverup now is a baseball cap, but maybe I should dare to be different.

I never wore hats except in very cold weather until I was in my late 30s, I guess, then began to wear a baseball cap to keep the sun out of my eyes. Eventually, I grew a desire for something not as cheap and common as those foam-stiffened trucker's caps that sold everywhere for a dollar. I started looking for more classic shapes. So did a million other people, it seems, since the actual *baseball* cap came back into fashion, with the tightly curled brim. My ambition grew from there to a bush hat with a brim all the way around, for maximum shade. I have two. The one I wore for that photo was a Wind River hat I bought from the Salvation Army for \$6. They were all missing hat bands, but I easily made my own from some webbing. I also have a Tilly, which is much better made and better fitting. For a lark, I bought an inexpensive sort of Tribly, but the narrow brim doesn't really suit my appearance. Why?

When I was younger, I rejected the mandatory Fedoras, porkpies and flat caps everyone seemed to wear everywhere except in the shower. But as I got older, the sun seemed to bother me more. After all, it's not quite the same sun as it was in the 1960s and '70s. More UV gets through to trouble the eye than before.

You mention how far your chair can get you on one charge. Can the chair be charged from any electrical outlet, or is there more involved, necessitating you being home to recharge it?

It can be recharged from any standard outlet ... if I bring the recharger unit with me and can wait three or four hours. I might be able to get enough of a recharge to drive home from only an hour or two, but the less thoroughly I discharge the batteries, the better for them.

In the Fifties my comics reading was mostly confined to *Superman* and *Batman* and related titles like *Action Comics* and *Detective Comics*. My allowance was a quarter a week and comics, as I recall, were 12 cents, so they didn't fit easily into my budget, which mostly went for penny candy. Later, for a time, I picked up on *Spiderman*, *The Fantastic Four* and other Marvel comics when those series were still fresh. I particularly liked *Iron Man* for some reason. Then in the mid-Eighties I was briefly into comics – mostly wonderful indie stuff like *Neil the Horse*, *Morty the Dog*, and *Flaming Carrot*. I thought *Watchmen* was brilliant. Alas, I was broke during that period and I simply couldn't afford to keep up with comics. Haven't followed them since.

Were comics ever ten cents? It was so long ago that it's hard to believe. What does the common, garden-variety comic sell for today? \$2.50? Many times what inflation should have made them. I have recently tried to catch up with some landmarks of the genre, like *Kingdom Come*. I've just read two of the four volumes of *Before Watchmen*, and enjoyed them. Next, I suppose I should tackle *League of Gentlemen* ... even though it looks unendurably "talky."

Like you, I find Jack Kirby's style ugly. Distinctive, but ugly and not really to my taste. Same with the *Dick Tracy* strip.

Fine article on Doug Winger, who I didn't know. Not even his work. But he sounds like an interesting character. It does seem sad that he retreated to his room. Maybe he was forced there by mental illness, or maybe that was just the way he chose to live. Anchorites would wall themselves up someplace and never emerge into the world. They communed with God, Doug communed with the Internet.

That 82/83 TAFF field was remarkably strong. I guess Avedon, once she entered, was a foregone conclusion. When UK fandom decides it wants something, it invariably sticks together and gets it. I don't think there's been another, big enough or coherent enough fannish group to oppose them for a long time. Mind you, I am not implying any organized effort, but rather that a particular group of UK fen all know each other and have similar tastes so it just occurs naturally that they vote the same way, be it TAFF or the FAAn awards.

What if you had won? Maybe if they met you, you would have suddenly become more talented in their eyes, and won awards right and left ever since.

My fear was that once they realized that I didn't drink beer – could not even stand the stench of a pub – that they'd view me as some unnatural creature and exorcise me from fandom altogether.

I loved the combo of art and writing in the comic strip, but I have to admit I don't recall the events or the people enough to really understand much beyond the broad outlines.

Another terrific issue. At this rate, if there's ten issues to go that's at least 400 more pages!

Realistically? Much closer to 300. Alas... I never got to write the TAFF report illustrated below ...



R. Graeme Cameron, rgraeme@shaw.ca

Bear in mind when I say I can only concentrate on one task at a time I mean exactly that. The final push to get my "monthly" *Auroran Lights* out three months late, not to mention putting my new Website in order, consumed all of my "creative" effort. Most such days I don't even check my email. Can't afford the distraction. Not just a question of available time, but of physical and mental energy. When I'm pushing to get a project done I neglect everything else. Only way I can bring any project to completion.

Don't I *know* how single-minded you can be! That was why I made that – hopefully slight – dig ... to get you to post the recent two issues. Publishing does me little good without up-to-date sites from where my zines can be downloaded.

However, you can still give yourself a pat on the back. My next big thing is to get #3 *OBIR* out soonest. Which probably means I wouldn't have turned my attention to "lesser" tasks for another week. But when I saw your post I forced myself to get your zines up before doing anything else. Can't always guarantee I can do that.

For one thing, I find myself in the embarrassing position of being taken seriously by publishers and authors. All kinds of free PDFs of books are showing up in my mailbox. Even advance review copies months before their projected publication. Almost as if the pros are desperate for publicity. But then I saw an article recently which explained that the average Canadian fiction book sells less than 3,000

copies. No wonder 99% of Canadian authors either have a day job or depend on their spouse's income. One highly respected publisher even complained she couldn't find another Canadian publisher willing to take her first novel. Or any American publisher either. Had to go with a Brit publishing house. Of course she could have published it herself under her own imprint, but maybe that's considered a bad thing in the industry.

Point is, even Canadian publishers (the independent ones at least), are struggling, barely breaking even, never mind authors. Mind you, authors like Robert Charles Wilson, William Gibson or Robert J. Sawyer have international reputations and a guaranteed sales capacity that keeps them print-worthy from a publisher's viewpoint, but they are the exceptions. Most established Canadian authors with numerous books already published are struggling. And as for self-published authors, 99% of them lose money. Not uncommon to self-publish on Amazon and earn less than one hundred dollars, which doesn't even earn back the money spent getting an artist to create a stupid-looking el-cheapo cover.

So... you've "sold out" for fame and free books? I knew you would some day. It's the Canadian Way. What if you find that you're fed up with reading whatever random books come to you? Many people have decried the publishing industry before, and predicted its total collapse once any number of things happen. The most likely is that the industry will decide to publish only a small number authors at the Steven King or J.K. Rowling level of sales. Another possibility is that all the other writers will starve to death, or, to avoid it, give up writing to find a mundane, 50-hour-a-week job. Finally, readers may simply refuse to pay more than a few cents for what they download for their Kindles.

Clearly, I've begun to think seriously about my writing far too late. With increasingly rare exceptions, anyone starting now has their ticket punched "void" before they start.

Which reminds me, there are gazillions of self-publishing author wannabes desperate for covers that "stand out" from the crowd. I believe there's even a Website devoted to lists of such artists willing to work relatively cheaply, say in the \$200 range. The site includes small galleries of representative covers they've already done, I think I read somewhere. Usually said artists just grab some clip-art photos and Photoshop them together in some not particularly interesting way. Seems to me, if you were to offer your artistic skill for hire, you'd probably pick up a steady extra income creating (by self-publishing industry standards) distinctive cover illos no one else is capable of doing. Granted, you'd have to meet deadlines. But asking for payment up front could help motivate that. Sure, you'd be prostituting yourself for filthy lucre, but why the hell not? There IS a huge demand – most of it currently being filled with crap. Your clean and detailed style matched to your very individual concept approach could prove immensely salable. Vampires on Mars? Yet another apocalypse? I'm sure you could surpass the "originality" of the novel itself quite easily. More than it deserves, probably. Besides, readers browsing Amazon are probably tired of seeing lousy photo covers. Intriguing art, actual art, could catch their attention quite well. Doing art for self-published books could turn out to be quite the cash cow. Anyway, it's a thought.

