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Back issues of *Broken Toys* are available as free digital downloads from <http://efanzines.com/Tara/index.htm> & <http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/> Should you wish to contact me, I park my butt at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6 Canada. Or e-mail me at tara@bell.net. It doesn't cost postage.

This is important! Lately, I have become aware that not only are some fans using an address that has been out of use for more than two years, but they *are bulk-distributing* that wrong address to others! **Please** replace the useless teksavvy address with the correct one, above! **3 June 2016. Last ish, August?**

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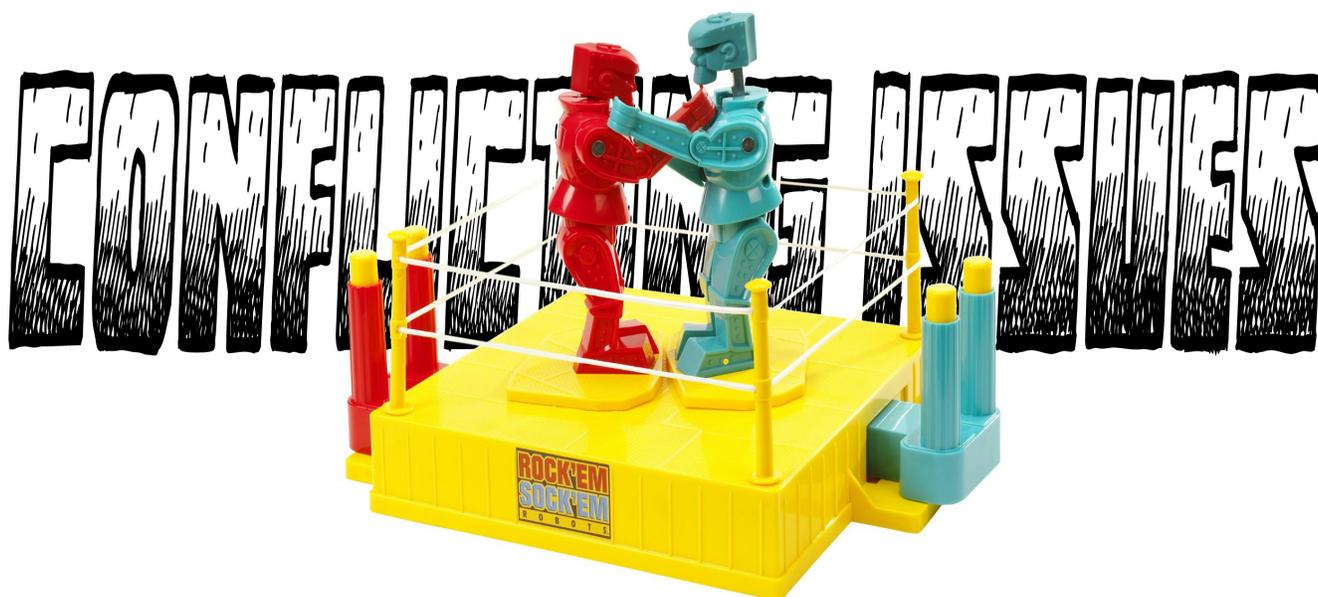
My Name In Lights (Odditorial)

I'm going to break a "rule" by mentioning that *Broken Toys* is a finalist in the fan publications category for the Auroras. It was a personal "rule" of mine not to mention such news because it seemed unsporting. It was only proper if other people reported it. However, the Auroras are a rather obscure award, associated with the roaming annual, roving Convention, which is also somewhat obscure. As a

result, there are only a handful of boosters who mention the Auroras at all ... until the winners appear on *F770*. I've been nominated a couple of times before, I think ... at least once. But there was some guy dressed as a Jedi warrior who did a routine with his laser sword to the tune of "Singing in the Rain" who beat me. Or maybe it was some other guy who read a literary paper on the use of the caesura in Canadian Fabulastional Fiction at an academic seminar. Perhaps both, because fanzines per se don't seem to fare well in the Auroras. For a couple of years the category had to be omitted entirely, for lack of candidates (not that I wasn't publishing, but few of the Aurora voters would know that).

This year there are several nominations in the fan pub category. Along with *Broken Toys* are **Ecdysis**, a very serconish zine from the East Coast, *The Page of Reviews*, that I've never heard of, and sounds like a Webpage, *Speculating Canada*, also very serconish ... or is it a fiction semi-pro? And *Warp*, the monthly news and reviews from the Montreal SF club -- you need a membership to get the password to read it, but I gather the editor will sometimes give it out. Which will win? Well, given that Canadian fans are a pretty sercon lot who seem to believe that fandom is a way of dedicating yourself to sacred cause of science fiction, I would say any of the above ... except *Broken Toys*.

Incidentally, once again I was given no warning of this. The final ballot came out, and there I was.



We're really getting close to the wire with this issue. The next *Broken Toys* is The Very Last One! The very last issue ... unless I change my mind. I probably won't, but already I'm weighing the pros and cons of quitting. The pros are obvious – a monthly zine is an enormous task, especially when you write everything but the letter column. Even then, I compose lengthy replies to my letter writers. This issue was intentionally late, just so I could savor the luxury of a month without a *Broken Toys* to hurry to completion. And now that my month's grace is up, I'm surprised just how hard it is to get started again! The other side of the equation is harder to add up. I will certainly miss the initial rush of letters that came in with every issue. Despite the relatively few regular letter writers, I think Left-Over Parts kept up a lively discourse from the earliest issues. There is also the intangible thrill of knowing that one is still in the game. With *Broken Toys* gone, who will fill the gap? Someone will, of course, someone always does, but it won't be the same to me because it won't *be* me. I don't know how I'll bear up under the knowledge that fandom will survive without me...

Especially when so many of my recent experiences seem to be tuning my world upside down. I had long sought kindred souls in fandom, as well as a community that held values and goals similar to mine. Of course, fandom was never anything of the sort, as most people discover in time. Some accept this phlegmatically; others are cast into utter despair by their disillusionment. A few write long articles trying to come to grips with why fandom isn't what it should be, and whose fault that may be. At times I've fallen into the latter category. Regardless of what fandom should or shouldn't be, I have found it to be full of an awful lot of disputatious, competitive, insecure, manipulative and judgmental people. I've been some of those things myself, and recognize the types readily. Some of our most illustrious members have been, and are, total dicks. Being one myself hasn't made it any easier to get along with those people.

Over the years I've knocked some of the rougher corners off my character, and slowly realized how unsatisfying, how unproductive many of my interactions with other fans have been. How much time have I spend arguing with other stubborn know-it-alls over some point that doesn't matter a hill of beans? How many times have I looked for some means to counter an argument, or overturn a particularly damaging *bon mot* at my expense? How much time has been wasted trying to promote my opinion or version of fanhistory over another? Way too long, way too many, way too much. There was never any time that I enjoyed this, I stress, but jostling for position seemed to be one of the main things you did as a fan – it passed for having a social life and status among your peers.

Maybe it would have been different if fandom had actually *been* a social life for me, for more than a little while. But that phase lasted only a few years. I was active in the Toronto club, OSFiC, from about 1972, but by around 1978 or '79 it was all over. Victoria Vayne and I continued to publish *DNQ* together for another three years, but the local club passed into other hands, while the cozy group I had known dispersed to the four winds. Then Victoria gafiated as well, and I essentially stopped going to conventions. From about 1982 onward, fandom was an abstraction to me – names and addresses from which fanzines and letters came, but little more.

To this day, interacting with a fandom at arm's length has limited my relationship with it to words and pictures. I have many acquaintances in fandom, but few genuine friends. I think that my social distance can explain a great deal of my status as everyone's second or third choice ... but rarely anyone's first ... for a lost TAFF and DUFF race, 11 lost Hugos and a suspicion of doors that never opened.

Ironically, it may be that having kept aloof from fandom suits me better now that I'm at an age where looking back is what you mainly look forward to when you wake in the morning. I've done my share of being a talking head at the front of a room – not enough to get really good at it, but enough to know that it fills no empty voids in my being ... as it does for some people. Did I *want* to be one of those people? No ... not really. I do sometimes feel a bit of regret that when I finally log off from this life, the news may travel slowly to fandom – neither friends nor family are likely to think of it – and my passing will probably not rate any great public display of sorrow. Despite ambitions to the contrary, I'm not sure I've left any mark on fandom ... or even that *any* individuals of the Old School can leave any mark on what fandom has become. I'm counting on Mike Glycer to at least not bury me in the "Pixel Scrolls," but that's about all.

Conversely, I've been enjoying more the time I spend with people who are *not* fans. Some are people who were at the edge of fandom when I got to know them, but who seem to have shied away from it for one reason or another. Good sense, I suppose. But others have been people I've met more recently, in

my official capacity as a patient or a needy case number. I have especially enjoyed being attended to by attractive young nurses and my doctor. The experience has been novel on several levels, and the fact that it was these young women's jobs to be friendly and pleasant has not diminished my pleasure. It allows me to turn on its head the years of rather disappointing encounters with women in fandom, in which I never seemed to be noticed at all ... or, if noticed, not *favorably*. I was always found wanting, I think, because I wasn't politically enlightened enough, or maybe it was because I was not interested in experimenting with dope, or perhaps I just didn't move in the right circles in fandom, or name drop the right BNFs from the Age of Heroes ... I never did pin it down. seemed best to just shrug and chalk it up to my being a naïve klutz. There's probably a good deal of truth to that. I was badly undersocialized in my twenties, emerging from my teens as an only child whose family moved annually for most of my life, who had few friends or ties until discovering fandom. I don't think I managed to improve much upon my deficits until I was in my forties. On the other hand, young women I meet today don't shun me the way I remember when I was young. Could it be... that fandom was a pitiless shore, upon which I had the misfortune to be cast up without the necessary survival instincts?

I don't want to end on that note, so let me state that I found genuine friends in fandom, have encountered very nice people through its auspices, and have little to complain about the place I occupy in it in 2016. Being a Guest of Honour at the 2009 Worldcon, in Montreal, just about validated everything up until that moment. It's just... just... *sigh*... I will never get over feeling that I could have done *more*, had a *better* time doing it, except that fandom was changing even as I mastered the skills needed to play a significant role.

The Old-School fan in my mind, whose shoes I gradually grew to fill, is in no position to matter in modern fandom. No fanzine can really matter unless thousands read it, and those thousands are not interested in my personal notes, observations, flights of fancy or scraps of humour. Those thousands clamor to know about their favourite professional author's health, or his next movie deal. No fan writer whose writing doesn't reach a vast audience on-line will be read, nor will his opinions be noted. ¹ No fan artist whose work isn't seen by the sort of crowds present at large conventions, or in pro-fiction magazines, can hope to leave an impression. The fanzine, in other words, is irrelevant to fandom today. As a medium, it is as dead as smoke signals.

In modern-day fandom, you only matter when you know Neil Gaiman and have been to his daughter's wedding, when you edit an on-line magazine that has published a Hugo nominee, when you are a member of the committee running a convention large enough that the city chamber of commerce issues an official welcome to it, when you invite "name" writers to your workshop and they come, when you are invited to premieres of new SF films or have been to the Lucas ranch. That is not, and never has been, *my* fandom, nor a fandom I want a part of. It has all the vices of mainstream "success" and none of the virtues of a counterculture.

The fanzine as I knew it is a fading hobby pursued by a fading generation of older fans who form a closed circle, that is gradually shrinking without hope of resurgence. Moreover, it shrinks unevenly, with tight knots of it maintaining a connectedness more typical of fanzine fandom thirty or forty years ago, while others struggle like lone swimmers in an empty sea – keeping their heads above water for

¹ As an amusing example, within the last month I posted a political cartoon on Facebook for the second time. The first time I posted it, the cartoon drew one or two comments and sank pretty much without a trace. This time it was "shared" by David Gerald, however, and the last time I checked it had shared from Gerald's page more than 2,600 times! In other words, what drew little attention when I posted it was a hit when someone well known posts it. Clearly, the web is not meritocracy.

now, but who is there to notice when they go under? Most of the time, I feel that I am one of those swimmers. I am holding my head up ... but no one is near enough to offer encouragement.

Small wonder I look more closely at mundane society and find small pleasures in a kindly word spoken now and then, a look of unsophisticated wonder when I show my treasures and the clear signs of undivided attention when I speak?

All of which leads to an unexpected announcement. I have begun proceedings to declare bankruptcy. It's a move for which I've tried in vain to gain traction for the last few years. But I brought the matter up again with my new social worker, Danielle. She's been helping to organize the switch from the Ontario Disability Support Program to the Canada Pension, Old Age Security and Guaranteed Annual Income plans when I turn 65, this Fall. I brought up the matter of bankruptcy again, as a way of getting out from under the threat of legal action to collect on debts I can't possibly pay – only serve the interest on for the rest of my life by living frugally, a prospect I do not relish. I had always been unable to find the necessary legal assistance, but social workers have powers that mere mortals lack. She managed to set up an appointment with a financial counselor, and the wheels have been set in motion.

The thing is, I really like Danielle. Apart from appearances, she is a pleasant and intelligent young woman who make me think it would be really nice to be 25 or 30 again. She appears impressed by my stories and my third-rate career as a freelance artist, and thought highly of a essay on Parkdale history that I wrote and may appear in a neighborhood publication later this year. In fandom, all this would be a matter of complete indifference. Who hasn't something printed somewhere, or doesn't have a 25-year history of painting dragons and unicorns for conventions, or can't talk about their wacky adventures until morning? It's too commonplace to remark upon or be at all impressed with. But when I talk with regular people like Danielle, I feel like I've actually *done something* with my life. It stands out.

We walked from my building (actually, I rode in Traveling Matt) to the financial counselor's office. It was only about a 30-minute stroll on what turned out to be a beautiful day – the sun shone in a clear sky, and temperatures were just warm enough to believe summer is coming, but not so hot as to remind you that you will soon regret summer came. I talked most of the way, about the landmarks we passed and the history of Parkdale, about my sawed-off career as a comic book artist, about the American primaries, about odd events that had happened in my building, about my interests and reading. She had noticed an article in the newspaper about furry fans, costuming and role playing, so I astonished her by revealing that I was in at the start of all that, and that in the founders' day furry fandom was nothing like it is now – it was about comic books and art, not costumes and make-believe. I didn't *do all* the talking.

Listening to Danielle, I learned that she was still doing her post-graduate studies and hoped to make social work her career. She had lived in Ottawa, but wasn't born there. She had gone to South Korea for a year, to teach English. She said it was good pay, but it took a while to get used to the cooking – *everything* is pickled. She was a vegetarian – but I was in such a good mood I could easily forgive that.

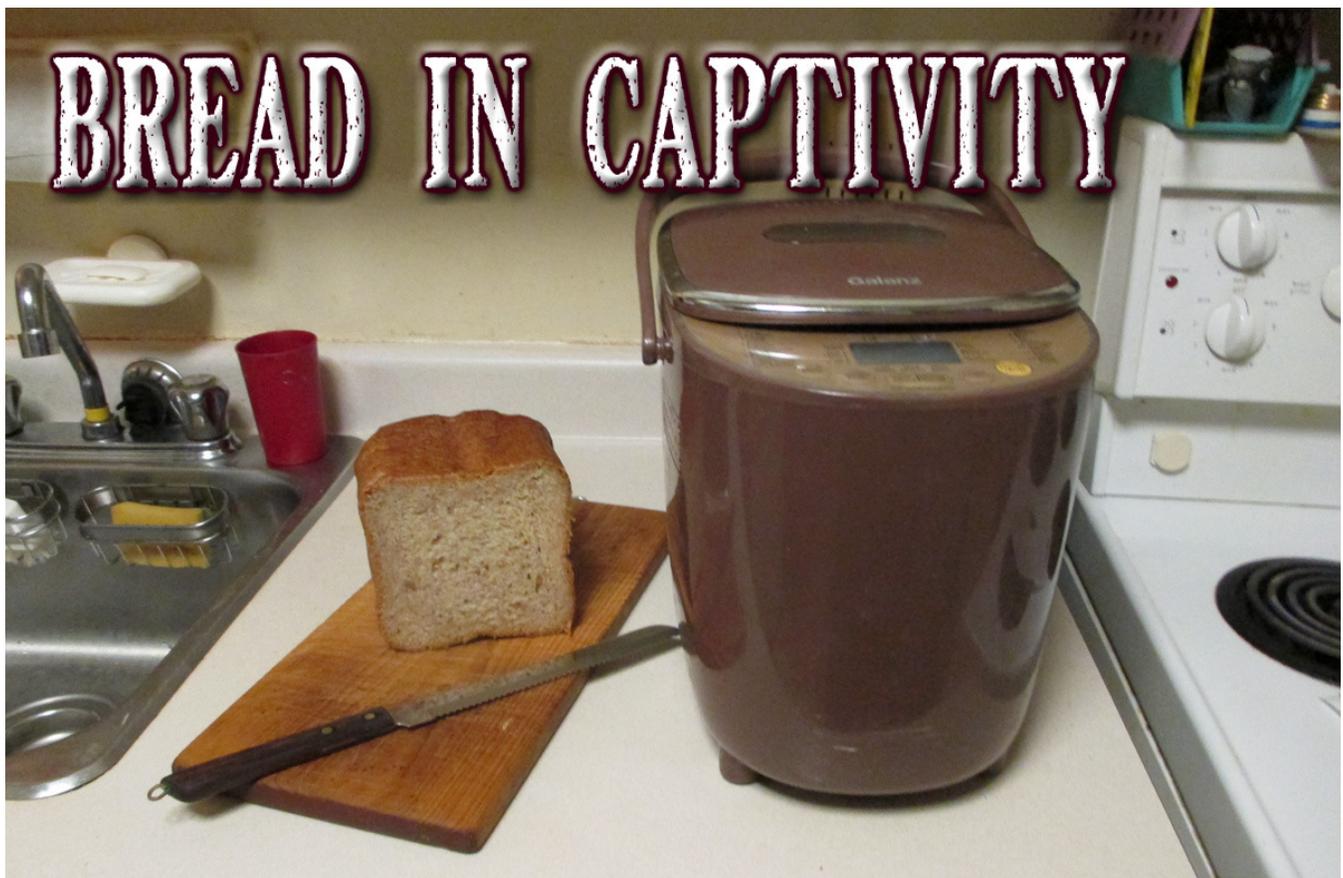
The appointment was at noon. Since we were early, we had a coffee at a Tim Horton's across the road.

