



Broken Toys 42, a zine for all seasons, but more specifically, late September 2015. (c) Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. Or, if you live in the 21st. Century rather than the last, Taralebell.net You may download as many free copies as you want from eFanzines.com, or fanac.org/fanzine/BrokenToys/. This is [Kiddelidivee Books & Art 301](#) and the 9th. last issue.

Notitorial – Without any planning on my part, this seems to be shaping up as a rather angst-ridden issue, marinated in sadness, ennui and loss, like the blog of some 16-year-old high-schooler who confuses whining with profundity ... Just bear with me, please. The mood may pick up before the end. *Before I forget*, in the last issue a paragraph on page 35 spontaneously reverted from teal to black, putting my words in someone else’s mouth. (This shit happens with old versions of MS Word.) I have sent revised files to both eFanzines and Fandom.Org, and encourage readers to download one. If you do, both me and Paul Skelton will sleep easier ...

Life in Free Fall

I seem to be free-falling of late. What I mean is that there are a lot of things I began a few weeks ago that are hardly any nearer to completion than they were at the start. I have much the same list of things to finish as I’ve had for months. I have a few irons in the fire – one of them a story now being considered by a *fourth* editor, another a series of illustrations for a short novel – that are no warmer now than they ever were. Do I have time to begin a new career in *anything*? I worry that the many things I thought I might someday do are only pipe dreams at this point.

Meanwhile, the weather has taken a decided turn for the worse. It is hot sometimes, but not consistent summertime heat. It is cloudy much of the time, and the probability of rain is usually as high as 30 or 40%. The Canadian National Exhibition is over for another year. Fall is clearly upon us.

It seems so soon.

With Fall just around the corner, I feel a new urgency to leave the apartment as often as I can. Once there is snow on the ground, my mobility will be much compromised. Traveling Matt has no difficulty with cleared sidewalks, but as little as an inch of snow is problematical. Even when sidewalks have been cleared, often the shoveled path is too narrow for my powered chair. So as long as I’m able, I require very little excuse to go out.

Still, I haven’t much to do. While the summer was sunny and merry, I re-explored the

neighborhood and took photographs of its nooks and crannies. That's pretty much all been done, now. I make my big outings at the beginning of the month, when I have my check and need to shop. I don't have any immediate doctor's appointments, though I had more than enough in the Spring. The next coin show isn't until October. My birthday - my annual get-together with my sister - is in October too. In the meantime, there doesn't seem much else to do.

When I've nowhere to go, I start the day on-line. This usually means checking a couple of web comics, a handful of NASA sites to save photos, and the news. Then I log into FurAffinity and Deviant Art to read whatever comments have been left for me, and sometimes to upload a couple of new files. This often takes but a few minutes. When I'm finished there, I go to FaceBook, a more dependable time-waster. All this used to be great fun, an insatiable sponge for my time and attention, but now, all too often, I come a cropper. Some humorless, self-righteous killjoy will pop up and call me a faggot, a gay-basher, a commie, a fascist, a pedophile, a dooper, a bigot, a misogynist or some other damn thing, and all the fun goes out of FaceBook. Increasingly, I find a sense of aversion rising even without such confrontations; then I know it's time to log off.

My day is effectively done. All that remains is to watch DVDs and scribble offbeat porn until it's time for dinner and bed.

In another couple of weeks, I suppose I'll have to start putting together *Broken Toys 42*. Far from being an event to look forward to, the monthly issue is beginning to feel as though it only marks time, like the ticking of a watch. One second has barely passed and the next already begun. When I'm not working on *Broken Toys*, I race to finish drawings that have no purpose. They are posted and soon forgotten. Or I try to write for something other than my own fanzine. Unfortunately, the thrill of that is much diminished also. I've just had something published in the UK, but I won't have the pleasure of seeing feedback on it until the issue after *that*, three or four months in the future. I had an illo in the Seattle Worldcon program book that I haven't seen yet. Anyway, the last illo I did for a program book was butchered by some idiot who thought he knew how to "improve" it. Another couple of articles are due "whenever." None of it excites me the way it once did. I think the signs are on the wall that I'm growing disenchanted with fanzines again.

So why do I do it? Why do I drag myself out of bed in the afternoon, and force myself to face another day of pointless make-work? Why?

Because I can't think of anything better, I suppose. Putting on a funny costume and fighting crime (or committing crimes) doesn't seem to be an option. I'd love to tour the world, staying in first-rate hotels, having charming young ladies as dinner company every night, seeing the world's great museums, galleries, and ruins before some group of religious fanatics erases them from the map forever. But that sort of luxury is normally reserved for the scum of the Earth - people like Donald Trump, Dick Cheney and Justin Beiber. There must be a third option?

Could it be religion? Since it turned out that no one else was free to go with me to the Canadian National Exhibition this year, I went by myself. At one of the booths selling games and DVDs, I found three of the four seasons of *Fraggle Rock* for sale at an amazingly low price. I didn't need

them for myself – I have had all four sets for about three years. Instead, my thoughts turned to proselytizing! “I could buy those and give them to a good friend for Christmas, or their birthday!”

Reluctantly, I resisted the temptation. Who would I give them to, I wondered? My friends indulge me in my passions, but clearly they do not love *Fireball XL-5*, *Tintin*, *Batman* or *Fraggle Rock* the way I do. I could have spent the money on the *Fraggle Rock* sets, but would anyone have watched them? Or would the DVDs end up on a shelf at Value Village shortly afterwards? I don’t think we have to look far for the answer.

Why, then, does it bother me so much? Why do I still cling to a picture of me presenting those DVD sets of *Fraggle Rock* to one of my best friends, of their faces lighting up when they see the colourful Fraggles on the boxes and anticipate the hundreds of hours ahead of listening to cheerful, nasal voices singing,

“Dance your cares away,
Worry for another da-ay-ay,
Let the music play,
Down in *Fraggle Rock*.”

Or

“Every day the world begins again,
Sunny skies or rain,
Come and follow me... “

That’s where my vision fades and a picture of reality comes into focus. I see the faces of my friends wrinkle up in repugnance, then – as soon as my back is turned – they hastily shove my pitiful gift behind some tattered copies of Terry Pratchett. Out of sight and out of mind, *sigh.*

Self-realization hurts, but the truth is that, in looking for direction, I *have* come down to this. Because there is no other meaning to my life than some imaginary Better Place Than This, I have become a religious zealot. I have nothing better to do than go door to door, peddling my tawdry enthusiasm. Someday I may be at *your* door, wearing funny clothes and a rope tail, trying to get you to take one of my pamphlets ... or, if you foolishly let me in the door, I would regale you with hours of stories about *Fraggle Rock*, what it means to me, and how it might save *your* soul as well. I might even try to sing, despite the complete lack of evidence that I can do anything of the sort. If you value your friendship with me, you won’t let me in to make a total fool of myself.

Still, that just leaves me with nothing to do ... like before. Without a purpose, there is no up or down, no forward or backward, just a slow unwinding of possibilities. Far from finding a comfortable Zen center, vacant of ambition and want, I just feel nowhere. Where is the deep wisdom, where is the self-knowledge, and where are the groovy magic powers that mystics promise when you abandon your Self? Those things are not there. If there were, then your pet rock would be a Buddha. I don’t want to be a pet rock. I’m afraid that the only thing I find in free fall is boredom.

Screw this ... I’ll just put on *Fraggle Rock* again, and immerse myself. This is as near to any meaningful center as I’m going to find.



NED BROOKS (1938-2015) : HE PASSES AWAY

At the age of 77, Ned Brooks was, perhaps, in better shape than was good for him. He still did most of his own home repairs. On the last day of August, however, he was repairing the roof of his house when he fell off, and was fatally injured. Apparently it was a sister who lived nearby who found him. Almost immediately, I heard the news through the grapevine. Within hours, the word must have reached most of “connected” fandom.

Ned’s death was so sudden and unexpected that my first thought on hearing the news was that I should e-mail Ned to find out if it was true ... Then the absurdity of that thought sank in. The news had come to me via friends, Eric and Mary Mayer, and Eric had asked plaintively, “why do we *never* have this kind of news to tell about the *bastards* in fandom?” I’m sure we all have a little list of fans we would gladly **shove** off a roof. Maybe the news about disliked people doesn’t spread so fast because we don’t actually care much about their absence? Judging by the speed with which the news about Ned’s sudden departure flashed through fandom, he was very well liked indeed.

I’ve known Ned Brooks since my earliest days in fandom, forty-plus years ago. I believe I met him once or twice at conventions, back in the 1970s, and he struck me as a congenial, eccentric senior in fandom, a good 12 or 13 years older than I was. Mostly, however, I knew Ned through fanzines. I sent him *Synapse*, *DNQ* or *Broken Toys*, and he sent me *It Comes in the Mail* and *It Goes on the Shelf*. These were simple zines, with a few illos and letters, that consisted mostly of Ned’s short comments on the books, magazines and collectibles that constantly flowed into his home, and were often just what I was looking for myself. I did covers for several issues of Ned’s zines over the years.

More recently, Ned and I had been in touch through *Broken Toys*. Ned wrote a letter of comment on most recent issues. As was my practice, I wrote back right away with my comments on his comments. Then he

would write comments on my comments ... and so forth. It was a good way to stay to keep up an interesting, informal correspondence.

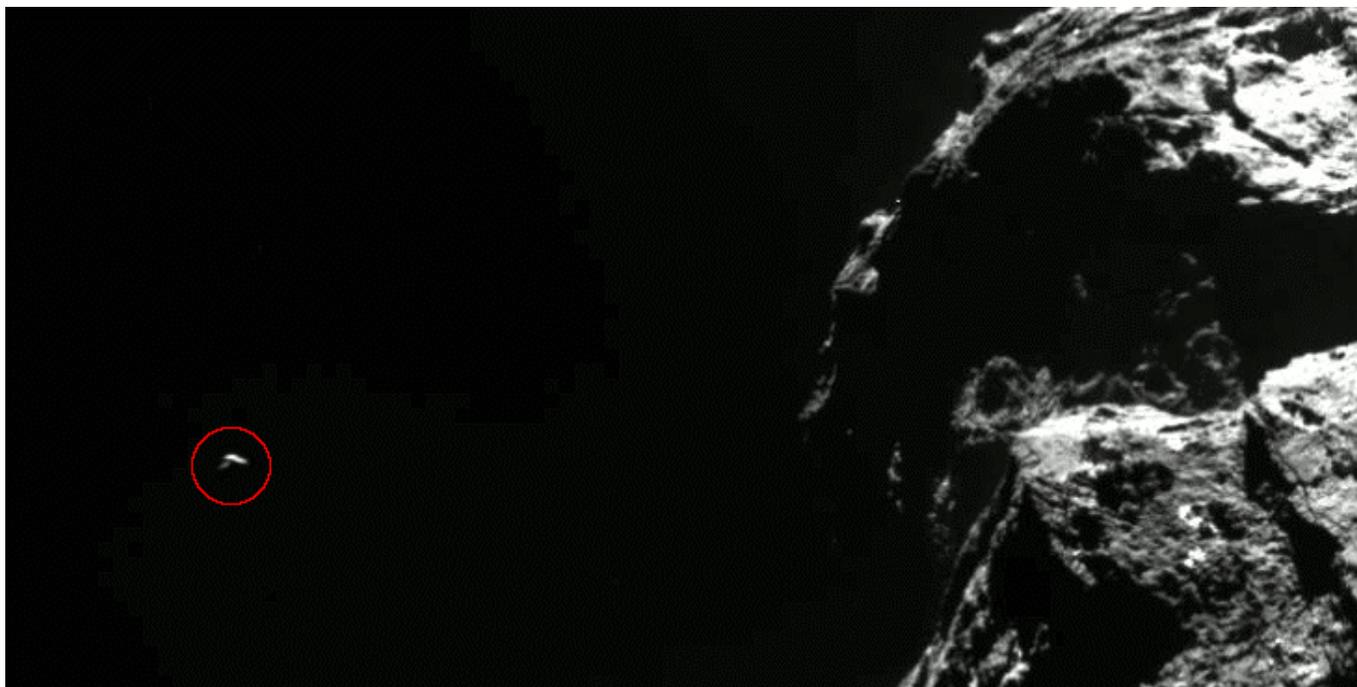
Ned was probably best known for being an avid collector, especially of dark fantasy publications that most of us could never even expect to hear of, much less possess. But how many people knew that Ned also kept over 300 old typewriters? I recall last year, in response of one of my articles about coin collecting, Ned revealed to me that he had a number of gold Pesos from his days in Peru. He asked if I could help identify and evaluate them. Reveling in my new-found expertise in fandom, I happily obliged. It is hard to guess what Ned's surviving family will do when confronted with 300 old typewriters, a cigar box full of mid-19th century gold pieces and what else only the Elder Gods know. I hope they will be as fascinated as I think I'd be.