You're advising me to do professional quality-colour covers that few will ever see, for the smallest possible monetary reimbursement?

This is advice I need like another medical complication. Why would I want to spend a huge amount of my time on illustrating some clumsily written tripe for maybe a hundred bucks? I'm not sure it would be worth it for \$500 anymore. I work far too slowly to make freelancing at all worth while to me. I'd rather do without the extra spending money and do art *I like*. I suspect you've allowed yourself to be dazzled by the illusory glamour that is supposed to come of associating with the pro side of the genre.

I no longer even especially want to read the stuff, much less pursue ambition. At this point in my life, there are only two things that pique my interest – self-satisfaction, or really huge gobs of money for little work. If you can have both, all the better. I may have had ambition once, but now it seems that to sacrifice one without the other is a waste of my remaining time.

Getting back to *OBIR*, apparently it has a significance in the industry I never anticipated. Quite bizarre. But, it's nice to get free books. And I'm having fun. So what the hell, I'll keep doing it.

By the way, the reason this letter is so long is because I just sat down at the computer and it's the first thing I'm doing with my first cup of coffee. Once I switch to *OBIR* I doubt I'll be working on anything else today.

Oh, well ... some people like to bowl, some learn to play banjo, others review books. Luckily, I don't have to understand it. Reviewing books seems to give you pleasure that it wouldn't give me, so more power to you.

Alexander Case, alexander.case@gmail.com

Sorry for not sending a LoC to earlier installments of *Broken Toys*. Finishing my degree kind of put a crimp in my fannish activities (including my own 'zine).

It will do. But you have to have a degree these days, whether to drive a cab or serve fried chicken.

With regard to your moving toward audio books as your preferred method of reading fiction, I've actually discovered recently that a few comic book storylines have been adapted into radio plays. The BBC did a radio play adaptation of the DC comics storyline *Batman: Knightfall* that was really, really good, and I believe is currently available on Audible. GraphicAudio.net has also been doing some audio drama adaptations of comic book storylines - including DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, Marvel's *Civil War*, and they have an upcoming adaptation of the "Ms. Marvel" storyline *No Normal*, which was nominated for a Hugo this year (not on any of the Puppy Slates, if that's a concern), and featuring the introduction of Kamala Kahn as Ms. Marvel.

Oh, and on the off-chance that you're wondering what happened to Carol Danvers - she's currently just "Captain Marvel," as Mar-Vell of the Kree hasn't been using the name for a few decades due to a terminal case of the deaths - one which appears to have stuck, leaving him and Uncle Ben in the "No, really, he's actually dead" crew at Marvel.

Say what? Did I mention audio books somewhere last issue? If I did, I totally don't remember. I don't have any audio books and don't think I've ever listened to one. How did the subject come up, then? I'm guessing one of my letter writers mentioned it. Another possibility is that I was talking about listening to movies while I work. That *is* something I do, though I also look up frequently to follow the action. As for radio plays, I think I'm even less likely to listen to one of those than an audio book.

Hopefully the issues with Traveling Matt's Flat (hey, that rhymes) remain just with the flat tire. I too, am surprised that they didn't do the foam-filled tires to begin with. Also, out of pure coincidence, I started reading this issue of *Broken Toys* right after watching the second episode of the newly revived *Battlebots* TV series, wherein a robot called Stinger (which is a rammer with foam filled tires) took a

robot by the name of "Captain Shrederator" (a spinner) to school, and flunked the Captain out. Is it wrong that my first thought after reading about the foam-filled tires was "If it's good enough for robot fighting, why wouldn't it be good for an electric wheelchair?"

I asked that same question – except the part about battlebots. The answer I was given is that some people prefer the air-filled tires because they give a smoother ride. When I have the foam tires I'll be able to confirm whether that's so. The real reason may simply be that the air-filled tires are cheaper.

That's all I've got for the moment. I'm looking forward for the next issue.

Philip Turner, farrago2@lineone.ne

I enjoyed your further adventures on your Personal Transportation Module in *Broken Toys* #40. There are a few PTMs buzzing around in Romiley and I am now wondering if they have some form of insurance for third-party, fire, theft, breakdown and recovery. Because if anything goes wrong, the rider is really stuck.

When I could use my legs properly, I used to swear at the fat, slovenly bastards in their scooters and chairs as they whipped by me at 5 or 6 mph, without so much as a toot on the horn or a "giddoutta daway!" Now I am one of them. For a little while I was dangerous. Though I quickly got the hang of controlling my 200 lbs. of hurtling death (the chair, that is, not me personally), there are degrees of control that only come with greater experience. Realizing that people on foot are unpredictable is the beginning of wisdom. When they decide to stop, turn around or change direction, they not only don't think that they might have someone behind them, closing at twice walking speed, they also look straight over your head when they do look. But children are by far at greatest risk to both of us. When they see you coming they will invariably do the worst possible thing: hunker up on the ground and refuse to vacate the spot you expected to pass through, or rush at you like a maddened buffalo, evidently determined to end their young lives by throwing themselves under the churning wheels.

I've actually been reading some SF recently as part of a book reduction programme. I have no room for more bookshelves and there are books stacked sideways on books stored vertically on shelves. Something has to go to make room for new purchases. So I've been reading and asking if I might want to read the book again as a pruning mechanism. Some top authors are getting the chop, surprisingly. *A Case of Conscience* by James Blish (a convincing argument for banning religion), *More Than Human* by Theodore Sturgeon (theme homo gestalt, not really engaging characters) and *Valis* by Philip Dick (mostly blah, if not horse feathers) hit the charity box. But proper SF, like *Costigan's Needle* by Jerry Sohl (Robinson Crusoe revisited) and Robert Sheckley's *Mindswap*, is tending to go back on the bookshelves.

After a squad of fire inspectors had finished telling me that poor people in city-owned apartments had no rights and could only own a five-pound limit of combustible objects, questioned the need for anyone to own more than one shelf of books, and suggested I sell my fanzine collection because, surely, I want the money more than a lot of ratty old magazines, I began to sort through my books. (See "Fire Sale," this issue.) Perhaps they were a wake-up call. In spite of continuing efforts to rid myself of books I didn't really want, the number was climbing again. As well, there were other things I

could use the shelf space for. I had a large number of model kits that were unbuilt partly because there was nowhere I could put them when built. All I could do is sigh and start weeding out books again, this time with little mercy. Unfortunately, I have to pace myself. Standing and moving books from shelf to shelf, putting those I don't want in a box, is tiresome work for someone in my condition. I generally do half a shelf, then turn to other matters, doing maybe one whole shelf a day. At that rate, it might take weeks before I make much in-way.

I've also been removing various kinds of paper I know for certain, now, that I'll never use. I got rid of blinds I never put up, cardboard mailing tubes I no longer need for my mail-order business, comic bags for comics I no longer have, glass and plastic containers from the kitchen, empty DVD containers, an extra roller suitcase and half a ton of other things that I kept for no better reason than it would be work to get rid of it all. You might get the impression that I was a hoarder, and perhaps in a sense I was, but you must put out of your mind any picture of an apartment stuffed with clutter from floor to ceiling. It was crowded, all right, but everything was put in its place, neat and tidy, and as out of the way as possible. I did not save old newspapers or the empty cardboard box my microwave oven or digital clock came in. Which is why it surprises even me how much is coming out of this apartment as I work on it. And no matter how many boxes I ask Winston – the building maintenance man – to carry away, nothing seems to change in here!