At noon we crossed the road and spoke with the counselor for about half an hour, beginning the process of bankruptcy by requesting a credit check from the government. That would establish just *how much* I actually owe, a figure I have always avoided adding up lest it frighten me to death. Once I had that, and had completed some paperwork, the next step would be to be interviewed by two trustees. One or both would plead my case to the court, and it could be over as quickly as that. It will set me back by as much as \$600, though. I still regard it cheap at the price, because I will then be able to answer the phone

without fear of hearing annoying, automated messages that tell me it's urgent I phone back, and won't receive letters threatening legal action by some bullshit deadline, which never happens because my Disability payments *can't* be garnished. It will be a part of my life restored to me ... as though the lean years of the early millennium had never happened.

But the interview with the counselor is not really part of my story. The point to which I want to draw your attention is that I had a wonderful time with an attractive young lady who made me feel great, even though she was not one of the supposed "kindred souls" of fandom, but a person out of the mainstream of life who would probably not be caught dead mooning over unicorns or wearing a tee-shirt covered with badges, much less being eager to discuss-in-depth more than 200 different science fiction or fantasy writers. Is *this* what I've been missing all this time?

Alright, sure, it was the young woman's job. I'm fantasizing, and I know it. I'm old enough to be Danielle's father. But, you know... I felt like a million bucks anyway, and it's been a long time since fandom made me feel that way.



I was out of bread, so before brunch today I had to make another loaf. I have the routine down to automatic ... pour so much canola oil into the bread machine's pail, next pour in 8 oz. of water, then so-much sugar, so-much salt and so-much skim milk powder, followed by 5 or 6 tablespoons of mixed oat, rye and bran for extra fiber and flavour. Then 3-1/3 cups of the flour of my choice, plus two teaspoons of baker's yeast. When the pail was completely loaded, I pushed the start button and the machine went "thud, thud, thud, thud" ... instead of "whoosh, whoosh, whoosh," as it was supposed to. Inside, nothing seemed to be happening.

At this point, perhaps I should diagram how a bread machine works. The heart of the operation is the pail in which the ingredients are mixed. At the bottom of the pail is a spindle that attaches to a blade that turns and agitates the bread mix. The spindle is secured in the pail by a gasket, and engages a simple clutch beneath the pail. The clutch is as simple as two turning arms at the bottom of the bread machine that lock against a similar pair of arms on the end of the spindle. One pair of arms pushes against the other. The rest of the bread-maker is an insulated container with heating coils that surround the pail, and a few electronics to choose the baking program.

A bread-maker can be a little intimidating at first. Did those instructions say 1-3/4 teaspoons of salt, or 1-1/2? But that's 2 *tablespoons* of sugar and milk powder, not *teaspoons*, right? Once you are in the habit of using a bread-maker, however, it becomes second nature. When I get up on mornings and there is no bread left, I first make coffee. Then, while the coffee machine brews my Blue Mountain or Columbian Supremo, I load the bread machine. I finish with that and pour my first cup of coffee. The whole procedure can't take much longer than five minutes.

Since the bread-maker didn't seem to be working this morning, however, I removed the pail loaded with the bread mix, and inspected the clutch at the bottom of the machine. It was barely moving, even without a load. I tried turning it by hand, but it would barely budge. I noticed for the first time, though, just how much leaked canola oil had gunked up the works. Unplugging the machine, I used a wet, soapy sponge to clean out the tar-like grunge. Plugging it in again, I turned the bread-maker on again ... but now there was *no movement at all!*

I decided to have a look inside, at the motor and drive belt, to see if I could find anything wrong there.

Meanwhile, my bread mix was sitting in the pail, slowly leaking through the worn gasket around the spindle at the bottom. As bad as that situation was, there was the worse possibility that if I didn't fix the bread machine, I had a pail full of perishable ingredients that probably wouldn't keep well in the fridge. I decided to put the mix in the deep freeze – maybe it would still be good when thawed. But because the pail leaked, I had to find something to prevent it from making a frozen, oily mess at the bottom of the freezer. An aluminum baking pan did the trick.

After removing two or three screws from the bottom of the bread-maker, I discovered that some were a weird kind of screw I had never seen before. I have 11 kinds of screwdriver, but none like *those*, of course! With no way to remove them, I replaced the other screws. It was beginning to seem as though I might want to take Traveling Matt up to "Sufferin' Mall"² next day, and blow around \$75 or \$100 on a new bread maker.

As a last-ditch effort, I poured some soapy water down the shaft of the clutch. Still nothing gives when I tried to move it by hand. Unable to think of anything better to do at that point, I plugged the machine in again and turned it on ... and left it on. If the stalled motor burned through a coil, how would I be any worse off? Short of the damned thing catching fire, anyway. I heard "thud, thud, thud," but didn't see any movement, so I turned to the coffee maker to pour myself a cup.

² Dufferin Mall, actually, on Dufferin Street, not far from Bloor, a major intersection about a mile from here.

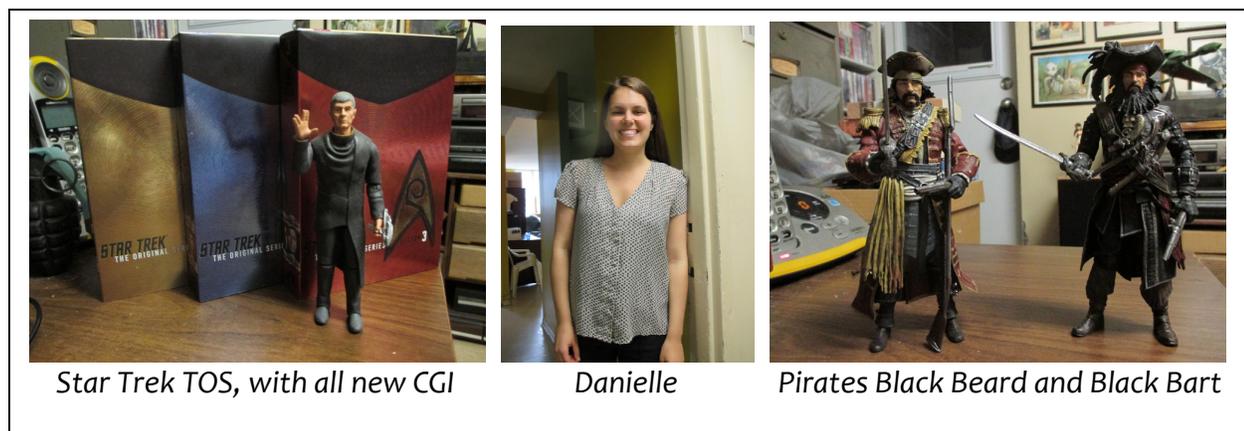
It's funny, but when I was a kid, I didn't like bread. It was vile stuff that tasted like eating a particularly bland sponge. All it did was ruin the flavour of perfectly good luncheon meat. It wasn't bad with peanut butter, if it was spread thickly enough. And toasting and butter gave the bread a flavour I much enjoyed. But just plain bread and butter on the side of your dish, eaten with your dinner, seemed a substitute for food rather than food itself. (We can't afford an adequate serving of meat or veggies, so we'll eat a slice of wretched bread to fill up that empty corner of our stomach.)

Of course, that had been *Wonder Bread*. I had no idea what *real* bread was until I discovered pumpernickel and rye, years later. Suddenly, I was buying pricey half-loaves from delicatessens and bakeries, enjoying them for the genuine flavour of bread without preservatives, refined, bleached flour, injected vitamins or excessive levels of sugar.

Like everything else, bread has done nothing but go up in price over the years. If you ate any number of sandwiches, a loaf didn't last long, and the cost of bread over a month was surprisingly high. Finally, one of my sisters asked if I would like a bread-maker for Christmas. It seemed only logical to reply, "I'll say!"

That first bread-maker worked for me faithfully for many years, and saved me a small fortune by producing loaves of bakery-quality bread for less than a buck each! Eventually, though, it died. Fortunately, my other sister never used her bread-maker and had already given it to me. It went into active service the next day, and made bread flawlessly for another few years. Alas, all good things must end! My second bread-maker was also headed for that great kitchen counter in the sky.

But while I'm stirring a packet of sweetener into my coffee, I notice a change in the "thud, thud, thud" from the bread-maker. From "thud, thud, thud" it was beginning to sound more like the "whoosh, whoosh, whoosh," it should. Peering into the machine, I could see a jerky movement of the clutch mechanism. Each jerk seemed a bit smoother. A minute later it was working perfectly, making sudden half-circle rotations at one-second intervals. I removed the pail of bread mix from the deep freeze, clapped it into the bread-maker, and watched the ingredients form into a ball, just as they should. It appeared the water I poured in earlier had finally loosened the oily sludge enough to free up the works. I would have bread that day, after all.



Star Trek TOS, with all new CGI

Danielle

Pirates Black Beard and Black Bart

Loafin' Around ... an aftermath



If my previous adventure about fixing the bread-maker wasn't enough excitement for you, wait – there's *more!*

The day after I made the bread, I decided to give the machine a very thorough cleaning. Once I took a good look inside, I saw that it badly needed one. The rotor that turns the spindle and mixing blade was surrounded by a sea of black, which turned out to be months of encrusted cooking oil, baked into sludge. Underneath was shining metal that I had forgotten had ever been there. I also removed the spindle and blade, and thoroughly cleaned *that*, as well.

It was a mistake. I discovered that the sticky, oily grunge was all that had kept the spindle in place in the bread pail. The gasket that had once done that job had disintegrated long ago, I remembered, and now, without gasket *or* grunge, the spindle slid right out of the pail. Fortunately, after all the parts had a little time to dry, they held together just barely well enough. Still, I thought, this would *never* do!

I went on-line and found several pails for sale on eBay, but none with the right model number. One of them *might* have worked, but that was a risk I wasn't prepared to take. Then I looked up Regal, the bread machine's maker. They promptly e-mailed me back to tell me they didn't make bread machines any more, and had no parts in stock. Pfui.

I went back to "Sufferin' Mall" to see if the kitchenware shop I remembered was still there, and to look again at the bread-maker that WalMart had for sale.

Unfortunately, the kitchenware place was long gone – "Sufferin' Mall" is more and more turning into clothing shops, as though people had nothing to do but try on different clothes all day long. What's wrong with a couple of drawers of t-shirts and one of underwear and socks, I wondered?

When I opened one of the boxed bread-makers at WalMart, however, I realized that I had lucked out.

Galanz may not be a big name in the bread-maker business, but the machine looked well made and rather stylish. And it was marked down to \$50. I later found on-line prices ranging from around \$75 to over \$100.

The long and the short of it is that I bought it. The "Chinglish" in the manual was hilarious, and the metric measurements were a bit of a puzzle, especially as they were for a one-pound loaf (sic) and the machine baked *1.5-pound* loaves. But turned out that just using the same measurements as for the old machine worked perfectly ... as why *wouldn't* they?

So now I have a brand new bread-maker that looks rather attractive, and takes up even less space than the old one. As long as it's still working *next year*, it will be \$50 well spent.



By now, *The Martian* has come and gone ... and perhaps more importantly, so has all the puffery. As with *Gravity*, we were led to believe that this science-fiction film was based on solid fact, in a tasty action-packed gravy to help it all go down like an easily digested meal. Unlike *Gravity*, there is rather more to that claim in the case of *The Martian*. I saw no major violations of physics or of what facts we know of The Red Planet. However, picking nits is what I do...

I'm not the only one who picked nits with the film, either. No less than Neil DeGrasse Tyson went on record saying he was certain that launching from the surface of Mars with a tarp snubbed over the gapping hole in the upper structure of the lift-off vehicle would not be a good idea. I suspect that he is right, and that even the thin atmosphere of Mars would whip that tarp to shreds, like a mainsail in a hurricane, before a high enough velocity was achieved. And could the jet of air from a leaky glove *really* propel an astronaut across a gulf of several hundred yards of empty space between his escape vehicle and his rescuers? Perhaps because you do have to *think* about it, these details are plausible enough for the movie to go ahead ... because it *might* have worked, and audiences don't pay to sit through ninety minutes of desperate survival strategies only to witness a most likely, real-life tragedy at the last minute. Aside from those little details, Tyson had little but praise for *The Martian*.³

³ If you wish to be informed of a handful of other minor peccadilloes, they can be found on YouTube by searching for *Everything Wrong With: The Martian*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HzNyMUuQfmE>

Still, *this* viewer wasn't entirely satisfied. My feeling that the Mars shown was an entirely fictional one began with the first sight of the Red Planet. Even granted that Mars is a planet of surprises, whose wonders we have barely begun to explore, *this* Mars seemed entirely too dramatic. Certainly, there may be craggy spikes and saw-toothed mountains in many parts of the Red Planet. But these seemed too conveniently placed to please the camera. And would the first manned expedition to the surface really choose to park itself any closer to hazardous terrain than a mile or two? In subsequent scenes, Mars actually seemed *too* red! All the photos transmitted from the surface so far show muted ambers, buffs and khakis, not saturated red and orange. Nor, because of the persistent dusty haze, are distant objects visible in sharp clarity, as they are in the movie.

Despite all attempts to show Mars realistically, this is still a very *cinematic* Mars.

But the problems go further than that. The premise of *The Martian* is that during a dust storm, one of the crew is separated from the others and given up for dead. The expedition aborts their mission and launches prematurely, not knowing that the lost astronaut is in fact still alive. Right away there are problems with that. How could a dust storm possibly catch the mission unawares? Don't they have satellites in orbit of Mars, watching the weather patterns? We already do in 2016, so did we get bored and abandon them by mid-century? Secondly, how quickly can a dust storm move? Once seen on the horizon, surely they'd have more than a few minutes to get to shelter? But let us suppose the storm had somehow caught them by surprise, what sort of danger would it present? The atmospheric pressure on Mars is usually less than 1/100 what it is on Earth. A 200 m.p.h. typhoon could probably barely move spilled popcorn, much less turn the Martian sky impenetrably black and fill it with deadly flying debris. This melodramatic turn offended me mightily. After that, it was easy to believe a man could live on potatoes grown in his own shit for two years.



Lately, we've been hearing a lot from the Space Boomers. These are the people who appear to think that all we have to do is roll up our sleeves, divert \$27 trillion dollars from somewhere else in the economy, and we can turn over the first shovelful of red dirt for a Martian shopping mall by the end of the decade. First of all, I have a strong suspicion that this is part of the American Expansionist impulse, the same fantasy which inspired Robert Heinlein to write about pioneering Titan and sent Peary to open up Japan with a friendly broadside. Mankind's Manifest Destiny never seems to take any other form than an American one – never one in which a Chinese or Indian flag flies over the first human Mars colony, or in which the lingua franca on Mars might be Arabic or Russian. When American visionaries are at their most generous, the future does take on a more international character ... nevertheless, for some reason, half the colonists are still American, even though only one person in twenty in the world actually lives in the USA.

But my main objection is not the blatant nationalism of such visions of our future in space, but that their optimism is unrealistic.

"We have the technology," say the Space Boomers. But *do* we? I'm certain we don't. It's true that we can build a whopping big rocket that takes up to two years to reach the Red Planet at

attainable velocities. But this is simply not fast enough for a manned mission. While a robot probe can take its time on a leisurely, fuel-efficient trajectory, there are serious difficulties in sustaining the human frame in space for so long. The current record is held by a Russian cosmonaut who spent something like fourteen months in the Mir space station in 1994-5 ... and he returned to Earth a tottering wreck. I believe he was barely able to stand up in Earth gravity. All those who return to Earth from a prolonged exposure to zero-gravity experience the accumulation of bodily fluids in places they were never meant to be, their bone mass decreases, muscles atrophy despite hours spent in daily exercise, spines expand from lack of downward pressure on the disks, blood electrolytes go out of whack, cardiovascular systems accustomed to a full gee of resistance are weakened and a whole lot of other not-entirely-minor problems grow worse with every passing week spent in space. The cosmonaut recovered in a matter of weeks, but space took a toll on his system that I don't think we should take lightly. Now imagine spending no less than two, perhaps three years in space, most of it in zero-G conditions. Might the effects be debilitating, perhaps even life-threatening? How long will it take the crew to recover from such effects when they have returned to Earth ... if recovery *is* still possible? The fact is, we don't know. And volunteers spending a year or so on the ISS won't be able to tell us, either.

