

100 th. & Last? Article
by Taral Wayne



Drink
Tank
340

TW05
colour
2013

100 is Not Too Many!

Words and Art

by Taral Wayne



At least, I hope it wasn't. One hundred is now the number of articles I have written and had published in *Drink Tank*. Looking back on it, I'm astonished that I held out that long, especially as they appeared in fewer than 200 issues between number 153 and whichever issue this is. (I'm told it will be number 340.) But, in answer to the question, "Is 100 too many" – no, it is not. It was just the right number, and not one article *more* than the right number.

This answers another question, the one I posed in "99 Down, 1 to Go." Do I plan to retire from writing for *Drink Tank*, or not? I do – 101 *would* be too many.

I was pleased to see that a few people wrote to Chris to say they hoped I'd continue. It wasn't exactly a groundswell of support, but when has the response to *Drink Tank* ever been overwhelming? I suppose I ought to have been flattered that my impending retirement was noticed by the readers at all, given that I had nothing to say about the *Firefly*, fempunk

fiction, San Diego Comics Con, old time radio, the WWF or John Scalzi. How can I compete with relevance like that?

However, I was all but certain that I was going to retire from these pages even as I asked the reader whether I should.

It's a good thing that I have never been doctrinaire about my plans. In fact, I can barely stick to any sort of plan, whether it be to publish a fanzine or never to order a large pizza again. The reader may not be wasting his time by hoping that my by-line will appear again in the pages of *Drink Tank*, sometime. Stranger things have happened.

I was probably rash in promising a special last bow, however. One reason that several issues have gone by since "99 Down, 1 to Go" is that I've been beating my brains out trying to come up with something brilliant enough to serve as a grand finale. Sorry. I haven't had one. But, I did come up with the idea that I could complete the circle begun with my first appearance in *Drink Tank*, way back in issue 153.

What began my sojourn in this fanzine was the first of two parts of an interview conducted by Frank Wu. He likely didn't expect me to respond at such length, or that I would provide such a large amount of artwork to go with my first appearance. Now, since I am taking a formal "last bow," it seems appropriate that perhaps I should make my 100th appearance in *Drink Tank* another – somewhat more candid – look at the origins of my art. And perhaps much else about it as well.

To begin with, I began my career unabashedly copying from the funny pages and comic books, though I could never quite get the hang of anything until I was in my teens. By that time, I was well under the influence of *Mad Magazine* and *Hot Rod Cartoons*. More than anything, I wanted to draw for one or the other, or even both! But not science fiction – not yet. I really didn't read SF until I picked up a couple of my father's paperbacks, and later – inspired by *2001* and *Star Trek* – I looked for more of the same at the library. For better or worse, my first inspirations were humour. As it happened, I never developed my own, distinctive style of cartooning. I can fake any number of styles, but I never felt that any one of them was mine.

On the day puberty arrived, I suddenly discovered that *girls* – not just spaceships and hot rods – were also interesting to draw,. Somebody should have told me earlier, because I would like to have been good at it by the time I reached puberty. The second half of the 1960s were also an erotic time to suddenly take notice of girls, because girls themselves were unusually erotic in those years. Gone were the starched skirts that hid their legs down to the penny loafers, gone were the lacquered hairdos with artificial curves and piles, vanished were the pancake make-up and flowery perfumes favoured by June Cleaver. For the first time since Eve, it seemed, femininity was on fuller view than ever before, from the bikini line down to the sole of the foot. Cleavages, shirts unbuttoned and midriffs bare, and boy, did I dig it! Hair was long and hung the way nature intended it ... to the hip. Clothes were skimpy and loose, or clung like cellophane. The 1960s were Al Capp country. As if it were not enough to be half-undressed, girls painted their faces like canvases by Renoir or Picasso. On TV, Goldie Hawn danced for *Laugh-In*, decorated with flowers and slogans – and Bond girls were painted gold all over for naughty Russian spy-masters with a lust for bullion. The times gave me a decidedly *peculiar* taste in sex.

Despite admiring what I saw, I didn't seem to get along well with girls. There was nowhere to mix with them except school, and the sooner I got home from *there*, the better I liked it. My conversation with anyone in those days leaned toward the finer points of dinosaur paleontology, large scale naval battles in World War II, drag racing, collecting bubblegum cards, volcanic eruptions, Saturday morning cartoons, Greek mythology or the manned space program. It was hard enough finding other boys who found my idea of small talk interesting. The girls I knew, however, really didn't seem to take an interest in anything ... except boys. I'll grant that when boys weren't obsessed with sports they made better conversation ... but *otherwise* what good are they? I never saw the attraction girls saw in them.



And, having made that statement, I perceive more or less what my trouble was back then. *Of course* girls should be interested in boys. They just didn't seem interested in this one.

It seemed to be in my nature to make few friends at the best of times, and up to the age of ten my family moved with maddening regularity. I barely had time to make a friend before we pulled up stakes and moved on. I never really got the knack of it, and after a while it hardly seemed worth the effort to try to befriend other kids. When I was ten, we finally settled down for protracted period – but, despite having the luxury of eight entire years in one place, I made only a handful of friends the whole time.

At school, I discovered that I had a lot in common with another boy named Mark Britten. We both read *Hot Rod Cartoons*, built plastic model kits and had an impressive arsenal of toy guns to raise hell with. Mark and I spoke the same language – *Nerd*. It wasn't called *Nerd*, then, but it wasn't standard *Boy*, either. We could talk about a “chopped and channeled deuce coup fueler with a blown mill” waiting at the “staging line” for the “Christmas tree” to count down, but neither of us was very clear what a “forward pass” was. Mark's older brother owned a recording of drag race sounds, including the impressive explosion of one engine that went just a little too far beyond the red line. As Mark got older, he followed in his brother's footsteps and began to take a practical, real-life interest in cars – and girls – so I saw less and less of him.