Rodney Leighton needn't apologize for having a fire on May 24th. I have them in May, June, July; any month when it's a cold day and my feet are freezing. Comfort is more important than the calendar.

We have a fire in this building about twice a month ... then the fire department comes to put it out.

We are now getting some CFL matches on British TV but not seeing anything of Toronto as the Argos are doing a stint on the road. (Dare I whisper Go Eskimos?)

I often think half my soft spot for the CFL comes from a package of bubble gum cards I bought when I was eight or nine. I don't know why I bought them, since I wasn't interested in football or any sports, but for some reason I found the crisp, black and white photos of the players fascinating. And one of the players had a marvelous name, something like "Jim Longbow" that made him sound like an Indian (in fact, I think he was). But it was only football, and I never bought another pack.

That homeopathist con story was a real hoot! More!

More stories about homeopathists? I have more stories, but not about "homies."

Immune systems should be banned, IMNSHO. Mine is also in an uproar, in a way that offered blindness as an optional extra if I hadn't been sent to an expert who was able to spot the condition soon enough to treat it. I didn't find out about that possibility until some time after the event. By then, it was far too late to start panicking! Which is probably a blessing. According to what I've read, the base condition can last up to 6 years, the average customer has it for 3.5 years and it will go away as mysteriously as it arrived. Roll on that day.

My problem is Myasthenia Gravis, which can sometimes go away in about five years. I've had it for longer, so I guess I'm not so lucky. Then again, I *can* breathe ... some sufferers *aren't* that lucky.

Have I cheered you up enough with my tales of woe?

Milt Stevens, miltstevens@earthlink.net

Broken Toys #40 made me realize one thing. I have no idea who Johnny Lombardi might be or why anyone would erect a statue in his honor. That presumes that erecting a target for pigeons that resembles you is an honor. In most such cases, the honoree is depicted as looking heroic, or visionary, or possibly constipated.

The Lombardi statue doesn't look like that. It looks relaxed and convivial. A statue like that might scare the wits out of somebody. If you weren't looking directly at it, you might mistake it for a real person. It always frightens people to discover they have misclassified a living or non-living thing. At a recent San Diego Comicon, they had Arnold Schwarzenegger pretending to be a wax museum display of the Terminator. People reacted spectacularly when he moved and talked to them.

I could have explained at much greater length who the man was, but did you really want to know? He was an Italian-Canadian who was a radio personality in Toronto, who became involved in the local sports scene, the Italian community, ethnic festivals, charities and so on, making him much beloved in Little Italy ... even by the Neapolitans, who don't consider themselves really Italian.

I actually quite like these naturalistic statues. I've stood next to Johnny myself, and also sat on the same park bench next to Al Waxman, "The King of Kensington." Typical statues elevate the subject, making them larger than life and placing them on a plinth, often far above your head, to remind you how much greater they are than you. These new "urban" statues are more like the ordinary men and women they really were, and you can sort of imagine bumming them for a quarter.



*Al Waxman, "King of Kensington"
Civic leader in a pleasant ethnic
neighborhood in inner Toronto, and
star of a sitcom of the same name.*



*Carlo's House of Spice, in Kensington,
where I recently bought about \$45 worth
of superb, fresh roasted coffee beans!*

All this reminded me of a statue that is still standing in downtown Los Angeles. It is an equestrian statue in Olivara Street, which is the original plaza of Los Angeles. The statue was there for decades without anyone paying it any attention. Some “time vigilantes” appeared and demanded the statue be removed because it represented a Spanish King who had oppressed Native Americans. This made people realize they had no idea who the statue represented. As I recall, it turned out to be Charles V of Spain, who was a great liberal who made major efforts to protect the natives from being enslaved or exploited. After this discovery, the vigilantes jumped back in the time stream and swam away.

But *everyone* oppressed the natives! Shall we do away with the lot? Tear down all the George Washingtons, the Theodore Roosevelts, the Edgar Allan Poes, the Babe Ruths and John Waynes, Einstein and Robert E. Lee and J. Edgar Hoover and Jonas Saulk and Harriet Tubman and Mickey Mouse, who all must have been on the wrong side of *some* issue ... this could get silly fast.

Years ago, I thought about running for TAFF. It was one of those things I thought about every few years. It was always an idea of something I might do at some time in the future. Obviously, I never got around to doing it. These days, a fan fund delegate has to be prepared to be on the road for a month or more. That’s a lot of strain on the old constitution, if you happen to have an old constitution. It’s definitely an activity for the young and vitamin-packed.

You’re setting yourself up for comments like “Canadians, we hates them we do.” Of course, that isn’t true. Nobody hates Canadians. That’s why the rest of the world wonders about you. As far as TAFF and DUFF were concerned, maybe you should have dyed yourself blue and campaigned as a person of color.

That’s not true! *Canadians* hate Canadians. Right now I hate any Canadian who plans on voting for the current government in the next election. Considering the way our Prime Minister has turned Canada 180 degrees from its former liberal stance, and has made the country a flimsy shadow of the Bush America, the *whole world* should probably hate us.

I have painted myself blue (and white) on at least two occasions. It has never helped.

Dave Haren, tyrbolo@comcast.net

Here's the promised loc. Differentiated from the random emails that fly from the inspired pen of senility.

I like the cover ... you should feature that artist more often.

I don’t know if I can persuade him – he’s gotten awfully lazy, and terribly snooty about fandom. However, that is my plan, after *Broken Toys 50* and reviving *New Toy*.

Traveling Matt adventures are fun (once they are over). Adventures you have lived through are always better when they are over. Recruiting posters used to be like that: if you had been involved in what was pictured, you would run away as fast as you could go.

Nothing wrong with the hat selfie.

I'll bet that Lombardi was involved in the unfortunate experiment in USA known as the Volstead Act. The Europeans weren't exactly enthused about drinking water for some strange reason having to do with lifespans.

And, strangely, despite the vast amounts of wine consumed seem to have a slightly longer average lifespan than most Americans – perhaps all it proves is that wine is better for you than Coca Cola?

In the field of religion, the differentiation seems to be over whether we are risen apes or fallen angels. Risen apes haven't done too badly for themselves. The fallen angels seem to be determined to get us into the fossil record as a nasty stain line of shale.

You should pay a minimal attention to the USA prez races but bring your popcorn. Donny Trump has implemented his plan to woo Hispanics by calling them rapists and drug dealers... GRIN! This is going to get better, as all of our nuts are on display at once. If you want to ruin your life, take the things presented by the media seriously.

How could I miss the antics of the Republican party as one clown after another pops out of the tiny little polka-dot car and falls over the one before him? What if they surprise us all, and Donald Trump becomes President ... it may not be as impossible as we like to think. We face the same problem of the improbable happening in Canada. By a great majority, Canadians hate our Prime Minister. But they split their votes between four liberal-progressive parties. Meanwhile, the mouth-breathers all vote for the bullying know-nothing they understand. The polls show that Steven Harper has just about as much chance of being re-elected (for the 4th. time!) as either of his two chief rivals for office. It's all well not to take the media seriously, since they are a 24 hour carnival show. But the only remedy for real life is total flight into fantasy! I've got my ticket ... don't wait for the last moment to get yours!

You'd think (Hugo) and Puppies would be a magical recipe for happinesses. But that ignores the fallen angels plans to make everything into a bone of contention. For me, the burning questions are why the zine fans haven't swept the Hugos.

