

OPUNTIA #11.1

Late January 1993

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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$1 cash, trade for your zine, or letter of comment.

THE USUAL: In the zine reviews that follow, reference to the phrase 'The Usual' means that the zine can be had for \$2 for a sample, trade for your zine, contribution of art or articles, or letter of comment. If you've never seen the zine, it might be best to send for a sample copy before contributing.

TRAVELS OF A BOOK

I came across a copy of NEBULA AWARD STORIES TWO in the Co-op book exchange. It was an ex-library copy from the Arkansas County Bookmobile in Stuttgart, Arkansas. It had been checked out eight times in 1967 and 1968, according to the library card still in it. Then silence, and who knows where it was prior to showing up in Calgary twenty-four years later.

"AQ!", HE SNEEZED ...

For production values and fine printing, one must look to ASTROMANCER QUARTERLY, put out by the people who would have you believe that Niagara Falls is the place to be in 1998. Good reading here (the zine, not the Falls), where a definite frivolous tone intermixed in sercon stuff, some of which relates to SF. Leah Zeldes Smith reviews zines by thematic order, the way I would like to do if I had the energy. This time around she concentrates on revenants, zines put out after a long absence by people who used to be BNFs before they gaf-iated. AQ has also been reprinting con reports from forty or so years ago, to give a feel of what was back then. And a rare item indeed is the art critique, in this case being Sheryl Birkhead on the artwork found in zines. Her column 'Scattered Images' will probably never include OPUNTIA, unless she decides to review clip art.

AQ #4 is dated November 1992. Available for The Usual via Box 500, Bridge Station, Niagara Falls, New York 14305, USA.

THINGUCHUCK'S

If it's a zine postmarked Halesworth, Suffolk, then it must be THINGUMYBOB, even if it has no cover or return address. Chuck Connor does himself proud with a zine written in one continuous flow, with the locs integrated into a hard-boiled detective story. The hero is searching for Chuck, who has gone missing, while the Multiverse drifts into forbidden paths. Loc comments are incorporated as part of the plot, and nicely done at that. An excellent read all round. The Usual, via Chuck Connor, c/o Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England.



THINGUNIGEL'S

Another zine from Merrie Olde Leeds, in the $8\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ or A-whatever size that the Europeans insist on using such that we North Americans can't get them to fit properly into binders or on bookshelves. Nigel Richardson writes about life in gloomy seaside towns and finishes up with life on the pogeys. A rather depressing read, frankly. It is to be hoped that the occasional ray of sunshine will stray into the next ish. Before I forget, the title of this zine is SLUBBERDEGULLION.

The Usual from Nigel Richardson, c/o 9 Windsor Green, East Garforth, Leeds LS25 2LG, England.

THINGULELAND'S

The peripatetic editor of RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY, Leland Sapiro, produces a small (12 cm x 21 cm) zine that is as serious as a zine can get before turning into an academic journal. A selection of poetry, a short story, and some locs are there, but the major interest is in the criti-

cal articles. Issue #33, dated August 1992 but received here just after Christmas, continues a series by Justin Leiber on his father Fritz. Future history is discussed as a basic form of SF, although most of the text deals with Wells and GBS, as well as Poul Anderson. Johnny Townsend goes on about Mormonism, Orson Scott Card, and homosexuals. There is a brief tribute to Asimov, and the story behind the death of a poet whose last contribution turns out to have been plagiarized. The loccol briefly mentions that classic of opera anecdotes, "What time does the next swan leave?" which seems to have been attributed to every tenor who ever sang opera, whether or not he was in one with a swan.

A sample copy of RQ can be had for US\$2.50 from Leland Sapiro, Box 958, Big Sandy, Texas 75755.



LET IT STAND

From out of Wheeling, Illinois, comes the August 1992 ish of STET. Pubbed by Leah Zeldes Smith and her hubby Dick, STET 6 is a thick 88 page doorstopper of a zine, mimeoed on fuzzy paper in the time-honoured tradition of fandom. Sixty pages of this are locs. While FOSFAX may still be in the lead for verbosity of its loccers, STET is giving it a close challenge. Neither zine is something to be quickly skimmed; there is a full evening's read in both. (RADIO FREE THULCANDRA is a third zine in this category.)

Ahead of all those locs are a few articles. The button-pusher in STET 6 is "Devaluing the Egobuck" by Greg Hills who has a decided opinion about what is wrong with zine pubbing these days. He starts off with a premise that few will disagree with: zines are having trouble publishing, and fans are having trouble finding zines. Hills believes that the problem is that standards are too low. A zinepubber soon finds out that he/she gets the same number of trades whether he/she publishes two, six, or ten issues a year. A scribbled postcard gets a trade just the same as a thoughtful three-page loc. And a point I have taken to heart is that article writers do not have their addresses published, whereas loccers do, a valid point that I'll correct in future issues of OPUNTIA. This does make a difference since other zinepubbers reading a lettercol will send sample copies to the loccers but not to the authors of articles.