It is only a slight consolation, but we have surely not heard the last from Ned for a while yet. His letter in this issue *Broken Toys* will be only one of many more to appear in other fanzines in future months, before his genial voice falls silent.

Mike Glycer obituary – <http://file770.com/?p=24667>

Two obituaries by Tim C. Marion – <http://file770.com/?p=24679>

Original photo above, by Tim C. Marion



Rosetta Rocks the Press!

Originally posted on File 770 [August 18, 2015](#)

Remember those science fiction movies where a spaceship in the Asteroid Belt is pelted mercilessly by fist-sized rocks and is forced to dodge tumbling boulders ranging in size from VW vans to small Middle European nation-states? In reality, spaceships pass through the asteroid belt without seeing so much as a speck of dust except by using very powerful, long-distance cameras. Space is empty, *and how!* Even the crowded bits are mostly empty vacuum. However, the cameras of the Rosetta spacecraft have caught a very rare bit of footage last month ... and yet somehow the media, which brings us everything great and small,

from the fires raging on the West Coast to the verbal diarrhea from Donald Trump's mouth, has missed this rare event entirely! Here is [footage of a large boulder passing by Comet 67P](#) at the end of July. ESA scientists don't know how large it is because they can't estimate its distance accurately. Their best guess of the scale puts this rock at between roughly 1 and 50 meters ... approximately between the size of the average older fan's ass, and the stage where the Hugo ceremony is held. At even the lower estimate, the boulder is too large to be lifted off the surface of the comet by out-gassing, and its trajectory appears also to rule out a surface origin. Therefore, this appears to be a genuine piece of flotsam from the inner edge of the Asteroid Belt nonchalantly drifting by. It must be traveling in a very similar orbit to Comet 67P, however, as their relative velocities are very similar. That may, in itself, argue that if the rock may ultimately have had the comet as its origin at some point in the past.



WAHIF: **Mitch Marmel**, who points out that the streetcar pictured in last issue is a PCC (President's Conference Committee) model from 1940, class A2. Well, I *knew* it was a PCC... **Ron Kasman** strongly suggests that if I have more trouble from nosy fire inspectors that a press release that reads something like, "Taral Wayne, world renowned Canadian writer and artist, 13 times nominated for Hugo Award, guest of the World Science Fiction Convention in 2010, being forced to relinquish world class collection," might lead to some hasty back-tracking. As perhaps would a mention of discrimination against the poor and elderly. Could work ... look what publicity did for the "Save the South Porcupine River Potato!" movement, as well as the "Drive for Clean Sock Exchanges for Street People!" And of course, "Mandatory Hand-Writing Analysis For All Muslims!" **Arnie Katz** wrote to tell me, "Yjaml fpr the new issue." I believe he means, "*thanks*," and that he must have had his fingers one key to the right on the keyboard. He warns of an impending Katz zine. **Greg Giacobe** explains to me the meaning of "gemutlich" – I didn't realize that the word was Italian. **Bruce Gillespie** offers "Happy 300!" **Dave Haren** is too pissed off at my fire inspectors to write a coherent loc at present. Maybe later, he says. **Paul Kidd** observes that "If a fire inspector ever saw my place they'd instantly drop dead from shock. And then I'd hide the body under a pile of paper." **Mathew B. Tepper** is scheming *this very minute* to revive the Hogue at Sasquan, using a certificate for the Hogue that I worked up for him. But apparently, when the great moment came, everyone at the Ranquet forgot about the Hogue. **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** says she is going to Antarctica to see penguins. She doesn't mention if she's taking a tux along.

Patricia Peters p.peters1@sbcglobal.net

A LoC on *BT#41*: I can't think of a nationwide exhibition here in the States. There are State Fairs in each state, and County (or equivalent) Fairs contributing to those. A few miles south of here is the county fairground. Most days it hosts mega RV or hot tub sales. Occasionally there is a gem or (old) car show. And there's always off-track betting at the racetrack. But the first week of July is the County Fair. Much like you describe the Canadian National Exhibition but on a smaller scale, with less than a dozen permanent buildings. I go mostly for the fair-food, so, after the first few years of delight at being so close, I have only gone the handful of times when we were not in a horrible heat wave in early July. I do like the permanent model train exhibit, which is much smaller than the one you describe. Outside that building there are several old-time farm machinery exhibits that I also enjoy. This leads to the animal (mostly 4H) exhibits, with kids trying to keep their animals cool. But there are several large display pens(?)/corrals(?) and they've taken to having shows of herding dogs doing their stuff ... now *that* is fun!

Once I went to the annual Scottish Games held at the fairgrounds. The caber toss was OK. The bagpipes became tiresome. Again, the sheep dog trials are my favorite, but the birds of prey are a very close second. I suspect the kilted mile race is more fun for participants. The pavilion that hosts 4H kids in July is home to Clydesdales and Belted Galloway and Highland cattle for the first weekend of September. I got winter scarves as gifts for some family members ... Morrison clan tartan. (There are several tartan colors for Morrison, I prefer the mostly blue and green to the red, but don't honestly know which sub-clan the name comes from in my family line.)

There are a couple of tartans for clan MacDonald, but I don't know which would have been the right one for my father's family. I doubt he knew, or that his father knew, or his grandfather knew. I've been told that in Canada, there's a good chance that Scottish families that go back to the early 19th century are MacDonalds of the Isles, highlanders... but I have no idea when my father's family arrived in Canada. They might have hailed from Liverpool or Bristol, for all I know.

Your recollections of going to the CNE as a kid brought back a memory of going to the Michigan State Fair in 1969. The fairgrounds were at 8-Mile and Woodward and going south of 8-Mile was a *big adventure* in itself ... in those days ... for my family. Our custom was to go for a few hours and spend most of our time on the midway. That year my sister and her boyfriend took me to the Fair for a whole day. If you got there by 6 a.m. on the Sunday you could go to Mass and get in to the grounds for free. We did. We then saw every 4H display. There were the expected livestock ones, but I enjoyed the entire building filled with dioramas and needlework. We saw sales booths for Magic Lint Removers, Ever-Sharp Knives, Veg-O-Matics ... and on and on. The racetrack hosted car and motorcycle events which we watched from a nearby grassy area you didn't have to pay entry to. On that Sunday we covered the entire fairgrounds. At dusk, we headed to the midway and (since we had packed lunch) spent our first money of the day. Seeing the lights of the midway after dark was terrific. I'd never before gone into any of the freak shows, but my future brother-in-law was a big fan so I saw several of those. Likewise for the carnival games; Tom may even have won a stuffed animal for Nancy.

Good luck with "The Zine Artists". I've read some about it from FaceBook and it is good to know some of how it got started.

After initial rapid progress, we don't seem to be getting any farther in our efforts; we have stopped hearing

back from people we send queries to. If we can't get more artists than the dozen or so we have, the effort may have been wasted.

Your "Fire Sale" brought to mind the first Corflu. Two members were clearing out their fanzine collection by auctioning of "boxes of zines" (small-sized moving boxes) for Taff/Duff/Corflu.

The David Williams LoC in *BT#41* brings up theology from issue #40. I have fallen back to Aquinas's "unmoved mover" idea ... and stopped there. Being merely human, I do not believe I can understand anything more about the uncaused cause than its concept. I distrust organized religions because they purport to understand more than that, and meanwhile put up all kinds of laws and rules. The laws and rules might make some sense in the historical context in which they're initiated, but are as unlikely to be everlasting as I am. Too many of the organized religions are snake-oil salespersons profiting from others' pain and loneliness.

Alexander Case's allusion to Milt Stevens's LoC/statement in #40 about audiobooks had me confused too. I read Alexander's LoC as that you, *Taral*, were using audiobooks, not that Milt was. Now that I have it clarified, I'll not go on and on about ways to get them cheap or how much I despise Audible as a source.

Your problems with pedestrians while you travel on Matt is akin to those I've had with dog-walking (shelter volunteer and my own dogs). People are so focused on their phone/texting they fail to realize a big dog is approaching. Though the dog is under control and on a leash by the time the pedestrian's peripheral vision picks up on us, they jump in their skin or stop suddenly instead of calmly going on. Kids, even kids who are with adults, come running toward the dog. And it's the dog, not the kids, who respond properly to my "Stop!" command.

Finally, just for the record. My favorite Dr. Seuss has always been *On Beyond Zebra*.

It's one of five or six that I own. Finding used copies that haven't been reduced to ticker tape and confetti by the children who owned them isn't easy. On one occasion, I was reduced to erasing *crayon*.

Fred Patten, fredpatten@earthlink.net

I started publishing fanzines in 1961, and I continued until my stroke in March 2005. I included a "press number" as well as the individual titles -- genzines, apazines, clubzines, SF convention fanzines, special fanzines, etc. -- so I know that there were over 2,760 of them before my stroke made it impossible to publish on paper any more. *Salamander, Foofaraw, Mistily Meandering, Lefnui, Dry Martooni, Moomsnops*, and more. Admittedly, over 2,000 of them were just two-page issues of *iRábanos Radiactivos!* for the LASFS' weekly Apa L, but that's still a lot of fanzines.

I have my share of two-and-four page apazines in the total, but I was never very comfortable with apas. I think I only belonged to a couple of them for even as long as three years. Perhaps *one* reason I tended to drop out of them quickly was because I usually exceeded minac every mailing. I also counted among my 300 fanzines various program books, catalogs, portfolios or anything that was obviously more than a flyer. 300 is not really a large number for a fan who's been active for more than a couple of decades, but I was

also stuffing file boxes full of fanart. I can only guess how many drawings I've done over the years – in excess of 4,000 maybe?

Since 2005, I've been writing from my hospital bed on a MacBook Pro laptop computer. I probably have over a thousand online book reviews for several websites, and I write a weekly column on animation.

<http://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/category/funny-animals-and-more/> I've also begun editing s-f & fantasy anthologies, mostly for FurPlanet Productions in Dallas. So even though I can't publish fanzines any more, I keep busy. <http://furplanet.com/shop/item.aspx?itemid=770>

It's hard to imagine **not** being busy, isn't it? What would you do, if you could do nothing?

"Fire Sale!" sounds painfully familiar. Before I had my stroke that has had me in a convalescent hospital ever since, I had lived in the same apartment in Culver City (a suburb of Los Angeles) for thirty-four years. To say that I had amassed a "collection" is a vast understatement. Even to me, it was more clutter than an organized collection. My landlord, Earl Adams, didn't want to order me to throw anything away, but he kept saying, "What if the fire inspectors see this?"

They finally did, a couple of years before my stroke. They weren't happy, but my apartment was actually neater than a couple of others in our building complex. At least I had kept my clutter in well-organized bookshelves and stacks of paper, and there were no bugs or food residue around. A couple of the other apartments were real messes.

I've always been very well organized and tidy, though lately I find it hard to mop the floors. The inspectors clearly disapproved of my owning so much, regardless of how well kept up it was. I half think there was a prejudice involved ... what was someone ostensibly poor doing by having a rich, nourishing physical environment? Poverty is supposed to deaden the soul.

What the outcome may have been was cut short by the stroke that permanently hospitalized me. (Thank Roscoe for Medicare!) As soon as it became clear that I wasn't going home again, my landlord said that he'd have to throw everything into the dumpster so he could rent the apartment to new tenants. Fortunately, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society rallied behind me, and he gave the LASFS a month to box up my collection and donate everything to the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy at the University of California at Riverside's Rivera Library. The UCR Library got almost 900 boxes of "stuff" that's still being catalogued after ten years.

I don't think anyone wants my stuff – books, art, fanzines, collections or anything. The Merrill Collection would take the fanzines, but I'm suspicious they would trade away all the good stuff – *Quandry*, *Mota*, *Telos*, *Twill Ddu* or *Raffles* – for more turgid crap like *The Scholastic Quarterly Journal of Speculative Fiction Review*. I'm very much of two minds about that...