But the effects of zero gravity are possibly not even the biggest problem associated with deep space travel. A rotating spacecraft can provide a reasonable facsimile of weight. However, spinning a spacecraft to provide full Earth gravity would probably be impractical. It would have to be the size of one of those old Von Braun space stations, and have to be assembled in Earth orbit before being sent on its way to Mars. To create the same angular momentum, a smaller ship could be spun faster ... but then it would be subject to stresses that would tear it apart, unless built stronger ... which also means heavier. In practice, though, I don't think full Earth gravity is necessary. In fact, a mere 1/3 G might well be enough to mitigate the effect of being away from the Earth for long periods of time. And by happy coincidence, 1/3 G also matches the surface gravity of the Red Planet.

In fact, that is one of the more clever parts of *The Martian*. The author was well aware of the advantages of artificial gravity and the Ares III, manned spacecraft is equipped with a rotating wheel-section. Neil DeGrasse Tyson commented that it ought to be rotating about three times faster ... but that is assuming it creates Earth-like gravity. The speed of the rotating section is probably about right for Martian conditions.



Ares III spacecraft from *The Martian*

A much greater worry than the effects of microgravity is the danger of long-term exposure to radiation. At best, the vacuum of space is in reality a sleet of hard radiation, but normally it

takes a great deal of cumulative time in space for that to do significant damage. A solar flare, however, can bathe a spacecraft in a sleet of charged particles many times more lethal. We *do* know how to stop solar radiation – just blanket yourself in 100 miles of atmosphere, such as the one that protects the Earth. This being impractical, various other proposals have been made, including a jacket of water around the spaceship, and strong magnetic fields. But both approaches involve additional weight that would tax the capacity of any launch vehicle we can imagine being available in the near future. Water weighs a ton – literally. Lifting it to Earth orbit would be a costly undertaking in itself. We might make it easier if we were able to get the water from the Moon, or an asteroid, en route to Mars. However, that implies that we have first created the infrastructure to exploit the tenuous water resources on other astronomical bodies. I suspect we would probably proceed to Mars before all that was ready. Then the weight penalty of a large volume of water would still have to be calculated into the amount of fuel needed for the return to Earth.

So what about powerful electrical fields to surround the ship and stop incoming energetic protons and the occasional X-Ray? At first glance, this is an attractive answer. It is easy to imagine a generator somewhere that somewhat resembles an oversize stereo amplifier, humming to itself as it produces an invisible protective shield. The problem is that a powerful enough generator would not be so small as that. It would have to be as powerful as a respectable particle beam device. To put *that* in perspective, the Large Hadron Collider occupies about as much real estate as Liechtenstein ... and cost many billions of dollars. By necessity, a portable field generator would be far smaller and far less powerful. It would probably do nicely for the average radiation flux between Earth and Mars, *but...* What about flares and solar storms? Any half-decent flare can overwhelm the magnetic field of the Earth itself, and would certainly result in fatal exposure for the occupants of a spaceship between planets. The only practical solution seems to be to provide a small shelter, something like a bank vault, for the crew to retreat into for two or three days until the peak of solar radiation passes ... and hope that it is not a really BIG solar flare, one that even the walls of the shelter are inadequate to stop.

Even on the surface of Mars, there will be a radiation hazard. The Martian atmosphere is vanishingly thin, and there is no magnetic field to speak of. The degree of risk, however, is not unacceptable with metered exposure ... but no imaginable suit would be adequate protection in the event of a major solar storm.

Let us suppose, though, that we have developed adequate protection for a 90% safety window. There is only a *small* chance that a solar flare strong enough to endanger the crew will occur during the mission. Let us suppose, also, that we have developed a spinning spacecraft that can mimic about the same gravitational force as Mars – roughly 30 or 35% of Earth Normal. There are two ways to do this ... short of actual artificial gravity, as seen in *Star Trek*. You could build a complete, wheel-like vehicle, similar to those space stations envisioned by Werner von Braun and Willy Ley. But that would be massive overkill.

The alternative I propose is to spin a more modest spacecraft at one end of a tether. The other end might be the propulsion unit, say, or fuel ... or just a rock we've snagged from space. A little napkin math will show that a space-wheel would have to be enormous – as big in

diameter as the ISS, I suspect, if not quite a bit bigger. The bigger it is, the slower it needs to rotate. The faster the rotation, the more robust the wheel will have to be if it is not to tear itself to pieces. All that mass has to be placed in orbit, so there has to be some optimum balance between size and rate of rotation that will please the engineers – not to mention the taxpayers – best.

The Ares III spacecraft in *The Martian*, strikes a plausible balance. While it does employ a rotating wheel, it is divided into four counter-balanced modules, and is not a continuous circular tube. As Neil DeGrasse Tyson pointed out, the wheel was far too small for 1G. Too bad that he didn't comment on whether it would be large enough for 1/3G.

Assuming we have those issues settled to our satisfaction, there is also a little matter of *reliability*. Our best technology to date goes into the International Space Station, yet the ISS is in constant need of replacement parts ... not to mention the continuous delivery of expendable resources, mainly food. While the reliability of the ISS is doubtless impressive, given the complexity of the station, imagine that an indispensable part for which you carry no replacement, gives out after several months in space ... and there are five more months to go before you even arrive in orbit around Mars. Carrying spare parts for *everything* is impractical, obviously. Are we ready to depend on a brand-new space vehicle to function near-perfectly for up to three years? I seriously doubt it. And *each* unmanned test would take about two years to complete. Perhaps the only sensible solution is to send two spacecraft together, each one capable of supporting both crews.

At present, the only new spacecraft on the design table is the Orion capsule. This is just the Apollo capsule blown up a little larger, with some updates in materials and electronics. The design is for a crew of four, and provides around 2.5 times the amount of internal space for them than Apollo had. Picture spending up to three years in space living in a Chrysler minivan! Clearly, the Orion is best suited for a return to the moon, or a visit to a nearby asteroid that wouldn't take more than a month, or at most two. The notion that it could be used in a mission to Mars is absurd. At best, it could be involved in a mission as a sort of auxiliary to the main spacecraft, like a dinghy. At that, the Orion capsule is not expected to carry a man into space until around 2024! That's a pretty late start to a program to place a Man on Mars before 2040.

But never mind all that. We *will* overcome the difficulties, and expense, and political obstacles eventually, and someday send a team of astro/cosmo/taikonauts to the Red Planet to see what *they* can do that the robots that preceded them weren't able to. I actually think the first manned landing will be just a stunt. There is far too much advantage to a manned landing on the larger and nearer of Mar's natural satellites, Phobos, which because of its miniscule gravity field would be much easier, and probably *far* safer. No large amount of fuel will need to be carried to Mars for a return lift-off, either. From that near vantage point, it will be simple to remotely control fleets of robots on the surface – wheeled vehicles, borers, fliers, balloons, you name it! Drop them from orbit and forget about ever having to retrieve them! All this just isn't going to happen in a mere ten year's time. Or *twenty*, I suspect. But perhaps by mid-century – if we don't spend all our hard-earned nickels and dimes on new Middle Eastern Wars, and invisible killer-jets that don't fly.

Colonizing Mars is an entirely different proposition than a scientific mission, however. Large numbers of people will have to be moved to the Red Planet to create not only a self-sustaining population, but also a community. Each new arrival will probably cost millions of dollars each, just to *deliver* to his/her new home. Then, of course, there will be the expense of building on Mars – even with 3D printers, inflatable habitats, novel materials and as-of-yet-unknown technologies, this will entail the movement of many tons of payload from one planet to the other. As well, there will be a thousand things the colonists will need – everything from medical instruments to beer coolers, geological tools to videogames, space suits to clean socks. A colony of a thousand would require an investment of \$100 billion, I suspect ... and there would be more billions spent on its continual upkeep.

The classical reason for colonization has always been to relieve overcrowding. The ancient city-states of Hellenic Greece send excess population to settle all around the Mediterranean, and even much of the Black Sea. The Vikings left settlements on the Shetland Islands, Iceland, Greenland and even Newfoundland. There is no possibility of this becoming a rationale for colonizing Mars, however. No matter if we freeze-dried volunteers and sent them to Mars packed like kippers in a tin, we would outbreed the benefits on Earth by orders of magnitude, so the net effect on the terrestrial population would be essentially nil.

But *that* isn't the real reason why we want to colonize The Red Planet, say the Mars boomers. The reason they give is that it is desirable not to have all our eggs in one basket. That is, to ensure the survival of the human race, we cannot depend on one planet! Really? And if that big asteroid with our name on it strikes the Earth in 2105, a small colony on Mars will guarantee our long-term survival? That seems highly unlikely to me. Even by the early 22nd century, a Mars colony would most likely still be highly dependent on support from Earth. It may not be able to survive on its own, despite any strides toward self-sufficiency, simply because a *single failure* could well be lethal to the entire colony. The point is, the surface of Mars is unrelentingly *hostile*. There will be no safe moments.

It isn't possible to guess with any accuracy how populous a 22nd Century colony might be, but even if it is as large as ten thousand, I think it would be too small to take seriously as a guarantee of our species' continued existence. The loss of genetic diversity would be critical. Cloning and artificial gestation are just wishful thinking at this point ... and without very sophisticated genetic engineering, could lead to undesirable genetic drift. Even in the most favorable circumstances, the colony may be unable to grow fast enough to offset attrition – people falling in holes, developing leaks in their protective gear or suffering aggressive cancers due to excessive time spend outside their shelters. In other words, a colony smaller than the population of my neighborhood is not really very good insurance for our ultimate survival. It would be a desperate gamble at best.

Long before any colony on Mars could be *robustly* self-sufficient, I think it far more likely we will have developed the technology to divert any planet-killer asteroids away from Earth. I think that's where I'd put *my* money.

Another argument given in favour of a manned mission to Mars as soon as possible is the chance of a human-created Armageddon. Never mind planet-killers from outer space, we have thousands of them in

silos in undisclosed locations in Russia and the American West. Given the human propensity for divisiveness, though, establishing a colony on Mars would only increase the likelihood of war eventually. Not only could we have an extinction-event war between superpowers on Earth, but also one between Earth and Mars...

Don't mistake me, though. I do want the human species to survive and to reach the other planets of our solar system. I'm not convinced that it is our destiny to *live* on them, mind you. But if we are going to, Mars is clearly our best bet. It would not be *immediately* lethal to leave your environmentally controlled shelter, as it would be on Venus, Mercury, Pluto, or any of the gas giants and their multitudinous moons. It's just that I'm in no hurry to cover Mars with shopping malls, McBurger chains, gated communities, 'hoods, industrial parks and highways. We have Southern California already, so let's not be in such a hurry to convert Mars into an unnecessary copy. Until there is *real* need – and if we play our cards on Earth right, there may never be a real need – I'd like Mars to stay as it is. At least, let us not mess it up before we have even had much of a chance to explore it. Every planet in our solar system is unique, Mars no less so just because it somewhat resembles our Earth. As environmentalists point out, there is only one Earth ... and there is only one Mars.

One day I would hope it will be possible to walk through a virtual recreation of Mars, one so detailed you can bend over and sift the sand through your unprotected hand ... and yet never leave a footprint to spoil the experience of other virtual visitors behind you, who may number in thousands at a time, although not one of them is aware of any of the others. The proper explorers of Mars may always be our robots, both those whose AI is sophisticated enough to explore on their own, and those we guide through some form of advanced telepresence. Humankind will still want to send living representatives to the Red Planet – to prove that we can, as much as anything else – but there is a likelihood that its inhospitable, alkaloid deserts will no more be colonized than Antarctica. It may forever be a scientific preserve.

Besides ... if we can't be trusted to take care of *one* planet, what makes anyone think we can be trusted with two?

LEFT OVER PARTS

SESSION 48 ON ISSUE 48

WAHF – **RON KASMAN**, who is nearing the completion of his graphic novel, *The Tower of the Comic Book Freaks*. Ron's stories about comics fandom make him the Garrison Keillor of the subject ... as opposed to Evan Dorkin's stories about the *Eltingville Club*, which are more in the Ted MacFarlane vein. **KENT POLLARD**, who advises I not advertise my criminal intentions in my fanzines ahead of time. **WALT WENTZ**, who discovered another handful of typos, too late to fix them, as usual. **RICHARD DENGROVE**. **KJARTAN ARNORSSON**. **JACQI MONAHAN**. **HOPE LIEBOWITZ**. **R-LAURRAINE TUTIHASI**, who is catches up with issue 42. **DAVID REDD**, who likened my article on the Claudian coin to "A History of the World in 100 Objects."

ADDIES:

Thought I would give addresses a little differently, this time.

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PAUL SKELTON

Owing to me being a complete dickhead, I'm going to be somewhat slower in responding to this issue (as I have also just said in a note to the latest *Banana Wings*). This is because it's time to do the voting thing and I haven't made any notes. So I am in the process or re-reading, where necessary, all the 2015 fanzines I received. Ah, the things we do for love...

Thing is...being only involved via the medium of LoCs, I feel I really should not skimp on that category in particular. So obviously I am rereading all the LoCs too. Then I am giving each one a points score from 1 to 4, covering the range from 1 (they at least took the trouble) via OK, Good and Very Good. Excellence gets between 6 & 10 points. When done I'll add up all the points and pick out the highest 5 (and if there are any close calls I'll bring the highest average into play to decide)

And yes, it is a lot of trouble and possible overkill, but at least I'm sure I'm voting on what I've seen for 2015 and not being influenced by historical impressions. So far I've dealt with everything except *Vibrator* (4 issues to go) & *Broken Toys* (35 thru 45). I am finding some surprises. Anyway, even more urgent is carving up Bestie's legs of lamb and getting them into the freezer (mainly) or into Bestie (current meal).

That expression is a mistranslation of the name of a 16th. century barber who, while trimming young master Billy Shakespeare's hair, accidentally removed a sliver of the lad's right ear, and was roundly sorted out by the future Bard, later to be immortalized as a clumsy "surgeon" (as barbers often were in those days) in "Richard IV, Part II."

"Ods bodkins ... one might as well send young Pimpernel to the surgeon for his tonsure, and be verily done with it! That *Richard Capa* is a botch with the scissors as with everything else."

Indeed that *is* devotion to an award that may well be meaningless. Most fans apparently seem to be voting their appraisal by *not* voting.

REBECCA JANSEN

I enjoyed the commentary about the character of Claudius the most. I'm still annoyed at that big hit *Gladiator* movie for getting the characters of two emperors completely wrong, according to any historical accounts I ever read. Oh well, it looked great I suppose.

Totally made up those emperors, who might as well have been named Pudenus Maximus and Villainus for all that they resembled the actual Marcus Aurelius (who could not even have conceived the idea of restoring the Republic) and Commodus (who was neither effeminate nor incestuous nor even particularly degenerate!) The movie didn't seem to rely on what we know of Roman decorator sense, either, preferring the Hollywood tradition. And those outdoor shots of the Forum and Colosseum? Accurate as far as they went, but magnified two or three times their actual size, to look more impressive!

I've had the unhappy experience more than once lately of making some light comment about one bizarrely successful populist politician or other, and gotten back very serious (entirely humourless) personally affronted responses from people I never imagined could be won over by such characters. I was thinking "what in the fuck???" I wonder if people in 1931-33 Weimar Berlin had this same experience? Yes, I have even known a "Rob Ford is really a good guy who cares about working people" acquaintance. It astonishes me, and not in the mild "where do all these balloon and banner waving straw boater types come from that you always see on TV at election night?" way. Not a happy parade to join at all. I even caught Ford's bro and himself on the now gone Sun News network (sic) show in case it was somehow connected to a Bible prophesy I'd need to start taking seriously and I'd better get ready. Yikes!

On the positive side, I guess, a Bernie Sanders believer did at least say "but I know he won't really be able to do a damn thing." I expect if Trump were elected, or that future televangelist Cruz, that they'd simply have a major spaz and petulantly quit after not being able to do things like force libel laws or public school prayer on "day one."

I suspect that a GOP Congress would be almost as uncooperative with a President Trump as a President Obama. Those Republican cheapskates won't want to pay for fanciful walls around Mexico or a ring of armed casinos in the Middle East. A Democratic Congress would be even more obstreperous. As for Cruz, I don't think he intends to ask Congress and won't care about public protest – he'll just declare the United States to be a Republic of God and begin writing his own constitution for it.

Ayn Rand is good for a few yuks to balance things out, though. If you aren't laughing maybe you're crying? I think that Philip K. Dick android some fans made could run and win next. More interactive than Stephen Harper ever was, and that thing just looks great (see Youtube).