Hills considers the unfairness of the 'all-for-all' trading policy, the fact that poor locs get a trade the same as a good loc, and other imbalances. He does concede the point that "... publishers are pouring money down a hole which is fine if they really want to do that but is not, in my opinion, something that should be expected of them"

Whether it is expected or not is irrelevant; no one publishes a zine in the hopes of making it a money-maker. At least I hope they don't, for zinepubbing is a hobby, just

like growing roses or playing hockey in the local league. Zinepubbing is done for the same reason we have other hobbies; it is fun, a way to make friends, and a means of creative expression. If too expensive, then it must be dropped in favour of a cheaper alternative, but no one is obligated to publish.

As far as freeloaders go, I do and don't agree with Hills. I currently carry on my mailing list some loccers who only send a postcard, or trades who only publish once a year. At the moment, the print run is 75, of which 60 or so are mailed out immediately and the rest gradually used up as sample copies to new might-be loccers or traders, or given away at conventions. I will eventually hit a limit, probably at 100 copies, where the mailing list will be pruned, and only better loccers and trades will be kept on.

"... the quality of locs is dropping.", says Hills. In looking over fanzines in my library that are twenty or forty years old, I can't see any difference on the average.

Meanwhile, Harry Warner Jr., who can write a loc about colophons or baseball, has a lament in STET, or more a diatribe rather, about typewriters. Nevermind the reckless, headlong rush to personal computers, Harry's a man firmly against the idea of electric typewriters. After all, if a manual typewriter was good enough for Shakespeare ...

STET #6 came to me for The Usual from 17 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, Illinois 60090-6415.

THIS JUST IN FROM CINCINNATI ...

... being OUTWORLDS #65, another zine in the time-honoured tradition of doorstoppers with lots of reading. No quick skim here. The major piece in this issue is an extended appreciation of the late Frank Arnold, an English fan you probably never heard of. Neither did I, but Dave Rowe is the author of this biography that not only illuminates a life but provides an excellent history of SFdom in Britain. Numerous photos and an account of the life and times of Frank Arnold that was hard to put down.

The Usual or \$5 for a sample copy from Bill Bowers, Box 58174, Cincinnati, Ohio 45258-0174.



... AND THIS JUST OUT FROM TEXAS

No map for this review, since the two editors live in different cities and the mailing address on the zine is a third one. TEXAS SF INQUIRER is a typical clubzine, if a column on learning Gaelic can be considered typical. An editor of this zine lives in San Antonio, an outlier of the Canadian Football League, which recently awarded a franchise to that city. You can't get much more outlying from Canada than that.

Available for The Usual, c/o Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge, San Antonio, Texas 78239.

CLUBZINES

Just a quick run through some zines put out by more social fans. BCSFAZINE #235 has an interview with the author Spider Robinson, but the gripping part of this is the discovery that the club was unincorporated, contrary to what the membership thought, and thus all members could have been held liable for the \$15,000 Westercon debt. The person who was receiving the mail from the Registrar of Societies didn't bother to pass it on to the club executive, who operated in blissful ignorance that their club was dissolved in 1990. And if you are on a club executive, you'd better demand to see with your own eyes proof that your club is registered; don't just take someone's word that all is well. BCSFAzine is a monthly, available for \$20 per year from BCSFA, Box 35577, Vancouver, B.C., V6M 4G9.

Just DASFAX, ma'am. From Denver, the American equivalent of Calgary, comes the January 1993 issue, with a bunch of reviews and the policy platforms of the candidates for the club executive. Dave Gibbons says if he is elected Treasurer, he will change the title to Exchequer. Hypocritical though, because he also says he will balance the checkbook; it should, of course, be a chequebook. Nothing is said about him spelling words with '-our' instead of '-or' and '-re' instead of '-er'. We'll make a Brit out of him yet. Meantime, you get DASFAX for The Usual, c/o Fred Cleaver, 153 W. Ellsworth Avenue, Denver, Colorado, 80223-1623.

OASFis and OSFS are Orlando and Ottawa clubs respectively. EVENT HORIZON out of Florida via OASFis, Box 940992, Maitland, Florida 32794-0992. STATEMENT from OSFS, Box 6636, Ottawa, Ontario, K2A 3Y7.

NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE USUAL

If you attended university, you'll remember the student newspaper had cartoon strips by a wannabe Doonesbury. It may have been well drawn, but probably had the political incorrectness of an engineering student.

And so we come to TWISTED IMAGE, a monthly or so compilation of Ace Backwards cartoons mixed in with reports on the street life of Berkeley. The usual attacks on American politicians; in the January 1993 issue, Ace begins a transition from vilifying Bush to denigrating Clinton. A cartoon page on Madonna, as if we needed to hear more about her sex life. A photograph of massed Orthodox Jews, which needs no explanation to those who have read previous issues of TWISTED IMAGE, as a result of which Ace learned the hard way not to mess with Holocaust revisionists. But that is another story.