Mark had a friend, though – Bob, a kid who was a couple of years younger than we were. He was rather short, tow-haired and jug-eared, and his gap-toothed grin lent him an uncanny resemblance to Alfred E. Neuman that I left carefully unmentioned. It was all the more remarkable that his own family name was Newman. Although I never met Mark again once we drifted apart, I did have an unexpected meeting with Bob at a hobby show, about 15 years ago. I turned around and abruptly found that I was staring at the buttons on a shirt of someone who appeared to tower a good six or eight inches over my five-foot-nine-and-a-half. Whoever this was, his girth matched his height. I looked up – way up – and goddamn if it wasn't Bob – the younger, shorter friend I knew when I was 12 – now all grown up. He remembered me too. I discovered that he worked in a garage ... as a hydraulic lift, I think. I almost wished we'd had more time to talk, but I suspect the gulf of years between us yawned too wide.

Just about the only other friend I made in those years was named Mike Horner. His parents were English, and he had a room full of esoteric Airfix model kits of British bombers you couldn't buy over here... Lancasters, Wellingtons, Short Stirlings. Hardly anyone my age, but me, had ever heard of most of them. He also had a stack of *The Beano*, *Dan Dare* and strange little English war comics. They were about the size of horoscope books at the checkout counter, and printed in black and white. He also had a backyard that had been torn up for some reason, and was all dirt. We could do whatever we wanted there, and often used the entire yard to stage battles with our

Dinky Toys, plastic soldiers and military model kits. Unfortunately, Mike didn't live anything like close. I had to bicycle a good three miles to get to his house, and then three miles to get home again. At the age of 14, a six-mile bike trip seemed like a Five Year Mission. We gradually, inevitably, drifted apart.

Oh, and there was a kid named Alan or Allen, with freckles and a long sad nose. What I mainly remember about Alan is that his brother had died – run over by a huge concrete sewer conduit that had squashed his head like a ripe





melon. I didn't see this for myself, thankfully, but Alan had. We dropped out of touch shortly after he revealed this horror to me. I thought I'd share it with the reader because this is the sort of thing that really impresses the hell out of you when you're a kid.

Of the four, Mark and Bob were the only real friends I had through the entire '60s. I saw them practically every weekend, when we'd get together at either of their houses. They lived only a couple of blocks apart. But, when they were busy, I was left to my own devices. After Saturday morning cartoons were over, I had little to do but wander up and down the creek next to where I lived – throwing rocks in the water and slaughtering legions of dandelions with a stick. In fact, I spent pretty much *all* my time alone during those sedentary years, just as I had when my family was on the constant move. I read a lot, watched television, built my model kits and scribbled fighter planes and racing cars on pads of typing paper. When I was 15 or 16 and began to grow hair on my chest, I only became lonelier.

It was for this reason I began to give some of my drawings names. It wasn't enough to draw a naked girl painted with the Union Jack ... I had to name her Brittany.

Or perhaps Saara Mar.

Once I began reading science fiction, it began to permeate everything. Why draw a Messerschmitt when I could draw a Gemini capsule ... or, better still, the *Enterprise*? Dancing girls in body paint became humanoid aliens who happened to be cerise or viridian, or have natural floral patterns. One thing led to another, until I began to experiment with physically exotic anatomy – girls with the legs of satyrs, girls with wings, girls with cat's eyes. Inevitably, even furry girls who were part ferret or impala. My science fiction reading fed me plenty of possibilities. For example, Chee Lan, a small, white, squirrel-like female from Poul Anderson's Falkayne series. Or the H'nau from C.S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*. It was not as though science fiction's seed had fallen on ground that hadn't already been ploughed by my comic reading – was it a big step from Ma'm'zelle Hepzibah to Chee Lan? For that matter, are the linear progressions from *Goldfinger* to King Midas, from Metropolis to Tina the Platinum girl from *The Metal Men*, only obvious to me?

It all began to come together in the artwork. Girls. Comics. Girls. Science fiction. The '60s. Girls. Maybe there are artists who were inspired to dedicate themselves to their art by the beauties of Nature, or a metaphysical sympatico with shapes and colours. I suspect most of them are poseurs, but ... who am I to judge? All I can say is that I used line and space in my work, but as means to a different end. I've always known my art was a form of wish-fulfillment ... not

art.

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE
NOT SCARING ME.
NOT EVEN A LITTLE.



EILAH!
HE SCARING
ME JUST A
LITTLE!



TW'06

I DON'T LIKE
KNIVES,

I DON'T LIKE
PEOPLE WHO
FRIGHTEN
TANGEL' ...

AND I DON'T
LIKE YOU!



W'07

In my fantasies, Deja Thoris always came to rescue me. I had no illusions that my masculinity or the discovery of a mystic cave would change anything about the hum-drum life I lived. If the walls of my mundane prison were to be broken down, the heroine was going to have to bring the means to do it, as I had none of my own that were up to the job. The original Saara Mar, *Build 1.0* looked human in all respects. She was strong, didn't feel the cold of space, came to Earth in a spaceship and felt a hard-to-explain attraction to a kid not even 18 who lived in Toronto. She had already acquired her signature page-boy haircut, but I was unsure just what colour it was. I hadn't even decided with any certainty how her name was spelled – it had been “Cera Mar” before I worked out a coherent version of her language.