Did you ever hear about Ayn Rand's sequel to *Atlas Shrugged*? After all the bankers, businessmen and engineers got their way, the creative people tried to withdraw their services from mankind too. A year went by, then two, but nobody noticed. Eventually all the poets, painters, dancers, actors, playwrights, novelists, sculptors, comic book artists, comedians, directors, etc. starved to death. The world went on without creative people just as it always had, and meanwhile they rotted in the invisible hole they created for themselves somewhere hidden in the jungles of Brazil. It was going to be called *Apollo Sulked*, but then Rand realized she didn't give a crap about such people either...

Um, okay, anyway, those are my thoughts back to you. Get well soon etc. I keep trying (take that Yoda)

FRED PATTEN

Thanks a lot for *Broken Toys* #48. Lotsa good reading; I'll miss it after #50 is out.

There are two articles in #48 that brought a flood of memories, one fannish and one not.

The fannish one was touched off by your bookshelves, and it goes back to 1982 or 1983. Back about 1980, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, where I was very active at the time, decided to bid for the 1984 Worldcon as L.A.con II, with a "rat" theme centered around George Orwell's novel, *1984*.

We did most of our planning together at the LASFS clubhouse on Burbank Boulevard in North Hollywood, but occasionally we split into smaller groups. On this occasion, I needed to plan something together with Alan Frisbie. We were both regular attendees at the LASFS' Thursday evening meetings, but we weren't close friends. "Friz" invited me to his apartment to discuss whatever-it-was together. I had never visited his apartment before.

His living room had a wall of floor-to-ceiling makeshift bookshelves like yours, crammed with books. Friz invited me to sit down in an armchair by the shelves, and we began to chat. Suddenly I heard the smallest sneeze I've ever heard, right by my left ear. I turned, and I was eyeball to eyeball with a large black rat.

Friz said casually, "Oh, that's my pet rat. I let her explore up and down my bookshelves when I'm home. She's probably intrigued by your hair cream or your earwax. If you hold out your arm, she'll crawl up it to your shoulder." So I did, and the rat did, to sniff my head thoroughly.

Friz proposed making her, Reynolds Rat, the official L.A. Con II mascot. I don't think that many of us thought too much of the idea, but we figured, "The 1984 Worldcon is almost two years in the future. The life span of a rat is about two years, and she's already almost a year old. Sure; let's do it to make Friz happy, since she'll *die* first ... and we won't really have to deal with her at the con." But she *didn't* die first, and we had to provide a home for her at L.A. Con II. She died *there*, due probably from a combination of extreme old age for a rat ... and nervousness at being petted by so many strangers.

I believe I was at that L.A. Con. I was visiting Schirm that fall, and wasn't actually too keen on attending the Worldcon, as I remember, though I don't remember *why* ... but Schirm wanted to. I still have one of those little black plastic rat pins that were given out as promotions during the bid.

The nonfannish memory is set off by your report of the Toronto coin show and the Claudian silver.

First, let me say that I've always been interested in old coins and banknotes, and I still, eleven years after my stroke, look at the online numismatics sites. One of them just this month posted the pictures of a Michigan \$3 bill and a New Jersey \$10 bill, from the 19th-century period when both the federal government and the individual states could issue paper money. (The federal government has always held a monopoly on coins.) California never did, but several states did until the federal government assumed a monopoly on issuing all money. They were usually not recognized outside their own states, and sometimes not within them. That's why 19th-century merchandise often had two prices, one in coin or "hard money" and a higher one in paper.

The California Gold Rush from 1849 to the next ten years poured a tremendous amount of gold into the American economy. There was so much gold that in 1854, the U.S. Treasury established a mint in San Francisco primarily to buy the miners' raw gold and mint it into \$2.50, \$5, \$10, and \$20 gold coins. A serious problem was that, in the 1850s, California was cut off from the rest of the U.S. A transcontinental railroad had not been built yet, and there was no convenient way to transport that much in gold coins overland. California alone could not absorb that much money without touching off a massive inflation. So the Treasury told the San Francisco mint to just stockpile the gold. This worked for a couple of years, but by 1857 the gold coins were piling up at the mint. The Treasury finally decided to have all the gold coins shipped to Washington, D.C. by boat. The coins were packed up and sent under guard by ship down the West Coast to Nicaragua, transported overland to Nicaragua's East Coast port of Colón, and loaded onto a new ship, the *S.S. Central America*, that sailed for Washington, D.C.

The shipment got as far as somewhere off North Carolina when it sank in a massive hurricane on September 9-11, 1857. Being loaded with 30,000 pounds of gold coins didn't help any.

Treasure hunters searched for the sunken *S.S. Central America* for over a century. It was found in 1988. There were over ten years of lawsuits over who owned the gold. Most of the gold was finally awarded to the salvage company.

By now gold coins were no longer legal tender in America, so the salvage company decided to cash in on them through the numismatic market. The next major coin convention to come along was the Long Beach, CA Expo. This is when I came into it. I had been a regular attendee of the Long Beach Expo for many years.

"The world's first public exhibit of previously-unseen California Gold Rush treasures from the famous S.S. Central America shipwreck will be displayed at the Long Beach Coin & Collectibles Expo ... February 10 - 13, 2000. The \$10 million exhibit of recovered coins and ingots will be housed in a specially-built, 30-foot long replica of the ship's hull.

"The display will include the world's largest gold bar, a brick weighing nearly 80 pounds (933 ounces), produced in 1857 by historic assayers Kellogg & Humbert of San Francisco. It was among the tons of gold cargo on board when the Central America sank in a hurricane in September 1857 on a journey from Panama to New York City."

There were armed guards all around the Long Beach Convention Center that year. In addition to the replica of the sunken ship with open chests full of real gold coins spilling out (most of the coin dealers complained loudly about scratching of the coins), there were several other colorful dioramas. One featured an enlargement of a September 1857 front-page from the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* with a featured detailed story about the sinking.

It was quickly obvious that whoever prepared the diorama hadn't bothered to read any of the rest of that page. This was an 1857 Southern newspaper. It had a front-page editorial about how slavery was the greatest blessing of American society. I forget whether the n-word was used, but the editorial emphasized how the simple Darkies were happy to leave White Men to do their thinking for them.

That editorial became the talk of the Expo on its first day. People crowded around the diorama to read it for themselves. The whole diorama was taken down by the second day due to outraged complaints.

I don't have any comments on the rest of *Broken Toys #48*, but as I said, I will miss it after #50.

History is good ... so that people will take pride in their countries ... but not too much history, or people might think.

EDD VICK

Many thanks for #48. I really should loc at least one issue before you move on, yes?

They help me pass the lonely days...

Caesars and FAAns and cars, oh my! Still and all, it's the essay about your bookshelves that prompts me to reply. I am reminded of the news article I read when still in college about the book store owner who died buried in stacks of fallen *National Geographic* magazines. I'm happy to hear your bookshelf travails had a happier ending.

Being in an earthquake-prone state, my wife and friends were eager to make certain my shelves were secured, as indeed they are. That didn't stop a water pipe I was unaware of in the ceiling of my library rupturing during a hard freeze and spewing water all over my fiction & poetry & some of the art sections. My wife returned home from an errand to find water emerging vigorously from under two of the three roll-up doors of the three-car garage housing my books. She turned off the water, and when I got home we spread out the books on the driveway where they froze (instead of binding one to another and become one huge solid mass of pulp). Since I've been a bookseller for decades, I created an Excel spreadsheet with the replacement value of every book there and to my surprise the insurance company paid the full value without complaint after verifying my bonafides.

Having a three-car garage in which to store my collection is the only way I can get away from double and treble-stacking the books. It is certainly nice to be able to see every title. When we last moved, we told our real estate agent that we were looking for "a house with attached warehouse" because the books were multiply stacked at our old place. Sadly, the agent kept showing us bungalows and the like; nice, but completely inadequate. It turned out we found our place instead at the suggestion of a friend who is wont to drive up every odd street he can find "just to see where it goes." Dave mentioned this house in West Seattle, in a neighborhood of nine houses that is otherwise in the middle of a greenbelt that is in turn in the middle of an industrial district -- far from any area normally considered residential. We looked at the house, loved it, loved the garage, and bought it. And then the next week Dave called to say he regretted telling us about it, because "I've got three cars, you know."

By the way, after just celebrating our twentieth anniversary, Amy and I still haven't merged our book collections, despite much crossover. I doubt we ever shall. My books will fill their odd collection of shelving bought from stories-going-out-of-business, estate sales, and – oddly – the old library at our daughter's middle school when they upgraded their library from the former walk-in-closet-sized area. Amy's books will take up her basement office, on specially-constructed rolling library shelves that I definitely faunch after. But then, for that kind of money I could certainly buy a whole lot more books.

Isn't that always the problem with collections? I have a similar one with collecting ancient coins. Sure, I should have a complete library of the standard references for Greek, Roman, Celtic, Medieval, Islamic, Oriental and other coins, but works as specialized and scholarly as that commonly cost a couple of hundred dollars each! Think of how many coins I could buy instead. So I get along with a small assortment of less specialized books, and seek advice when I'm unable to find what I want to know.

BOB JENNINGS

I noticed the .pdf version of *Broken Toys* #48 in my email first thing this morning, which was a bit of a surprise for me. I did a quick check and it seems the last time you emailed me a copy of your zine was back with issue #44. I check the efanzone site very infrequently, so the fact that you haven't sent me the intervening issues never registered to me at all. Most fanzines follow a highly irregular schedule, if their editors bother to declare any kind of schedule at all, so the idea that you might be cranking numbers out never crossed my mind, what with all the other things going on in my life.

A name might get skipped once by inattention, but I don't know how it would happen three times in a row. Could I be mistaking you for someone else, higher on my list, and thinking that's just you popping up a second time? People often have multiple addies, under different names. I do have a "Jenner" on my mailing list, so some sort of mix-up like that is not impossible. But I distrust easy explanations. More than likely it's gremlins.

I notice the discussion of the FAAn Awards. Your comment that very few ballots had been received by this year's administrator, Claire Brialey, does not strike me as being remarkable, considering that lots of people view Corflu and the FAAn awards themselves as a highly incestuous sub-set of SF fandom in general. For what it's worth, (nothing, really), I don't think the awards really reflect anything about the general popularity or relevance of the fanzines still being produced in this hobby. Increasingly, it seems that pretty much the same circle of fan friends win most of the awards all the time. What's the point, if the awards don't really reflect what is going on in the wide world of fanzines? People are not voting because they don't think their voice is important, or would be listened to anyway.

One thought I've had is that people are not seeing the news about the FAAns or the ballot. How many fanzines run the ballot? If I hadn't seen an announcement that the nominations were open on *F770's* Webpage, I wouldn't have seen it at all. The FAAns must be well-nigh invisible to all but the most intensive readers of fanzines.

To quote you directly, "To make the process as simple as possible, there are no separate steps for nominating and casting a final vote. Your nominations are counted according to an incredibly difficult and arcane scheme by the administrator. The magic numbers she arrives at *are* the final results, so don't trouble yourself about how it is done."

Right. I think that may also speak volumes as to why many people don't bother to participate.

Except that the streamlined process was adopted because of the time and effort to run a two-step system ... *that was felt to discourage participation.*

My sympathies on your shelving problems. I also use metal shelving units. The key to stability is to screw the shelves in as tight as possible before you start loading the things. But even with lots of book

weight on them, they sometimes have a tendency to lean to one side if the top shelves are heavier than the bottom. This could be solved by screwing the units firmly into the wall, but that's something I never got around to doing, probably because I'm lazy and also because I'm an absolute klutz when it comes to working with my hands. Replacing burned-out light bulbs is about the extent of my home repair expertise.

When I lived in a basement in the north end, Willowdale, I had the problem of a lateral shift due to a slanting floor. I solved it by nailing a wood two-by-four to a rafter. The shelves leaned against the two-by-four and couldn't move any farther. Of course, you don't have handy rafters unless you live in a basement ... not on the top floor of a 21-story apartment building.

Fortunately for additional book storage, some friends built a set of wooden shelves that they screwed firmly into a wall. Then I bit the bullet and bought two long industrial steel warehouse shelving units. Yes, they cost real money, but they will not bend, lean, break, or buckle, and they do not have to be screwed into any wall. I initially regretted the expense, but since then I wish I had bought a couple more of them, especially since one of the old, original units in my extra library room is leaning slightly, despite me rearranging books and migrating weight downward the minute I noticed it.

Shelving problems are situations that older fans have to deal with; a condition that younger trufans may never have to even face. E-books are increasing their market share every month. I think very soon e-books and electronic gadgets to store them will completely dominate the field(s), with print books demoted to the same status that new vinyl LPs have in the music world these days. Then, of course, as the older collectors die off, their relatives, who don't give a damn about anything in their collections, will give the stuff away to friends or donate chunks to some obliging library book sale, and toss the rest of the stuff into dumpsters.

They might also delete files, write over hard drives, re-purpose USB devices, etc. Surprisingly, the drop of sales of paper books has leveled out and even rebounded somewhat. Same with vinyl records. This was an effect I expected, but was pleased to see it nevertheless. Not being burdened with possessions is all well and good, but there is pleasure to be had from appreciating something well made, and when you've spent good money, you like to have something to show for it – not merely a file that could become corrupted or accidentally deleted five minutes from now ... and may not be available from the source due to some arbitrary corporate decision. “Sorry, customer, we know you wanted that album by *They Might Be Giants* or that DVD collection of *Bottom*, but due to disappointing sales of under 500,000 units we've discontinued that item for the foreseeable future. We suggest you re-attune your taste to match the general public more.”

On the completely unrelated subject of vegetables; some fresh, garden picked veggies are perfect. Nothing can beat the taste of fresh picked sweet corn, or fresh picked broccoli, for example. Tradition says you start the water boiling in the pot, and when it's at a rolling boil, then you pick the corn. If you trip and fall on the way back in, you've lost too much time, and the flavor is ruined. Other veggies lose flavor the longer the time has passed between being picked and being cooked. This is one of the biggest advantages frozen or canned vegetables have; they were picked and processed very rapidly, so little or none of their flavor has been lost. On the other hand, green beans or Brussels sprouts that have sitting in the produce aisle of the grocery store for a couple of days, plus another few days, or more, in transit and packing, sure don't taste as good to me as the frozen/canned varieties.

I have never had much in the way of freshly picked vegetables, other than tomatoes and cucumbers. Fresh tomatoes I've had tended to be too ripe sometimes, like biting into a water balloon. Cukes I'm just not fussy about. As far as sprouts go, I like fresh from the supermarket all right, but frozen ones tasted somewhat bitter to me. Corn always seemed much the same whether canned, frozen or on the cob. It's *good* to be predictable.

I think David Williams' assessment of the decline and fall of Classical Fandom is correct. I also think your comment that convention fandom may not be the wave of the future is also correct. Large, media-oriented gatherings where the promoters make lots of money and primarily feature TV/movie personalities as well as dealers primarily selling expensive media-related merchandise are going to be around a long time, but their client base is increasingly people who have no interest in any phase of SF fandom at all. The smaller conventions, whether literary-oriented or relaxacon-style events, will slowly wither away because of the sheer cost and the amount of work involved.

I am not much of a convention person, but I believe a comparison survey check would show that even now the number of conventions is in slow decline. Most people seem to opt for the big mega-event rather than the small city gathering for whatever reason, and that trend will certainly continue as the costs of hotels, guests, programming and everything else related to putting on a con climbs even higher.

Also, the generation that grew up wanting to run cons is almost as old as the fanzine generation. They'll be gone not long after we're gone.

I enjoyed your essay on Roman coins and long-dead emperors. The reputations of ancient rulers are largely dependent on the good will of their successors, and whoever took over the governments in the following decades. Nero, for example, although acknowledged as a person who liked to live very well, is primarily reviled because of his fervent persecution of the Christian religion. Since Christianity survived to become the state religion with millions of followers, they naturally had nothing good to say about the ruler who tried so hard to stamp them out. Oh, and also he probably murdered his mother, and most of his friends and closest advisors, probably including Seneca The Younger, and he was a notoriously vain egomaniac, but it is his persecution of the Christian religion that primarily determined his memory in history.

Up until fairly recently, you're right that it was the Christian narrative that largely determined how Nero would appear. But not entirely. Claudius also passed an edict banning Christians from Rome as agitators, but it has largely been overlooked in the shadow of Nero's much greater persecution, later. Other emperors also persecuted Christians, but that detail of their reigns has mostly been forgotten. Nero was so unpopular in his own time, though, that after his death the Senate refused to deify him. Historians tore into him almost immediately. Still, a Christian spin was added to the Imperial history after Constantine, and continued right up until the 20th century. Classic Hollywood epics about Rome are really embarrassing today because they give the impression you would have tripped over Christians everywhere in the first century, and that typical Romans were wandering the streets, lost in hot debate over this troublesome Jesus person. Not so! To most Romans, Christians were only an odd flavour of Jew ... if they'd heard of Christians at all.

However, serious historians had been reappraising the Christian viewpoint since as early as Gibbon, in the 18th century. In the popular culture, the Christian view of Rome went out of fashion along with *Ben Hur* and *Sparticus* on the big screen. The readers of the history novels were increasingly more interested in the actual Rome, not just in a colouring setting for Christian myth-making. I'm happy to say that the

modern novel set in the glory days of Imperial Rome has put the issue into its proper perspective ... which is obscurity.