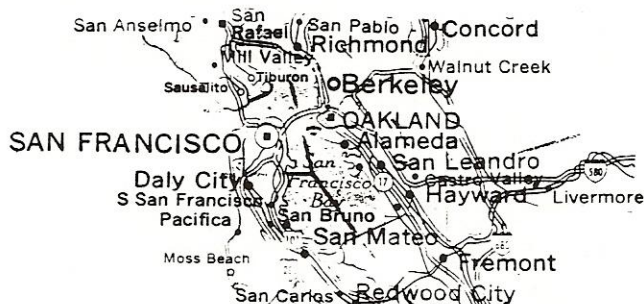
\$20 for twelve issues from Ace Backwards, 1630 University Avenue #26, Berkeley, California 94703.

IT'S OVER! THE ART STRIKE IS OVER!

What do you mean, you didn't know it was on? Granted that the only participants were artists whose absence was never noted. It was, however, great fun to write about, so much so that someone proposed a Pretentious Drivel Strike. But the shouting and sulking is over now, and we turn with relief to the various zines emanating from Iowa City. The Drawing Legion puts out a cluster of zines for US\$10 Stateside, US\$12 Canada, and US\$18 elsewhere, via Box 227, Iowa City, Iowa 52244. You'll get all of them, beginning with YAWN, a single sheet zine of Sporadic Criticism. It has occupied itself mostly with the Art Strike, but churns out manifestos on other movements. Sometimes hard to read, and much given to making unsupported statements.

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During the Art Strike, RETROFUTURISM appeared once in a while. The March 1992 issue (the latest one) covers the Immediast movement and a hassle that a rock group got into when they copied the band 'U2' a bit much. A zine that disappeared during the Art Strike but is now back is PHOTOSTATIC, which has a couple of short articles but is mostly reviews of alternative zines and books.



GOOD DATA IS HARD TO FIND

Once a week like clockwork I visit the University of Calgary Library to catch up on the current periodicals. I read mostly science journals, but one advantage of open stacks is that I can browse and spot titles I would not ordinarily read or even know existed. And so it is with THE INDEXER, published by The Society of Indexers. I'll not give an address to subscribe as I don't expect many readers of this zine will put out £25 for two issues per year; it is a truism that academic journals are always overpriced.

As we become buried under a sea of data in this age of computers, it becomes more difficult to locate data. One must rely on indexes, but good luck finding them in some books. Indexers seem to be in a growth industry, but it is not always immediately evident from the looks of it.

The October 1992 issue of THE INDEXER completes Volume 18. It starts off with an editorial to the trade written by Hazel Bell, her photograph appended by her editorial. She looks exactly like the stereotype of a librarian, a middle-aged matron with glasses and a one-strand necklace. You know the type; you've seen her in your local library, whether Calgary or Kiev, Stamford Hill or Melbourne. Her editorial starts off with the burning issue of the day, "Who should index books?". Professional indexers, editors, or authors? She quickly dismisses authors, who are least qualified to index their books, not being trained in such niceties as depth of indexing, colocation of related entries, or multiple entry posting. A professional indexer is preferred of course, but failing that, the editor should do the work. One can imagine the response of editors to this suggestion, for who wants to be stuck in additional work?

The table of contents lists the kind of articles expected in THE INDEXER. "Legal Vocabulary and the Indexer" is followed by "Should Fiction be Indexed?". One article I

read with great interest was titled "Selected Linguistic Problems in Indexing Within the Canadian Context." by Lisa Rasmussen.

The most obvious problem in indexing Canadian literature is British spelling versus American spelling. The mixture of two different traditions in the English language has resulted in some Canadians who use British cheques but American tires, rather than checks or tyres. And it goes without saying that any indexer must decide between 'labour' and 'labor' or 'centre' and 'center'. In a book written by a single author it is no problem, but an anthology or magazine may have half the authors using 'labour' and the other half using 'labor'.

Canadianisms are relatively rare and usually do not have alternative spellings. A British indexer may be baffled by 'Nanaimo bar' or 'muskeg', but a good dictionary of Canadian terms will solve the problem. It is difficult to index phrases such as 'on the pogy' but while Canadian English is swamped by British and American words, few Canadianisms have made their way to the outside. ['pogy', by the way, is unemployment insurance] When the \$1 banknote was replaced by a coin depicting a loon, it immediately became known as the 'loonie', although 'looney' had a brief life before falling from favour.

Bilingual books are a headache for Canadian indexers, as often the French version is too freely translated and has a different meaning. Faux amis are words that are similar in appearance but have different meanings. 'Les appointments' means a salary in Québec, not rendezvous as in anglophone Canada. Québec French has a number of words derived from 16th and 17th century French that are no longer used in France. Indeed, a person indexing Québec publications had best be someone who did not learn French in France, as there are a number of variations between the two forms, much like

the differences between American and British English. (My favourite example of such philological landmines is the case of the Englishman asking a North American woman if he could knock her up, and getting a well-deserved slap in the face.)