I also began thinking how to rename myself as early as 1968 or '69. I don't know why I wasn't satisfied to be a “Wayne MacDonald” – neither name was bad in itself – but I just didn't identify with the chirpy-looking kid with the parted haircut who was identified as “Wayne MacDonald” with hand-written white ink in school photos. Along with reinventing my world, I desired to reinvent myself, an undertaking that would take a few years and that I wasn't ready to reveal until at least 1973 or '74.

The most dramatic break with my juvenalia came in 1971. I was still inventing “alien” races for “Cera's” civilization (which was already called “Dalmirin”) and had added centaurs, cetaceans, insectoids and other obvious stereotypes to the list of 21 sentient species on 24 worlds that were to be the current members of Dalmirin. Hard up for more ideas, I suppose, I had decided to improvise a new “race” from a drawing of Actaeon changing into a stag. To put a little more distance between the Greek myth and my new alien species, I altered the colour from naturalistic shades of brown to a startling blue and white motif. When I was done, I found I had created something more interesting than I had anticipated.

After some thought, it became Saara Mar, *Build 1.1*. The hoofed lower extremities were first to go. A little while later I shaved off her tail. And the vestigial antlers – two, simple, slender silver prongs – were last to go.

Saara Mar, *Build 1.2*, on the other hand, was a gradual process. I modified her ears over a very long time, until they were less satyr-like. Her nose had been cat-like to begin with, but grew more human-like over time. Her bangs were at times longer or shorter. The blue patch on her breasts and belly shrank to a sort of bikini-pattern. All the while, I was expanding and perfecting the background of Dalmirin to match Saara's own refinement. The final touches were almost all in place before I moved to Willowdale at the end of 1977.

Even Saara's earlier models were a great consolation to me. If there was simply nothing else to do, or no one I could talk to, I could



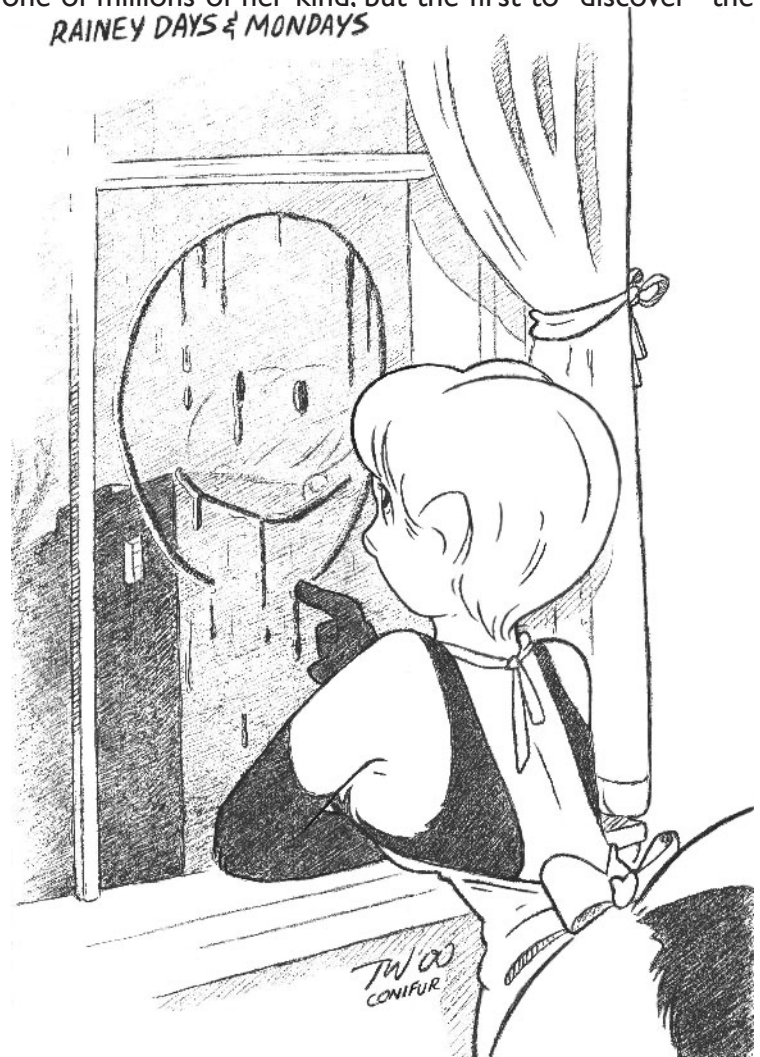
always go on a long walk with her. Whether it was day or night didn't matter. I never spoke to Saara out loud, of course – someone might get the impression I was a little peculiar. In fact I was ... but that was no reason to let anyone know. Nor did Saara talk back to me ... I wasn't *that* peculiar. But I could *imagine* she did.

It wasn't altogether easy holding a conversation with an imaginary person. It wasn't as though I was a small child with an imaginary friend that I actually believed in, nor was I psychotic enough to not know where the voice was coming from. I had to make up both sides of the conversation, supplying a different set of opinions, point of view and store of knowledge for each of us. I never really got as whole-heartedly into talking to myself as I would have liked – it would hardly have been a sign of good mental health if I had. Creating voices in my head was a skill I would later discover to be highly useful, however. After all, what is writing (and art) but talking to oneself?

Like me, Saara was rather a lonely person. At first, she belonged to a lost civilization– she was the last of her kind. Little by little, she acquired superhuman abilities – resistance to cold was one of the first. Boy, did I *hate* the cold – beautiful though a fresh winter snow in the blizzard-prone 1960s could be. But, Saara? Cold was nothing to her, even in a state of dress that was only next to next-to-naked. More than human strength was pretty much mandatory among fantasy figures. And, of course, she would not grow old and lose her elfen good looks in the short span of years allotted to mere Humans. Why did she have to be superhuman at all, you ask? I think the answer is simple – any young man wants a girl of his dreams to be something special, whether the daughter of royalty, an heiress or a movie star ... and the 1960s were an era of TV sitcoms that I was addicted to, all about witches, genies and ghouls. Because I had begun reading science fiction around the same time, it seemed perfectly natural to turn to a science fiction source rather than to magic or wealth in my fantasies.