I have to accept your expertise that Claudius was extremely frugal in his coin making, and that this was one of the main reasons there are so few silver coins bearing his image left. Considering the fact that coins get melted down regularly whenever the current government devalues the currency or economic crisis looms, it is remarkable that so many old coins of any kind, let alone ancient coins, managed to survive at all. I'm glad you were able to fill in a piece of history with your coin collection. Despite its expense, clearly you have already gotten full value back in the joy it has brought you.

At that point in my article I admit that I had to rely on a certain amount of guesswork. But the financial crisis early in Nero's time was very real, and resulted in the worst devaluation of the denarius until the time of Commodus, more than 120 years later.

An enjoyable issue. Please try to remember to email me a copy of the next one.

One expects the Post Office to lose copies, but I'm at a loss to explain how e-mail does.

REESE DORYCOTT

Nice issue; interesting read.

My wife Anna says that I should tell you that *you* can tell people where those DVDs of *Men Into Space* came from ... so okay, you can. It was me.

I recently, as in yesterday, read a book titled *Men Into Space*. Written by Murray Leinster, a Hugo Award Winner and based upon a television show from the late 1950s. I thought that it would be entertaining and could be passed on to you as I did those DVDs some time ago. It was crap, I'll send it later but honestly, it is crap even for the era.

What is my right to say something like that about a Hugo Award Winners 1960 book, seeing as I myself have no writing awards? Okay, let's just examine that.

A very long time ago, only about twenty feet from where I sit now (this room used to be my parent's bedroom) when I was thirteen or fourteen I came to the decision that I wanted to write Science Fiction. But did I want to write at the level of *Lord of Light* or *Dune*? No I decided, I wanted to write at the level of *Lucky Starr*, *Witch World* and *Tunnel in The Sky*. Did I want to be some famous author whose books became plays, movies or won great awards? Nope absolutely not, that is honestly scary.

So the absolute first thing I did was consciously plagiarize a book titled *Five Boys in a Cave*. Yep, I did it knowingly and with purpose, the purpose being did I have the drive to write a 45,000 word book, not just the short stories I had been scribbling out the previous few months. This project was handwritten on TOPS Spiral Steno 6 x 9 Inches, Gregg Rule notebooks with a true fountain pen in cursive longhand. I named the project *Seven Boys in a Cave*, mainly because I sort of followed the original book's plot ... but as a caver myself, I was well aware of what one would run into in those cold dark wet places. When completed, the entire mass went into the garbage, all eleven notebooks.

Odd I remember that so clearly seeing those notebooks, as after two major head injuries my memory is highly fragmentary. Now, some fifty-two years later, I still live in the same decaying home that is seriously in need of carpentry, plumbing, painting and, most importantly, foundation work ... so what do I do with myself? I still write, and dream, of taking a D-12 bulldozer to this rotted wreck of a house. Why not repair it, you ask? Asbestos siding, floor tiles and lead paint comes to mind. Also three gang houses on my street, and though my wife and I have the knowledge and skills, our bodies no longer have the ability ... and a serious lack of money. Putting two children through a University placed all four of us in serious financial strain, I think that the kids will be paid out of debt around 2036 or so.

Me? I'm almost in almost as bad of a shape as you are, I just haven't yet ended up in a wheelchair, mainly because the drugs I have to take keep the pain at a bearable level.

Most of what I wrote before 1983 no longer exists: my father threw all my carefully hand-written stories away, along with almost everything else I left behind when I was overseas. After that, two marriages, a theft while stationed in the Philippines, several moves and water damage. Things just tend to *vanish* over time, you understand?

So what have I written since then? Actually quite a lot.

I have some twenty novels under construction. How many will be completed? I don't know. After one heart attack already, I can't see starting anything new, so maybe half of them, or a little under. Now as to my most popular book to-date, according to sales? It Isn't *Possible*, a book that took about five times as long to write as it does to read, and had no outline, no initial plot ... and no real *anything*. As with one of my other novels, *Nightmares*, I simply started writing, and my characters told me where the story was going as I wrote. Obviously, the less expensive Kindle version is selling better than the hardbound. Seventy copies sold this January, fifty-six in February, fifty-four in March. A total of 297 copies since July of 2015. With a royalty of thirty-two cents each, I am in no way going to get rich or win awards from such numbers ... and I refuse to enter contests. Still, that is one hundred and eighty readers in three months and a bit over fifty-seven dollars in royalties. Last year it was only around 117 sold. Looks like this year I will have to worry about the IRS!

No, I'm never going to get rich, although this month's royalty payment has paid my April Loot Crate™ bill. HollyWeird is not going to be banging on my door wanting to buy the film rights for one of my books to produce for next week's Movie of the Week, television series or massive Summer blockbuster ... still, in my mind I have reached my goal.

In truth, I am only writing for my own amusement.

And that is the experience that allows me to say professionally that Murray Leinster's *Men Into Space* is crap.

Although this was originally quite a bit longer, I thought it said enough of interest about the sorry lot of the aspiring elderly writer to run in abridged form. Thus I have edited the text with a much heavier hand than is usual in my letter column. Many of the changes I've made were for the sake of brevity – details of your past life, computing software or Websites, and other books lay on the cutting room floor. I hope you don't mind *too* much!

You really don't need to send the Leinster book to me – I believe it's crap! Honestly! I don't need to read it to know!

Leinster's own stories often aren't bad, but those were his own ideas. Converting television scripts into fictional form must have been just a job, to be done to put bread and butter on the table, and I wouldn't expect much from them. The *Star Trek* episodes in the very first collection were hardly James Blish's best work, either.

DAVE HAREN

In the body of the email I sent *Broken Toys* with, I wrote this impromptu text: *I honestly never intended to make a March deadline, but around the middle of the month I realized that I hadn't written anything for publication in over two weeks ... So I thought I had better get started. One thing led to another, until I realized that it would take an actual effort to delay the issue past the end of the month! Once that realization sunk in, I decided to go for it ... and at that point, last-minute delays occurred. Naturally... But by then I was determined, so there are bits of minor text in this issue that haven't been proofread, and might bear rather more typos or misplaced punctuation than the reader is accustomed to.*

But if there's one thing I've learned in 48 issues of Broken Toys, it's that most of the readers commit as many typos and make as many mistakes with their punctuation as I do ... including some who write for a living.

I got this response:

This is a scurrilous characterization of your wonderful correspondants when thee well knows that the scribblers arte was ne'er so constrained before the lame started insisting there was onlie one truu way to contrive speechery on ye papyrus.

That literally made my eyes water. Either that or I've been reading on-screen too long today.

Not to worry though once the AI driven iconography of screen phoneyrie has finished the dumbing-down process mastered by schooling of the youth, anything literate folk have written will only be readable by pale scholars burrowing in the piles of aging pulpwood. The average high-schooler couldn't read *The Last of the Mohicans* in the original edition to save his mother from incarceration. Hard to say why it is the most popular work written for the most literate folk on earth has become so obscure, while the spoken language has remained unchanged, only the educational level of the people has changed over the years. That they make a lot more malleable consumers of the detritus that passes for goods these days and that the engines of schooling are totally entangled with that basic economy hardly explains why most have accepted their own fate so docilely in an age when even barely literate folk can self-educate beyond the dreams of past utopians.

“Phoneyrie?” I'll bite. What's it mean?

In the interim, treasure troves such as the odd collector builds may be the seed from which a later renaissance is built after the cities are drowned beneath the effects of climate change. The ensuing

hodge-podge will probably be as good a caricature as our so-called western civilization was a rebuild of Roman efforts at empire.

Then again I'm sure the elder statesmen and leaders vying for control of the arsenal of USA all have a major unveiled plan to save us from past folly.

“During the early 21st. century, the mass of Americans worshiped small, brightly coloured ponies who taught that the gods loved those who openly carried their sacred firearms and paid the lowest taxes, but drove the largest SUV or pick-up truck.”

Now that's an act of faith to turn a Calvinist green with envy.

I find it amazing that Mani, who was contemporary of Jesus, was so well and truly documented ... tax records, laundry lists, name of his pet dog, etc. ... but [about Jesus] nothing was available until Suetonius, and that minor reference was so much of an obscurity it might not even be about Jesus. Couple that with the leading Dead Sea Scrolls scholar pronouncing that Jesus was a mushroom being grown in caves around Qumran, and you get a sense that the whole scam was a way for Saul of Tarsus to revive Serapis while stealing the collections for the poor of the Jewish Christians.

You undoubtedly mean the obscure agitator, Chrestus, a Jew or Christian who was exiled from Rome by Claudius along with his troublemaking followers. Some historians believe this was a misspelling of “Christus,” but overlook the point that it *doesn't matter a fig* because Seutonius describes Claudius as expelling “the Jews” in the year 49, years after the events in the New Testament, so Jesus would hardly be walking around in the streets of Rome. Whoever “Crestus” or “Christus” was, he wasn't Jesus. So what does the expulsion of this stranger prove about *anything*?

There *is* an earlier mention of Jesus, though, and that's from Josephus, the Jewish Roman historian. The problem is that the text appears to be monkeyed with, and written in a way uncharacteristic of the author – there is good reason to suspect a much later interpolation to provide false “evidence.” Josephus never claimed to have met Jesus or any of his disciples anyway, so would his remarks, if genuine, prove the existence of Jesus, or just that Josephus had heard the story?

The real legendary quality of the 1957 Chevrolet was the Zora Arkus Duntov 283 V8 engines in the early ones. While most contemporary engines would encounter valve float (valves staying open through the power cycle), this limited them to between 3000 and 4500 RPM caused by inertia in the valve train.

Duntov 283s would turn up to 15,000 RPM before the oil system failed to lube them enough. Once this was noticed by the government, legislation and a redesign made sure these were no longer in the average citizen's car. Same thing happened to the 4-rotor Wankel engine Chevrolet. I have a Mazda whose limitation was that the exhaust system melts above 10,000 RPM and is in the same HP-to-weight class as Mopars with 426 Hemis, while having less than 200 CC displacement. A 4-rotor Wankel would have been an awesome car in the right hands, but would have killed the average idiot in less than a week.

It all falls into the class of toys that will break you even if you are careful. But they are highly enjoyable for those with the right stuff (attitude). Being slammed by an elephant rifle is something to tell tall tales about, same with big caliber handguns (.454 Casuls, .45 Rem Mags) and fast cars or muscle cars.

Nothing sexist about it, few can match Hannah, who flew the first of the helicopters inside a building, and was a test pilot on rocket and pulsejet aircraft (V1 buzzbomb with a cockpit). You either *are* that kind of maniac, or you are not, and no amount of wishful thinking will get you into the club. You can *die* trying.

Lamenting that there are no monster hordes of fans clamoring to come into zine fandom is entirely wrong. The world has to be run by a small group of powerful conspirators -- yourself and your friends of course -- so shoulder the burden cheerfully.

Mum's the word ... once I get my share of the loot.

JOHN NIELSEN-HALL

Your travails with the shelving remind me of the terrible dark days when my first wife and I moved into a flat on the 21st floor of a tower in east London. We needed a big shelving unit and the living room was a reasonable size, so we decided that the internal, and as we thought, partition wall, would be the best one for the job. Well, a partition wall it may have been, but it was solid concrete with a thin veneer of plaster on it, just like all the rest. I have never been great at DIY, but as we were without the resources to call for professional help, I had to just try and do my best. After struggling with the timber and the metal supports and fixings and I don't know what all in the tiny lift, I threw it all down in the middle of the room and set to work. I had bought a big two handed drill with hammer function, but it made next to no impression on the concrete. Each hole took ages to drill with frequent stops to let the drill cool down, and was way too wide for the fixings when it was done. So each screw had to go into the wall with stuff to pack the hole out, which had to be left to set... Oh, it took days and days, and at the finish I had what looked the library from *The Crooked House*. And don't even mention the kitchen. That reduced me to tears. That was back in the 70's. Hopefully things have moved on a bit and there are much easier ways of doing these things these days. Or are there?

In the clear light of hindsight, I think you would have done better to have bought free-standing bookshelves. Unfortunately, the best solution was probably also the most expensive. Wood book shelves can cost hundreds of dollars each, and a twelve foot wall could accommodate three of them.

Taking a look at your picture, though, I have to say: Too Much Stuff. Who is going to have to deal with all that when you are gone? I live in Zen-like minimalism compared to that. Well, compared not only to that, but to most of my friends. The Charnocks live in a big-ish house crammed from floor to ceiling with Stuph and Guitars. Claire and Mark's place is a south London semi with a through room on the ground floor lined almost completely on one side with books and that, I am informed, is nothing to what is on the upper story to which I have never ascended. After Julia, my first wife, died, I had about forty large cases of books and fanzines to shift when I finally moved out of the old house in Oxford. The fanzines went to Rob Hansen (another house with books rising in serried ranks from floor to ceiling), the books went initially into a new flat on professionally built shelves, but as things turned out, they all had to be crated up again when I moved to another house elsewhere in Oxford, where I just gave up in despair and had them all shoved in the attic as they were. Finally, I made a judicious selection of volumes from which I could simply not bear to be parted, and the rest went to a second-hand bookshop that would come round and collect. (A Buddhist friend of mine insisted that I not do it, and that he would go through them, take what he wanted, and then take the rest to the bookshop. He gave up after a day or so, kept only about twenty paperbacks for himself and called the bookshop.) These

days I buy e-books to read on my tablet, more or less exclusively. It must be a year or more since I last bought an actual book.

My sister is constantly on at me to produce a list of what should be kept, or else she'll throw a match into my apartment after I die, and just torch it all. But the problem with slimming the apartment down is that it's not junk, and I should find responsible homes for it all ... not just cart the books, fanzines, unbuild model kits, comics, records, excess clothing and so on out to the curb. I have been doing what I can to reduce the amount of property I have, but now I've got banker's boxes full of stuff to go *somewhere* that are just sitting on the floor, waiting for me to have a bright idea! Tons of stuff have already left the apartment ... yet it makes almost no visible difference.

The simple life appeals to me ... sometimes. But as an artist, I'm accustomed to be surrounded by things to use as models, reference books, the tools of the trade, materials, and the archives of my work. Moreover, as a consumer of mass culture, it is natural to have thousands of books, movies and albums. Reading what the library happened to have rather than what I wanted was never satisfying. I'm also a collector of things, such as coins, bubble gum cards and diecast cars. How does one simplify all that and be oneself? I'm not a monk, satisfied with contemplation and a bowl of rice once a day.

Now I'm going to do the same with CDs. The custom-built CD cabinet I bought when we moved up here from the village twelve years ago is now overflowing, so I have bought a hard disk thingy and am in the process of ripping all of them to it. Maybe by the end of this year, perhaps some time next, I will be getting shut of all those CD's. I shall feel virtuous and lighter in the soul. Having to feed the hard disk single CD by single CD is a bit of a chore though, it must be said.

That tempts me, sometimes. Ripping your music to a hard drive is a practical solution to the space problem ... as long as you keep it safe from viruses and the drive doesn't crash, taking hundreds of albums you no longer have as CDs with it. Movies, on the other hand, require a lot more disk space. Unless you have terabytes of memory, you may not be able to save many.

In your remarks to David Redd about the spread of religions, you are basically right about the spread of religions due to large urban populations. At least, they were large by the standards of that time – nothing like modern populations, of course. But it is also the case that unlike any of the belief systems in India or China, or in Zoroastrianism or the Egyptian or Jewish religions, Christianity and Islam were actively, and often forcibly spread into territories far beyond what you might otherwise call their home range. That had not happened before. And both of them are still doing it.

There's been militant Buddhism, too. The two main sects in Tibet, the Red Hats and the Yellow Hats, warred with each other for centuries before one of them made allies with the Yuan dynasty in China and defeated the other. Buddhist monasteries in China and Japan were often the strongest fortified military bases in the country, and controlled legions of armed "monks." Whether they used any of their power to force their beliefs on anyone is a question I can't answer. However, political dominance is usually an effective tool for converting the masses who wish to join the dominant elite.

Only two more ishes to go. Keep on keeping on, Taral.

And then... the Rapture? Or the Singularity? Decisions, decisions...

ERIC MAYER

I tend to loc zines as I read through them so for me, having both my word processor and an ezine open on the screen is the height of convenience. However, it does mean that my locs tend to have no

particular design. I never "compose" a loc. First, then, I will remark that I enjoyed your thriller about how you barely escaped the killer shelves. That nosy old lady is lucky Traveling Matt didn't charge straight into her!

Fraggles are too nice to run over old lady's toes... I should have named my chair Wonder Warthog instead. He'd have no problem with running back and forth over her head until it popped ... let alone her toes.

Next, in the loccol Paul Skelton wrote of the FAAns: "The main gripe, lately, is that it is always practically "same old, same old"... that they are dominated by a "Corflu clique." I tend to agree, though I think this a simple result of human nature rather than some sinister conspiracy."

This is precisely the way I feel about the FAAns. I do not believe there is any conspiracy involved or any bad motives whatsoever. The problem – for those who see it as a problem – is that for the most part only one cohesive group of friends and acquaintances takes much interest in voting. They vote for their friends because they aren't interested in reading fanzines except those produced by their friends (a perfectly acceptable attitude, since this is a hobby) or they like their friends' writing best, which is not surprising. Given the personal nature of fanwriting, it stands to reason we are more interested in what our friends have to say than in what strangers have to say. Also, those with similar tastes tend to form groups.