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com

On the last day of August, Ned was repairing the roof of his house when he fell off, and succumbed to his injuries. Ned has been a regular in this, and other letter columns. His name was always welcome when it popped up in my e-mail box: he will be missed.

As I mentioned earlier, I was never comfortable with apas. I have belonged to perhaps a dozen, and only briefly in most cases. *Fapa*, *Azapa*, and *Rowbrazzle* were the three I remained in longest – *Fapa* for perhaps two years, *Azapa* for perhaps three and *Brazzle* for a whopping nine years. But usually it quickly became a chore if I was to cut a respectable figure as a member, and then I would even lose interest in reading the blamed thing.

Interesting account of the Canadian National Exhibition, which sounds a bit like the State Fairs here - not that I ever got to go to one. I was 10 years old in Concepcion, Chile. Somewhere later I did ride bumper cars, I forget where. I never got to see a Freak Show. My mother was at the 1939 World's Fair - I never got to one of those either. You are right that both such exhibitions and their audiences have changed. I was just looking at Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity is Near*, where the statistics on the rate of change in our culture based on the time to the next major event – it was down to 10 years in 2005. The world has become an exhibition that you can see with Google – and you wouldn't live to Google it all.

I had not heard of the Zine Artists archive – perhaps I was not paying attention. I have a vague notion that I met Alan White at a con long ago. I am not an artist – my sister has all the artistic talent in the family – but I always wanted good art in my fanzines, and was lucky to get some from you and Steve Stiles and many others. I was a bit late in fandom to publish much on Twiltone from hand-cut stencils, and I never had a stencil-burner, but I did publish a good bit of art using thermal mimeo stencils cut with a thrift-store Thermofax. A nice website! I used quite a lot of little Barry Kent McKay fillos.

The Fire Marshals seem a bit overboard. Books and stacked paper like fanzines are not that much of a hazard and should not count so much in "fire load". Plastics are very variable – celluloid is very flammable, while Bakelite won't burn at all. And there has to be an ignition source. I suppose the most likely source there would be an electrical short-circuit or a cooking accident – is there a sprinkler system? Are the dividing walls fireproof?

No sprinklers, but there are smoke detectors that go off the instant you light a match! The walls between apartments appear to be fireproof cinderblock. In fact, there was a serious fire in my building around the time I was writing "Fire Sale." It blew out the windows of an apartment on the 5th floor, but doesn't seem to have affected the apartments to either side, though. Over a dozen fire vehicles responded to the alarm, which is a good deal more than for the usual pot on the stove catching fire. There have been perhaps three *serious* fires at 245 Dunn since I moved here in 1991. One resulted in evacuating some of the lower floors. The TTC send buses to house the temporary refugees since it was the middle of the night in a January or February. There was a fatality in at least one fire. In no cases was there any damage to other units other than from smoke or the fire hoses.

I'm sure there are a lot of things here that I could get rid of - but I don't. You never know when something will be useful. I have kept thrift-store junk for years and then found a use for it. But these are all durable objects - I don't keep anything that can "go bad" except in the refrigerator. And of course collectibles don't have to be useful – much of what we know about the past is because people kept interesting items that they didn't actually use, like my 300+ typewriters.

Shades of "The 5,000 keys of Dr. Ned!"

Glad to hear you are getting the foam-filled tires – it seems unlikely that you would ever "wear out" the tires. Auto tires get hot from the friction that slowly removes the surface – with your vehicle that will

happen very slowly and any rise in temperature would be from hot pavement.

I had not heard of the Eusatanist church, but there have been a lot of fantasy tales about the actual nature and activities of the Dark Lord that get way beyond the old Faust deal-with-the-devil legend.

You haven't heard of the Eusatanist Church because I haven't sent my acolytes to your door with pamphlets and a demand for a donation yet! Patience. I plan to own a Republican Senator by 2018.

Steve Green, ghostwords@yahoo.co.uk

Having suffered my own mobility issues last summer, you certainly sparked my sympathy with the tale of poor Traveling Matt and its punctured tyre. However, it's good to learn of the positive impact TM has had in general upon your life; I certainly wouldn't wish to abandon my car in favour of the vagaries of public transport.

Like yourself, I'm a fan of Russ Manning's run on *Magnus Robot Fighter*, but I didn't bother with the 1990s reboot. Such enterprises rarely work, possibly the worst example being the dire *Dan Dare* update in *2000AD* (although I did hear it was never intended as such and that the 'Dare' label was attached after the first strip was drawn in hope that brand recognition would boost sales, although anyone who recalled the Hampson/Bellamy era would have been appalled at the new version).

Having fire inspectors goose-step around your apartment and virtually order you to gut your library and record collection sounds like a massive intrusion to me; the only time I've heard of anything similar this side of the Pond is when there's a major health hazard, like rotting waste or a rat infestation. From their comments about paper and vinyl, I'm guessing this pair were advocates of the new war upon physical media, championing downloads, streaming and that nebulous 'Cloud' over artifacts I can actually hold in my hand (or even, in the case of books and comics, read without a power source). It's all part of this new On Demand culture, with literature, music and cinema placed on the same level as a home-delivery pizza. Personally, I want no part of it.

I have actually predicted this as the new "prohibition" – an era of prudery in which people are pressured to live without property of their own. Dispose of what you don't immediately need, because you can always stream, download, pay-for-view, lease, or timeshare it when you *do* need it. Why be burdened down with nasty old objects, made of scarce resources by environmentally unfriendly processes! I can even foresee your employer re-assigning you to a different job, in another city, with an identical habitation unit waiting for you, with uniform furnishings and kitchen appliances. The fridge might even be stocked with your favourite food when you arrive, and your drawers with the correct size clothing in the current fashion. Your digital "assistant" will carry all your apps with you, and link you to the cloud for your digital property. An automated car will pick you up and deliver you to your new home while you read a book or sleep. There might even be a new family waiting in your new home! The only people who own actual things will be the Fucking Awesomely Rich. *They* will refuse to give them up, knowing better than to fall for the scam offered to the peasants. And, of course, they'll be the only one's who will have a choice.

David Redd, dave_redd@hotmail.com

Received safely, thanks. Your fascinating CNE memoir may well be an Important Social Document for those charting The West's Decline and Fall – but whatever, it's a good read and I've printed it out to reread at leisure.

Oh, the surplus books I could relieve you of, had I space and finance to suit. (Never mind the time to actually read them.) A pity eBay isn't the help it was even five years ago, before Kindle-owners multiplied and came to expect good reading for next to nothing ... or indeed for *nothing*. Not worth the time to list much SF material, with so few buyers and nobody collecting the mags. Good luck with finding appropriate homes for the collections.

I have two hopes. A bookstore I can get to on Traveling Matt has already taken some books for trade – they may take more. And I now a dealer in Florida who has bought books from me before, on generous terms, who pays the shipping! Dealing with either is a bit of a hassle, but of the two, the store here in Toronto requires the least effort.

Eric Mayer, groggy.tales@gmail.com

Terrific issue, but your "perszine" has grown into a "genzine" ... except it contains only your own articles. The larger a zine becomes, the harder it is for me to loc. I see so many comment hooks, if I tried to hang even a short paragraph on every one I'd have a whole book and it would take me a month to finish. And do you really want a loccol a hundred pages long? So let me hit just a few subjects.

100 pages of locs? Lord no! Despite my shrill appeals for locs in the early issues, I seem to have succeeded beyond my wildest dreams, and now I have trouble providing enough of my own material to keep the lettercol from taking over the issue! What I should probably do is edit the letters more. Sometimes I *do* let people prattle on too much ... but I hate to discourage them by cutting out the fat. I'm afraid they might stop writing altogether. It's also pretty much true that feedback in the letter column is the only reward a faneditor gets. I also have a disheartening suspicion that it's the part of *Broken Toys* the readers like best.

First, I loved your account of going to the Ex in the old days. For me the similar event was The Bloomsburg Fair. One year I rode the rides, saw a bearded lady, ate cotton candy, bought plastic vomit and got home in time to watch the premier of *The Flintstones*, which, as the first ever prime-time half-hour cartoon, struck me as a miracle. Maybe the best day of my life!

I remember those first season episodes keenly. In glorious black and white. In commercial breaks, Fred and Barney would sneak out back to smoke a pack of Winstons! Later, when TV execs reconsidered the wisdom of selling cigarettes through a cartoon show that appeals mainly to minors, the Flintstone family switched to selling 1-A-Day Vitamins. Did you know that the original name for the show was *The Flagstones*? When Hanna-Barbara remembered that a cartoonist named Dik Browne drew a highly-visible newspaper strip called "Hi & Lois" – who were named The Flagstones – they tried to wrangle permission from Browne to use the name. No soap. So the "modistoric" family became the Flintstones. Could have been worse ... what if they were the Brimstones? Or Gallstones?



“Oh Fred, you’re so debonair!”

Then there were the fire inspectors. I can't even express my horror or how utterly repugnant those people were. Right, just give up your life – which they know nothing about, having the imagination of the patio stones behind their suburban houses. Probably they just get their jollies beating up on poor people. But it is sickening how so many human beings are little more than empty shells, with practically nothing in their brains except money. Maybe you could try telling them you continue to work for pay (both because you need to financially and for your health) and all the zines, and tapes and models etc. relate to and are necessary to your work. Why do some people just revel in causing trouble for others? I sure hope you can find a good solution.

It had occurred to me that there was a prejudice in operation – that these inspectors wouldn't expect to get away with such demands in the home of anyone who owned the property. But people renting city-owned property have little money and are vulnerable to bureaucrats who want to push them around. If they fight back, they may lose their lease and have nowhere to go. And “because they can” is often enough reason for some people to be bullies. For now, I'm just hoping I never hear from them again.

I sympathize when you say in your intro that you work at a disadvantage because you can only write about what you know, while fanzine fans today mostly want to read about fandom. Being fond of personal essays, I would much rather read about people's life experiences from their own idiosyncratic viewpoints than yet more faanish articles aimed at an audience of fans. But as I said in the last loccol, personal essays probably made more sense, and were more generally accepted by fans back in the Seventies, before they became so commonplace in various forms on the Internet. Which is why I've pretty much ceased fanac. It's been made clear to me that what I have to offer isn't of any interest to fans these days and if I want to write for a market, so to speak, I'll write for one that pays, thanks.

Although I've been playing this note for some time, I'm going to flip flop now. Although it *is* true that there are some readers you just can't please unless your name is Langford or Lichtman, and if you aren't writing about the Corflu dinner or who should run for TAFF, there is also *another* side to the story. It's easy to become preoccupied with chasing after the approval of people who haven't been impressed by anything new in fandom for decades, and overlook those who enjoy fandom in the present. I may not be able to compete with Walt Willis in the affections of fans who read *Hyphen* in the 1950s, but I *can* entertain fans who are reading my fanzine *today*.

Of course, I've also ceased to believe in fan history. Once our generation is gone, no one will continue in

our footsteps. The world we knew has been swept away by blogs, smart phones, video-streaming, e-books and electronic games. If you want to leave a mark on the future, that's where you have to start. But I'm 64 this Fall, so screw it!

I'm hoping to do a lot more such writing in the near future. This year I've been in the process of retiring. I'm on Medicare, soon to sign up for Social Security, already collecting a bit of a pension from my brief toils in the corporate world. I've eliminated all my legal writing work save for one project which I've done for twenty years and can do in my sleep (practically) for a little extra income. By next year I should be able, finally, for the first time in my life, to be writing pretty much full time.

Since Mary and I started on our novels we've averaged about two books published every three years working only in our spare time. At that rate unwritten ideas have piled up. I'm looking forward to be able to get to some. So I think I need to be careful about wasting too much of that long-sought-after writing freedom on fanac. Given the reaction I get, I'd be cheating myself.

You gotta do what you gotta do ... or what pays the best. All I've got to give you is space in *Broken Toys* and a sympathetic ear.

Fans are going to like what fans are going to like, not necessarily what a minority of us might like or want to write. Paul Skelton's tally of recent FAAn award totals, showing the same small group placing at the top repeatedly, amply bears out your contention that the award has become predictable. You can only conclude such a showing makes sense if you also, implicitly, assume those few fans truly are head and shoulders above everyone else, which is clearly not true. Frankly the idea that those writers Paul cites may be "best" year after year, thus accounting for their placement, is laughable. They are not. Period. No matter what a handful of fans in the UK would like to imagine.