Eventually, I realized that my original conception was too clichéd – last survivor of a lost civilization, indeed! Why not just copy out of John Carter of Mars? In fact, much of the thought I've given to Saara's civilization can be summarized as ways to avoid age-old clichés ... or at least rationalize them. For instance, her civilization is named "Dalmirin," which only means "a civilization." She is one of millions of her kind, but the first to "discover" the Earth ... because she wanted to see Saturn's Rings. I was caught a bit off guard by that decision – it turns out that every gas giant in our solar system has rings, and perhaps they are common as planetary features go. On the other hand, they may also be transitory, as Saturn's is certainly the only set of them in this solar system that is worth seeing – Jupiter's rings and the others are mere wisps of soot. Saara's home planet is about 400 light years from ours, so the EM wavefront from our civilization has had insufficient time to be discovered by her people. Saara didn't land in the United States and immediately arrange an interview with the President because, frankly, she doesn't give a rat's ass for power and influence. She didn't side with Capitalism or Communism, or take it as her responsibility to feed the starving millions. She wasn't here for any of that. Picture Saara as a tourist in a car, stopped by the side of the road to take a picture of the picturesque landscape, paying no attention to the hovel in the background or the rustic native whittling on the porch. It was her intention to move on from the start.

My thoughts about this have gradually evolved. After all, even if you didn't stop to save the local inhabitants from their own stupidity, surely once you've taken your snapshot you might intervene to stop someone kicking a dog? Saara did



decide that Humans were too irresponsible to be left with nuclear weapons ... and saw to it that henceforth they wouldn't work. *Nobody's*. Over time, the word about Earth spread to the rest of Dalmirin, bringing other visitors, who implemented casual means to improve the mess we've devised for ourselves. Clean, limitless energy, for one. But also a ban on our leaving the Solar System until we outgrow things that might make us a danger to other, less aggressive species – such as organized religion, corporations and armed forces.

You might say that these developments in Dalmirin's relationship to the Human race reflect my own expanded understanding. I wouldn't want to resort to a cliché such as "with great power comes great responsibilities" – that's for guys in spandex suits and capes. Even so, there's something to be said for it. Saara's people wear loose garments, tunics and serapes, and have become partial to denim; still, they could hardly do nothing but watch as we destroyed ourselves. It must be remembered, though, that even while saving the Earth, most visitors to our planet come to pick up the finer points of necking at drive-in theaters, and to sample the wine.

Mine is not a common power fantasy. Or rather, it is a fantasy in which I see power differently than it was expressed in pulp adventure fiction. Saara's spaceship is no mile-long planet-buster. It is small, although has the felicitous knack of being larger inside than outside ... and it might bust a planet if there was call for it. But there is clearly something wrong in thinking that if you own a squirrel rifle, you have to expect a gun battle between the CIA and the Yakuza in the backyard. There is little art showing Saara ending the Soviet role in Eastern Europe or of her evicting the CIA from Latin America. The power to dominate others and aggrandize myself is nothing I've ever desired. The power I fantasize about is to go anywhere and do anything I want, knowing that I can do it – to be able to walk into a strange bar, learn to play the piano or go to Mars, looking for the crashed Polar Lander – all with the same aplomb and confidence I'm accustomed to when I pick up a pencil to draw. That's the sort of power I wish I possessed!

I wouldn't necessarily need anyone to recognize that I had the power. If you ask, I would tell you why I have a pair of ruby slippers autographed by Judy Garland in my living room, but I don't need to flaunt it. I'd like to drive a 1963 Thunderbird ... but not the latest model Lamborghini. My fantasies are about what's in me, my own True Grit ... not about the impression I can make on other people.

As you can see, Saara's narrative is not one about grand occasions and earth-shaking events. She doesn't do dinner with celebrities or prevent hijackers from smashing jet planes through Wall Street towers ... though she does quietly move asteroids from Earth-crossing orbits on occasion and has toured the wreck of the *Titanic* on foot. Had recent history not been diverted onto a different path, she might have been on hand to oversee the *Curiosity* Rover landing properly.

Much of my art has been about what it might be like knowing an extraterrestrial being personally, and the mutual experiment in forming a friendship. In my drawings I almost always chose to illustrate intimate matters such as Saara's first slice of pizza, her laughter at abstruse String Theory, or her frustration over hard-core believers who insist that she is covering up the real reason why little green men in flying saucers mutilate cattle. She has a sense of humour that runs to uncredited appearances in *Deep Space 9*, sitting at the bar in the background.

Now, does anyone else do that in their art (or writing)?

In the course of illustrating for fanzines over the last 40 years, naturally I've departed from the ideal – probably more often than not, in fact. So I've drawn my share of people wearing propeller beanies and the odd serious portraits of SF writers that have been requested of me more times than I like to think about. (Rarely a writer who interested me, unfortunately.) Recently, I've been asked to draw Tom Baker as Dr. Who (a program I never watched), an army of R2D2s (from a movie I don't particularly like) and to adapt the DVD cover from *Men in Black* to use as a fanzine cover (no complaints there).

