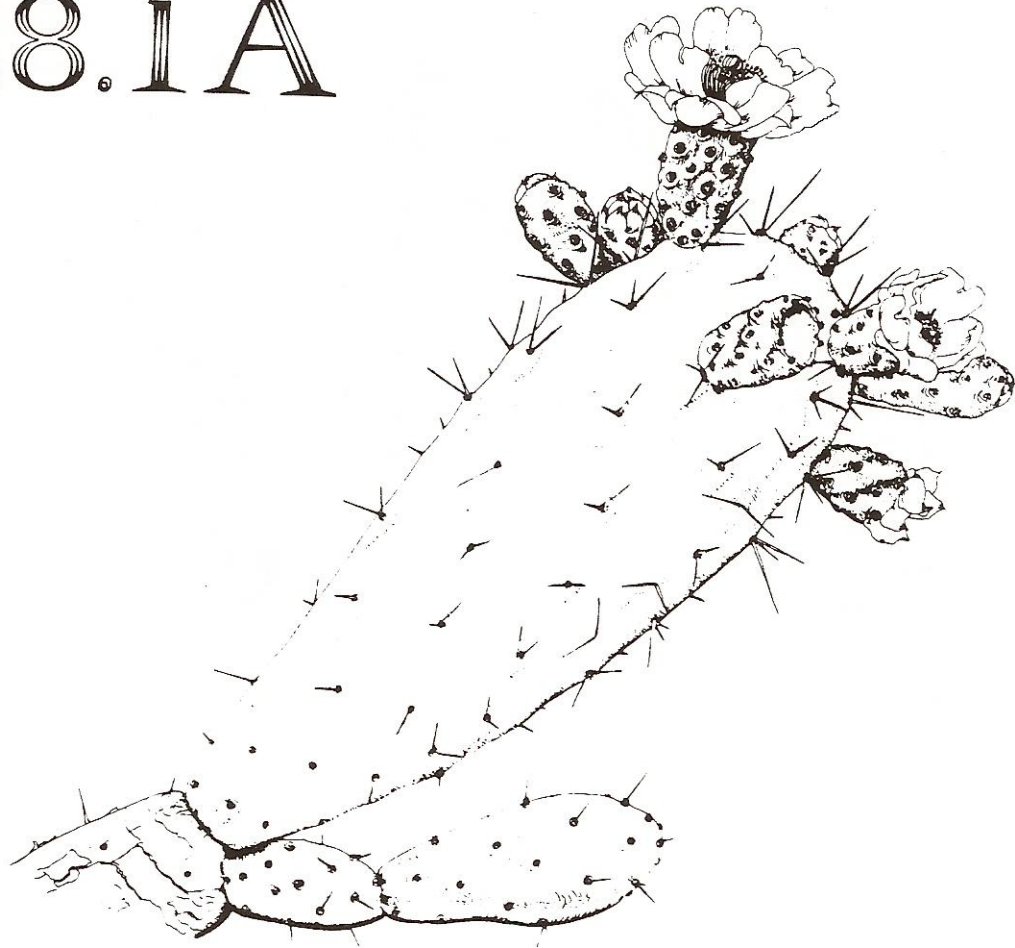


OPUNTIA

28.1A



OPUNTIA #28.1A

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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. Available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or a letter of comment on the previous issue.

COVER ART: Opuntia ficus-indica by Rita Weber, from the 1983 book PLANT INVADERS, published by the Dept. of Nature & Environmental Conservation, Cape Town, South Africa.

CONVERSION 13/CANVENTION 16 will be held July 19 to 21 in Calgary. Membership is \$35 until July 5, from Box 1088, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2K9.

WORLDWIDE PARTY #3 will be held on June 21 at 21h00 local time. Where-ever you are at that time and date, raise a glass and toast fellow SF fans around the world. The idea is to get a wave circling the planet of fans celebrating the hobby. Benoit Girard and Franz Miklis did a lot to get this new fannish tradition going, so let's see if we can keep it rolling. I'd like to print your account of how you celebrated WWP3 in my next perzine issue, so be sure to drop me a line.