As for the letter-hacking category, it might be instructive to check out what zines (and whether electronic or print) the top finishers mainly loc.

It almost seems too obvious to bother pointing out that that there is likely a high correlation.

Paul says fans know what they like. So far as I can see, from the look of the results, what they like is work by fans they like. Which is hardly surprising. All of us are going to find a letter from a friend more interesting on a personal level than a brilliant essay in *The New Yorker*. Not only that but people become friends partly because of shared tastes and interests. Groups of friends are on the same wavelength. Is it surprising they tend to vote for the same writers and artists? Aren't we all biased towards the work of people who we feel in synch with?

But why can't they admit it? Please, drop the pretense that one's friends just happen to be, on some objective level, the "best." Really, can any intelligent person believe that all the "best" artists and writers just happen to live in the UK and know one another? Give me a break.

The predictability of the FAAn results doesn't reflect any conspiracy, or any lack of sincerity on the part of the voters. It results from friends voting for friends and the fact that one group of friends happens to participate, whereas most of the rest of fandom does not. It would only take a small influx of new voters to spread some egoboo to the many, many writers, artists and editors who are every bit as good or better than the few who are regularly recognized. But does anyone think that's likely to happen?

That's the hell of it, I think. None of this is a conspiracy, just the natural workings of a tight group of people brought together by common interest and active socializing. It ought be possible to broaden the voting base, if we could give the indifferent a good reason to vote. Of course, then we court the other bane of awards – cliques may attempt to dominate them, as is happening now with the Hugos.

And why should those of us outside the usual group, whose tastes differ – you or I for instance – care about the FAAns any longer? Certainly no one whose work I enjoy has any chance of winning unless he or she happens to be good friends with the UK group. I think the FAAn awards should limit voting to Corflu members and adopt a new name to more accurately reflect the corner of fandom they have come to represent. And I also think quite a few fans ought to stop patting themselves and each on the backs because they like each other and vote for each other.

I'm reminded of The Horseshoe Club my friends and I had when we were in grade school. We met in someone's basement every month to talk, eat chips, drink soda. record minutes and elect club officers. There were a huge array of officers and since you couldn't serve consecutive terms, everyone got to be an officer. Eventually we listed all the officers month by month in a history. It was a honor on a par with the FAAns.

With that, I think we can wrap up the subject of the FAAns. Considering that my official position concerning the FAAns – that I was not going to think or talk about them – somehow they've filled up an awful lot of two or three letter columns. Hopefully, someone will put some useful suggestions on the table for revitalizing the FAAns. Or perhaps the consensus is that they don't need revitalizing, in which case they can proceed along their merry way as they are, until there's nobody left to run them. Perhaps, long before then, I'll have found another niche for myself and won't even hear about them any more.

Allan Maurer, allan.maurer@gmail.com

You get these out faster than I can read them, Taral. I've read a good bit of your other work hither and yon, and despite your self-doubts, you're a fine writer.

What worries me is that I'm almost getting them out faster than I can *write* them. That's one reason I want to change gears after issue 50.

Some nuances of writing just seem to elude me. I'll send a sentence to Walt like this one, "Earlier that day while the sun was still high, and there was most of Tuesday ahead of me, I discovered that in fact it wasn't Tuesday at all, but the middle of a Thursday night ... would you believe it?" Then I'll get back, "Earlier that day, while the sun was still high and there was most of Tuesday ahead of me, I discovered that, in fact, it wasn't Tuesday at all, but the middle of a Thursday night – would you believe it?" Note the placement of commas. Whatever I do, they always come back to me pixelated! I delude myself into thinking that I understand the rules, but in the end I've still got them all in the wrong places! At this point, it's plain that I'll never learn. I talk to my writer friend about it, and he says he just knows. Maybe so, but apparently that working part has been left out of me.

I had flashbacks to when I lived in apartments reading your "Fire Sale" piece in this issue. I've always had the collector's problem of way too much stuff in way too little space. I still love print, but if it were not for digital, I've have to buy and read fewer books and magazines.

One apartment I lived in threatened to report our place as a fire hazard because in one of those cash-flow times that afflict freelancers, I was behind on the rent and did have boxes of books piled in the hallway and against a bedroom wall, as well as in half a dozen book cases. Good thing I have a house now, because there are 15 overfilled bookcases in just my living room now and all the rooms have bookshelves and books on about every available surface. My alien and space toy collection is in closets, as is much of my movie memorabilia (posters, props, toys, promo items), although my walls do have a lot of film posters of all sizes (along with a fair amount of original art). I've never culled my library without regretting it for one reason or another later, so I don't do it often. A library is a toolbox for a writer in many ways. Don't need every tool in the box every day, but they're there when I do need them.

I know what you mean. I may not want *Dophins of Altair* now, or *The George and the Dragon*, but get rid of those books and within six months I will have an urgent need to consult one of them. Fortunately, the Internet can often fill in for having an honest-to-gawd library ... but it is biased in favour of newer information. You can find obscure writers online who have appeared in the last 15 years, but often can find no trace of a similar minor figure from 45, 65 or 85 years ago.

I'm not sure why I keep some of the stuff in my storage unit (attached to the house). I have two large boxes of '90s era comix, with some earlier stuff, most of it not worth a lot. A mag I edited had a trade deal with a comic shop. I wasn't particularly smart about what I spent the trade dollars on.

Clearly we were *meant* to live forever ... how else can we look after our junk forever?

I did unload most of my print monster mag collection, which I replaced with digital versions (of *Famous Monsters*, *Castle of Frankenstein* and *Fantastic Monsters*) all now easily available on CD, or online download. I like them for the distant echo of my childhood that reverberates in their pages when I look at them.

When I was 12 or 13, my friends were all into those *Famous Monsters of Filmland* type magazines. I would browse them and just see actors in cheap costumes and makeup. But then, I never cared for the movies. I collected the bubblegum cards anyway, just because I loved collecting cards – I collected anything halfway decent, but I drew the line at The Monkees or baseball cards. Little did I know, when I was 12, that I would someday meet the editor of *Famous Monsters of Etc.*, learn all about him in fan history and come to regard him as a bit of a twit.

If you ever wanted to actually unload the fanzine collection (I envy you that), you could likely find a university that would purchase the lot. A good number of major universities have SF and pop culture collections.

Anyway, still enjoying your zine.

As I told the fire inspectors, disposing of a fanzine collection properly would take a lot of time. I bet it could take a year of slow queries and negotiations to find a willing university if I went that route. But what would I do without all those zines that contain my own old fanwriting and art? I haven't transcribed it all digitally yet!

I appreciate your final line. A lot of the older fans are impossible to impress. Their minds were blown by *Hyphen* or *Quandry*, *Void* or *Waroon*, decades ago, and nothing, not even Shakespeare, will ever measure up to that standard in their minds. There's the same problem penetrating cliques – their buddies

are tops, and that's the end of the matter. I've slowly learned that I have to please those who I can please, and ignore the rest. They probably enjoy *Broken Toys* also ... even if not as much as their treasured memories of the past. (Don't know if I'll publish this last paragraph – it's getting time to change the subject. If I go on too long about one thing, I'll get to sound like Garth Spencer. Shudder.)

Later, a follow-up from Allan:

Famous Monster's of Filmland's late editor Forrest J Ackerman - the twit you mention - was a hero to me growing up in a tiny river town in PA in the '50s and '60s. He basically introduced me to fandom through his magazine, which I started reading about the same time as I began reading paperback SF, along with comics, around about 1957.

Forry was guest of honor at the first convention I ever attended, a Lunacon in NYC circa the early '70s. I think part of the reason Forry appealed so much to us as kids is that he just basically never grew up himself. His *Spaceman* magazine, a short-lived SF-focused companion to *FM*, was done in a more adult style that was ahead of its time - later publications such as *Starlog* (which published some of my early short nonfiction) and many others.

Twit or not, he won the very first Hugo award (as number one fan, which he promptly gave away to a fan he thought deserved it more), is often cited as one of the first costumers (see pictures of him at the first Worldcon in 1939 in his Frank R. Paul-inspired outfit). He paid Ray Bradbury's way to the con and supported his efforts otherwise, something Bradbury never forgot. He also edited one of the earliest and best fanzines of its era, as you probably know.

When I was an active member of SFWA from '77-'79 (I still have the membership books and they were thin then compared to the membership numbers now), Forry sent a form with a self-addressed envelope asking for my autograph, a thrill coming from a childhood hero, I gotta tell ya. He was such a completist as a collector that he wanted every SFWA member's autograph, even from a 3-story unknown like me.

Anyway, I retain a great fondness for him, and my movie memorabilia collection now holds several items from his.

Forry had many accomplishments, and if he was a bit of an overgrown kid until he died, that doesn't detract from him. My problem with Forry was only that he had no taste – he could not distinguish between good and bad, apparently, nor make any distinction between SF and monsters carrying off scantily clad young women while a mob of angry peasants brandishes torches trails them to the castle!

In the 1940s he seemed to be at least a controversial character ... widely popular, but some of those in LA held him in derision because of his earnestness – he disapproved of using the LA clubhouse (a cheap rented and overcrowded room) for men and women to dance, for instance, or of wasting official meeting time on anything but what it said in the agenda. He was very square, there was no doubt of that. But he doubtless had other good qualities that, like the bad, I can only read about ... so I may have an opinion of the man, but hold nothing against him. I don't know what it was like to really know him.

But, amusingly, I can tell you a little story. Shortly before Forry died, I discovered his webpage. At that time I was researching Francis Towner Laney – who was one of Forry's greatest persecutors in the '40s – and so contacted Forry to see if he had any photos that weren't already known by fandom – there are precious few. Forry didn't answer, but I got a curt note from his secretary that Forry wasn't well enough to deal with his e-mail. However, I noticed that the Great Man had a page on his site – a list of people he

claimed to dislike. FTL's was prominent on it, despite decades of claiming in the fan press that he did not dislike FTL. But there it was. And later, there it wasn't. After he died, that page vanished.

Eric Mayer (Addendum), groggy.tales@gmail.com

*> 100 pages of locs? Lord no! Despite my shrill appeals for locs in the early issues, I seem to have
> succeeded beyond my wildest dreams, and now I have trouble providing enough of my own
> material to keep the lettercol from taking over the issue! What I should probably do is edit the
> letters more. – TW*

I think that the idea of a well edited loccol is obsolete. In the old paper days it made sense both from a financial and an aesthetic viewpoint. However, it's simple to publish everything you get these days and, presumably, readers can skip letters they don't want to read. Now it may still be aesthetically pleasing to have a tightly edited loccol but it is rather accepted that on the Internet people talk back and forth without editorial intervention. I expect that people would generally prefer to have what they wrote printed in full and a fanzine is not a commercial publication nor even a work of art (in my opinion) but a means of communication so reader preference rates higher than some aesthetic standard of good editing.

I think that's a good point. No one likes to spend their time writing locs only to have half of it edited out because the editor prefers the part where you fawn on him to your harrowing account of the near-death experience with an electric razor. I know *I* feel that way when it happens...

*> It had occurred to me that there was a prejudice in operation – that these inspectors wouldn't expect
> to get away with such demands in the home of anyone who owned the property. – TW*

The world is full of would-be bullies. I think half of voters are just looking for some bully to beat up people they don't like. At least they didn't hand down any ultimatum. Hopefully it's the last you hear about it. One of the joys of owning one's own house, even if it is only 490 square feet, is that you're not at the mercy of landlords and such. Of course, in the city, you are still at the mercy of building inspectors, but out here codes are only enforced if someone snitches, and people tend to mind their own business.

You know... one of the odder things is that the inspectors never even looked at the very realistic toy guns on the wall, nor asked if they were real or not. Does that seem strange to you? It does to me.

> Although I've been playing this note [about fandom] for some time, I'm going to flip flop ... – TW

I would take that attitude if I felt like I could find even a tiny audience in fandom. Your loccol proves that you do have readers who enjoy what you do, and even though you don't place where you should, you do place higher in the FAAns than any "outsider." Since I returned about ten years ago I have never been made to feel there is adequate interest in my work to justify the effort. There was the debacle of my zines, but there's more to it than that. During one seven-year period I wrote 400 locs -- 170 in 2012 and 2013. I guess they weren't good enough for a FAAn, or not written to the right zines. My monthly column, which ran for years in Dave Burton's and Dave Locke's zines, was utterly ignored.