The real train-wreck of my intentions, though, has been furry fandom. I don't regret being among the early founders of a hobby originally formed around the anthropomorphic black and white comics of the 1980s ... but what furry fandom evolved into has left most of the founders, me included, sadly shaking their heads. For a number of years, furry fandom was much like SF fandom, with newsletters, fanzines and a common language



based on a common interest. I found it particularly lucrative, as well. My old fan art was “furry” enough to be collected into portfolios and sold from a dealers table at conventions. It was a short step from there to grinding out more and more explicitly furry art to take advantage of the demand. At my peak, I had a number of regular customers who kept me busy drawing as many as a couple of hundred pin-ups a year. It will come as no surprise that those were the years in which my output of fannish art began to dry up.

So far as I was able, I fobbed off furry art on fanzines. The reception was mixed, as you might imagine. Some fans loved the sensuousness, others gagged on what was, to them, cloying cuteness.

Unfortunately, my time was limited and it wasn’t possible to satisfy everyone – customers came before fandom. Not coincidentally, my interest in regular fandom was at its lowest ebb from the late 1980s until about 2001 or 2002. That was roughly when I began to find the changes in furry fandom less than palatable. It had become mostly about costumes and role-playing, and there was a damn sight too much lame anime mixed in. It was becoming obvious, too, that what the internet giveth, it taketh away as well. With an almost inconceivably larger audience, the potential demand for commissions was greater than ever. On the other hand, the internet attracted hundreds, if not thousands of other artists, so that the net gain was just about wiped out by the intense competition. Worse, hundreds-if-not-thousands of artists were posting their work online for free. Rates were driven down, and the average quality of the art fell. Furies were still willing to pay for original work, at least, but the demand for prints and portfolios dwindled away. As any professional writer will tell you, your living comes from mass editions of cheaply reproduced books, not from writing an original story for each and every reader. It’s as true for artists. Earnings from published art are a lot easier than creating an original work of art for each customer. The luster of furry fandom had worn off – more of the base metal was showing through.

So it was that my interest in SF fandom renewed itself in the early years of the century. Though much of it was still furry themed, I began to send out more art. Several things had fallen by the wayside in the intervening years, unfortunately. For one, I no longer always inked. With a digital scanner, it was possible to tweak a pencil drawing so that it was nearly as clean and dark as inking would make it. Another thing I had stopped doing was comprehensively indexing my art. I had never indexed sketches, and as almost of the work I did in recent years fell into that category, very little was being recorded. Without a title and number, my unindexed art was hard to keep track of. If I contributed it to one fanzine, I had no way of preventing myself from contributing it again to another. More often, art was never contributed to any fanzine at all.

If you think you’ve seen a *lot* of my work in the last 13 years, think again. Earlier, I said that at my peak I was turning out nearly 200 drawings a year. A more average number, taking into account less productive years, might be 150. Have you seen 1,800 drawings with the “TV” signature since 2000? I thought not. I’d be surprised if one drawing in ten ever made it to publication. I suspect, too, that it might be better that way. They weren’t all gems, by any stretch of the imagination.

For the last few years, though, my output has fallen drastically. In part, this was due to my drift from furry fandom and my failing business. In part, I was having problems with my eyesight. They were only the slight changes that come from growing older, but I didn’t know what to make of it at the time, and worried more than I should have. I’ve learned to cope, since. Another reason for my slow-down was plain burnout. You just can’t draw 200 nekkid bunnies and cat-girls a year without it sooner or later losing its appeal. At least I couldn’t – I know furry artists who seem to have no problem with it at all, who, in fact, don’t seem to have had an interest in drawing anything else, ever. In my case, the burnout is more severe than just a desperate need to lay off the skunk girls. A couple of years ago I announced to furry fandom that I was “retiring.” Frankly, I was close to being tired of drawing *anything at all*.

The strange thing is that I get more commissions offered me now than *before* my “retirement” from furry fandom. I sometimes accept, sometimes I don’t. How much money I’m offered makes a big difference. Even if I take a job on, however, I labour slowly. If I stick to the drawing board too long, I begin chewing my nails – 6” flat-heads – and pacing the apartment. Happily, I’m better at fan requests. Much to my relief, it’s not often that anyone in fandom wants me to draw a cow-chick with four breasts and a dildo strapped on. Or a giant Saara Mar crushing cities underfoot. You think I’m joking? Think again. The same furry later paid me to write a *prose* story to accompany the drawing.

Outside of a small circle of fans who I’ve known for a long, long time, it’s little known that in the late 1980s

I began a second fantasy world. Unlike Dalmirin, which was based in classic science fiction ideas, the new fantasy world was an alternate history. In the Willow Run timeline, Napoleon had died outside Moscow and British forces were sent to North America to finish the War of 1812. It ended in a truce, as it did in real history, but one that was much more favorable to the British and to the First Nations. Much of the Midwest was incorporated into British North America rather than into the expanding Republic. In short, North America developed into a mosaic of different nations – chief among them the rump American Republic, Texaca (including California), Quebec, Arcadia, New Albion and a Canada that consists of the entire Great Lakes and upper Mississippi region. In this alternate history, I created a small town named Willow Run. I was living in Willowdale at the time I created it, but when naming the town I was thinking of Kenneth Graham's novel, *Wind in the Willows*.

In fact, there is a Willow Run ... but it's in Michigan. It was home to the Ford built B-24 Liberator bomber, and to the Chevrolet Corvair. I didn't know it at the time.

My Willow Run, though, was situated in imaginary Calumet county, roughly where Wheeling, West Virginia is. But in my alternate history, it is part of Canada – a country that has not had a French presence for a long time. Instead, there has been a much greater First Nations influence. Another departure from familiar reality is that in Willow Run's timeline there are other intelligent, non-human species living on the Earth with us. Since they are native to our planet, they are not extraterrestrials.