It's really very simple. Fifty years of proselytizing SF has worked! We've spread the taste to millions of people who have never read a fanzine and have no interest in ever doing so ... and we've encouraged them to vote! What the hell did we *think* would happen?

David Williams, dbwilyumz@tds.net

Did you ever receive this? With the long lettercol in the latest *Broken Toys*, I was surprised that my LoC wasn't included. I was even more surprised when I wasn't even mentioned in WAHF.

Naw, I'm pretty sure I never saw it. Actually... I can check. Nope, there's no other letter from you in the box. What do you expect when four or five internal security agencies read all our e-mail to protect our humble homes from squads of suicide bombers? I'll run the loc in issue 41.

A strange sensation is overwhelming me. I feel compelled to comment on a fanzine appearing online. Must be an early sign of senile decrepitude. Oh well.

Speaking of sensations, reading the ongoing account of your medical tribulations fills me with sensations of guilt and anxiety. Guilt, because in 70 years I have been hospitalized just once, more than 50 years ago, and that was only for rest and observation, no treatment required for my self-healing condition. I have no aches or pains, no joint or back problems, no allergies. My last headache was back in the late 1970s. As for the common cold, it's not common for me. My last sniffles were in 2003. Thus my sense of anxiety - how long can this go on? After all this good fortune, I feel a looming sense of dread that I will now be struck down by six or seven crippling afflictions all at once. Or you could be one of those lucky people who die of a fatal case of good health.

I share your willing suspension of belief in God, but with an exception. We are told that the Supreme Being created the heavens and the earth (in just six days!). But look around: hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, mosquitoes. He seems to have badly rushed the job. I have to laugh every time I hear the words "Intelligent Design." My suspicion is that, if God created our world, this was just his first attempt. He made the effort, gained some experience, and moved on to the next Multiverse to produce something better.

On the other hand, it's now known that, once the Big Bang occurred, everything else followed pretty much automatically, thanks to the laws of physics and chemistry - no need for any supernatural nudging or tweaking. But that leaves some pressing questions, such as: why did the Big Bang occur? Where did the laws of physics and chemistry come from? Why, indeed, does anything exist? So there may be a God, he's just not the one we've been told about, and he doesn't offer humanity any benefits. He doesn't take any interest in our personal lives or in our planet.

He is detached, uninvolved, aloof. Kind of like most of the folks who read fanzines online?

If I believed in a god, I'd be tempted to wonder if, in fact he, wasn't created along with space, time, matter and energy, and isn't just another imperfect natural phenomenon. On the other hand, is there anything natural about people who read fanzines? Are we outside the time-space continuum?

Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net

Thanks for another eye-pleasing issue of *Broken Toys*, and congrats on reaching issue 40. If 50 is your limit for this title, the final 10 issues should look great. Of course, issue 51 wouldn't be refused. Getting ahead of myself here...

I may go back to *Broken Toys*, but not until I've done something else for a while. And predicting the likelihood of the second series lasting another 50 issues is far too premature...

The future is always ahead of us, expecting that we will be better, better off and somehow younger. Instead, in the future, we will be older, poorer and more decrepit than we already are. Big difference between fantasy and reality, I guess. If only we all had a reset button that would de-age us back to about 25. The world would never be rid of us.

Poor Steven...his family does have a habit of planning his time for him, and he is often the last to find out about it. It is good to get your mobility freedom back, and enjoy the things you've missed. I know Paul and Janet fairly well, and they are good folks.

One of my uncles on my mother's side was a Mason, and the head of his lodge in Kilmarnock, Scotland. I'm not sure how he ever got into that position, for I looked into being a Mason, and I don't even come close to qualifying. I must reflect my leanings as a Groucho-Marxist, and Ron Kasman said it later on in his loc.

My grandfather claimed to be a Mason, and had a ring. But I never heard him talk about meetings or Masonic business of any kind, and my grandfather was a mere barber and rather a low-life, so I have been skeptical about his story for many years. For all I know, someone left it on the bar in some gin-joint, and he stole it... But perhaps the bar for membership in the Masons was just set very much lower in the small town where he came from, and once he left Gananoque he may have dropped out.

I know some put an arbitrary limit on what fanzines they respond to. Paper only, .pdf only, UK only...who knows. I haven't put any limits on myself, and I don't intend to. Still having some fun with this, subject to change.

I mainly limit myself to fanzines I enjoy. This means I haven't locced any zines in foreign languages lately, or zines about fursuiting, or zines by White Supremacist editors. For that matter, I only loc about a dozen or two-dozen zines a year, figuring that I do enough other things that I can slack off with this.

My grandparents used to send me British comics many years ago...the *Beano* and the *Dandy*, followed by the *Hotspur* and the *Wizard*. I think I did get a copy of the *Rover* once, too. I gather many of those British titles are gone now.

I had a friend when I was about 12 whose folks were English and he got a load of English comics of various kinds sent to him by relatives back home. I read some, maybe even acquired a couple, but what interested me was how peculiar they were. One of the biggest peculiarities was that they purported to be humour, but could often be astonishingly unfunny. It blew my 12-year-old mind. I also remember some really high quality, digest-sized war comics that my friend had!

The superintendent of the building I live in used to work in several banquet halls north of the city, around Aurora and Newmarket, and when I told him of the various conventions I worked, especially around the airport strip of Toronto, we had the chance to exchange stories. We often see the people in the banquet hall or hotel as going through the motions, sometimes enjoying the event they are attending in spite of the facilities it's being held in.

Done for now, and trying not to get any further into trouble. Thanks for this issue, and see you when next you produce an issue.

Hopefully, I'll get a few night's sleep first. One reason I'm knocking off at issue 50 is that it seems that another issue is due every time I turn over in bed.

Paul Skelton, paulskelton2@gmail.com

"There are quite a lot of people on my mailing list who have received all 40 issues (counting this one) and have not written to me even once!"

Bloody Hell, Taral! Are you some kind of Saint, or what? Yeah, I know there's not the same resource issues with an eZine, but come on ... 40 issues of tolerance is way above and beyond the call of anything other than pig-headedness. You have to have figured out that they simply don't give a monkey's.

(Hear that, Moshe?) Yours would seem to be the obvious conclusion to draw, but when someone you've known for 40 years and regard as a friend is sending you that message, it's understandable that you might be reluctant to face the obvious. Also, I'm a little afraid that once I cut all the deadwood out of my mailing list, I might discover that I only have around 40 readers, and finally just give up in disgust.

For me the most involving part of your latest issue was in the LoCcol, and most particularly in your dialogue with Rodney Leighton about the FAAN awards, where I thought you pretty much came across as 'Captain Grumpy'. Of course, given your health problems, you do have more reasons than most to be grumpy, but even so...

I have to fess up here and state that this year was the first time I'd ever voted in this second incarnation of these awards. This was mainly down to my stupidly assuming that, because they were administered as part of Corflu, that you had to be a member of same to vote. There was another factor too, namely that because I was familiar with too few fanzines, I wasn't really qualified to cast a knowledgeable vote. That was why, at the only other Corflu I've attended, I refrained from voting as I'd only just got back into fanzines. I wasn't going to vote this time either, given that I assumed the vast majority of zines these days were eZines and I was only familiar with the dead-tree variety. I remembered how outraged I'd been many years earlier when 'No Award' placed ahead of Dave Langford's efforts simply because of most voters' ignorance of the latter.