Who you remind me of in fandom is William Brieding. He used to write these poetic personal

remiscences in *Outworlds* and one or two other places, but he was never very popular and I think rarely commented on. But Bill Bowers liked his writing, and kept it in print. Breiding is still in touch with fandom, to what extent I don't know, but I added him to my mailing list.

> *Of course, I've also ceased to believe in fan history. – TW*

You're right. The histories fans are writing are never going to be of any interest to anyone but themselves, right now, like the history of my school Horseshoe Club.

> *That's the hell of it, I think. None of this is a fannish conspiracy ... – TW*

Or more precisely, an even more odious clique might dominate them. Why don't fans vote? I suspect a lot of fans today read very narrowly. They might feel unqualified to vote. Also, given the results, most fans probably just figure the FAAns are a Corflu award given to that crowd and nothing to do with the type of fandom they are involved in, even if it is reading *Challenger* or *File 770* or another popular zine with a large number of loccers.

They might even be like me, and find it difficult to choose. Worrying about how to vote for the FAAns was actually a lot of work, and I never felt I had done a good enough job. What if Willy Wonka (who I just voted for) actually didn't write anything last year? I have to get up and check some old fanzines to be sure. Can I actually remember if I saw any Philbert Desanex illos in a fanzine recently? I better check ... That's work! And my dirty little secret is that I've lost interest in most fanzines, and only browse them, looking for what interests me. You think I'm going to read some long article on Ray Bradbury's socks, just because it might be the greatest piece of fanwriting since F. Towner Laney accused Forry Ackerman of still wearing knee pants at LASFS meetings.

> *With that, I think we can wrap up the subject of the FAAns – TW*

Well, do you really think after my rant everyone will be content to leave the subject lie? (Okay, yeah, I know, people just ignore my writing....) If you don't want to get involved in arguments about the FAAns, feel free to leave out that part of my loc. I didn't make any points you didn't already make, was just nastier about it. I'm perfectly happy to vent to you in private to get it off my chest. You don't want to break *Broken Toys*.

Bend a little, maybe, "break," no.

E.T. Bryan, abpix.gremlin@verizon.net

Re: "Fire Sale:" Perhaps you should have mentioned that your apartment and its contents are considered both a museum of popular art and a work of art itself by many persons of the art community.

That it has been featured, in model form, at various official functions of the aficionados of speculative fiction.

Amusing idea. I could submit the photographic recreation of my abode at the 2009 Worldcon as proof of its cultural significance!

It is indeed unfortunate that a significant fraction of first-world jobs have been farmed out to third-world sweat shops ostensibly to save first-world consumers money. In turn, the consumers lose their newfound savings from this bargain in higher taxes. These are required in order to employ the former job-holders as government functionaries. Functionaries whose new job is to regulate, investigate and castigate their fellow citizens like so many locusts or biting flies. The main advantage of this peculiar arrangement accrues to vote farming, money laundering politicians and the oligarchs who own them. My profound sympathy on running afoul of the beasts.

Employed as government functionaries ... or, just supported on welfare. Whether it's the pogy or make-work, it costs the taxpayer much of what he saves of cheap goods. More important, it costs the unemployed *everything*. Are they better off with cheap t-shirts and disposable razors when the only money to pay with such stuff is their relief check?

By and large, my experiences with bureaucrats in the last couple of years has been very positive. Social workers, paramedics, nurses and doctors have kept my head above water. That's one reason the fire inspectors were such a shock: they were unexpectedly hostile. This has led me to an original observation. Public servants are fine ... when they acknowledge you as who they serve. Trouble comes when they regard themselves as working for their supervisor or employer, and **not** you. Then *you* become the enemy.

Philip Turner, farrago2@lineone.net

Hell and damnation on the human anatomy. When I started trying to type this, I found that my right hand was okay in a vertical position, thumb uppermost, but when I turned it flat to put my fingers on the keyboard, it protested vigorously. Which meant typing in short bursts until it finally got the message and backed off the pain a bit. A spot more senile decrepitude, I guess.

It's times like that when your resent being a free spirit trapped in a broken down material shell. When I don't take my meds, my right hand also becomes nearly useless – not because of pain, but because it won't obey my will and wants to just lie there, looking normal but no more useful than a ziploc full of chicken fat. Or my right eye will want to close. Or my head drop forward on my chest. Sometimes, all three.

Whilst the LoCs might be interesting, your account of visiting the CNE was fascinating, which is better. No surprise that the ones you remember are so much better than the rubbish served up now. I've just received a copy of *Banana Wings* #59, which features an article by you, "When Willowdale Burned," and the combination of *Broken Toys* and *Banana Wings* articles inspired started me thinking of a scenario built around *Fahrenheit 451* meets *The Minority Report* (sort of):

The hidden story:

The Combustibles Squad and the Pre-Fire Department team up to kick Taral Wayne's door down, for his own good, and burn all his combustibles, for his own good, to avert a catastrophic future-fire ... which they trigger by accident during their visit when they manage to touch off the combustibles in the famous Canadian fan's Elements Bucket.

The reported story:

Conflagration in downtown Toronto

The local Combustibles Squad and the Fire Department are being blamed for a massive fire, which consumed several residential buildings. Some 2,304 displaced residents have started a class action against the city council, seeking compensation and punitive damages.

Attempts to shift the blame to residents who had collections of books, vinyl records and other materials in excess of the "fire load" of their apartment have met vigorous opposition from the displaced residents. As one of them pointed out: "Books, unlike humans, do not undergo spontaneous combustion at ambient temperatures."

Another said: "The Fire Department claims to have detected phosphorous pentoxide, potassium salts and traces of mercury in the wreckage. This is of no significance, as the fire-suppression process created such a mish-mash of debris that only the absence of common elements and their compounds would be significant."

Just a thought but maybe, Taral, you can deploy some sort of screen in front of the bookcases to hide them from view ... and claim they are part of an advanced energy-saving, planet-saving insulation system? Play the system a little?

Or just build false walls around the free-standing shelves and in front of the shelves against the real wall? Claim the tiny space left between is a dining room designed for standing.

I agree with David Williams about "Intelligent Design," it's strictly, "Intelligence, but not as we know it, Jim." My Scottish grandfather was a Mason – he was initiated into the Hampden Lodge of Freemasons in Springfield, Mass., in May of 1910. His Masonic apron is still stashed in the blanket chest.

I shall do my best to convince myself that any noises heard in the night are not zombie-foodstuffs, which have revived in the freezer and are looking for a way out.

Right, I think I shall give my Personal Typing Mechanism (right hand) a bit of a rest.

Dave Haren, tyrbolo@comcast.net

Probably not a proper loc. Now that my blood is no longer boiling over your situation. Like I said reach out to friends, acquaintances and strangers for help. Once meshed in any bureaucracy's coils trying to make a brawl out of it is counterproductive. Save that for later. That is what true dissent is all about, don't get mad get even. Your current problem needs some labour to solve, and the idea of you struggling to solve a life's collection in a short time is a vision from one of Dante's circles.

I'm too far away in real space to do much more than encourage you to seek the help you need locally. There has to be a maker group in your area. There has to be academic and library facilities, got to be museums. If you were living on the Arizona strip that might not be true, but you're in the general area of densest population in North America.

I understand the human tendency to go "tsk tsk, isn't that sad, but obviously god hates Taral or he would have been born rich and famous and ride around in a chauffeur-driven Rolls." Having shifted the blame for misery and ills onto the Sky Daddy, they no longer have any responsibility.

You may have noticed that this isn't a new tendency or just related to you at this time. The real danger is dogmatic rulesets that shift responsibility away from community by fiat.

While it won't cheer you up, we have a classic example here. The central valley grows 10% of the planet's food. There is a drought. Fracking is no longer viable economically since they can't produce oil cheaply enough to be able to compete with current oil prices. Fracking uses water.

Now rational humans would obviously stop fracking, and use the water to grow the food until fracking became economically viable or the drought was over.

What they are doing instead is to continue fracking, try to clean some of the toxic waste out of the water used, and now use it to grow crops. That this is one of the most biologically unsound ideas ranking next to open nuclear bomb tests in long term hazardousness is easily apparent. So now fracking gets to contaminate the groundwater, and then contaminate the crop land.

If that was the only thing of its general type going on right now you might think there was hope for human survival. The truth is there is hope, but not from any current institution. I hear Harper wants to arm teens to save you from the menace of Russian invasion over the icepack. He should spend the money on F-35s instead. Some fighter pilot commentator said "it would be clubbed like a baby seal in its first dogfight." Even the Airco DH-2 "spinning incinerator" of WWI fame wasn't talked about that badly.

I hope you meant "spend the money on *replacing* F-35s instead." How would flying baby seals help us save the Arctic from grasping Russians? Maybe we should ask Elon Musk to invent us an electric jet fighter? It would have to be powered by some form of induction if batteries are too heavy. A 1,000-mile-long extension cord is likely unworkable.

Anyway, get back to solving your problems.

Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net

Still catching up with a large number of zines that came through around Worldcon time, and now I have *Broken Toys 41* in front of me. We all have our schedules to follow...

Three hundred issues of zines ... as you say, few come close to that. I can count on one hand all the issues of zines I myself have produced, not counting my involvement with *Torus* all those years ago.

I might be in the upper 10 percentile, but many fans have published their zines well into hundreds of issues. What makes it hard to compare one fan's output with another, though, is that often a lot of such prodigious records turn out to be 2-page apazines. Even if they are 10-page apazines, clearly it takes a number of them to equal one large genzine. I've been sparing in the number of apas I've belonged to, but a sizable number of the 300 publications listed as Kiddelidivee Books & Arts are only two to six or eight pages. A number are over 60 pages, however. I have no idea what the median or average might be.

The Ex is on, and is closing in on its final day. Were you able to go? I freely admit that I haven't been to the Ex in more than 30 years. Too many people who walk into me, and not enough that interests me to justify the money and time. Yup, cranky me, but at my age, with limited funds, I must satisfy myself with what I can afford.

As of September first, no. Steven Baldassarra has said he was interested in going with me, but we haven't set a day yet. Ditto with Victoria Vayne & Simon Claughton ... though they may reach a decision tomorrow. We are surely going to cut it close, though!

I have had a look at *The Zine Artists*, and it looks very interesting indeed. Some fan artists I'd never heard of, which certainly tags me as a relative latecomer to this fanzine business.

Not all fanartists are quite created equal. Some are actually a bit obscure. But we're still scrambling to get whatever we can. While you might think any self-respecting fan artist would fall all over him-or-herself to have as much of their material posted on *The Zine Artists* as they can, some have so far failed to reply to our repeated enquiries. So if you wonder why we don't have any Steve Fabian, Dan Steffan or Charles Williams, that may be why. In other cases, such as Jim Barker's, we've encountered technical issues. Others like Steven Fox we have no way to contact. In the case of Randy Bathurst and Bill Rotsler, we've gotten little help from them for the simple reason that they're dead.

I figure that if there is any self-respecting fan out there whose home is free from clutter and piles of whatnot here and there, they must be in the process of gafiating. Most of us are collectors, and these days, there's too many people who simply don't or won't understand. And, it's not up to them to decide whether something is of use to you or not.

And there's page 16. What a shame ... Ned, you will be truly missed by all of us who enjoy fanzines, especially the wondrous *It Goes On The Shelf* you put out annually. Goodness, what happens to that amazing collection now? He lived in one house, and his library lived in the house next door.

Well, there's one final letter by Ned Brooks in this issue ... I guess you'll just have to write an extra loc issue to replace Ned's after that!

My loc...every so often, our age presents itself, and reminds you that it's there by finding out that something on your person suddenly doesn't work as well as it used to.

For some years, there were even steampunk zines. Let's see, *Steampunk Magazine*, edited by Margaret Killjoy; *The Gatehouse Gazette*, edited by Nick Ottens, and of course, *Exhibition Hall*, edited by Chris Garcia. There was also a club in New Zealand who put out an excellent zine, *AetherNZ*. Most, if not all, are gone now. I think attention spans, plus matching entertainment spans, are at an all-time low.

Is Exhibition Hall officially defunct, then?