One of these species are Xsiprits, who live in the wild places. They are generally friendly, are able to walk both as bipeds and quadrupeds, and defend themselves with pheromones that can either attract or repel Humans.

House Gamins are the other major species. They are mainly pests, often querulous and have a variety of annoying characteristics that would take me much too long to go into here. There are also Field or Wild Gamins that are usually better behaved and less of a nuisance to Humans.

There are the Teh Langgi, too. They are exceptions in that they are from another world – immigrants who have settled a handful of colonies on the Earth. Almost all Teh Lengggi live in clans in small towns, where they are near the wide open spaces that their species prefers, but also near the amenities of Human civilization. Their own culture was roughly 18th Century when they began to hitch rides with star-faring people into space. The average Teh Langgi is about four-foot-six-or-eight and has the build of a small, slender, upright dinosaur. But unlike dinosaurs, they have luxuriant black and white fur and a gorgeously fluffy tail. Despite a slight resemblance, they understandably do *not* like being compared to skunks!

Teh Langgi are inherently nomadic. They run superbly, and move in well organized migrations from one settlement to another on their homeworld. As one clan leaves town, the next scheduled to occupy it moves in. The outgoing clan spends a time "roughing it" until it is their turn to move indoors at some prearranged destination down the trail. Although not technologically advanced on their home world, the Teh Langgi catch on quickly to hi-tech and enjoy puttering with machinery or electronics.

One such Teh Langgi is Tangelwedsibel – usually shortened to Tangel. A bit of an eccentric,



she bought a bus ticket and left her clan to see what she could see. Her ticket and money ran out in Willow Run. Fortunately, she was befriended by Saara, given a home, and finally found gainful employment as an assistant in a bakery. (One of my favourite drawings is of an illustration of Tangel on her first day in town, showing her looking in the window of the bakery where she would soon find a job.) A couple of years passed until she saved enough to begin her own business. Renovating an old frame house in the nearby town of Pocahontas, she opened a restaurant, called “Le Blanc et Noir.” It is also her home. She lives on the second floor over the dining rooms and kitchen. Tangel misses the old days, though, and is still a frequent guest at “Homefall,” where Saara and I have made our home.

“Homefall” is a large, old house at the edge of the Run that I picture having renovated with Saara. I’ve spent a good number of years designing and revising the floor plans and exterior of what I saw as literally as a final destination, a retreat away from the ugliness of modern life ... but not so far away from modern conveniences, of course. The design has never finalized, as I wavered over how large was too large, how modern was too modern, how humble was too humble, as well as how an old home would be to have gosh-wow features like secret rooms, stained-glass domes and a wind tunnel for testing model aircraft. One of these days I’ll nail it down, but the plans are still embarrassingly inchoate. In spirit, “Homefall” is part Gothic and part Craftsman, with at least one octagonal tower, a big porch and a hall with parquet wooden floor and spiral staircase. Of equal interest are the grounds, which include oddities such as the foundation of a ruined Georgian house that had once been owned by a retired pirate. A dirt path leads to the ruins, along which lost items such as old rings without stones and broken cast-metal toys are regularly found. A nearby meadow is carpeted with millions of tiny, dry bones that no





one can explain. A huge boulder in the woods has the names of the curious from the last century written on the stone with candle smoke. But the writing is upside down; so it must be that the boulder was somehow turned over.

I began to fill Willow Run with people I knew in real life. Designing homes for them was less demanding than working out the details of “Homefall.” Moshe Feder, for example, runs a book store in the nearby town of Pocahontas. Ken Fletcher lives in a haunted house a few miles north of town. To Marc Schirmeister I gave a rustic cabin half-way up

a wooded ridge. (Not much departure from reality, actually). Another acquaintance I lodged in a rambling apartment over a 24-hour Laundromat that lives up to its reputation as “World’s Largest.” It is large enough to have a dismounted tank turret in one corner, for kiddies to monkey around in. I no longer remember how many real people I allowed into Willow Run as immigrants, but each and every one received a detailed drawing of the home they inhabited, along with a map showing where in town or in the neighboring countryside their home could be found. Only a relative few lived in Willow Run itself ... along with me and Saara. It was to be a peaceful refuge, after all, not an obligation to host weekend barbecues for large masses of people.

At one point, I located my own mother in Willow Run. Not in the same house as Saara and I ... please! I may have been living in my mother’s basement at the time, but it wasn’t my ambition to be there always. Nor did I want Mother in *my* basement! So, I designed a bungalow of her very own and put it on the other side of town – about a half mile away. I even added a room to the bungalow for my mother’s mother, who was alive at the time. Dog kennels, too. Mom was a fiend for keeping large numbers of animals, especially dogs, and I thought that as long as I didn’t have to live with them, there was no reason she couldn’t have as many as she wanted.

I presented my mother with a formal lease – the usual floor plans of the house and map of the location, along with some other documents describing the town and history. She had been in increasingly poor health, and I believe that in a way I gave her the lease as a sort of promise of immortality. No matter what, there would always be a place for her in this better-than-real afterlife. Mom died early in 1991, and I found the lease in her desk drawer among other papers she kept. It seemed the right thing to bury it with her, along with a drawing of Saara to keep her company in the dark.

Although I was able to put fans in Willow Run, I’ve never been very sure where Saara Mar belonged in fandom. Earliest reports suggested to me that most fans paid the business no attention. I suspect that those who were most aware of what I was doing found it a little embarrassing, and did their best to appear not to notice. After a while, I accepted that as the status quo. I’d go right on doing the art, but not force anyone to look at it or think about it. I wouldn’t say anything as long as no one complained the concepts were vain, immature, pretentious or “twee.” Well ... one fan called the art “twee.” But only one. I was certain that everyone else was thinking it, though.