But I finally figured that by abstaining I was disenfranchising myself unnecessarily. Surely my votes for the best of a limited selection of hard-copy zines would be more than outweighed by the far more numerous votes for the almost unlimited-circulation eZines, would they not? So I figured I could after all give a pat on the back to those who'd provided me with a year's pleasure in 2014.

Well, this was the first year in quite some time that I *didn't* vote. I refrained this year in part for one of your reasons. I no longer felt quite aware enough of the whole field. But also because of my feelings of ambiguity about the FAAns had become outright feelings of futility. I no longer thought whatever purpose the award served was especially valid, or that there was any way in which it could be mended, or that anyone would take action to mend it. Furthermore, thinking about the FAAns just made me "grumpy" ... as you've observed.

So anyway, that's where I'm coming from in this. This at least means we know where I'm coming from, because I'm a bit uncertain as to where I'm going, mainly because I'm unsure how to take some of the statements in your interchange with Rodney. Take for instance...

"Given that they were in England you knew that the awards would go to Brits."

...and your response...

"Of course the FAAns went mostly to Brits at a British Corflu! Those that didn't went to those with close ties to Britfandom. The sheer predictability of the results was one reason I didn't bother to vote this year – "

...seems to me to carry an implication that Brits will vote for Brits and US fans will vote for US fans, irrespective of quality...and this is not borne out by the results over the last 3 years (which are the only results which I have instantly to hand, and which of course are the most pertinent). So, I have analysed the top five placings over the past three years and have the following to offer...

One of the oldest debates in fandom is whether the local fan base affects fan awards. I remember 1973, when *Energumen* won the Best Fanzine award, that there were insinuations that it only won because the worldcon that year was in Canada. Was it so? It is true that there would have been a disproportionate number of Canadian votes that year, because more Canadians were likely to buy a membership when they had a reasonable expectation of attending. On the other hand, how many of those members were likely to have been well-read in fanzines, and could be expected to vote in the fan categories who might not have otherwise? Probably only a small number, so the real question was whether that small number could have made a difference or not. I don't believe any consensus was ever reached. One could apply a similar argument to the case of a British Corflu and the FAAns ... and probably reach no firmer conclusion. But even disregarding the "local" effect, the awards were largely predictable, were they not?

I think you overlook the caveat I made, that the FAAns also "went to those with close ties to Britfandom." Obviously, the British vote will be an important factor in the FAAns wherever Corflu is held. It might have been just more so this year.

Looking at 'Best Fanwriter,' Hooper, Plummer, Brialey and Kettle have featured in the top five in each of the last 3 years (3/4 UK writers, but 2/3 US Corflus) which seems to indicate that the people who regularly vote know what they like. Indeed the higher proportion of UK votes may have had an effect in 2015 because Andy Hooper dropped from first to fifth in this last year at the same time as the proportion of UK voters increased and his subject matter switched to stuff of less interest to UK voters (well, that's my reading of it). Yes, Graham Charnock did replace Curt Phillips, but as you appeared to admit when you wrote that he was "a sounder bet" (for perzine admittedly) but given that his own fanzine was where the bulk of his writing appeared that wasn't an unlikely change.

As to best Genzine, *Banana Wings*, *Chunga & Trapdoor* have been ever-present, whilst *Beam & Raucous Caucus* have both featured twice.

The 'Single Issue' award has also in that period has always featured *Banana Wings*, *Raucous Caucus* & *Trapdoor* with *Chunga & Beam* featuring twice.

As for fanartist, Steffan, Stiles, Foster and West have also been present all three years. The difference being that you were present for the last two years, replacing a Brit (Harry Bell) who featured in 2013, so no indication of bias surely in this. In contrast to this, though the 'Best Cover' has featured only Bell, Steffan, Stiles and West ... so virtually no change there either, albeit that it appears from his rise in the rankings that West is a prophet more appreciated in his own country, provided one doesn't take the view that his work was particularly fine in 2014 (which incidentally I thought it was).

I don't want to argue specific cases – too many egos involved. However, I contend that there are two different ways of looking at an award like the FAAns. One of them is that it is a peer-chosen measure of the best of every year – and that if the "best" don't change from year to year, then there is no reason to expect the voters to choose differently from year to year. From that point of view, the same tiny circle of fandom can win year after year without there being anything odd about it.

My point of view is that this isn't reasonable at all. Every year is different, and every fan's record is different from year to year. Not only that, but it makes sense that fandom's taste changes with time. You should not expect an award with a sufficiently large voter base to produce 60% the same results year after year. It isn't a question of specific people or fanzines winning, but of the overall results looking suspiciously like opinions have stagnated and the ballot is no contest.

Which view is correct? Probably both ... in their own ways.

However, it is with the 'Harry Warner Memorial Award' that accusations of Brit bias can be borne out. This award has been a 'pass the parcel' between Robert Lichtman and Lloyd Penney since 1999 except for the two years when it was won by Brit Joseph Nicholas and, blatantly at a UK Corflu, by myself ... another Brit. We can of course safely assume that the fix was in.

Best Letter Hack is the category in which the charge of stagnation is most easily sustained! Loccing is not yet a lost art, but there are few who engage in it on a large enough scale to be considered "best" at it. Robert probably comes out tops for the content in his locs, but he is very sparing with them, leaving many fan editors jealous of the half-dozen or so zines that Robert favours. Lloyd is obviously number one for the sheer volume of letters he writes, pleasing a much larger number of fan editors. There are another half-dozen or a dozen other letter writers whose merits fall between. So what choice has the voter. Basically chocolate or vanilla. There is no strawberry...

So of course there could be no surprise at Brits filling so many places in the awards at a UK Corflu, when they filled them at US Corflus for the previous two years. It's just the way it was presented between you and Rodney that got up my nose a bit. You yourself admitted that you not bothering to vote was...

And if it had not gone up your nose, you would have gone on napping and not written me a loc, right?

" - not really a protest, but laziness. I didn't want to have to think about who to vote for if not the "usual suspects," then end up voting for them anyway since I could think of no-one better."

...which ("no one better") appears to be the way everyone else feels.

Which I think does not bode well for the continued existence of the FAAn.

Jerry Kaufman wrote in a recent *Vibrator* that he didn't know the way forward for the FAAn awards, given that some people didn't vote because they didn't believe in the integrity of those tallying those votes, a point referenced obliquely (and perhaps humorously) by Rodney when he wrote...

"I was looking forward to having some fun twitting Mike Meara on his, since he was administrator and all and the sneaky so-and-so didn't take any!"

...that could be taken by some as an aspersion against someone of unshakeable integrity.

I never had any doubt of anyone's integrity. There is such a thing as being *too* conspiracy-minded. This is just fandom. Leave the tin-foil hat stuff to the Republicans.

Jerry also wrote that the “usual suspects” business also tended to dissuade folks from voting. But all this means is that as long as just the usual folks vote, then the people they prefer will form the list of “usual suspects.” What is needed is more voters. Jerry didn’t bother to vote. You didn’t bother to vote. Rodney didn’t bother to vote. All those scores of readers getting those eZines didn’t bother to vote. I’m sorry, but I can’t make myself feel overly bothered about the concerns of people who can’t be arsed to vote.

Maybe, but what is the point of the contest then? If no one votes in a national election, and the Prime Minister is chosen by the 74 people who did, is it a working democracy?

You went on to add...

“I admit that, after so many years, not winning a single FAAn does not sit well on me. But, as I was recently reminded by one of my correspondents, his fanzine and fanwriting has never even been in the running. And I can name first-rate fanartists who have never come close to winning a FAAn either. For someone who cannot make personal contact with the voters, I guess I do surprisingly well.”