Paul Skelton's loc ... thank you, Paul, you noticed. That's a greater award than a FAAn right there. That's egoboo galore for me. I figure that the only one who knows how many zines I loc is me, for no one else could receive that wide a variety of zines.

Fatigue is setting in, and coming up with logical thoughts is becoming difficult. Maybe another coffee might help me. Take care, and I am sure you're cooking up issue 42 as I am writing.

Indeed!

Brad Foster, bwfoster@juno.com

This is your 300th fanzine? And no Taral parody art of a "300" movie poster? Well, maybe that would have been too obvious, so I will try to get over my disappointment.

Gee ... the only movie called "300" I can think of is that dreadful mess about Spartans and debauched Persians at Thermopole. (Every history buff knows it was the *Spartans* who wore the eye shadow and silk stockings.) I'm not sure I could parody something while holding my stomach.

Regarding the unnamed reader comment you ran that you "...are not the best fanartist or fanwriter or faneditor..." My thought is that there is no single person who could claim any of those titles for real, but there would be a group of names for each title that could all share it. But, while you might find the same name in two of those three groups, it would be rare to find a name in all three groups, save for you. You do it all, and you do it all exceptionally well.

To my way of thinking, you're quite right that we don't have "bests" in fandom, but individuals who consistently rise to the top, like the foam on beer. We even have some individuals who excel whether they are up to bat, play second base or pitch. Steve Stiles comes to mind, who is among fandom's best artists, writers and fanzine publishers. Unfortunately, awards force us to rank people, even though there is no commensurate measure for disparate talents.

Your comments about checking out the midway at the Ex, and people having no problem then staring at people who were "abnormal" reminds me of how so many of the "reality" shows on some of the cable networks are just thinly-disguised modern versions of that. A reality show about "little people?" Why would I care about watching what an average family does every day? Oh, well, see, they are very short... And here's one about a lady, and her everyday life. Why should I care? Oh, well, see, she's really fat... Yeah, people still seem to want to stare at others, they just pretend it's for a different reason. With so many "reality" programs like that, makes it easy to flip through the listings and skip over half of it without even having to worry I'm missing anything.

You notice that the one reality show we'll never see is *The Life Style of Powerful Republican Billionaires Who Secretly Run America*? Can you imagine watching one of the Koch Brothers rising from bed, surrounded by flunkies who hand him his clothes, button his shirts, adjust his tie, open the bedroom door for him... As his Chief Assistant Bearer of the Executive Coffee hands him the first of 43 cups of black, no sugar, Mr. Koch demands to know if the Senator from Alaska has agreed to the price offered for the state wildlife reserve, and if not, make sure he capitulates before 11. Otherwise begin grooming another non-entity for the governor's office. Then he busies himself in preparation for a meeting with Rupert Murdoch, to begin a new conspiracy against the White House, etc... It would be sure to get top ratings before being cancelled, 12 minutes into the first episode.

Much appreciate all the effort Alan has put into getting The Zine Artist site up, and your joining in to help him out on it. I think you might be right about how it might be tough to get people to return after their first visit. I know the one thing that has always struck me about many websites is that, unlike getting fresh material once a month or so, as with a magazine, a regular scheduled appearance, sites just dribble in changes bit by bit, now and then, and when you do end up going back, it's hard to know where to look

for the new stuff. If you guys came up with some sort of "this is new since last time" thing, and dropped it into stuff like efanazines, or direct emails to a list (like you do *BT*), that reminder might get people to return. But, hey, if I knew how any of this stuff really worked, I'd be running a super-successful website. So, probably my advice is worth about what it cost to type here. I know I love the idea, and would like to see stuff up there representing folks like Steve Fox, a phenomenal fan artist who just seemed to vanish. His work deserves to be remembered, among so many others.

This has been very much on my mind, and I have, in fact, sent Alan an "update" icon to use if he can make it work. When new material by Brad Foster was available, you might someday see this:

BRAD FOSTER 

Your experience with the inspectors is a fine example of bureaucratic slash-and-burn "cleaning." Somehow it's never "need to straighten up, maybe get rid of a few things to get to code compliance." Once they show up, it's "this ALL must go!" Our own version of that around here is the alley back behind our house. It is where all the houses that back to it are required to place our large trash and recycle containers for city pickup once a week. They have really large trucks for each, and require everyone keep the alley clear for them to drive through. No problem, totally reasonable request. I try a couple of times a year to cut back the branches on some of the bushes that want to grow out into the alley, so they won't whack at the trucks and workers as they go through. Usually keep up with it, though I also don't spend much time -in- the alley, so have to go out of my way to inspect it now and then. I do try to do it often now though, because...

Several years back, sitting in the studio working, and hear a god-awful racket of what sounds like a WWII reenactment going on outside. Looking through the back window, I can make out through the spaces in the back fence that there are a number of very large vehicles parked in the alley, and that much of the foliage I can see is shaking, swaying, and then disappearing downward quickly. I head out to see what is going on. Crew of about a half-dozen guys are busy chainsawing their way down my property line, taking out every single bush at ground level. When was able to finally get one of them to turn off enough equipment that we could talk, he said they had an order from the city inspectors that, because the tops of some of those bushes had grown tall enough to almost touch some of the power lines, they were ordered to cut them down. All of them. Not trim the couple of branches about 30 feet up that were the actual problem, but remove them completely. Holy crap! If they'd just left me a notice, I would have gone out there with a pole cutter and trimmed things back, but instead, got this wholesale slaughter to the ground line!

Since then, as well as making sure no branches stick out into the alley, I always drag out the long pole cutter, climb a ladder, and clip back a few of the taller branches going up. Because I know, if one of those gets within a foot of the lines again, some eager inspector will pick that day to drive down the alley, and decide that, for the good of all, twenty feet of lush bushes have to be cut to the ground again.

We've not had anyone come inside yet to look things over, but I have started the last few years with my own "thinning out" of the thousands of books in every room. It's that same question: am I ever going to read this again, or even want to glance through it? There are books to which that answer is "no," but they are still old friends that I like to keep around. But have found it easy to part with many books. I get a few bucks for them, which then allows me to buy -new- books to read. IF I do this carefully enough, a lifetime of acquiring books will now help to finance these final decades of books. (And, while most of

what I have is barely in the half-price-or-less value category, I have found a couple so far that brought in a bit more than I originally had to pay for them, which is nice.) If I can get the book part of my life to become self-sustaining that way, it is less painful having to put 105% of my income into paying off debts every month.

Hey, what kind of a whiney loc is this turning into??? I'm going to go draw a funny little cartoon and cheer myself up. 'bye!

I have a similar coping mechanism. I pour myself a little Amaretto, put on a movie and scribble Fraggles Rock orgies ...

Paul Skelton, paulskelton2@gmail.com

Your implication that I would not have LoCed your previous issue had you not “gotten up my nose” was actually off the mark. Unlike some of your circle who obviously feel that they deserve every issue of your zine as a right, without having to make any sort of response, I am well aware that you and I have no such relationship and therefore if I enjoy your fanzine and want to keep on getting it, I need to stir my stumps in some way. As my only way of obtaining fanzines these days is by writing a LoC, then the result is pretty much preordained. Simps, really.

Actually, you probably *would* have gotten away with never responding ... I'm so pathetically desperate for readers that it's almost enough that I have heard of you to put you on my mailing list for life! I only cut Yvonne Rowse from my list a little while ago, since I wasn't even sure there was such a person. Could she have died? It wouldn't be nice to cut someone off for something they could hardly help...

Still on the subject of your response to my previous letter...I see you have put words into my mouth...your words in fact, by the failure to change colours for the second black paragraph on page 35. That unfortunately happens sometimes when moving the text up and down. It'll move into a space that refuses to switch colour, and changes the text colour instead. Fonts spontaneously, too! I usually catch it, but it can easily happen again the *next* time there's any change, even from auto-formatting that I didn't directly do. When I release this issue, I'll ask Bill and Jack to replace the old file for issue 41 with a corrected file.

Moving on - In your intro you write... “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...”

That's actually an interesting point. The thing is, your Loccol is where you and your readers get to interact. You are heavily involved in there yourself, remember, and by your interaction you increase the sense of involvement of your readers in general, even if they are not featured in that particular issue. It's where we get to feel a part of what you are doing and, by selecting the most interesting and stimulating letters you encourage this feeling of involvement. In this section of the zine we are more than just consumers. It is also, as Number 5 would have it, **INPUT**, from lots of different viewpoints. There's also the “chaos” element...the element of uncertainty. Here you are not as completely in charge. Yes, you get to choose which responses you print, but you are limited to those you actually receive. Unless, that is, you write them yourself and attribute them to your readers. Unlikely, of course, but it has been done. I myself once published a response of my own as “by” Walt Willis, in response to which he opined that I

hadn't quite captured his natural style. So your letter column adds a big splash of different styles and tones which complements your own pieces. At least if it's their favourite part, it must mean that you are doing it right. So there you are Granny, that's how you suck eggs.

Alas, yes, a popular zine will have a popular letter column, and necessarily the letter column is part of the zine's popularity. All very synergistic ... Like TV celebrities who are famous for being celebrities. Mind you, I once wrote all the letters in an issue of *Drink Tank*, but it ought to have been perfectly clear, with names like "Floyd Benny" and "Robert Stickman," that they weren't real people.

I heard just this morning of Ned Brooks' death. Whilst his Loc in this issue might not be the last of his to appear, it is probably the last to appear in his lifetime. I remember reading each issue of his *It Comes in the Mail* with interest as it was the main source of potential 'trades' back in the day when *SFD* was still wagging its tail (albeit its "least attractive...painfully amateur... and the mimeograph reproduction so faded that it verged on unintelligibility" tail, as someone whose name escapes me once described it in *Askance*). The info in brackets added to satisfy somebody who wrote that he'd like to see fanzines mentioning each other more. Do LoCs count?

Why not? Perhaps it's for the best that it is my habit to answer locs to *Broken Toys* immediately, so Ned actually read what was substantially my reply to his final loc before his death.

I thought "Fire Sale" was possibly the scariest horror story I've read in a fanzine in many a year. It is of course possible that you have deliberately used exaggeration for effect, but it doesn't read like that and my sense of your writing in general is that you pretty much "tell it like it is," preferring to convey the essential interest of a situation rather than by trying to add interest with embellishment. Can the various city petty fiefdoms generally act like this or is it simply because you are a tenant of the city's "social housing" (as it is termed over here)? Could they have demanded entry to a privately-owned house (like say the late Mike Glicksohn's) and made the same sort of demands? If so, that would be even scarier because I tend to think of North America as being less restrictive and looser than the UK and whilst I don't **think** they could do that to me over here, if I were to look into it, maybe I'd find that they could.

My account was condensed somewhat, and the dialog contrived to be more pithy than the original, but it was entirely factual. I think the fact that I live in city housing is entirely germane. People in their own homes, or who rent from the private sector, rarely have any kind of inspectors at their door unless they've requested them. The only time you could expect a busybody to visit you is if criminal accusations have been made, such as, "officer, I'm certain there are 30 or 40 Al Qaeda terrorists hiding in his basement, and there are opium poppies growing in the back yard." Insurance companies, on the other hand, seem to have a broad spectrum of intrusive powers.

It won't surprise you to learn that Stockport does not hold an annual "exhibition," but a traveling fair still comes to the local park during the town's annual "carnival" (such as it is or, to be more accurate, isn't) where we usually walk Bestie of a morning and, in season, feed the moorchicks. Part of the fair returns for the August Bank Holiday weekend where all rides are reduced to £1...just a couple of adult rides, four kids' rides, some stalls and of course the full-price food vendors. As this was just last weekend I was reminded by it of your 'exhibition' piece. As you say, the world is not the same place it was when we were kids and as with exhibitions, the same with traveling fairs. To other than a very small child, what is the attraction or excitement in a traveling fair these days? I wondered (as I wandered) were we perhaps seeing the end days of these also?

Not many traveling circuses either. Most of those perform indoors, as well.

Milt Stevens, miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Broken Toys #41*, you mention having published 300 issues of fanzines. Congratulations. I think. Publishing a lot of issues makes you a Publishing Giant. Fans gasp when they hear your name. There are legends about your many ill-considered escapades. Other fans may even send you copies of their fanzines.