Another article in THE INDEXER discusses problems in the name of an author. Not just the usual problems with pseudonyms, ghostwriting or 'as told to', and variant spellings (are the Russian brothers 'Strugatski' or 'Strugatsky'?), but headaches like the famous paper in a 1986 issue of PLASMA PHYSICS AND CONTROLLED FUSION which had 246 authors. And for common names, it might be advisable to start using nicknames to sort out all those scientists named John Smith. Say, for example, John the Plasma Smith, to separate him from John the Fossil Smith. The article discusses the problem faced by the Scottish Crofters Union, which has difficulty sorting out the 435 MacLeods and 430 MacDonalds who subscribe. The S.C.U. is in fact appealing to the membership to list their full names and nicknames to help sort out all those James MacLeods.

Like any magazine, THE INDEXER has book reviews, but instead of the usual 'I thought it was a great/lousy' book' type reviews, they only review the indexes. This is much like the book collector periodicals who review the latest Stephen King novel by discussing the binding and paper.

ZINEZINES

The sudden collapse and death throes of FACTSHEET FIVE has left more than a few zine addicts suffering from the pangs of withdrawal. If you never saw it, F.F. was a reviewzine that listed thousands of zines, audios, books, and videos from the alternative scene. I've not found a complete replacement but a couple of titles are worth mentioning. OBSCURE doesn't run a mass of capsule comments, but usually mentions a dozen or so titles and goes

into great detail about one or two items. Sample copy is US\$2 via Box 1334, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201.

I recently came across ANGRY THOREAUAN, free in southern California and \$2 elsewhere. This is basically a musiczine, but it lists lots of zines in a similar style to F.F.. One reason I enjoyed this type of listing is that the alternative press zines are much more interesting than the average SF zine. Advocacy zines from lunatic left to lunatic right, or whimsical zines such as DISHWASHER, which I sent away for, it being described as a perzine of a chap who alternates between dishwashing in restaurants and playing in a rock band. (I hope to have a review of this in a later ish of OPUNTIA.) The local is vibrant albeit ephemeral. Some editorial concerns, the usual indignant the-world-is-going-to-hell stuff. US\$2 for a sample copy from A.T., Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814.

SCANDAL SHEET

Recently a new magazine showed up on Calgary newstands, a biweekly called FRANK, the Canadian equivalent of SPY or PRIVATE EYE. It appears to have been around a while, as the January 21, 1993, issue is #133. The content is mostly about scandals in Ottawa (where the magazine is based) or Toronto. If they ever hire a stringer in Alberta, they'll have a fit over Ralph Klein, our new Premier, who campaigned for party leader on a platform of cheap beer and the right to smoke in public places. But for now, FRANK mostly goes on about who is doing what to whom in Ottawa, usually involving a Minister and a legislative assistant. There is the public servant who fiddled the bills by \$300000 for bulletproofing the Canada Customs post at the border where it runs through the Akwesasne Reserve (seems the Mohawks keep shooting out the windows, something about Oka cheese). \$45 will get you a year's supply of FRANK from Box 604, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2R7.

In 1967, a thin, 94-page trade paperback was published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart Ltd., titled POLITICAL REALIGNMENT, and subtitled A CHALLENGE TO THOUGHTFUL CANADIANS. The book made a splash in the news media because the author was Ernest Manning, then-premier of Alberta. He retired a few years later after three decades as premier, and his party, Social Credit, did not long survive him. Manning's book sold well; twenty-five years later it still keeps showing up in secondhand bookstores and the Calgary Co-op Book Exchange (where I got my copy). It has not been reprinted though, and I suspect that Manning himself wouldn't want to see it out again unless extensive revisions were made. The book is fairly readable but suffers a bit because Manning wrote in a Johnsonian style, with long rolling sentences and Latinized words.

POLITICAL REALIGNMENT has been forgotten by the news media and general public, if indeed many people remember enough to know it existed. No surprise, given that most of those two groups have the attention span of a fungus gnat. Twenty-five years later, Manning is in his 80s and Social Credit is extinct in Alberta, where it was born and ruled for four decades. But there is indeed no new thing under the sun. Today, attention is focussed on Preston Manning, son of Ernest, who leads the Reform party in federal politics. The ideology and philosophy of Reform can be traced back to this little-remembered book.

1967. All those years ago! And yet only an eyeblink in history, with lots of 30ish and 40ish people around to remember. To understand this book, one must understand the times in which it was written. Canada had and would continue to have a succession of minority governments. No federal party could get a firm grip on power, all were regionalized, each struggling to fight clear of its own corner and convert the rest of Canada. The Progressive Conservatives were based in western Canada, the Liberals had Québec, the New Democratic Party was scattered here

and there. Most peculiar was Social Credit, which had Alberta, British Columbia, and, of all places, rural Québec. Undecided voters formed a major bloc of votes to swing elections wildly. Three federal elections of the early part of that time had voter turnouts of 79% each time. (Since then voter interest has declined; in 1988, the controversial free-trade election, only 75% voted, and before that, in less exciting elections, as few as 69% voted.) Ernest Manning had ideas on What Is To Be Done, and surprisingly they did not involve Social Credit. The Socreds were still riding high in 1967, but while he never came out and directly said it, I think he knew they were doomed. He proposed a major reorganization of the Tories, but suggested if that was not to be, then a new party was needed. The old world was dying, but the new one was not yet born.