...and indeed you do. It would seem that people appreciate your style and ability, even if they aren’t personally into ‘Fuck Me’ squirrels. I can also now appreciate how not winning a single FAAn award would not sit well. Until this year I had never, in my entire life, won anything. Nor had this, to be perfectly honest, bothered me. I had never expected to win anything. But now that I have, I appreciate what a blast to the self-esteem it can be.

But of course you feature in just about all the categories, so maybe it particularly rankles to be considered a jack-of-all-trades but master of none. You are indeed a fine fanwriter ... but not the best. You are a fine fanartist ... but not the best. You publish a fine fanzine ... though not the best (though obviously these views are subjective).

Obviously. And pointedly so.

It does seem to me though that it is in the ‘perzine’ category that your best chance lies, given that this is the category wherein history is not doomed to repeat itself and where more different names feature over the last three years.

But let’s face it, Taral – you don’t write, draw or publish in order to win awards, no more than I write LoCs in order to do the same. We are doing this because it’s what we enjoy doing...and I hope you keep on publishing *Broken Toys*, because I enjoyed reading it.

Clearly I won’t stop because of the FAAn awards. If I have to be done with one or the other, I prefer to be done with the FAAns. When I do finish with *Broken Toys* it will be because of the perfectly sensible reason that I have reached the mystical number, fifty, and cannot exceed the limit set upon me by Forces Beyond My Comprehension!

John Nielsen-Hall, johnsil32@gmail.com

Like you, Taral, I can’t find much to talk about these days apart from my health. My personal zine/blog *The Other Side Of The Wood* stalled because I vowed I would not write anything unless it was

something other than my medical issues. Occasionally, I treat dwellers *InTheBar* to gory slices of my life, but very occasionally. Most of what I write these days I write in response to others. I still intend to put out a ninth, and final, issue of *Motorway Dreamer*, but that task will now have to await my retirement in a few months, because dialysis just takes up so much of my time and I feel so shitty for so long afterwards, the remaining work I have to do takes up most of the free time I have. So I sympathise with your gloomy view of the future of *BT*, but it will be a shame if you stop at 50. I have enjoyed the zine very much, even if I haven't always said so. For me, you are up there with *aMFO* and *Vibrator*.

But no pressure. You carry on for as long as you want to and no more than that.

Until you have serious health problems, it's difficult to picture the effect it has on one's life. It isn't like a cold ... not just a nuisance. It drags your whole perception of being down to a lower level, where you cannot imagine putting on your shoes as anything but a difficult task, where you no longer expect to see a street corner again, or asking yourself whether it's worth the trouble of having dinner and if it's likely you can sleep tonight.

Since altering the dosage of my medication, it's as though I've been reborn. I *can* put on my shoes without using a three-foot shoehorn, and taking breathers between shoes! I've seen places in my neighborhood that I never thought to see again ... even though they might be only two blocks away. I no longer worry that I'll run out of food before one of my friends has time to take me to a supermarket. It's bound to affect your outlook for the better.

There's no question about it, everyone should be young again ... as often as needed.

Jefferson Swycaffer, abontides@gmail.com

Fun Cover!

Bummer about the flat tire and the roofing nail. I actually keep a little collection of the nails that tirestores have pulled out of my flat tires. (And there are actually people who go about their daily lives *barefoot!* That just gives me the willies!)

You learn to watch the sidewalk out of the corner of your eye without paying it much attention. I actually found the sidewalk itself to be the main hazard. It is as rough as shark's skin, and will sand the bottom of your foot off unless it has been thoroughly calloused first. Yet, walking off the sidewalk has all sorts of hazards as well – dog poop, seagull poop (where applicable), hot tarmac and gravel! I suspect that primitive people invented the sandal long before the bra and jock-strap!

I'm happy to learn that Karno is living in the U.S. again. I remember when ... Well, I remember when he gave his "I'm so happy to be here" speech at the San Diego Comic Con, and went on a little too long. The audience was gearing up to storm the stage, when a couple of his friends wisely pulled him away. Actually a fun chap, and his art style, while maybe a bit rough, is strong and -- what's the word? -- depictive! When he draws a pic of a squirrel and a horse, there's no problem seeing what they're doing. A very effective art style, and enough to get him published, at least back in the day when there were independent black-and-white comic book publishers!

(Damn, I miss Mu Press!)

Yeah... Edd *is* a good guy, and I had an "in" with him in *The Day*. But he's still around, contributing to *Rowrbrazzle*, and I contribute to his '*Brazzle* zine.

It seemed for a while as though almost anything could be published ... but it was more of an illusion than the reality. Those umpteen titles that were appearing in the late 1980s rarely sold a thousand copies, and then most of them to dedicated furry fans. The sales of most comics barely paid the printing bill. Then Diamond acquired a virtual monopoly of distribution, and suddenly refused to distribute comics without more than a couple of thousand pre-orders ... ending the furry comics boom overnight!

(I've submitted material twice to Antarctic Press...and both times, they lost my submission. I can't find myself taking them too seriously.)

I think they are still around, but have left the anthropomorphics scene behind, to publish American-imitation manga and some translation. But I haven't seen an Antarctic Press book in a decade, at least. I'm not looking for them, and few stores will carry such fare anymore.

Fascinating bio of Doug Winger. Like many fur-pervs, I was somewhat familiar with his artwork -- it's a style that can most gently be described as "not for everyone," but I liked it -- but had no idea about his real life. I had no idea he lived so close nearby: I might easily have contrived to have met him, and now kinda wish I had.

It's unfortunate that you didn't. I think Doug might have been pleased to see you ... but equally likely to retreat to his room after a few minutes, leaving you hanging with Steve Martin, who owns the house. Steve is an entirely different kettle of fish. An ardent fan of Rush Limbaugh and Ed Wood movies, insatiable in his appetite for "spooage," and focused to the oblivion of all else on selling his fetish art to anyone who wanders by. Maybe it is just as well you didn't try to drop in.

(Southern California delights in a very strangely tight-knit fannish community. I met a new friend at the Westercon, just this last July 4th weekend, and we quickly learned that we had dozens and dozens of friends in common!)

I've been to Southern California for extended visits at least a dozen times, I think, and discovered that it's not a place at all. It is a number of separate communities that exist in separate dimensions, connected by various space-warps and jump doors, but with no actual space-time between them. Their "real" locations hardly matter as much as whether they are connected by the I-5 or the Ventura Freeway.

Happy guffaw over "Less is More" and the homeopathic drunkenness! (And, Lordy, it's a good thing that homeopathy of that sort is not a natural law of physics, given how much fish-poop and bird-droppings and mouse-poop and dead weevils there is in our food. If "Less is More" and "You Are What You Eat" were both laws of nature... Ay ay ay! Badness!)

That might explain why the planet Venus is uninhabitable. Some idiot a million years ago said, "there is no sulphuric acid in the atmosphere," and so naturally the atmosphere became saturated in it instantly!

Fun "TAFF Race" comic!

Currently watching old "F-Troop" episodes on disk. Fun! Stays pretty good, even after all these years. Half-hour episode length helps a lot: it forces them to be quick and trim with the humor. No time for padding or lollygagging. This is another instance when "Less is More." A full hour episode would not have been as effective.