When I was a young fan, Dick Eney and Bruce Pelz had huge total issue counts which they publicized with each new issue of one of their fanzines. Having a big total issue count really impressed us lesser fans. Then *Apa L* came along. It was the clipper ship of the apas. The weekly *Apa L* boosted you issue totals in a hurry. I eventually did 152 issues for *Apa L*. Others did 500, 1000, and even 2000 issues. I also did 83 issues of *Alphabet Soup* for FAPA and something like 35 issues of *De Profundis* for LASFS.

APA membership was the key to having a truly impressive and meaningless bibliography.

The Internet created an everlasting now. You may have done 200,000 posts on the Internet and it counts for nothing. There is only now. The Internet is an intellectual dark alley where you risk meeting all the people you never wanted to meet in the first place.

And now our fanac is more meaningless than ever! We have been reduced to what I suspect we were all along – a lot of garrulous ne'er-do-wells in search of a coffee shop.

I own my own home, so relatively few people can just walk in and tell me what to do with it. Insurance companies can pretty much tell you what to do with your property. One insurance company demanded I replace a retaining wall which had been damaged by tree roots. They didn't insure the wall, and they weren't going to pay anything, but they did make the demand.

There was one incident that did involve fire. There was a bigger than usual fire in Southern California in 2003. It burned a thousand square miles. My insurance company looked at a map and noticed the fire was right across the street from my house. They may have considered that suspicious. In any case, they cancelled my insurance. I'm sure it would have been useless to point out that the street in question was an eight-lane freeway. It's situated up the hill about 50 feet above my house. It's about as good a firebreak as you could hope for.

My local government did try something really sneaky once. They sent me a note saying there had been complaints about my dog, and that I hadn't licensed the dog in question. I've never owned a dog, and there aren't any dogs in my neighborhood. They must have sent that note to everyone in town. Sneaky.

This must be the sort of intrusive action by government that the rabid right-wing complains about. Rightly, in this case. As a rule, I applaud government efforts to spy on Al Qaeda, to monitor ocean temperatures and cod stocks, to enforce speeding laws and license doctors. I would howl if they didn't, and I bet so would the right-wing! But now and then the bureaucrats go too far, and insist you must use four different coloured recycle bins, or that you get your hamsters licensed and given shots.

Ron Kasman, ron.kasman@gmail.com

Hi, Taral. Things have been busy and mostly in a good way. Each day I take care of baby, try to fix up the house so that the baby doesn't die in an accident, cook and do a bit of drawing on my long comic book story. I am on page 150. I try to get in a bit of exercise too. I like to swim. Also it is about the only thing my body will tolerate. I walk and bike a bit but bending, twisting and quick motions are all risky.

Yeah, now and then I've thought of giving you a call, but my Spidey sense tells me you'd be up to your elbows in diapers or baby formula...

It's not exactly exercise, but I try to get out when I can, even if I have nothing specific to do. In another couple of months, going out will get more and more iffy. With the first snow, where I can go will depend entirely on how soon and how well the sidewalks are cleared.

I read the latest issue. This is from memory.

Your comments on the CNE took me back. I visited the sideshow but never the freak show, though it was there in my day. I don't know if they allowed kids into it. I remember, particularly, Shlitzie the pinhead, though I never saw him. He, actually I think it was a woman, was said to be wealthy, but I was told by an insider that she was dirt poor and lived in a single room. I remember him/her largely because there was a funny-looking but not freakish kid at my school who was also called Schlitzie. Poor kid. Now, I was funny-looking myself, but it was good, in a way, to know there was someone worse off. Misery loved company. I wonder where he is today. I suspect there is no medical degree or position on the board of directors of a large company, but you never know. Life is strange.

The equivalent in my primary school days was a kid name Simon and his twin sister Dawn. They suffered from what was called "Mongolism" at the time – but the preferred term for it now is "Down's Syndrome." Simon seemed a bit dwerpy from what I remember of him, though a normal enough guy in most respects. He was taunted mercilessly. I remember him being an even slower runner in gym than I was, and having a wad of scar tissue on one leg, from a package of firecrackers going off in his pocket when he was younger. I'm embarrassed to say that on occasion I didn't show him much mercy, either. As the #2 doofus in class, it was good to have someone even lower in the pecking order. At least the realization how wrong this was eventually dawned on me, and I put a stop to it. Children can be cruel, but *some* of us learn better.

It would be nice to think that to learn better was the point of life ... but I don't think life has a point. You can be a shit or a saint, and you just end up in the same place.

Also, I hope things worked out reasonably well, or as well as can be expected with the hazard marshals. I am sorry they wanted your stuff. I know how important that stuff is. My own piles of junk, collected since my youth, are part of my pie of happiness. One slice is enjoying your work, one slice enjoying those around you and one slice is having meaningful junk. It might not mean anything to the collections marshal, but it is important to me.

Some people can look to their careers, their children and grand-children, their business-empire or political battles they've won, and be reminded of their life's value. I have a room full of fanzines where my stuff was published, binders full of my manuscripts, art hung on the walls, kits I've assembled and the movies and music that has inspired me. Without all that... I am a street person with a roof over my head, nothing

more. So far I've heard nothing more from inspectors of any kind. Maybe it was all an empty threat?

Steve Jeffery, srjeffery@aol.com

First, thanks for the link to the zineartists.com. That happily wasted several hours scrolling through numerous llos and fanzine covers and remarking, "Oh, I remember that one".

Second, what on earth did you do when you rendered *BT* into PDF format? Did you compress or encrypt it before mailing. I just tried to copy/paste some text back into this email and I get a whole load of non-printing characters.

I don't do anything odd – just use a PDF maker (called Cute) to convert a word doc into pdf format. However, it's a pretty old version of MS Document, if that makes any difference ... and I don't see why it should.

Being ordered to get rid of a whole load of stuff that means so much to your sound incredibly harsh. I suppose you can't put a lot of it into storage? But then later, in reply to Phil Turner's letter, you write, "We have a fire in this building about twice a month," which does put that officious paranoia about fire loads into some perspective. Still, their intransigent attitude strikes me as an overreaction that has less to do with their concern for your health and safety and more about a petty exercise of power to make you do what they tell you.

We have had sporadic attempts at de-cluttering, even to a one-in, on-out rule for books (which never lasts beyond birthdays and Christmas). It is chastening that no matter how many boxes you fill and take down to the charity shops or the skip, it seems to have no visible effect.

Apart from *The Truman Show*, I have an near-complete aversion to Jim Carrey, so I haven't seen the Seuss films he features in, although *Horton Hears a Who* gets a four-star rating when it is scheduled on one of the TV channels. Somewhere on videotape I believe I have a copy of the *5,000 Fingers Dr T*, which I don't remember very much of except for a complete sense of weirdness. I may have to dig that out again.

Each to his own. In response to your comment to Eric Meyer, I actually like reading reviews and articles about SF just as much as I (still) like reading the stuff itself. Sometimes more. A good reviewer can actually make a work appear far more interesting than it turns out when you read it. I learned this about music (especially modern classical music) a long time ago, so it should hardly come as a surprise. There is in fact a joy in reading, or listening to, intelligent, thoughtful people discussing something they are passionate about, even if you don't share that interest.

I used to enjoy some articles on SF or reviews, but it takes an insightful writer, not just the usual plodding, "this is the premise, and this is what happened, and this is why I don't think it was good" kind of routine. So when I actually write such a thing myself – and I do – I have some special reason to be discussing that particular subject, and try to personalize it as much as I can. The other problem I have with reading more than a tiny, tiny amount of sercon material is that I'm not following the genre as such. I have no intention of reading 20 or 30 SF novels every year, and little interest in knowing what's going on in the field.

As for the frequent fire alarms in my building, the firemen told me once that most were false alarms.

I can't seem to get het up about the fairness or otherwise of the FAAN awards anywhere near as seriously as you do. Fans being fans, even with the best intent in the world, I've never considered it as anything other than a popularity contest, as much to do with circles of friendships and current visibility as it is to do with some definitive standard of excellence. And which (Sad Puppies aside) probably goes for almost any other non-juried popular vote award, from the Hugos to the Novas. Seeing fandom as a competition with winners and losers seems to me to be going about in a strange way, but then I've never really expended the effort to do more than bob gently (and quite contentedly) around in the middle rankings. I have to meet goals and targets at work. I don't want that thinking to invade my hobby.

I think you've probably got it in one. I've tried to avoid the topic in recent issues, but the lettercol just won't let me do it.



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Did you ever watch *The Da Vinci Code*? I've always enjoyed Tom Hanks in any role, even though I no more believe that Robert Langdon was omniscient in quasi-historic, fringe-Christian esoterica than I believe in the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. But, did *you* know that there was a Director's Cut?

It's word for word the same up until the last scene, where it extends the film by about a minute for the following conversation.

Robert Langdon is on his knees in front of the glass, pyramidal glass entrance to the Louvre. Overcome by emotion, he is venerating the hidden crypt below the plaza, which, he discovered, contains the body of Mary Magdalene – wife of Jesus, mother to the line of true successors to the Church, and legitimate heirs to the Roman Empire. While Langdon is rattling his beads, a tourist walks by. Curious about the well-dressed man on his knees in the middle of a plaza, in Paris, in the dead of night, he stops and listens. Then he asks in a braying voice, “You’re praying to Mary Magdalene, aren’cha?”

Langdon, who until that moment believed that only he and the secret Priory of Scion knew of the Holy Relic, is astonished. He says, “You *knew* the Saint is buried below the Louvre?”

The tourist answers him, “Well, everybody knows that, eh? Don’cha read the bro-shoors?”

“But... but, why isn’t there a shrine here, then, and crowds of people worshipping along with me?”

“I’m not criticizing, like, but it is after 1 in the a.m. you know. I wouldn’t be here m’self if the bars weren’t closing. Besides... it’s only the Beloved of Jesus, eh? Like, what’s it prove? That she was alive? D-uh. Don’t go to prove she was Holy or nothing, now does it?”

“But if she really lived, then of course she is the *proof* of Jesus’ divinity!”

“Nothing of the kind! Who says someone being real is the same as proving they’re God? Julius Caesar was alive, but wasn’t really a descendant of his gods, was he? Napoleon is buried right here in Paris, but was never the emperor of *me*! You need to learn to think straight, young feller.”

“Goddamn it,” Langdon cried, “I don’t need to think! I’ve finally got **proof!**” With that, he flung himself on the tourist and throttled him with his rosary.

That’s one way to make a point.

WHEN IT FINALLY
SINKS IN



It always amazes me, the things I had to learn when I became an adult. One of them is that you have to clean the sink. I mean, the sink was where you cleaned things. It never occurred to me that the sink *itself* had to be cleaned. But it does! When I was 12, I must have thought it cleaned itself ... and in a way, I was right, because Mom cleaned it. When I lived on my own, though, the kitchen and bathroom sinks mysteriously stopped cleaning themselves. Only then did I discover the reality, got out the Ajax cleaner and begin to scrub.

My discovery of the truth about sinks led to other amazing revelations. For example, it is not enough to just flush the toilet. The seats get grubby and need wiping and, depending on how hard your water is, you may need to use a brush to prevent the bowl from growing a mineral deposit. Some people never learn this, and appear content to use toilets with a flaky crust on the inside that makes the bowl appear oddly natural, like a cavity dug into the calcite wall of a cavern.

No one is so out of touch that they are unaware that knives, forks, dishes and glasses need washing after use. Some bachelors I know do their best to deny the fact, but sooner or later the mountain of unwashed dishes threatens to topple ... or the stench of rotting scraps of food can no longer be ignored. But that is far from the end of it. No, the burners of your stove also need to be cleaned now and then! Otherwise they gradually fill with small deposits of spilled soup, pasta sauce, creamed corn or beef broth that carbonizes into an armour-hard, blackened sinter.

The burner element itself is more or less self-cleaning. When red-hot, whatever might be stuck to it will turn to pure carbon and flake off into the bowl below. It is the bowl that needs cleaning. If it is not done frequently, when a wet cloth might still do most of the work, it may need hammer and chisel. Then there is the oven. After cleaning it once or twice, I just gave it up. Even with foaming oven cleaners, it is a hard, messy, time-consuming chore that will likely as not result in injuries to body and soul. Nobody looks in your oven anyway, you think ... and after a while you grow used to the smoke. That's what ventilators are for.