So it went, for many years.

Lately, I’ve been less sure than ever of where I stand regarding Saara and Dalmirin than ever. Almost as





though to deliberately confuse me, various fans who I've known for ages have actually told me they like my "non-fannish" work too – not just the obvious references to Star Trek, Asimov or science fiction conventions, but the "furry" art too. Perhaps I should have seen there were hints of approval in the record of the last 20 or 30 years. The record has not been altogether easy to interpret, though. The first spate of Hugo nominations were in the late 1980s, and ended with 1990. At the time, I thought "that was that." Then fans seemed to remember me again in 2000 and 2001. What was strange about it was that I was probably at a personal nadir for contributing art to fanzines at the time. The anomaly might seem to have rectified itself when I dropped off the Hugo nomination list the next year ... except that was roughly when I became more interested in having fanart published and started sending it out again. The present spate of nominations began in 2008, seven years later, and has so far lasted until the present. Will it continue into 2012? Who knows? For one, I can make no sense of any of this.

Just as I suspect that, at times, fandom has had considerable difficulty making any sense of me.

If there are any certainties left about my days as a fanartist, it is that they're not about to come to a end ... likely not until I myself have come to an end. I may slow down, but I expect that the reduced quantity of art I do will continue to be much the same sort of things I've always drawn – cars, planes, space ships, planets, furry people and fans. They'll be available as long as anyone in fandom asks for them. And I will never win the Hugo for this.

So far as it goes, the odds may never have favoured me, but they were shortest a few years ago. Some people said my best shot at the Rocket was in 2009, when I was the Fan Guest at the Montreal Worldcon, *Anticipation*. The odds may have still been good as late as 2010, when there was a "should-have-won-last-time" factor. Last year made it plain that no such factor had been in play and that the odds for 2009 had probably not been as high as some people said. Instead, there are increasing signs that the dominant role that Old School fanzine fandom at one time had over the fan Hugos is over. If that is the case, then all of us who missed the boat during the '70s, '80s, '90s and '00s – Steve Stiles, Marc Schirmeister, Alan White, Bell and Barker are left on the pier, listening to the distant strains of Cha-Cha music drifting back to shore.

It must have been a hell of a Seeing-Off party, some would say, to have dawdled ashore so long.

Well ... what else was I going to do? I tried my hand as a comic book artist, and found that it was too much work and too little pay. Times had changed, and nobody was looking for a 1950s black-and-white illustrator anymore. The one magazine I worked for caught up with the modern age and hired a photographer to replace me. By now, they've fired the guy with the camera and have a digital artist. Even his days are probably numbered, as there is software being written this very moment that will replace *him*. Commercial art would have given my imagination no room to play. To paint T-shirts or the sides of souped-up, custom vans, I would have had to live in California.

Some have said I paid too high a price to be the artist I wanted to be. One of my sisters told me that I ought to have gotten retraining when I was a young man, then found a decent day-job rather than the dead-end jobs I held. Secure in a job as an insurance adjuster or librarian, I could have pursued my art in spare time – an hour or two a day, or longer on weekends. That might produce a fanzine cover every few weeks or so ... assuming I had ever discovered fandom. Instead of having a portfolio of thousands of works of art, I might have a couple of hundred ... but I'd have had regular dental care and an RRSP to make my old age comfortable. Such talk makes me squeamish. How do you reply to such a suggestion? My sister meant well, and I can scarcely tell her that I deliberately planned my life for short-term gains.

For that matter, was it for the short term? I've lived 61 years so far, going on 62. Should I have spent all that time on preparing for the last few ... assuming a sudden stroke didn't do for me before I could retire on my accumulated savings and a generous pension?

I've also been told that if there have been hardships in my life, it was the life *I chose*. This is not, strictly speaking, true. I chose to put the exercise of my talents above monetary gain, true. But at no point do I recall ever making a decision never to be employed using those talents – I just never found the sort of employment I was looking for. Nor did I decide to be paid for my work at a fraction of minimal wage. I had hopes of the sort of relative fame and fortune that had been earned by artists before me – artists such as Al Capp, Bob Clampett and Kelly Freas. Those "decisions" to remain poor and obscure were made by economic and geographic realities that I had little knowledge of nor any control over. All that can be said was that I knew the odds were long but had foolishly hoped for the best.

What I think worries me most is that having a head full of wish-fulfillment fantasies has in subtle ways dulled the drive to fulfilling them. Not that I ever really expected to find a lost starship in creek-side cave or to date a millionaire crime fighter in a mini-skirt and boots. But, I have been more fussy than I probably had any right to be. Like anyone, I'm attracted to youth, health and good looks. But, not like everyone, I've formed almost no romantic relationships in my life. Was I just unlucky in love, or had I made myself into too much of a perfectionist? Perhaps I've simply had no opportunities? I was only aware that my interest was welcome in fewer cases than I have fingers on one hand. Of those, all but one were highly ambiguous, and may have been misunderstood.

I was very close to Victoria Vayne for a number of years, so much that some of fandom began to see us as a given couple – we attended conventions together, knew most of the same fans, and even published together. I contributed to her genzine, *Simulacrum*, and we co-edited the newsletter, *DNQ*, for several years. While we did experiment in a more intimate relationship, we discovered that we just didn't have those kind of feelings for one another, and reverted to a close friendship. Over time, though, even that friendship drifted farther apart. We remain friends ... but have completely separate lives today.

Gawd knows, I'm no prize myself, but I never fantasized about discovering my perfect mate among women my own age, who match my own gradually failing physical state. Do I dream at night about 60-year-old women with graying hair, who are 60 pounds overweight and take a half-dozen prescription medications for their problematic health? Of course not. But, I don't even dream at night about women my age who have kept their youthful figures and looks. (I know they're out there. I know a few of them.)