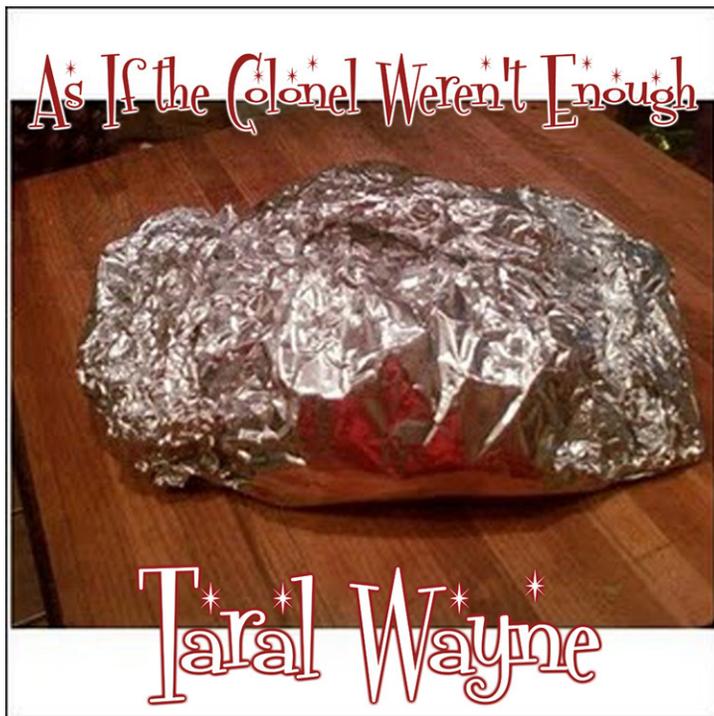
Oh, also old "The Rat Patrol" episodes. Who wouldn't want to pin up one side of one's hat and ride around in a jeep with a machine gun? Cut me off in traffic? Take my parking space? RATATATAT. Well, one can have one's fantasies!

I remember both of those shows. "The end of the civil war was near when, quite accidentally, a hero, who sneezed, abruptly seized retreat and turned it to victory!" F-Troop had great promise at first. I loved the Hekowi Indian tribe nearby, and the explanation for their tribe's name. "We travel many moons, then one day we stop and look 'round, then chief say, 'Where the heck are we?'" But as the show dragged on, it increasingly became the Larry Storch show, where he played endless cousins of his regular character, Corporal Agarn. I eventually grew to hate Larry Storch.

Rat Patrol kind of annoyed me because it was so *American* ... yet ostensibly a show about the British in the North African campaign! Complaints by offended viewers apparently led to the show's eventual cancellation. I don't know if you were aware of it, but similar armed trucks and jeeps *were* used in North Africa for long-range surveillance.



"Life was like a box of chocolates," said Forrest Gump, and I answered, "you think you're getting cherry, but all you get is the pits." I wouldn't have been thinking about that movie, except it was mentioned recently on FaceBook. It came to me that, after a fashion, *Forrest Gump* was merely another way making the same point as *Being There*. In both movies we see that we are all basically containers. Whatever is in the box is of no importance ... not even if there is *nothing* in the box! There can be no one at all inside, and it doesn't matter because people will put their own label on it, and, sadly, it's the label that will determine where you end up in life.



...There is always the strange story of Mike Blake's nightmare nosh to spoil your appetite.

Not everyone can be expected to know just what Mike Blake was doing in Bonnie Dalzell's three-story, slat-sided, hydrophilic New England home in the first place, much less why he was looking for a midnight snack. But the explanation is simple. Besides being the artist and sole productive asset of Sleepy Lion Graphics, Bonnie runs what could loosely be called a kennel. Between the net gain of Sleepy Lion and the dead loss of her beloved Borzois' breeding, Bonnie has managed to frustrate the Internal Revenue Service of its due every fiscal year since going into business. From time to time, business took her and her husband, Jim, out of town. Which business it was on this occasion is a matter for trivia hounds to pursue. It's enough to know that Bonnie, Jim, Genghis, Danna, Aurora and Lola were all out of the house, and needed a sitter to mind the place until she, husband and dogs got back.

It also helps if you know that the home Jim and Bonnie kept was far from a normal one. Jim is a doctor, and you might expect him to live a respectable, tidy life. But he is more the image of a Bohemian artist. He gets no arguments about his lifestyle from Bonnie, who actually *is* a Bohemian artist, when not coursing Borzois. Not every decorator would round out the furnishings of a home with fossil Smilodon skulls, stacked paper of every grade, texture and cut, human shinbones, armadillo shells, cartons of t-shirt iron-ons, flash attachments, three (or is it four?) separate spray gun setups, bronze castings waiting to be filed and a fully articulated and pickled Borzoi in a plastic garbage bin in the bathtub. It was sealed, so you needn't even remove the bin while taking a shower. I'm of the school that believes your surroundings offer clues to your personality. This particular home-sweet-home revealed a chaotic and inquisitive inhabitant unlike any other I've seen.

The Dalzell-Saklad Traveling Borzoi Pandemonium Picture Show had hardly left the driveway before Mike the House Sitter turned his thoughts from farewell to food. Instinct took over. Gravitating to the fridge, the feeding of Mike Blake entered the Research and Development stage. Manpower and Resources schedules formed in his mind as the freezer door swung open. Waiting for Mike's assessment was a tightly packed chamber full of foil-wrapped bundles of different sizes and shapes. It was obvious that, to take full measure of his provender, Mike would have to unwrap the entire stock of aluminum foil packages, one at a time, select one for immediate consumption, and carefully restore everything in the freezer in re-wrapped condition. First, he set a large pot to boiling water on the gas stove. Why waste time, when his dinner could go right in the moment he made his choice? He decided to unwrap a *large* package first. A large pot would boil a large piece of meat as easily as a small one.

Mike had taste. I'll give him that, thinking back on how he told me the story. He went right for the roast-beef-shaped bundle in the back of the freezer.

He had almost dumped it into the boiling water, too, when Mike noticed that it wasn't a roast at all, but a perfect, intact, quite solidly frozen and very dead Borzoi puppy!

The cadaver was carefully rewrapped and returned where it belonged in its corner of the freezer before Mike could even *think* about dinner again. And he preferred to *not* think about dinner again for a considerable time. He settled for having breakfast in the morning...

Of course, Mike was familiar with Bonnie's odd lifestyle, and was *almost* prepared for her explanation when she got home. "You didn't find the puppies in the back of the freezer, did you? I think I forgot to tell you when I said help to yourself to anything you find. They're for anatomical study, but I never got around to dissecting them."

"Oh?" he replied, poker-faced. "I found them alright, but gave them a pass. I'm on a low-fat diet."



Reprinted from *E-Ditto13*, August 2012. An earlier and cruder version had been written in 1978, I believe for an early issue of *DNQ*.

SEUSSING IT OUT

In recent years there have been four attempts to bring Dr. Seuss to the big screen ... with varied success and failure. Two have been live-action, and two were computer-animated features. Strange to say – or perhaps not, given the subject – the live-action films were the weakest of the four.

But first, I cannot fail to acknowledge the near-legendary *5,000 Fingers of Dr. T*, a dream-like, live-action film that Dr. Seuss himself directed in 1953. I don't know what the good Doc's intentions were; perhaps he thought the story was a delightful musical whimsy. But when I was about six, I watched only a small portion of *The 5,000 Fingers* in glorious black and white on the family TV... and it scared the hell out of me! The creepy, expressionist camera work and geometry-defying set designs haunted my nightmares for years afterward. It was only when I saw the film again, many years later, that I discovered that it was not nearly as nightmarish as I remembered. The premise that a mad music teacher would invent a vast, multi-level piano to instruct five hundred unwilling students, all at the same time, was great fun. Still, it remains hard to laugh at the wild-eyed dungeon elevator operator, whose orbs rotated in his black hood like marbles in a fishbowl, or the ladder that climbed and climbed and climbed into the air until it abruptly ended nowhere – from which the young hero must leap, using his own t-shirt as a parachute. And who can forget those sinister beanies every child had to wear, with a single, clown-like hand perched on the top? They still make my flesh crawl.