Manning started off by explaining the situation as it was in 1967, and as many would say it still is. He pointed out that there was little difference between the Tories and the Grits. Although philosophically it can be said that one is right-wing and the other is left-wing, the actual details of governing had more to do with pragmatic considerations of the day. No policy was being generated by serious major thought, merely by election platforms and response to voter pressure. This left it up to civil servants in Ottawa, which in turn led voters to say that it didn't matter who was in power, the policy would still be made by mandarins. The vagueness of party policy led to Red Tories and old-guard Liberals. This overlapping meant that people who agreed on certain policies would still end up opposing each other because they were on different parties.

Here is an extract of what Manning said about the system: "The first question which many ... ask ... is 'How can I get elected?'. Their thinking and activity during the most creative period of their lives is channelled into considerations involving the cultiva-

tion of their political image, the utilization of the latest techniques in advertising and campaigning, and the establishment of politically useful contacts. When these aspects of political life dominate the early years of a young politician's development, he gives little attention to the more fundamental matters which will eventually determine whether he is a political liability or a political asset to his country."

"The young politician who is eventually successful in his efforts to become elected, soon finds that he is of little value to parliament, to the government, or to the people back home unless he can make some significant contribution toward the development of solutions to public problems. He is thus forced to develop a new concern for policies which will provide realistic solutions to such problems (as distinct from the so-called 'policies' embodied in election platforms and campaign literature designed to attract votes) at a time and under circumstance which are not conducive to comprehensive study. ... He realizes, perhaps too late, that in public life there is a great necessity to discover and understand fundamental principles and values before one assumes responsibility for the development of policy, the advising of governments, and the commitment of time and energy to political action." [End of quote]

Ernest Manning proposed that a Social Conservative party be created, and stated its principles. His son Preston created the Reform party, with similar ideals. The New Democratic Party (labour socialist) knows what it stands for. The Bloc Québécois (separatist) know what they are for. But the Tories and Grits veer from side to side back and forth across the centre line. You wouldn't want to drive a car like that. Yet we accept governments like that.

The fatal flaw in Manning's book is the vagueness of its principles. Book reviewers savaged it because all but a few of the principles were stated in such terms that any party could accept them. "The preservation of Liberty",

to give one principle, is hardly restricted to one end of the political spectrum. The only principle to offend a socialist would be the one that said prosperity and economic activity should be the responsibility of the individual, not the government. Manning boldly proclaimed that individuals should have freedom of worship, as if any party was opposed to it, but he had nothing to say about freedom not to worship. For a premier with decades of political experience, it was surprising that he had no specific plans.

But perhaps it shouldn't be surprising. Any politician knows that if you announce a detailed plan, then the news media and opposition parties will commence to pick it apart. Their alternative will, of course, be better and most certainly will be vague to avoid being pinned down. Preston Manning, as head of the Reform party, is finding that out, although in some cases the Tories have paid him the compliment of stealing Reform ideas and claiming credit for them. As much as voters bleat about how they want a campaign of issues and ideas, the truth is that they decide on the basis of emotion and which news report they heard last. The failure of Ernest Manning to be specific diminished the impact of the book, but did save him from nitpicking vultures.

Manning's book appeared just before the Tory leadership convention that ousted agrarian populist John Diefenbaker in favour of Robert Stanfield. Dief was Prime Minister in the 1950s with the largest majority in Canadian history, Opposition Leader in the 1960s while fighting off the backstabbers, and backbencher to his death in 1979. Stanfield, touted as a winner to take the Tories back into power, was never able to defeat Pierre Trudeau. Manning had to announce in his book that he was not a candidate for federal office to prevent critics from saying he was gunning for the Tory leadership. The Tories careered onward without paying any attention to Manning. But neither did they gain the government for another decade.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Buck Coulson
2677W-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

1992-8-15

WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP, unless there are two books of the same title, has nothing to do with murderers. It consists of reprints of selected newspaper clippings from the 1890s BADGER STATE BANNER, and photos taken by a "town photographer", also from Wisconsin. It provides the negative side of rural and small-town life of the period. First edition 1973, Pantheon division of Random House. It has some grisly episodes; I like to dwell on the woman who committed suicide with a pair of sheep shears. Might be a murder or two included, but not emphasized. The author, Michael Lesy, did a second book REAL LIFE, about Louisville in the 1920s, which was not very good and not a commercial success. I remember Robert Bloch urgently wanting details on WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP and where he could get a copy. It made a minor splash in 1970s fandom. I doubt if I was the first fan to read it, but I may have been the first to review it.