No ... I *still* fantasize about Saara Mar. When the lights are out and my head is on the pillow, I'm 21 and, hand-in-hand, Saara and I are walking the woods behind "Homefall" in Willow Run, or she's pointing out the star in the night sky that lies between Earth and the Pleiades, around which her home world traces out the eight seasons of its year. Seeing as how a long imaginary relationship with a furry extraterrestrial seems to have led me to settling for nothing human, or attainable, should I have settled for *less*? *Could* I have? At my age, the question bothers me because the time for exercising options is running out.

But I can't say that I regret a moment. Not a moment.



Onward Yes (Chris Squire)

Contained in everything I do,
There's a love, I feel for you.
Proclaimed in everything I write,
You're the light
Burning brightly.
*Onward through the night,
Onward through the night,
Onward through the night of my life!*

Displayed in all the things I see,
There's a love you show to me.
Portrayed in all the things you say
You're the day
Leading the way.

*Onward through the night,
Onward through the night,
Onward through the night of my life!*

*Onward through the night,
Onward through the night,
Onward through the night of my life!*

“Remember it’s a sin to kill a mocking-bird.” That was the only time I ever heard Atticus say it was a sin to do something, and I asked Miss Maudie about it.

“Your father’s right,” she said. “Mocking-birds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy . . . but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.”

- To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee





“As knocking was no use, Pinocchio, in despair, began to kick and bang against the door as if he wanted to break it. At the noise, a window opened, and a lovely maiden looked out. She had azure hair and a face white as wax. Her eyes were closed and her hands crossed upon her breast. With a voice so weak it could hardly be heard, she whispered: ‘No one lives at this house’ ... ‘Won’t you, at least, open the door for me?’ cried Pinocchio in a beseeching voice.”

- **First appearance of the Blue Fairy in Collodi’s novel. Her resemblance to Saara Mar was a surprising coincidence.**

Thank You, Taral

by Chris

In the far-future, you'll be able to look at the history of *The Drink Tank* in three periods - Pre-Taral, The Taral Era, and After Taral. It's just that simple. It is not a shock to me that we won the Hugo during the Taral Era. Taral's pieces have been among the best in any fanzine over the last five or so years. His stuff in other zines has been awesome as well, and I feel exceptionally lucky to have had the chance to publish 100 of his pieces. Some are fantastic, and I don't think I've ever had any other article that got folks talking as much as the 'Cat pee' piece he did a few months ago. I don't know why, but it connected, even without many LoCs. It happens.

I could certainly write a lot about each of Taral's articles. My favorite over-all issue of the *Drink Tank* is the one after Taral won the Rotsler. It's a great issue, Taral looking at his own art, talking about how things go, even hacking on Rotsler himself. It was a great issue. There were pieces on the History of Fandom, on stuff that is just flat awesome. The fact is I love having Taral's pieces, and if this is the last, I'm just glad that I had the chance to run 100 of 'em, and this one, number 100, was among the best I've ever had the chance to put up.

At one point, Taral was concerned about putting this article in *The Drink Tank*. He didn't think that it would fit alongside pieces of the kind I tend to run. Pieces on wrestling, or movies, or steampunk, though I don't think I've ever written anything about Firefly. We figured that doing an issue completely dedicated to Taral's final work (and his art, which to me is some of the best in the world) would be the best idea. It certainly does make for a fine showcase of a fine writer, a fine artist, and a contributor I have been lucky to have.

Though, this may have gone against the theory of my zining.

Let me take you to a documentary I produced, *Rock The Block: The Story of The Cactus Club*. There is a phrase that half-a-dozen folks involved with the founding and running of San Jose's all-time greatest nightclub used. *You could come in any night and see a guy in a business suit drinking with a punk with a mohawk in a leather jacket.*

That's exactly what I've hoped the *Drink Tank* would become.

You see, I'm a guy who has varied interests, so is James, and we're always looking to find more and more stuff that's interesting to us to run. I want that article that is the Business Suit rubbing up against the article that is the Punk Rocker. Wrestling alongside gender theory, art history next to con reports, John Scalzi mixed with Zelda Fitzgerald. That's what *The Drink Tank* could be, and in my eyes, when it's at its best. I certainly think giving Taral his own showcase for his goodbye was a great idea. Here, I think he gets the focus he deserves. And, if there'd been any more content, this thing might have ended up as long as Issue 300.

And why doesn't he have a raft of Hugos?

It's hard to say that a guy who has been a WorldCon Guest of Honor is under-recognised, or a guy who has won the Rotsler, but he's not been on the big stage, accepting the Hugo, or even The FAAn Award. His art work is top-notch, his zine *Broken Toys* is exceptional, his writing is right up there with Claire Brialey and Bruce Gillespie for the best things going in the world today. I'll miss Taral's work in my pages, but things come and things go, and you never know what's gonna be next, right?

And Taral has a strong future ahead of him. He's gonna give us more *Broken Toys*, more art, and more writing all over the place. He's a special part of fandom, and someday, we're gonna realise it even more than we already have. I've been lucky enough to have Taral's writing for a long time, and now he's on to greener pavestones. MAYbe having his stuff where people will actually care about it will help him earn that recognition, but if he doesn't at least get on the ballot for Best Fan Writer next year, I'll be massively upset. This piece alone proves he deserves it, has deserved it.

Thank you, Taral. You've managed to do something that I never thought would happen. You made me feel like *The Drink Tank* could be something special.



WATCHING THE SUN SET FROM MY BALCONY, WITH SOME FRIENDS.