However, where I beg to differ with a lot of the so-called "Corflu Clique" is their smug, arrogant insistence that their own writers and artists are, in fact, the best in fandom and not just their own favorites. And the way they dismiss everyone outside their group. That's, to be blunt, bullshit. To the extent that the FAAns gold-plate this B.S., I think they would be best eliminated. Or simply rename them "The Corflus," to at least be honest about their significance.

Consider that Dave Locke never won a FAAn, nor was ever in the running for one (how big of a WTF is that?). Can anyone seriously tell me Dave was an inferior writer to the Corfluvians who habitually won while he was never seriously considered? Taral has not and cannot win a FAAn as they are now constituted, neither can I (moot, given my current lack of involvement), nor Mike Glycer, Chuck Connor, Guy Lillian, Bill Breiding, etc. etc etc. We simply are not members of the group, and so don't qualify. Oh, theoretically it is possible, but as a practical matter anyone familiar with the FAAns knows otherwise. It's kind of like voting on the US Supreme Court, theoretically Scalia could have voted with the liberal justices on big political cases. Realistically, it is to laugh.

Ah, so I seem to have managed to compare the FAAn awards to a Supreme Court decision about the US Constitution. Oh well.....

You realize, now that you've named me, I'm going to win that confounded thing ... the "clique will vote just to show you're wrong." Actually, there's one other thing in my favour this year. I gave the FAAns a push in *Broken Toys*. Given how few votes there has been, and might still only be when nominations close, it would only take a handful of my readers to make a big difference in the final count. In fact, I'm not entirely happy about that. I don't want people saying in the lettercolumns of other fanzines that I stuffed the ballot box.

[Now that Corflu has come and gone, I see we have nothing to fear from the Goddess of Irony, after all.]

As an aside to Skel... *Desert Island Eric* was the highlight of my whole faanish career. I admit I've always been disappointed that fandom did not value my contributions. I think most of us would like to feel we are a valued part of a community in which we participate, and I was never given that impression. Except that once at least I was reminded that although fandom as a whole had no use for my writing, a few scattered fans did.

Perhaps part of my problem was that I was not a con goer. I rather agree with David Williams' observation that in the 1970s, when I got involved in "fanzine" fandom, congoing was replacing publishing as the prime fanac. When I discovered fandom, it looked to me like a hobby based on publishing zines. Had the emphasis been on going to cons, I wouldn't have taken any interest.

Not being known to other fans personally is a disadvantage, and it's hard to be known if you don't attend conventions. Some fans managed to be popular anyway – Richard E. Geis, Richard Bergeron and Harry Warner Jr. to mention a few – but Geis reached thousands with his immense mailing lists, Bergeron reached hundreds and Harry Warner appeared in just about every letter column for years. As well, he was a regular contributor to FAPA, at a time when it was an influential institution. (*Unlike now, I imagine.*) It works the other way, too. I strongly suspect that people who choose not to attend cons are not brilliant socialites any way.

Your friend Steven's doctor had a poor bedside manner, but no worse than the family doctor I went to as a kid. I grew up in the heyday of penicillin, when doctors gave you a shot practically before asking what the visit was for. Being a wimp, I developed a terrible fear of needles. I still recall vividly one visit regarding some minor ailment. When the doctor brought out the needle I was crying in horror before it was within a foot of my arm, anticipating the dreaded prick of doom.

"What are you crying about?" the doctor asked scornfully. "Last week I mistakenly used a rusty needle. It broke off in the boy's arm. Now he had something to cry about."

Actually, I have had something akin to Steven's experience in seeing new doctors. In my case they see how skinny I am and assume I am either anorexic or riddled with cancer. I always have to explain that I've always been this way. The last doctor whose acquaintance I made must have looked at me and shook his head about five times, remarking, "You're really very thin."

That's a fascinating look at coins. The US actually minted 3-cent coins! Wow. I never knew that. Today the penny's main purpose seems to be to allow advertisers to fudge the prices of inexpensive items. Presumably \$2.99 is supposed to draw attention to the \$2 and lead one's thoughts away from \$3. Query about the old Roman gold solidus. What is the modern value of the gold in a solidus?

The price of gold today is a bit under \$40 a gram, and a typical solidus weighed 4.5 gm, so a bit of simple arithmetical wizardry produces a value in modern commodities markets of around \$180. A gold aureus of the late Republic and early empire weighed weighed 8 gm, however, until it was reduced to 7.3 gm by Nero. In Caracalla's time, 211 – 217 AD, the aureus was reduced again to around 6.5 gm. So those earlier Roman gold pieces were worth \$320, \$290 and \$260 in today's gold prices. Thereafter, gold was struck in numerous sizes and weights until replaced by Dicoletian by the solidus in 301.

I've never appeared in a movie, except for Super-8 home movies! Only once, so far as I know, was I ever on television. I missed it, but friends told me I had made it into a quick shot of a road race on the local news (staggering, no doubt).

And so the count-down to fifty continues....

KEITH SOLTYS

I guess if I want to see myself in *Broken Toys* I'd better get a LOC in before you wrap it up.

In issue 47, re Paul Skelton's comments about missing characters when reading in Acrobat Reader, I'm guessing the problem is that the font you are using may not be embedded properly in the PDF. It may also depend on which versions of Acrobat the two of you are using. I've had no problems reading your zine using a reasonably current (Version 11) of Acrobat, and the Pro version that I use at work does a very good job of converting it to Word so I can get it onto my Kindle. Sending the PDF to Amazon for conversion should also work, but doesn't – I run into the same problem that Paul mentions, missing or garbled text – generally in your comments in the letters section. Without knowing which versions of Word and Acrobat you were using, it would be hard for me to diagnose and fix the problem. I've run into similar issues at work, and they can be fiendishly difficult to resolve. (We had one problem with Acrobat a couple of years ago to which the only solution was to downgrade from version 9 to 8).

The version of Acrobat I use to assemble *Broken Toys* with is 5.0!

Re: Lloyd Penney's comment about being laid off with no notice or reason, I think it may depend on whether you are regarded as an employee or contractor. But even in the case of being a long-term full-time employee, you can still be laid off just by the company citing the need to downsize or because the job requirements have changed, as long as the legal minimum requirements for severance have been met.

Re: Joseph Nicholas' comment about planetary probes, I echo his comments about Stephen Baxter's *Voyage*. It is likely true that if we'd had a 1980s (or even 1990s) mission to Mars, as postulated in Baxter's excellent novel, we'd very likely not have had the robotic probes that have now shown us much of the solar system. Personally, I prefer the future that we have now, and if it comes to that, I'd rather see us go back to the moon and try to establish a permanent base there than go directly to Mars.

It would likely be more practical, doable, and safer.

Re: Eric Mayer's comments on computer monitors, yes, white letters on black on early CRT displays would have been awful. My preference, when I could choose it, was yellow on black or dark blue. Now of course, with high-resolution LCD screens, we seem to have settled on black on white as the default, although it's not the easiest on the eyes at times. When I'm reading on my phone (surprisingly easy when you have a high-resolution 5" screen), I do use white on black. I think the difference is the higher resolution and contrast of modern displays.

Re: issue 48, I'm afraid I skipped over most of your comments about the FAAn awards. I haven't been involved in fannish publishing to any degree since publishing *Torus* back in the early '90s. Yours is the first fanzine I've read regularly since then. I guess I should start looking around at some others.

May I recommend *A Meara For Observers*, *Vibrator*, *Raucus Caucus*, *Askance*, *Challenger*, *Banana Wings*, *Trap Door*, *Journey Planet*, *Beam*, *Reluctant Famulus* and *Alexiad* for a start. There are others, but those seem to be the top titles at the moment. As I see them... Most can be downloaded from eFanznes.com.

Your comments later in the issue about the decline of fanzine fandom and convention fandom are pretty much dead on. I'm surprised that fannish conventions have lasted as long as they have. From what I've seen recently they are largely on life support, and fandom seems to be getting older without much of an influx of new blood. Fanzine fandom was suffering from the same problem when I was publishing *Torus* – not to mention a bad case of not-invented-here syndrome (turning up noses at *Torus* because it was desktop published and xeroxed) and now fans (the ones that are left) are doing the same thing with ezines.

Tell me about it! One of the few fanzine fans left in Toronto won't even acknowledge the existence of *Broken Toys* because it isn't printed on paper! It's not that I wouldn't like to run off and mail 200 copies, like in the old days, but I can't afford it monthly! And would it be a better fandom if I published only twice a year, just to put a fraction as much of it on paper for collectors?

I suspect that the real market for publication these days is online and not the traditional magazines. If you're looking at SF, there are only three digest magazines left (*Asimov's*, *Analog*, and *F&SF*) and all of them pale shadows of their former selves. Meanwhile online, there are markets like *Tor.com*, *Lightspeed*, and *ClarkesWorld*, which pay rates comparable to the digests and may have a larger readership. And there are other, smaller markets. Whether any of them are interested in the type of fiction you are interested in writing is hard to say, which means that looking at self-publishing might be an option. Of course, the issue there is getting recognition in the vast sea of other self-published authors.

I don't know enough about web magazines to sell to them – and it would be more effort to learn than I'm ready to make. Above all, you're likely right about not writing what the market will bear. Self-publishing may never sell more than a few dozen copies, but it may be the only way to go.

MILT STEVENS

In *Broken Toys* #48, you point out one of the problems with having bookshelves covering most walls in your home. Bookshelves can tip over. That is particularly true in earthquake country. My worst experience with that was in 1971. When the earthquake hit, I was in the process of getting up and was sitting on the edge of the bed. I realized the bookcase next to the bed was going to come over, so I tried to catch it. I then realized it was still going to fall over. However, I did have a choice as to whether it was going to fall over with me underneath it or not. I opted to let it go. That earthquake convinced me that bookshelves in the bedroom were a bad idea.

I had about two feet of books and magazines on the living room floor. I didn't even want to think about picking things up, so I went to work. I stopped to buy my daily newspaper at the coin-operated newsstand in front of my local supermarket. There was liquid oozing underneath the front door of the market. I could see there was an awful lot of broken glass inside the market. I guessed the liquid was the former liquor department. After looking at that mess, the thought of picking up books and magazines wasn't so bad.

Could it be that living in an earthquake zone is the bad idea? You could have chosen to live in nice, safe Nebraska.

The '57 Chevy was just about the coolest car in the world when I was in high school (class of 1960). It was the car all the cool guys wanted to drive. I think most males thought driving a car like that would improve their sex lives. It certainly would have helped in picking up girls. I never saw a female drive a '57 Chevy. I guess they may have also believed the mythos and didn't want to advertise that they wanted to pick-up girls.

I see '57 Chevies driving around to this very day. By now they are play cars for some older guy who now has the money to buy one. I sometimes wonder if it is the former cool guys who are trying to regain their youth and virility, or the non-cool guys dreaming about what might have been.

They were classic designs, with a superior engine and affordable. Even the early Corvette's were less cool at the time, because of the wimpier engines up until '57. But while the new Corvettes had performance to match the '57 Chevy, they were more expensive and only seated two. I myself would have preferred a '57 T-Bird, I think. Or a '54 Studebaker Starliner with a Cadillac engine dropped in the front end – the legendary “Studillac,” mentioned in an early James Bond novel. Talk about styling and power! And NOBODY expected to get their clocks cleaned by a *Studebaker!*

Personally, I never wanted to be a teenager. Being a teenager might have been OK if you were a cool guy, but I wasn't a cool guy. I was a smart guy. I figured being a smart guy would wear better in the long run. Of course, I was correct.

A lot of those cool guys drive a Kia today ... not so cool.

PAUL SKELTON 2

I note also that in your explanation of the voting procedure for the FAAn awards you could not resist the urge to mischief when you wrote...

“Your nominations are counted according to an incredibly difficult and arcane scheme by the administrator. The magic numbers she arrives at *are* the final results, so don't trouble yourself about how it is done.”

You know full well the “incredibly difficult and arcane scheme” is called ‘simple arithmetic’ and whilst anybody of sense knows you were simply being playful rather than malicious...

Skel went on to say that there are enough conspiracy-minded fans out there that even joking about it feeds their suspicions. Arithmetic? Necromancy? String Theory? There had to be something underhanded behind all the other voters seemingly not agreeing with my choices.

I'd like to thank you, but more particularly Jefferson Swycaffer I seemed to remember. The name seems a bit too similar to be two different fans, but surely too big a difference for a typo. Then again LoCers going through name changes in your letter column are not unknown - I note that R-Laurraine Tutihasi has sometimes been ‘Tutahasi’ and even ‘Tutuhasi’, changing names in the same issue on more than one occasion... and indeed, to my relief, a Google search returns the fact that Jefferson's

former surname is an alternative for the latter: *Broken Toys* – the fanzine for folk with an identity crisis).

How one's name should be spelled is known only to he or she who bears it, and the god that putatively lives in the sky.

"Thanks" are due for his recommendations of Jack McDevitt's *The Engines of God* and Vernor Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky*, back in *Broken Toys* 35. That nice Mr. Google also informed me that these were also each the (logical) first books in a series and I'm always keen to find new series, so I decided to give them a try. I downloaded those two and started on the Vinge, which I am thoroughly enjoying, despite a moment of initial panic when I saw it started on page '1 of 696'. On the strength of my reaction I have gone further and downloaded the other two books in his 'Zones of Thought' series. As there are already a further six books in McDevitt's 'The Academy' series, I'll be onto another winner if that works out as well.

So, whilst you may not want to read about SF in fanzines, some of us would appear to be agog for the merest passing mention.

So I see... ah, well... another button to push. Whenever I want the reader to pay particular attention, I need only throw in a spurious "Robert J. Sawyer" or irrelevant "Harlan Ellison," and I'll have the reader's rapt attention. It works for Mike Glyer, I notice, who only has to mention Ray Bradbury once or twice a day to bring his readers back to his site on a regular basis.

I must say that at first I thought you were a nasty rotten bastard for spoiling my illusions about good-old CLAVDIVS. Not only do I remember the BBC series with great affection, but I used to see it as the next best thing to actually having time travel. Best, though, not to operate on the basis of illusion or delusion. Also, I can now tell myself that Graves' *I CLAVDIVS* was actually an alternative history novel and hence this makes Graves a Science Fiction writer, as alternative history stories are firmly ensconced within the SF genre (as any fule know).

You could at least take him places. He might slobber or make an inappropriate jest about barbarians who paint themselves blue and drink too much beer, but at least he won't poison any of your guests, or order them sewn into wet cow hides.

Brad Foster's letter is intriguing, partly because I too was burgled, oh, over ten years ago now. I won't go into any detail as I'm sure I must have already mentioned it in a prior LoC to some fanzine or other. The main reason, though, is that I reckon Brad must have been stone unlucky in that he must be the only US citizen to be burgled in the last decade or so. I base this conclusion on my familiarity with untold number of US Cop shows in which citizens are never burgled, but rather 'burglarized'.

"Burglarized" is how one becomes a citizen of the country of Burglaria, isn't it?

David Williams absolutely nails it with his analysis of why and when fanzines ceased to be important in SF. So what we need to do is find another area other than SF for fandom. My suggestion would be "gnat-sexing". Can you imagine humongous Worldcons full of tens of thousands of fans all interested in aspects of gnat-sexing? No, me neither. Just think, for us fanzine fans, the world would again be our oyster. How are you fixed for a 12-page article for my new fanzine, *To Rule The Gnat-Sexing Sevagram*? No, you're right; perhaps I **should** go and lie down for a while. But thanks for another

interesting issue.

Sexing chicks after hatching is actually a profession – you just squeeze a certain way and the junk pops out. Do it wrong, though, and something else pops out that you may want to use tissue to wipe off. The art of sexing, however, has been recently assessed as highly inappropriate behavior when practiced at science fiction conventions. Be warned ... do not sex other fans.

PHIL TURNER

Another *Vibrator* arrived yesterday, and I started wondering if I should send you an R U OK email when I checked and found that the last *BT* to arrive was No. 45. But I found #46 and #47 on efanzines, so you're obviously still around. Was it being skeptical about your exploding bog seat that dropped me off your distribution list?

Nothing like that. But I find out every now and then that people didn't get their copies, despite being fairly sure I mailed them one along with everyone else. It is possible that I skipped over your name in the list of addies, but not twice in a row, surely?

As someone else who sometimes gets into bed yawning and then finds that the unco-operative body won't go to sleep, about all I can do is read something or just lie there, thinking evil thoughts, until sleep overtakes me. The good thing is that, I've found no direct correlation between the amount of sleep I get and whether I get through the next day without losing a couple of hours in the afternoon.

I tried sleeping sitting up once; didn't work for me. My problem was that lying down gave me headaches which prevented me from sleeping. I eventually built myself a sort of 45-degree ski-jump, which let gravity take some of the pressure off the blood vessels in my head and let me sleep. You seem to have done the same thing in reverse; built a ski-jump to raise your legs. I did consider swapping the bed for one of the Gravity Chairs, which are a firm favourite in mail-order catalogues and are always reduced from £99.99 to £59.99, no matter who is selling them. But my problem went away after a few weeks. It sounds like yours could take a bit longer, so I offer the suggestion of a Gravity Chair, some padding and a seat belt.