[According to the review in OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS AND VIDEO, the W.D.T. they are talking about is a zine not a book, and is published by an Englishman named Chris Walton. The zine deals with murderers of various regions.]

Don't recall if I responded to your query about town names. Hartford City isn't very interesting, obviously named after another Hartford, probably the one in Connecticut. However, it's the county seat of Blackford County, named after Judge Isaac Blackford, who distinguished himself by running for a wide variety of city, county, and state offices, and losing every time. But he was a good party man, so they named the county after him, and appointed him to assorted offices.

[Re: MONAD] I have never heard of Damon Knight ever softening or restating an idea more diplomatically. The second issue did include material by one academic, and another by a former fan. The fan, however, had redeemed himself by having become a professional.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert
1104 Mulvey Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 1J5

1992-8-16

Surely the expense of fanzine publishing has much to do with the fewer number being issued, and your free distribution of copies at ConVersion 9 is an example that few can afford. Garth Spencer amazed me with the number of fanzines he published in past years, but his dedication to Canadian fandom is shared rarely.

[The copies I distributed were leftovers from each issue's print run and essentially cost me nothing. I currently order 75 copies, immediately distribute 60, and gradually get rid of the rest to new readers or by

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leaving them at con freebie tables. Printing is surprisingly cheap these days; postage is what seems to be the killer for most zines.]

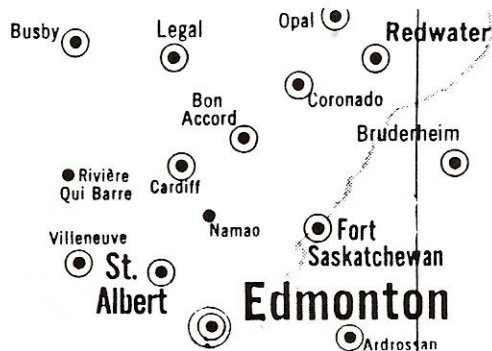
David H. Blair visited me recently and gave me a copy of an early draft of his book *ASTOUNDING REVISITED*, a detailed listing of the stories in the magazine with notes of his choices as favourites, and a similar listing of *UNKNOWN*, its companion magazine. Blair is definitely the highest authority in Winnipeg on the SF world known to me but is not a fanzine reader, apart from *LOCUS*. At his insistence, I have applied for membership in First Fandom. This group of oldtimers includes David Kyle, Wilson Tucker, and numerous others, few of whom I've met or corresponded with, but almost all known to me for one reason or another.

FROM: Joe Maraglino
Box 500
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

1992-8-17

Perhaps if more faneds used the freebie tables at cons they attend, fanzine fandom would be increased. It's surprising how many letters are generated, primarily by folks who've never seen a fanzine before, by doing just that. Because of quantity discounts and printer's schedules, *ASTROMANCER QUARTERLY* tends to have print overruns of several hundred copies per issue, most of which show up on freebie tables. It's been our pleasant experience to answer more than a few inquiries from possible zine-heads-to-be, sparked entirely by the fact that they were able to simply pick them up gratis, rather than paying out hard-earned LoCs, or, ghod forbid, dollars.

In answer to your question regarding the 50 years of fan publishing cover, the example you have is obviously a forgery. Note that the postmark indicates it having been mailed on 29 May, whereas the First Day of Issue clearly states 01 June.



FROM: Paula Johanson
Box 7 Site 1 RR 1
Legal, Alberta TOG ILO

1992-8-19

OPUNTIA #9.1 arrived when I was reading Asimov's autobiography *IN MEMORY YET GREEN*. Son of a gun, if he didn't mention the *DIMENSION X* radio show you described. I enclose a photocopy of the pertinent page of this huge tome.

[From pages 628 and 629 of this book: "On June 17, I listened to a dramatization of *PEBBLE IN THE SKY* ... The radio writer was the young but able Ernest Kinoy. It was only a half-hour show, so it was an enormously altered version. It even had a catastrophic ending rather than my happy one, but I like it; it was well done. There was only one little catch: My name was not mentioned on the program at any point, and I was indignant. I called Campbell who was, I understood, technical advisor to the program. He told me he was no longer connected with it. ... I called Fred Pohl and he was quite short with me and told me to act my age.

[continued next page]

[That one confused me, since agents were supposed to be more understanding than that. I found out from him later (in a letter of apology) that at the time I had called he was having a terrific fight with Judy Merrill as his third marriage was breaking up. I wrote letters all around and in the end ... the DIMENSION X people apologize and mention my name on the next week's program, but that wasn't the same, especially since they mispronounced it."]