But still ... you guessed it ... now and then you have to clean the air vent. At one time I was also unaware that the filter in the air conditioner would collect dust and fluff. If unchecked, the foam material will become a solid mat of what looks felt, forcing the unit to labour for breath like an asthmatic, two-pack-a-day smoker. I'm told this is about as good for the unit's motor as cigarettes are for a smoker's lungs.

Nor had it occurred to me - until I began doing my own laundry - that the very device used to clean my clothes had itself to be cleaned to prevent old suds from turning into a high-tide mark of petrified foam. It didn't end there. The clothes drier added its own peculiar chore of cleaning the filter trap of accumulated lint from your tumbling clothes.

Who thinks about cleaning the tools you clean with, before you actually use them to clean something?

Other things around the house that I never expected to have to clean include combs and scissors, my keyboard, the bottle of olive oil and the tops of salt and pepper shakers, light switches, the buttons on my TV remote and phone, handles to cupboards and drawers, doorknobs, the bottoms of garbage pails (despite the plastic bag inside), chair arms ... the list isn't endless, but keeping up with it is. How could I have once thought that all these things magically cleaned themselves? But I must have.

As I grew older, I gained wisdom, and learned to employ brush and cloth, Brillo pad, soap and water, cleanser or bleach, as though there were nothing unnatural about all that scrubbing. However, there was one, final lesson to be learned before I fully appreciated the perversity of our existence. There was one last thing that I had never expected would *ever* need cleaning, being itself cleanliness embodied. Then, when I finally grasped my folly, I was unable to reconcile it with a sane and just world. On top of cleaning *everything* else ... I had to clean ... the goddamn *soap!*

Yes, even bars of soap get dirty. It's a dirty world, and though we are grossly overqualified for the job, it seems we are put here only to clean it.

Fall of Empires



Summer was still bright and shiny as a new-minted penny. The “Ex,” still a couple of months in the future, was nowhere in my mind as yet. There was excitement whenever I took to the streets to explore a new point on the compass in Traveling Matt.

That particular day was one of those when the sun hang high in a clear blue sky, like a balloon that has escaped some careless child and means to stay unbound to the earth forever. Despite having little to do but deliver a letter to the post office, I decided to make an afternoon of it, and rode off looking for adventure. To begin with, I had no idea where to go, but it wasn't difficult to make choices on the fly. Left or right at this intersection? Go straight, or stay on this side of the main drag? North or south? By following my ever-changing compass I found that I was headed for the Canadian National Exhibition grounds. I hadn't been there in years, so I was curious whether much had changed.

The Dufferin Gate soon loomed before me.

Of course, things *had* changed! One of the biggest, most exquisite pavilions had been leased to a shabby restaurant chain, that presented faux medieval tournaments while you ate your roast chicken. Another of the more elaborate pavilions had more recently been converted into The Liberty Grand ... a rental banquet hall and ballroom. A third was now a cheesy casino. the old Electrical Building had long been torn down and replaced with a worthy successor – the new International Building, with deep green glass towers that would honour the Emerald City of Oz. The biggest change of all, though, was the disappearance of the old CNE Stadium. It had never been a classic of stadium architecture, but it had hosted many famous performers over the years,

including Bob Hope, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, the Beach Boys and The Monkees. I had even marched through it once as a member of a summer naval reserve program ... and manfully stepped right in a pile of dog shit rather than break step. The rest of the year it had been the home of the Blue Jays and the Argos. In fact, the very first Jays game was the only one in league history that had to borrow a Zamboni machine from the local hockey team to clear the field of snow. But now the old stadium was gone, demolished to make room for the new, quite ugly Bank of Montreal Field, purposed solely for soccer.

However, most of the familiar buildings were still in place; no small mercy.

About midway through the grounds, though, I came to portable barriers and a bored guard. Like most people, I had forgotten that the Pan American Games were to be held in Toronto this year. The events were scattered around the city, some even as far as Hamilton, a good sixty or seventy miles away from the main games, but most of them were to happen right here in the Exhibition grounds. The Pan Am games seem to be modeled after the Olympics, but the contestants are limited to countries in the New World. Also, nobody really gives a damn about them ... at least not in Canada. Maybe they're a big thing in Latin America, but what would I know about that? What was clear was that the preparations for the games were smack dab in my way!

Fortunately, I was able to go around the barricaded area by driving along behind the Horse Palace and Colosseum – not a very scenic route, since there was nothing but loading docks the whole way, but soon I was able to return to the main road through the Ex and out through the Neoclassical Princes' Gates. Turning north on Strachan Avenue, I crossed the bridge over the tracks and the 19th century graveyard for soldiers lost during the war of 1812. Fort York lies a little way to the east. At this point I stopped and stared.

West of Strachan and north of the CNE had once been a mighty industrial area. Square miles of heavy manufacturing, plant built up against plant in a baffling warren of grimy red brick, blackened limestone and rust-stained steel. I remember my parents driving past it when I was a kid, and I'd watch fascinated from the back seat as one of the most concentrated powerhouses of Toronto's prosperity solemnly unscrolled before me. Most of it had belonged to John Inglis. He had begun his business life in the mid-19th century, but in 1881 bought a huge triangular swatch of land in the west of Toronto, and with his sons built marine steam engines, pumps and other heavy equipment. During WWI they added artillery shells to their production, and in WWII produced Bren guns, Browning pistols and anti-aircraft guns, as well as the machinery for four Tribal Class destroyers. In the years after the world wars, peacetime production reverted to boilers, refrigerators of all sizes and washing machines. My family had an Inglis washing machine when I was young.

The other major manufacturer in the triangle sited north of the CNE grounds was Massey-Ferguson. It had begun with the Massey family. In the public eye, the best-known members would be Vincent Massey, once Governor General of Canada, and thus the Queen's own representative to our government, in a time when that still mattered. His younger brother was the actor Raymond Massey, who played in *The Shape of Things to Come* and *The 49th Parallel*. For the most part, however, the family were industrialists and – as was the custom among their class in those days – were among the major benefactors of the city. The founder of the dynasty moved

his concerns here in 1879, then in 1889 merged his business to become the Massey-Harris company, becoming the largest manufacturer of agricultural equipment in the British Empire.

As did Inglis, Massey engaged in war production also, building wings for Mosquito-fighter-bombers, or so I've read.

In 1953, the company merged again, and six years later changed its name to Massey-Ferguson. Gradually, through more mergers and take-overs, the company lost its identity, and in the late '70s began to re-locate ... but the brand is still made, and said to be the leading name in tractors today. My late uncle on my mother's side worked all his life in the office of Massey-Ferguson on King Street.

The Massey family gifted Toronto with Massey Hall, still somewhat famous as an important jazz venue, and also Hart House at the University of Toronto. One unintended boon conferred upon Toronto, however, is one of our better-known haunted houses. The family owned several mansions along Jarvis street, in the old east end. They have been re-purposed since then, but the mansion housing The Keg, one of the city's luxury steak emporiums, is supposedly inhabited by at least two spooks that are seen now and then by staff!

Over the next few decades, manufacturing gradually moved outside the city limits, and the vast area around the tracks began to fall to the wrecking ball, one plant at a time. The demolition of this stronghold of industry was more or less complete by the early 1990s. The last time I had been in this spot, I remembered walking over the broken concrete floors of factories whose upper works had totally vanished. Here and there, lengths of rail embedded in the cement came from and went nowhere. Steel stanchions that once secured heavy machinery had been cut through at floor level. Mysterious rings, bolts and other objects stuck out of the cement like fossil bones yielded up by the ages. In the middle of all those acres of desolation was a solitary island of red brick and concrete. It was the original Inglis plant, intact. I circled it once in wonder, then began the long trudge back to the street.

The Massey-Ferguson empire was no slower in its fall, and its physical destruction just as thorough. By some miracle, the original Massey Building on King Street, about a quarter of a mile from the Inglis ruin, also remained. Everything around it had been demolished, so that the entire area, nearly a mile long and half a mile deep, had been leveled. In places the rubble had been heaped up, in others there was barren earth. Weeds were beginning to claim the empty lots, but nothing could disguise the destruction.

But that was *then*, years ago, when I had *last* been there.

In 2015 I had returned to find the desolation vanished! In its place were row after row of modernistic glass and steel hi-rise condos! An entirely new street had appeared where there had once been only a dark maw between brick factories for heavily loaded trucks to enter. Compulsively, I turned Matt onto "East Liberty Street," half-expecting it to fade out of existence, but it was real. It was like rafting down the Grand Canyon, except that the walls soaring above me were man-made. At one point I was unable to resist the temptation to buttonhole a couple walking with a baby stroller and informing them that ten years ago, their entire neighborhood had

been as desolate as the moon. When I was done, I have no doubt that they strolled a little faster to get away.

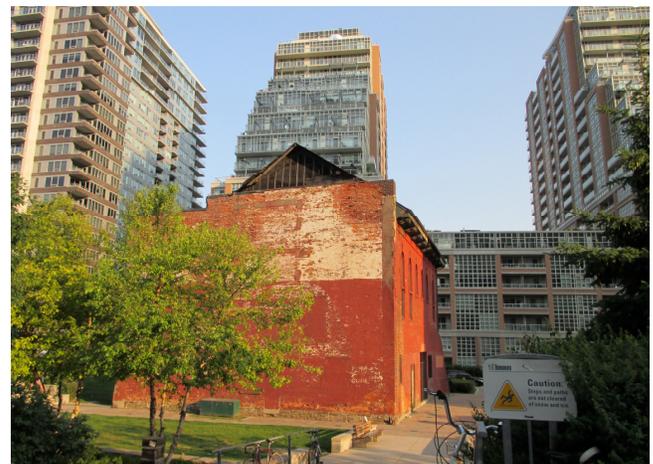
Then I encountered another surprise. Two or three blocks into the hi-rise canyon, a small park appeared, and square in the middle of it was the old Inglis building, just as it had been when I last saw it!

Of course, *that* time it had not been the centerpiece of an artfully arranged little parkette, with a raised level, park benches and a bloody awful-looking modern art sculpture at the other end! Fortunately, I had come prepared with my camera, and circled around the the old red brick structure, taking photographs. In the old days, cameras were loaded with film, and you planned your shots carefully, because each one would have to be developed later, at a cost. But the miracle of digital photography meant I could take several shots from every angle and at any distance I could imagine! Modern cameras are a clear of how not all things were better in “The Good Old Days.”

Satisfied that I could view the old Inglis building again from any imaginable angle by just clicking on a file, I resumed my journey.



The Old Inglis Building, sometime in the 1990s



The Inglis Building in September 2015!

The walls of glass to either side dwindled away, block by block, as I rode Traveling Matt eastward. Gradually, older brick buildings appeared here and there, and I knew I was back in “old” Liberty. Liberty was an industrial neighborhood west of the tracks, and south of Parkdale. At one time it had been nothing but heavy industry. It was hollowed out, now, gentrified. Old factory buildings and warehouses had been converted to lofts, offices and small business spaces for information technology, design and marketing. It was thoroughly yuppified, in fact. At one time Nelvana studios had occupied a site in Liberty, before it moved to an even more fashionable address on the Harborfront. There was a noisy dance club on the second floor of one warehouse, a trendy work-out gym in another. At street level, sushi shops and Starbucks appeared. Nevertheless, modernity peeled back layer by layer the farther east I went, until finally the massive Toronto Carpet Manufacturing Co. hove into view. In the setting sun, the Victorian bricks glowed red, the building throwing long shadows like Ship Rock in the desert. I crossed King Street and I was back in familiar Parkdale at last.

So much urban geological history eroded away by so few years ... with one or two curious exceptions, preserved like oddly out-of-place erratic boulders dropped from vanished glaciers. It is hard to believe that brick and mortar, seeming so durable, is in reality as insubstantial as smoke in the wind. Yet so it is. Decades of growth, labour, planning, production, accumulated wealth and prestige, all lost and forgotten. The people who filled the factories and offices are long in their graves. The buildings, the generators, the forges, the presses cannot be touched any more, only remembered in blurry black and white photographs that are themselves fading.

And where those industrial empires once flourished are whole new orogenies of urban development. They seem solid now ... but give *them* a hundred years, no, *fifty years*, and we'll see!



The Massey Bldg. on King Street, 1990s



Toronto Carpet Mfg. King Street, 2015

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<http://www.thezineartists.com/>

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