I have a foam wedge, similar to your ski-jump. I needed to keep my upper body from being level because it made breathing more difficult, and the wedge kept me upright enough for a long while to shift some of the weight to my butt. However, when the problem was at its worst, 30 or 45 degrees wasn't doing enough. I had to sleep around 90 upright, and that left my legs dangling all day except for when I was actually standing or walking. Much of my breathing difficulty is over, but I still feel better using the wedge than lying flat – it may be largely psychological by now. But my legs just lie flat on the bed, which is adequate to keep them from swelling. I *never* needed to raise them farther.

25-year-old strawberries? Stuff does keep amazingly well when frozen. People are always digging up tins stashed by long-dead explorers in the Arctic and finding the contents okay to eat. Something you could do with your strawberries, assuming there are any left, is drizzle them with Drambuie, apply some crumble topping and stick them in an oven for 20 minutes. The result? Heat-sterilized strawberry crumble. Delicious with a drop of cream.

The Pompeii exhibition sounds well worth visiting, even if it's full of fakes. I suppose some corporate suit from the insurance company had a hand in that.

Only the dead people were fakes, probably because there are complex rules for moving human remains over international borders. And although the actual casts would be mostly plaster, whatever was left of the corpse's bones would still be in there.

It would be great to be the Invisible Man for a while and fire invisible pepper spray into the eyes of people who use bolt-cutters on customers' luggage. There's a good example of an evil thought. I also got a bit evil over WAHF before it registered.

WAHF = We Allegedly Have Friends

Having perpetrated a \$3 bill for President O'Bummer, Fred Patten's letter in #47 has inspired me to think of a \$7 bill for President Trump.

I have a small collection of phony bills like that, but there must be thousands of known varieties ... I have five or six. The very first I ever saw was back in the late 1950s, when someone printed a Diefendollar on rubber, to make it's 97-cent value stretch to a full dollar. John Diefenbaker was the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, a Conservative from prairie country who was incensed at all the good taxpayer money spent on those big cities out east that were full of sin and sophistication. His most memorable act was to destroy the Canadian aviation industry – mostly out east in big cities, naturally – at a time when we were in a position to lead the industry, by canceling the futuristic Avro Arrow project and throwing thousands of highly skilled workers and engineers out of work. But since they all lived in one of those big sin-filled cities out east, Toronto, that was okay. “Deef” made other blunders than this one, including a deflated dollar, but that's the one people remember him for.



AVRO Arrow

And regarding Eric Mayer's recollection of a PC monitor with green letters on a black screen: 25 years ago, in the good old days of DOS, you could set your screen and lettering colour to any of black, red, green, yellow, blue, magenta, cyan or white. So black lettering on a white screen was available if you knew how to set it up.

Okay, time to get back to trying to finish a novel I started in, gulp, 2003. It has crept up to 180,000 words and it will take ages to print out when it's done. As my thermal binders have a spine width of only 10 mm, I'll have to bind it as a 3-volume set.

Hope your hospital trips get you somewhere worthwhile.

They got me home again, which is really what you want from a trip to the hospital.

LLLOYD PENNEY

Many thanks for *Broken Toys* 48, all the best on that one. Time for comments as the *BT* countdown gets very close.

Very close. I'm beginning to actually plan for the final issues ... of which the next will be one.

As I write, there's one week to go before the FAAn Awards deadline. I am sure I will nominate, and Yvonne has expressed some interest, too. Hope always springs eternal, but these days, I simply hope to place well. I am sure there will be an avalanche of ballots during this week. Either that, or it is time for another FAAn Awards hiatus, which could be its end. It'll then, or a little further along...

Looking over the fanzines posted at Bill Burn's site, I don't see a bright future. In a loc I wrote to Mike Meara, I said that there were only about a half-dozen "fun" fanzines today. Another half-dozen would probably include those I still read. But the rest strike me as re-inventions of the wheel, or "service" zines for clubs or specialist collectors.

As many have said, it's a shame cancer has claimed another victim, and Renata and the kids are alone, perhaps even with the rest of the Ford family around them. The best thing is that this idiot will not be around to bedevil the city of Toronto, or anyone else for that matter. Cruel? Perhaps, but he never got my vote, and Etobicoke will take a while longer to shake the idea that it's full of fools who supported Rob Ford. One bit of entertainment is that Doug Ford is showing himself to be too extreme, even for the Progressive Conservatives, so perhaps the name Ford will disappear for a while from the city pages. What a relief that will be.

*I had no grudge with either of the brothers until they grew ambitions, and holding the office of city councilor wasn't enough. Now, if only everyone running for the GOP presidential nomination would somehow die, leaving the party with no one on their ticket! Maybe I could wish that Hillary Clinton would have a bad migraine, too, and withdraw from the Democratic race? Or is that asking *too much*?*

Today is the third Monday of the month, so today, some of us will be gathering at Orwell's Pub in the west end for a pub night. I hope Steven shows up; I do enjoy his stories. Many of our books are on IKEA bookshelves against the wall in our living room. Seeing we may have 700 or 800 pounds of books on those shelves, I wonder what it's doing to the floor underneath it. It's never shown any sign of tipping or falling apart, knock on wood...

It's rare that he makes public appearances ... as you must know. Steven has a few good friends and little enough time for them, let alone gatherings of larger groups he doesn't know as well, or have as much in common with. Orwell's is on Bloor near Islington, a neighborhood I grew up in ... but it would be pushing Traveling Matt too far, I think. It's at least half again as far away as Yonge & Bloor, downtown.

Toys are packed so not even adults can get them out of the box. We know a lot of tidy collectors, who say that such packaging are just fine with them. I have to wonder, though, are we near the end of the era of the collector, so that mint toys won't gather prime values over time? Many of us are victims of the monetization of fandom, from which arose the big pro cons. Ick.

Who knows? It could happen. On the one hand, it might lead to losing collectables at a much quicker

rate ... but, then they may not be as expensive when found.

Paul Skelton ... the Corflus I attended seemed a little clubby, with groups of friends gathering and staying together. I found little to do, and at the Toronto Corflu I went to, people disappeared for dinner so quickly, I looked after the con suite both evenings. Part of my frustration comes from the fact I'd like to go to more Corflus, but I doubt finances will ever allow for going to another, so I guess I am fine with the idea of not getting to another one.

From my experience of three Dittos and, I think, two Corflus, is that they best serve fans who *already* know each other well from personal interaction. Knowing someone solely through fanzines doesn't seem to establish enough in common to make the best of such small, intimate cons. Although there do seem to be people who would have a great time with complete strangers in a bus station, I'm not one of them.

My loc...there seems to be many online SF magazines who will regularly take submissions. I am not sure if they are paying markets, but more and more, aspiring writers will whip up their stories, get published in one of those e-magazines, spread the word, and get writing the next one. At least they get a byline, which is enough impetus for many modern writers. Money? You must be kidding. I suspect there are some writers who will spend their entire writing lives in the minor leagues of online mags.

Apart from the money, being published in the minor leagues also means few people will ever encounter your work – only those dedicated few thousand who read small press or on-line publications, who you will likely never meet or hear from. And since you aren't getting paid – we inevitably return to *that* – what do you get from being published in this day and age? It's pretty much a matter of breaking into novels, or you're just jerking off with your word-processor, and how is that better than doing it with *Broken Toys*?

Steve has had problems over the years with keeping his weight down, and to be honest, so do I. I have weighed as much as 230 lbs., and am now down to 220. Getting past that and heading towards 210...well, there's the rub. And, I am at the age where losing weight is not as easy as it once was. My own doctor doesn't seem too bothered by my weight, as long as I am healthy, and making the effort to lose weight. But now that warmer weather is here, we hope to get out more, walk some of it off, and make sure everything fits fine for our travel in August.

We all belong to the same club – I don't mean Weight Watchers, either. I mean the *Resigned to Obesity Club*. Like your doctor, mine is content that I'm not gaining weight and my blood pressure is acceptable. The health issues I've had over the last three or four years have had little or nothing to do with my weight, so why worry about it? Would it be good to weigh 180 pounds again? Sure. Will it happen? Not unless I'm chained to a wall in a cell, and fed a starvation diet for a couple of years.

Years ago, I asked my local bank about half-dollars, and they knew little. If the penny is to be eliminated (and I still find some here and there), a half-dollar should be introduced as general circulation coinage. I have also wondered if a five-dollar coin would be minted.

People seem to get along without them... I think either the half-dollar should be scrapped, or minted in numbers that can be circulated.

Well, I have gone further than I thought I would, so good for me, and good for the local, I hope. Many thanks for this issue, and the penultimate issue will be out soon. See you then.



Some of you may have noticed that R. Graeme Cameron has been writing a column for *Amazing Stories*. He largely covers old ground, explaining fandom of the 1940s, '50s, '60s, '70s – and even more recent decades – to a generation of readers he believes knows nothing about Old School Fandom's hallowed history. This is a harmless pastime, I grant you. It might even do some good, though I tend to be skeptical of the missionary impulse, and even more skeptical of claims that any good comes of it. Now and then, however, Graeme touches on times I lived through ... and I think of so many more things that he might have said about them.

I suppose that is what it is like to be Ted White or Robert Lichtman.

For example, a few columns ago, Graeme wrote in part about the famous “Kill the Fucker” style of fanzine reviewing that was common in British fanzines in the 1970s. Joseph Nicholas wrote the reviews that might well have been the model for all of them. They were rude, aggressive, saturated with insult and sarcasm, and guilty of hyperbole from one end to the other. They were also screamingly funny ... assuming it wasn't *your* fanzine that Joseph was assassinating.

But many fans were appalled by the KTF style of reviewing. Such overwhelming rejection would *drive people away* from publishing fanzines instead of encouraging them to improve, wouldn't it? That's a good point. Yet I can't say I know of a single instance where any chastened neo immediately went back to studying for his post-doctorate instead of working on his second ish. It probably never happened. All the same, I can't imagine that Joseph's KTF reviews ever passed on any useful advice for publishing a better fanzine, either. Perhaps that's just the wrong way to look at them?

That's the way that R. Graeme Cameron would be likely to look at them, since my counterpart in BC prefers the role of booster rather than critic.

You have to consider the times. The last half of the 1970s was when my generation of fanzine fandom discovered British fandom. I had benefited by an early glimpse of it through Mike Glicksohn, but my contemporaries were a couple of years behind. I recall proposing David Langford for membership into our exclusive, cliquish little APA, Oasis, and being laughed at by people Who Really Should Have Known Better. You would be appalled by their names, and

they would vigorously deny it today. One of the most refreshing qualities about British fanzines was their directness. They would not die trying to be polite, and would gladly call another faned an ass, or a fool if that was what they meant. In the U.S. (and Canada too), such blunt language was tantamount to slander and libel.

With few exceptions, we on this side of the Pond felt constrained to speak positively whenever possible. If we could not, then it was good manners to not speak at all. As a result, fanzine reviews were largely a namby-pamby list of titles with one or two well-meant remarks that were about as deep as the shine on a nickel-clad dime. By reading such reviews you might learn what they contained, and who was responsible, but would gain no insight whatever into whether the zine even reached the standards of a dyslexic 12-year-old who was a year behind his classmates.

There *were* exceptions. Ted White, for instance, was and always had been constitutionally incapable of hiding his contempt for anything, and would likely show no remorse for driving that dyslexic 12-year-old to suicide. But such integrity was hard to find in 1970's fandom – the Age of Gil Gaier.

While it might have been good diplomacy to find something to praise in every zine, it made for very poor critique. The entire purpose of a review was to evaluate the strengths *and* weaknesses of the subject for the benefit of readers seeking guidance. Unless the reviewer intends that each and every fanzine be read by everyone, and no distinctions be drawn between them, a review that will not make judgments is pointless. Moreover, a truly good reviewer explains the purpose of a zine before it attempts to measure how well that purpose is served. Why condemn *Broken Toys* because it is not *Science Fiction Commentary*, or *Chunga* because it is not *Vibrator*?

In other words, good reviews are aimed at the reader, but must be sensitive to the fanzine.

Much as I enjoyed the Kill the Fucker style of reviewing, I eventually grew tired of the model. Joseph's major flaw as a reviewer, as I saw it, was that he was not as sensitive to the fanzine as he should have been. He did seem to compare fanzines with entirely different goals, and usually found them wanting when the goal was other than the one he was most familiar with – the fannish British fanzine of the time. The Britzine wasn't so much a style, as a circle of people who all knew one another pretty well. Even when they were not bosom-buddies, most British fanzine fans probably knew each other on sight and were on a first-name basis. After all, the drive from London to Leeds is a day-trip, similar to the distance between Toronto and Montreal. The whole of England would fit into Southern Ontario. This creates a tight-knit sense of community unlike North American fandom, and could be more easily compared with, say, fandom in California, or the American East Coast.

The British also shared a number of attitudes toward their zines. One of them at that time was that wide margins or any empty space was a waste of paper and postage, and that every available corner should be crammed with type. Some even went so far as to condemn illustration. Unlike North American fanzines, which sometimes went to the other extreme of pretentious display and lavish artwork, British zines often looked like a page of race tips in Chinese.

Being the product of a close circle of fans, Britzines were usually cloaked in in-group references as well as cultural differences. The American reader was as likely to be mystified by personal

peculiarities that every British fan knew about, such as favourite drafts, the game they call “football,” pigs-in-blankets, or Scottish nationalism.

The point I’m driving at is that British and American zines were different, even when they were most alike, and KTF reviews tended to view all zines as ideally alike ... and like British zines, naturally.

Although in the late 1970s and early ‘80s it was fashionable on our side of the ocean to rave about the superior sophistication of British fanzines, I’m not sure most American fans had a deep understanding of British fandom or the conditions that made it possible. Their cozy tribalism was a quality we wanted to imitate, but simply couldn’t ... because we are not all crowded into a country the size of a middle-sized state. Moreover, the enormous size of American fandom has resulted in a broader spectrum of fanzines – sercon, fannish, fan fiction, media, etc – each with a different focus. By comparison, the British zines I’ve seen tend to be more alike.

While my observations might be argued, the upshot of all this is that I don’t think British fanzines can be compared with American zines on quite the same basis.

At the same time, it seemed to me that few British fans took the time or even showed the same interest in learning about American fandom that Americans did about the British. All the more inappropriate, then, to judge America zines by British standards.

What might have made matters worse is that British fanzines and style had a disproportionate influence on U.S. fandom, but little seemed to flow the other way. While few reviewers over here adopted the look and style of the Brits literally, it was nevertheless greatly admired and touted as a model to emulate. In general, anything British was touted as a model to emulate ... with mixed results. Graeme Cameron touched on this point, in fact, when his *Amazing Stories* column discussed *Space Junk*, one of the decade’s more felicitous fanzines. Graeme found it a successful graft of the British style on the American fanzine. What he was unaware of was that the editor, Rich Coad, was a British fan living in San Francisco at the time. No wonder it seemed to Graeme to be the best of both worlds!

By the 1990s, the KTF style of reviewing had run its course, and most of its practitioners had stopped writing for fanzines for the time being.

As the years went by, fanzine reviews gradually became an endangered species. One might have hoped they would follow an ideal middle course, that was neither abusive nor vapid ... but instead most seemed to follow a course of least resistance. That is, just a title, the editor, a list of contents and a vague statement such as “this is a zine for *Star Trek* fiction,” or “I especially enjoyed the con report.” This was precisely the sort of uninformative, non-critical pap that I believe Joseph hated, and that I’m not overly fond of myself.

This trend is unfortunate on a number of levels. Reviews were one of the more valued currencies by which a fan editor was paid for his time and effort. A good review might even point the way for a learning editor to improve his work. It was also an important way to spread information about the fanzines that were available. When a freshly minted fan editor made up his mailing list, he almost certainly combed fanzine reviews for possible trades. Readers used reviews to find new titles they might enjoy. The sort of capsule reviews that were common around the turn of the millennium did none of these jobs very well.

Then, in the early years of the new century, the fanzine review seemed almost extinct. The only review columns that come readily to mind were Lloyd Penney's, which were never in sufficient depth to fill the job description entirely. I think they may only have been intended as a quick reference to what was out there rather than to offer judgments. At least that was how I read them. Then, for reasons of his own, Lloyd stopped writing them. More recently, the fanzine *Chunga*, edited by Byers, Hooper and Juarez, has run fanzine reviews – or at least fanzine discussions – written by one of the team. These have been lengthy and well thought out, leaving little to be desired except one thing – they are so infrequent, and cover so little of fanzine fandom. Happily, that brings us to Guy Lillian's *The Zine Dump*. Although it follows some irregular schedule known only to Guy, *TZD* is dedicated to its task of reviewing fanzines, and succeeds in both reviewing them in depth and in covering a wide cross-section of fanzine fandom.

That, however, is virtually the complete slate. A few other zines lists trades they get in the mail, sometimes with a few words of comment, but those do little good.