FROM: Ned Brooks 1992-8-18
713 Paul Street
Newport News, Virginia 23605

I love the postal cover cover. When did they start to call them 'fanzines'? For example, I have a bound volume of the 1924-1934 issues of Arthur Harris' UAPazine, INTERESTING ITEMS, done in letterpress in Wales. The first issue has a letter from the President of UAPA, Sonia Greene, who later married H.P. Lovecraft. H.P.L. is mentioned in later issues, as is Frank Belknap Long, whose name is oddly typoed 'Belhaug'. But the Piser index lists lots of late-1930s titles that contain the word 'fan'.

Most of the spare copies of my apazines go to longtime correspondents. I don't think anyone ever asked for one. Anybody can get IT GOES ON THE SHELF though, at least for now. I seem to have made too many copies of the last couple of issues.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr. 1992-8-17
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

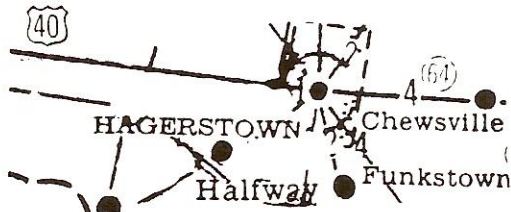
The apazine that I'm still producing every three months for FAPA had its first issue dated late in 1939.

When I used to go to cons occasionally, fanzine editors

would shove into my hands their latest issues. I would promise to write a loc soon but somehow never seemed to get around to it. It was as if there were some immaterial barrier that separated the hand-delivered fanzines from those that came through the mail, and with the best will in the world I almost always broke my loocing promise. I've seen references by other fans to this same inexplicable tendency.

I've taped several of the DIMENSION X episodes, although under the later name of X-1, but not the PEBBLE IN THE SKY dramatization. I suppose the radical change between Asimov's book and the script were unavoidable to get everything aired in a half-hour, but it's a good demonstration of the folly of trying to convert any novel to such a short timespan. Incidentally, a note I received from a U.S. fan many years ago told me how much he had enjoyed the public radio production of a novelette I'd sold to GALAXY some years earlier. It was the first I'd heard of such a thing and the last, too. I assumed either he'd confused what he heard with my story ("Rattle Okay") or it had been dramatized on some university FM station without going out on the network.

Hagerstown is named for its founder, a German whose name was Jonathan Heger. That's how he always signed it, but the bulk of the local population was English, and the name was anglicized to give it the proper pronunciation. Heger originally named the city he promoted Elizabethtown after his wife.



FROM: Rodney Leighton
RR 3
Pugwash, Nova Scotia BOK ILO

1992-9-3

In my view, anyone who expends money and effort attending a con is already a SFan; I would be surprised if you or anyone got any new readers by putting freebies on a table. Much better to send copies to reviewers, whose readership contains a lot of non-fen who might be intrigued by the review and thence become a fan. of course there aren't that many places now now, as you point out.

Another strange coincidence: on the same day I got OPUNTIA #9.1, I got a copy of OBSCURE from a friend. Have to disagree with your "basically a six-page FF" comment. Each of the five or six issues I have seen has a central theme, with essays and interviews, with reviews around the edges. Different than FACTSHEET FIVE.

The comments from Steve George certainly hit home. I started my wrestling zine for fun but soon got into an intense campaign to print what others wanted and might react to. It soon became not that much fun.

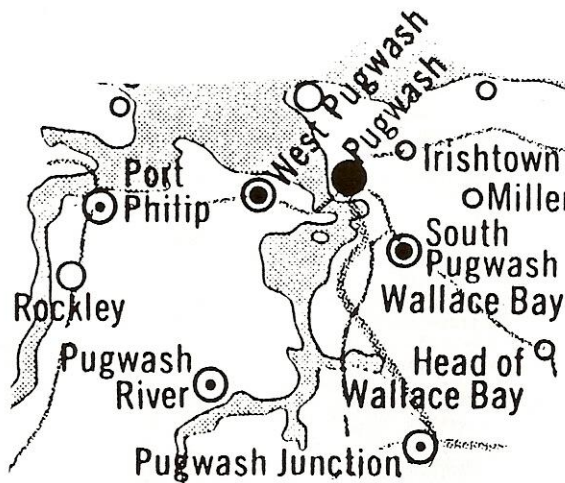
FROM: Henry Welch
5538 N. Shasta Drive
Glendale, Wisconsin 53209

1992-8-26

I'm sorry that you haven't had any success from seeding the freebie table at conventions. I've been managing to get about two responses a year from my various seedings.

In regard to your review of THE KNARLY KNEWS, it is my intention for it to be a genzine. Unfortunately I have not established the extensive connections necessary to

generate a sufficient number of contributions. As a result, you see what Letha and I manage to produce (we've never claimed to be decent authors), and the result is something closer to a perzine.



FROM: Jyri Kallas
Kalevi 97 - 3
Tartu EE2400, Estonia

1992-8-21

I was in Minsk, Byelorussia, in April and did a good search for any examples of works written in local language. Unfortunately, there were a couple of very old and much out-of-date novels and a volume of tales by H.C. Andersen ... in the whole Byelorussian capital.