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

Jim Carrey had been all but invincible up until this film. He must have seemed a natural to play the part of the Grinch in this live-action re-creation of the green meanie who nearly spoiled Christmas for all the Whos in Whoville. Yet, a little thought will lead to an entirely different conclusion; that Jim Carrey was in fact nearly the *last* person on Earth who should play the character. To see why this is so, it is necessary to return to the animated version directed by Chuck Jones in 1966, the revered Christmas TV classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. In this, the first screen version of the story, the central figure is drawn much as he looked in Dr. Seuss's original 1954 book. The only difference was that the director, Chuck Jones, couldn't resist meddling with the Grinch's eyes. He changed them from the sinister, oriental eyes of Fu Manchu to lovable Chuck Jones eyes, a move for which many fans of Dr. Seuss have never forgiven him. In retrospect, however, it may have been just as well that Jones did what he did, sparing future generations from endless arguments about whether the beloved Christmas special was *racist* or not!

The major difference between the two Grinches is that in the cartoon, he is played by Boris Karloff as a sour, uptight hermit. Even when he loses his temper, this Grinch is *dignified*. By contrast, Carrey's Grinch is a tormented clown, who turns Pagliacci at the slight provocation. He moans, he cries, he laughs, he hugs himself in devilish glee and then curls into a fetal ball when overcome by self-pity.

Perhaps it makes matters worse that the plot was greatly expanded to fill a standard-length feature film. The new material largely concerns the early life of the Grinch. While it is a brave attempt to explain who he is, and why he is as he is, it undermines the character more than it builds him up. The Grinch becomes a misunderstood kid with a deformity who is driven away from society, rather than a genuine monster isolated by his own nature. The interpretation robs the Grinch's eventual reformation of any real power.

In spite of the weaknesses of the story, the Carrey *Grinch* was a box-office success. As for me, I was never able to look at Jim Carrey the same way again. From an irrepressible comedic force, he had become an over-acting ham. If you are anything like me, you will probably be unable to stomach *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* ... mostly because the star is the wrong damn Grinch!

THE CAT IN THE HAT

Three years later, Hollywood tried to repeat the "success" of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* by making another adaptation of one of Dr. Seuss's beloved classics, *The Cat in the Hat*. Mike Myers was not the studio's first choice of actors – they had been considering Tim Allen, a much blander comedian than Myers. The result was a very different Cat than the one in Seuss's book. Instead of the mischievous but innocent-seeming visitor to Sally and Conrad's home, Myers is a wisecracking, street-smart Cat whose hyperactive stunts and Brooklyn accent put you in mind of a certain carrot-munching rabbit. Quite a few viewers found this hard to accept, but I rather enjoyed it. The gags were fast and unexpected, and many quite funny. Much of the humour was aimed at adults and frequently dared to be given an R rating – but frankly, *The Cat in the Hat* didn't strike me as a story for children at all. It was a movie *about* the childhood book, made for adults who remembered it, and who were ripe to be led deeper into the story.

One thing is beyond dispute: the sets, the costumes and props were gorgeous. They captured the spirit of a Dr. Seuss book, I thought, while adding a dimension of their own. Myers in particular was convincing as the Cat. Yet while I found the film hilarious, the public reaction was lukewarm at best. The film was nominated for ten Golden Raspberries and won in the category, "Worst Excuse for an Actual Movie." As a result of the bad taste it left in her mouth, Dr. Seuss's widow announced she would sanction no more live-action films based on her husband's legacy.

HORTON HEARS A WHO

While the only two live-action Hollywood features based on Dr. Seuss's books got very mixed signals, it is perhaps not a surprise that the two computer-animated films were more solid successes. I don't believe the spirit of Dr. Seuss can be captured by mere reality.

Horton Hears a Who brings Jim Carrey back to the Seuss universe, but this time in a much-subdued role, as Horton, a kindly, if socially awkward, elephant. No chewing the rug in this role, thankfully. The original material could not, of course, sustain a feature-length movie, so an entirely new subplot was created involving the lives of the microscopic Whos who live in Whoville, on a mote, on the flower that Horton is determined to save. The principal characters of this new material are the ineffectual mayor of Whoville and his diffident son, voiced by Steve Carell.

Horton's side of the story, in the macroscopic world, is told very much the way it is in Seuss's original. I must admit that it failed to hold my attention closely, despite a vividly realized character and setting. Having no further backstory, no additional details, no extra depth made the

opening minutes plod by rather predictably. It was the story in Whoville that grabbed my attention. The new characters were appealing, and their concerns were easy to identify with. Nor could the Whos be removed from the script without reworking Horton's part as well. If not for the efforts of the timid mayor and his nonconformist son, the Whos would not have been heard, and could not have been saved.

Judging by the box office, the public agrees with me that this was the most satisfying Seuss feature up to then ... justifying the decision not to make any more live-action films.

THE LORAX

With *The Lorax*, the franchise was given its fourth and most recent appearance on the big screen. Although *The Lorax* seems to have drawn large audiences, the critics have been less kind, giving it reviews that are indifferent at best. It appears, however, that the critics are judging the film less on its own merits as a story and entertainment, and more on the dilution of the message the critics suppose Dr. Seuss to have intended in his book. Instead of delivering a simple warning about consumerism, as many expected, the film fills in the background of the Once-ler, making him a more easily understood and more likeable figure. Although it is still he who has destroyed the Truffula forest and denuded the valley in which Thneedville rests, it was the wish to succeed and a lack of foresight that guided his actions, not any inherent malice toward nature. To fill *that* role, another character, a genuinely greedy, uncaring entrepreneur, Aloysius O'Hare, was invented for the film. At the end, the Once-ler is in fact spiritually renewed. I thought it was a nice touch when he and the Lorax compared mustaches as old, old friends reunited.

Whether or not the revised text violates the spirit of the original, there is no doubt that the studio went overboard in marketing the film. It takes a special sort of crassness to use a film that promotes environmental awareness to sell SUVs and disposable diapers – products normally found on any short list of environmentally unfriendly lifestyle choices.

Fortunately, I have never read the original book, and never saw the ads on TV, so was able to watch the film without any prejudicial baggage. I enjoyed it even more than *Horton Hears a Who*, finding the characters interesting, the story humorous and the end rather touching.

If there is one thing that critics seem to keep coming back to when addressing the feature films based on Dr. Seuss, it's that there is extra material in them, not found in the original books, or that some detail has been altered in a way they find distasteful. That, I think, is unavoidable. A Dr. Seuss book just cannot be translated page-by-page, line-by-line into a ninety-minute film. Dr. Seuss himself realized this when he authorized Warner Brothers, and later Chuck Jones, to produce inexpensive little cartoons from his books – the longest of which was 28 minutes. There were a number of television specials, as well, also shorter than 30 minutes. Clearly, if there are to be theatrical versions of Dr. Seuss, the critics will have to accept that they cannot be absolutely faithful to the canon.

Of course, I should never allow myself to be surprised at how stubborn a critic can be. Having brought just that point up with a friend of mine who reckoned himself a purist, his retort was that if there were no more Dr. Seuss films made, it would be dandy with him. I'm sure he meant it, too.

But I prefer to keep a more open mind.

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