In the past I have had several fanzine review columns. The reviews ran from detailed examinations of the issue at hand to brief impressions. The question came up, not too long ago, why I didn't write fanzine reviews any more. The brief answer is that I haven't time. A better answer is that I'd rather write other things. Much as I may feel a debt to fanzine fandom, I can't do *everything* and would much rather write factual articles, personal reminiscences and scraps of non-commercial fiction. More than that, as I replied to whoever asked me about reviewing fanzines, I currently lack "the essential empathy" to write fair and unbiased reviews. There are half a dozen fanzines I eagerly read from cover to cover, a few more than I read when the mood arises and the rest I barely glance at. This is not fair, but that's just how it has to be when you have many things you want to do.

The zines I choose to read appeal to me for predictable reasons, of course. They tend to be well written, humorous, evocative of something that appeals to me, or the thoughts of someone I know well. However, plenty of other fanzines are also intelligent, informative or well written that interest me not a whit! Unless I can review them all with equal attention, I have no business reviewing, and that – alas – I feel I cannot do. I have no desire to fall into the same trap as the Kill the Fuckers reviewers, and judge all fanzines by my own narrow standards.

Reviewing fanzines properly is a dirty job ... so who will do it, I wonder?



New Couch!



My friend, Steven Baldassarra, almost never fails to surprise me with his stories.

I've already written about the time when, in a fit of frustration brought on by waiting for friends while dressed in a silly costume, he maliciously misled some American tourists into thinking he represented a Shakespearian revival, and that the Bard had been born in Toronto.

That's what's most surprising about Steven. He's as kindly as one's own opinion of oneself after one or two drinks. Only a midget would find him physically intimidating. And Steven's as mild-mannered as iced tea... most of the time. But now and then there's a finger of vodka and a slice of lime in the glass.

Now, we all have stories about New York, and Steven is no exception. It's just that I can never tell where he's going with a story until he's gotten there. The other night, he told me that he knew what I meant about the abrasive side of New Yorkers. One time that he visited the Big Apple, he stayed with a buddy of his who, I believe, was named Peter.

Peter was a typical New Yorker. Street-smart. Wise-cracking. Without a shred of pity for human weakness. Standing next to him, Steven must have seemed like a study in human empathy. Nevertheless, he held his own when, somewhere in Little Italy or SoHo, they were confronted by a street person.

Steven has a test for panhandlers. He checks their shoes. If they look like they cost more than the shoes Steven is wearing, he passes by. It's a fairly strenuous test, too. It isn't as though Steven buys the best hand-stitched, Italian leathers or the latest hi-tech, LED-lit, synthetic-material tennies. He wears what you could buy for \$29.95 at Target or Payless, and he wears them *hard* before he buys another pair.

The guy who confronted Steven was the usual panhandler, with ragged clothes and shoes that passed the test. He held his hat out, expectantly, and Steve reached into his pocket. Instead of fishing out some chump change, though, he retrieved his wallet and pulled out a fin to tuck in the guy's hat. With tears in his eyes, the panhandler thanked Steven from the bottom of his heart – and no doubt rushed off to the nearest liquor store to spend the five. He may have been afraid the Canadian tourist thought it was a one.

Peter was incredulous.

As soon as the bum was gone, he burst out, "What are you doing? You never give a panhandler money! It's just *asking* for trouble."

What he more likely meant was that the bum didn't *deserve* a handout. To be charitable, the native New Yorker might also have been worried about mugging, or being harassed for more. New York bums are *every bit* as nervy as their employable brethren. (Remind me to tell you *my* New York panhandler story sometime.) Although no harm had been done, an unnecessary risk had been taken. Peter looked at Steven as though he were a prize fool who needed to wise up.

Not to be outdone for urban sophistication, Steven looked him back in the eye and replied, with a sneer that seemed well practiced, "You didn't give me time to ask for my receipt."

Peter treated him with greater respect after that.



The sleep lab

To Sleep, Perchance to Snore...

The follow-up to my health issues over the last few months was a lingering suspicion that I suffered from sleep apnea. I had my doubts, but the respirologist was a man with a positive outlook, and had no doubts at all. He insisted I attend a sleep lab so that I could be studied while wrestling with the mattress and pillow.

"Do you snore?"

"Um ... sometimes. Maybe. I know I did once – in fact, there was a time, a few years ago, when I'd start to snore even before I fell asleep, and it would wake me up."

"A-ha!"

"But then I taught myself to keep my tongue somewhere else in my mouth, and it stopped. At least it stopped waking me up. Maybe I still snore ... who knows? I live alone, so who's to complain?"

“Someone your weight and age? Of course you snore. Sleep apnea is a given: you may even have asthma.”

You can't disagree with logic like that.

Fortunately, there was a sleep lab right at St. Joseph's, where most of the work on my aging carcass had been done. St. Joe's is only about a mile from home, a short distance for Traveling Matt. I agreed reluctantly, my imagination full of images of electrodes stuck to every available inch of skin, cameras everywhere, humming computers in the background and a stern nurse glaring down at me, requiring me to fall asleep at some ungodly hour normal to other people, but as alien to me as falling asleep during electroshock therapy. But there was a waiting list at St. Joe's – unless I wanted to go to a different lab in the north end of the city, I'd have to wait a couple of months. I grasped the straw, slender as it was, and said a wait would be fine. Anything to put a disagreeable obligation off as long as possible, thought I.

The respirologist booked me for an evening early in May, and then wrote me a prescription for an inhaler.

It wasn't one of the usual ones that I've seen used before, which look something like a hash pipe. This was an unusual plastic thing that resembled an ocarina, with a sliding cover over a mouthpiece. Uncovering the mouthpiece automatically advanced the next dose. After 30 uses, it was to be discarded. After coaching me in its use as though I couldn't understand simple verbal instructions, the doctor wrote me a prescription and I picked up one of the gadgets on the way home.

After a month's use I visited the doctor again, who scowled at my new test results and said, “This hasn't done a bit of good.”

“But I actually do feel better,” I protested. “I've been sleeping quite normally lately.”

“What do you know? You're just the patient. Don't use that inhaler anymore, because I'm writing you a prescription for a different one.”

It may have been a different medication, but the inhaler was pretty much the same.

Perhaps the previous inhaler had only seemed to help, due to the placebo effect. Personally, I think my sleeping more soundly was just a result of my getting slowly better from the setbacks of the previous year. Yet, there was no harm in trying the new inhaler, and it may even be doing some good. No doubt the doctor will tell me at my next appointment. In the meantime, I read up about Anoro Ellipta (a combination of umeclidinium bromide and vilanterol). It is prescribed for people suffering from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, a catchall that includes what was once called emphysema or bronchitis. It is not really a disease, but a condition that may have many causes. Swell ... so I likely have COPD. The good news is that I *don't* have asthma! That was what the previous inhaler treated ... and it did nothing for me. Umeclidinium bromide and vilanterol, on the other hand, will *kill* you if you have asthma. So I *don't* have asthma. COPD isn't so bad, either. Its symptoms are manageable and don't necessarily grow worse.

Anyway, I felt fine. All I had to worry about was the upcoming sleep study, and that was booked way off in the future ... May to be precise.

It's a funny thing, though. No matter how long you put something off, tomorrow invariably comes, and soon the dreaded appointment was only days away. I dug out the brochures and forms I had been given, and brushed up on what was expected of me.

Not a great deal, fortunately. I was informed I should bring my Ontario Health Card (which entitled me to the luxury of medical intervention), a pair of pajamas and slippers, a book to read, a snack if desired, all medications I normally take and whatever else I thought necessary. A teddy bear was optional.

As it happens, I have my own *special* pillows that help me sleep in my preferred position, with my upper body and head raised. I could hardly carry them in my lap, but in cloth bags hung from Matt's handles, they could be taken anywhere. I decided to fill the backpack that also hangs from the back of my chair with a small electric fan, since I hate trying to sleep without a cool, fresh breeze. A book and a pair of shorts for PJs was just about the only thing else I needed from home, but I bought some cheap arrowroot cookies and a bag of eucalyptus cough drops from a Dollarama along the way to the hospital. So far, so good.

I arrived at room 1E 108, where I supposed the lab to be. It was just a waiting room, and there was no one there. I was also almost half an hour early, so I turned Traveling Matt's power off and read. After a little while, a couple of young women arrived and took seats next to me. An older man arrived later. Then, at eight sharp, a nurse arrived from nowhere and took us all to our rooms. Mine was nothing out of the ordinary, just a regular hospital room with a few fixtures set in the wall, a single bed, and a work desk with a computer. I didn't notice it at first, but the nurse pointed out a discreet camera near the ceiling that would watch me sleep. She gave me a questionnaire, full of the usual simplistic questions that can never be given simple answers. Next step was to change into my gym shorts and t-shirt, which is all I had as pajamas. Why should I dress for bed at home, after all?

Then the nurse began to string me up with dabs of adhesive goo, electrodes and an unbelievable tangle of wires. There were electrodes attached to six or eight places on my skull, several more around my neck and upper body, one on each of my lower legs, and finally a sensor was hung under my nose to sense my exhalations. It wasn't all that uncomfortable, but almost any movement brought me up short. The whole Medusa's hair of wires plugged into a small console.

"What do I do if I have to leave the bed to go to the bathroom?" I asked the nurse.

"You have to take all this with you. Just talk to the camera and I'll come to unplug you from the board."

When the time came, this proved doable, but awkward at best.

Then I was alone. I had done my best to prepare for today, going to bed earlier the previous couple of days and getting only about six hours of sleep the day before, but it was no use trying to sleep right away. I read until about 11:30, nibbling on biscuits. Finally, I composed my pillows *just so*, doused the light and tried to sleep.

It would be impossible to give an hour-by-hour account of the rest of the night ... not to mention pointless. It's enough to say that I did *not* go right to sleep. I may have dropped off once or twice, but never for long. Some little thing would always seem to draw me back from the edge of deep sleep. My pillow would make tiny annoying sounds, or the breath sensor under my nose would poke me in the mouth when I inhaled, or I'd start to feel a little sore in some spot or other and want to shift my weight. Finally, I was wide-awake again. I sat up and tried to sleep cross-legged, a fallback position from the time I was having trouble sleeping at all. Abruptly, the nurse broke in.

“What are you doing? The doctor wants you to sleep!”

“That’s what I was doing ... or trying to.”

“You sleep sitting up?”

“When I have to.”

When she left me to my own devices again, I tried lying back on my pillows a second time. Again, I slept and woke more than once, as best I can figure. I sat up again after a few hours, and lay down again. I noticed under the window shade that it was getting light outside. Did I doze a little longer? I don’t remember. But then the nurse was back, telling me it was 6 a.m. and time to get up. The next shift would need the room at 7:00.

So I changed clothes, packed everything up and loaded Traveling Matt for the return home. In less than an hour I was in my own bed, reading the same book, finishing off the last of the arrowroot biscuits and ... feeling tired.

I’d had a hard night at the sleep lab, after all, so there was really nothing to do but turn out the light and have a good six-or-seven-hour snooze...



All strung up and no music to dance to! Believe it or not, you can sleep all strung up like a puppet. What you can’t do is go to the bathroom until the nurse comes to unplug you!



The Sealed Envelope, Please...

Eric Mayer's FAAn Award Predictions from last issue

The nominations period for the FAAn Awards drew to a close shortly after the last issue of *Broken Toys*. At the time, there had been very few ballots cast – in fact, the one I submitted to Claire Brialey, this year's administrator, was only the *sixth* received! A friend of mine who cast his ballot a couple of days later, was informed that his was only the eighth. With less than two weeks remaining before nominations closed, it seemed to me that we could reasonably expect a record-breaking low level of participation this year ... possibly leading to the end of these awards. Similar declines had led to the abolition of the fan categories of the British Nova Award.

Eric Mayer and I are frequent correspondents, and have similarly cynical opinions about various subjects – one of them being fandom. We had been discussing the FAAns, and from our attempts to define the reason why things were the way they were, Eric made a series of predictions about the outcome of this year's awards. I immediately thought about publishing them, along with his commentary, to see how well Eric's guesses would match the results announced at Corflu.

Eric didn't want his predictions printed verbatim, as they were mildly rude here and there, but when I promised to smooth out the rough spots, he readily agreed. To ensure that no one would doubt us, I shared Eric's predictions with three or four other fans ... who will not be named unless necessary.

Before I give Eric's predictions, here are the actual winners revealed at Corflu, just a few hours ago:

BEST GENZINE (Tie)

Raucous Caucus, ed. Pat Charnock
Chunga, eds. Byers, Hooper & Juarez

BEST PERSONALZINE

Vibrator, ed. Graham Charnock

BEST SPECIAL PUB

The Mota Reader, ed. Dan Steffan

BEST WEBSITE	<i>eFanzines</i> , ed. Bill Burns
BEST FANWRITER	Roy Kettle
BEST LETTER HACK	Paul Skelton
BEST FAN ARTIST	Steve Stiles
BEST COVER	<i>Raucous Caucus 4</i> , D. West & Harry Bell
NUMBER ONE FAN FACE	Dan Steffan

Now Eric's predictions, along with his reasoning:

BEST GENZINE *Chunga*, eds. Bryers, Hooper and Juarez

Half right! The category was a tie, and *Chunga* only one of the winners. It was an understandable mistake, however, as Eric had the other winner in the wrong place (*Raucous Caucus* in Personalzine). Eric's thinking on the matter is that *Chunga* is a superb fanzine in its own right, but also that Randy's mortal health issues would draw the voters' sympathy ... a not unusual reaction in these circumstances.

BEST PERSONALZINE *Raucous Caucus*, ed. Pat Charnock

Eric admits to a big mistake in this case. *Raucous Caucus* is not a personalzine and should not be in this category. However, he had observed quite a bit of buzz concerning *Raucous Caucus* and rightly jumped to the conclusion that British fans were itching to award her a FAAn. What Eric got wrong was *which* FAAn, so in a way he was right after all.

BEST SPECIAL PUB *The Mota Reader*, ed. Dan Steffan

Spot on! And it was one prediction I agreed with 100%. It was hard to even think of another possible contender. I was not aware of a single one of the runners-up.

BEST WEBSITE *eFanzines*

Correct! Clearly the site is indispensable to fandom, and Bill does a fine job keeping it updated. However, its lock on the category is so tight that you can't picture another site ever winning ... so what purpose does this category serve? Is it just to thank Bill for *eFanzines*?

BEST FANWRITER Graham Charnock

Quite wrong. Eric reasoned that if Graham's wife, Pat would replace him as editor of the Best Personalzine, their friends would vote for Graham as Best Fanwriter instead. As it worked out, this was completely unnecessary. Graham still won a FAAn for Best Personalzine, leaving Best Fanwriter open to another British fan, Roy Kettle.

BEST LETTER HACK Robert Lichtman

Surprisingly, another miss! My money was on Robert as well. After all, the voters must give Robert a FAAn for something, and without a *Trapdoor* in 2015, he wasn't eligible in that

category, and he does write lengthy and very cogent letters to a few, favourite fanzines. In a bit of a surprise move, however, the voters chose Skel over Robert this year.

BEST FAN ARTIST

D West

Also dead wrong. Steve's talent and prolific appearances last year catapulted him far ahead of all other contenders, even the recently deceased Don West. West was, however, in second place with a large lead over third.

Eric did not make predictions for Best Cover *or* Number One Fan Face. If he had, I don't think it would have been Dan Steffan, whose presence has largely been confined to illos for *Trapdoor* and editing the *Mota* special. Or am I missing something? Forced to make a guess, I would have more likely opted for Steve Stiles, who has lately been just about everywhere. Not bad for a guy I remember saying, just two or three years ago, that he had probably given up fanart!

Once again, British fandom was heavily represented among the winners, taking all categories but Best Artist and Number One Fan Face, and sharing Best Genzine. This led me to quip on the *File 770* Website that the FAAn Awards were the replacement Nova awards for fanzines. There was one other slight oddity in the FAAn results – of the five top Fan Faces, four of them are artists. Do we have some advantage over mere wordsmiths that I'm unaware of?

Someone is bound to be thinking it, so I might as well blurt it out – I'm *not* especially unhappy with my personal performance. I have a second, two fourths, a sixth and an eighth. I wasn't even *trying* for the sixth ... and while not even two seconds make a first, I only need to glance down the long lists of other names, reaching down to 114th place in one list, to realize that I'm breathing very rarified air up here!

⊖

Before inscribing this piece in stone, I showed it to Eric for his final approval. Happily, I had not misrepresented him or put words in his mouth. But there were a few observations Eric wanted to add. *"Of the three total misses, Fanwriter, fanartist and letterhack, two of my guesses finished second and one of them finished third. And of those three misses, two of them did win an award albeit different from what I predicted. I think that should be mentioned because it makes even clearer how utterly predictable the awards are, because so few fans are, as a practical matter 'considered.'"*

Eric adds: *"Not to say that the winners are ever totally undeserving or in some cases maybe even the best of the year in actuality, just that only a limited number of fans are ever in the running."*

REMEMBER! Next issue is number 50, the last Broken Toys I intend to publish. If you think 50 pages was a lot for a frequent personalzine, wait until the ultimate issue! I don't know how long it will be, but can say with fair certainty that 100 pages is quite out of the question! I also doubt it will appear in one month's time. As I had with this issue, I think I will take my time – an August deadline seems most likely.