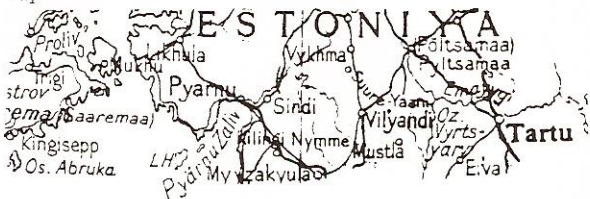
Later I have spoken about it with my friend; he's a Russian SF writer living in Byelorussia. He told me

that there is actually no SF literature existing today written in Byelorussian. I read an article there claiming: "We have got ten excellent SF writers here in Minsk only; of course, they all write in Russian."

It seems that everything depends on whether a nation in such condition did have its SF before the "attack" or not (like the Byelorussians) and SF literature emerged during the colonization period. It is difficult for the Big Brother to mess up with it, and the other way round, if the local literature existed earlier, it is virtually impossible to overwhelm it. A fine example are the Polish authors.

Of course, overwhelming a neighbour's developing is fairly possible. However, I think that in the field of literature it's rather an involuntary process.

The local authors are to blame as well. There is always a possibility to write using his own language in his own way.



FROM: Lloyd Penney
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

1992-9-18

Trying to find new fanzine fans is admirable, but the people who pick up back issues off the freebie table may not be aware of what they should do. Every zine on the

table should have inside a letter explaining what it is, what's expected if they want more issues, and what they should do next. This may be the best introduction to fanzine fandom they're likely to get.

Radio SF is still heard. Robert Sawyer had some of his fiction dramatized on CBC some years ago. Other fiction in drama form is broadcast, but so few people listen to CBC Radio, I'd wonder who really hears it.

FROM: Ken Cheslin
10 Coney Green
Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 1LA, England

1992-8-31

I've taken fanzines to every convention I've been to since my unfashionable in 1988. Apart from the '88 Eastercon I have noticed very few fanzines about (and not many there; the 'fanzine room' was part of a bar and utterly dismal). I have never had, as far as I know, one response. I think folks are just too used to getting freebies, and never having to be anything but passive ... 'TV potatoes' sort of thing. I think there is a lot more of this passiveness than there used to be and I don't like it.

FROM: Brian Earl Brown
11675 Beaconsfield
Detroit, Michigan 48224

1992-9-28

The stagnation of SF is pretty evident but I wonder to what extent it is due to nearly seventy years of continuous magazine and book publication of a field rather limited to appreciation of technological innovations? Most of the themes and plots of SF were developed by the 1930s. While one can see evolution in the mystery novel, SF often seems stuck in a rut.

FROM: Andy Hooper
4228 Francis Avenue N. #103
Seattle, Washington 98103

1992-10-4

I don't know if I feel all that firmly in agreement with your exhortations to advertise our version of fandom and to open my eyes to stuff from outside of the fanish field. The 108th fanzine of the year arrived yesterday, and I only throw into that accounting a few things that wouldn't pass the Lichtman test. How many more fanzines can a person assimilate? They're already arriving every 2.74 days. Is this a proud and lonely thing?

A few years ago, Wiscon, the Wisconsin SF Conference, was in a personnel crunch. Many of the actifans in Madison had done prolonged hitches on the committee, and had stepped away from the convention for a few years. In stepped a group of young anime fans, who had been itching to turn the con into a media-oriented event, and abandon its status as the only feminist-oriented SF con in the world. Needless to say, conflict ensued, the words 'politically correct' were used with promiscuity, and finally a group of formerly burned-out fans came back to the con and succeeded in returning the convention to the vision that most attendees and workers preferred.

I see this process being repeated in fanzine fandom at the moment. There are a lot of faneds returning to publishing after a few year's hiatus, partly out of concern over the declining number of fanzines, and partly because the rest of the desktop publishing world isn't taking up the slack as far as they are concerned.

And as for the notion that there's no vitality in fannish fanzines or that they are eclipsed by publications in other fields, I find plenty of vitality in the fanzines I receive.

I've found Garth Spencer's articles on the history of Vancouver fandom enlightening and unpretentious.

FROM: Steve George
642 Ingersoll Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 2J4

1993-1-13

Harry Warner's comments about the likelihood of two fans having very little in common struck a chord. There have been many times I've felt a flare of pleasurable anticipation upon realizing somebody I just met reads SF, only to have that anticipation fade quickly away when it becomes obvious that neither of us have read the same books, and in fact neither of us can even appreciate what the other has read. I suppose such diversity in the worlds of SF and fandom make it all the more enjoyable when we finally do run into somebody whose reading experience is similar to our own. Still, it's a far cry from the days when simply seeing somebody at the SF racks at a bookstore could make you feel a sense of kinship.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Par Nilsson, Harry Andruschak, Ben Schilling, Joseph Major, Chuck Connor, Nigel Richardson, Jim Emerson