ZINE LISTINGS by Dale Speirs

WARP #37 (The Usual from Montréal SF&F Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2W 2P4) Clubzine of media SF fans. Local news of media clubs is not too good, as they fold or their conventions die. It would be as well if there was only one large SF club in the city rather than a bunch of small specialized ones, but I suspect little change. What surprised me is that not one but at least two clubs are reported as having budget problems because they rent rooms from hotels for monthly meetings, yet there is no announced intention to look for cheaper places, just a grin-and-bear-it attitude. Surely there must be a church hall or community association room available? Elsewhere, lots of book and convention reviews, plus the usual run of movie and television stuff. One that sounds interesting is a new comic book out called ANGLOMAN, subtitled "Making the world safe for apostrophes!". This one is by the same people who did NORTHGUARD, one of whose characters was featured on a Canadian postage stamp in 1995 (Fleur de Lys). Angloman works out of the Fortress of Two Solitudes (the phrase 'two solitudes' has a different meaning in Canada and does not refer to C.P. Snow), and the comic works in lots of Canadian and Montréal in-jokes.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #43 (The Usual from Tom Sadler, 422 West Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Starts off with the usual ongoing saga of Windlebeam, Morton, and Balconie, fanfiction that ends installments with " ... then they opened the door and ... (to be continued)". Book and zine reviews, war stories, Web pages, and locs.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #65 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine with local news, reviews and letters. An essay in this ish on the death of paper.

GRADIENT #13 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-1023) Genzine on literary SF, with articles on pulps history, China, book reviews, and why communists are like Catholics.

VISIONS OF PARADISE #65 (The Usual from Robert Sabella as above) Diaryzine in the life of a maths teacher.

MARKTIME #40 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 59851, Schaumburg, Illinois 60159-0851) Perzine ranging from baseball to radio stations, locs, and travels across USA.

WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE #49 (The Usual from Jean Weber, 7 Nicoll Avenue, Ryde, New South Wales 2112, Australia) Perzine accounts of touring USA conventions, a medical operation, electronic technology, locs, book reviews.

CONTRACT V8#2 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B9) Newszine of Canadian SFdom and a listing of upcoming cons.

SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG #5 (The Usual from Garth Spencer, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) Emphasizes Canadian fanhistory and the whys and hows of fandom. This ish mostly locs on those subjects. E-mail version via hrothgar@freenet.vancouver.bc.ca.

LIME GREEN NEWS #14 (US\$2 or trade for mail art zines, from Carolyn Substitute, Box 771, Florissant, Missouri 63032-0771) Mail art zine, this time around including documentation of the Networker Necklace Project, where people sent in items to Carolyn for her to make a necklace. The rest of the zine is mostly locs by mail art folk, and ads and announcements of mail art projects. Harry Andruschak might be interested in the anthology project "Why Postal Workers Kill". Mail art encourages participation, not passive consumption à la Star Trek.

OBSCURE #34 (US\$2 from Jim Romenesko, #101, 1305 Grand Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55105) Reviewzine and news of zinedom, concentrating on a few items per issue and leaving the capsule reviews to FACTSHEET FIVE. This time around the story is the acquittal of a Washington state magazine dealer on charges of selling obscene literature. Includes witness' testimonies, juror's public statements after the verdict, and a book deal. Elsewhere is how the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE discovered zines, and the correct method of soliciting contributions for a zine.

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE #12/13 (The Usual from Karl Johanson at 4129 Carey Road, Victoria, British Columbia V8Z 4G5) In this issue, a tour of the Milk River hadrosaur site, yet another fan quiz, an essay on glacial cycles (we are heading back into another ice age about 11,000 years from now), Trekkies being slagged by Paramount for copyright violation, an Internet conversation thread which demonstrated to me why I need not rush to get on-line, locs, and reviews.

THE KNARLEY KNEWS #56 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine with mostly locs and personal reports. An account of chaos on the road as a result of a few inches of snow in Indiana. I'd laugh, except that Canadian drivers are just as bad. We're supposedly adapted to a cold, snowy climate which makes the Indiana weather look like a spring flurry, but unfortunately Canadians insist on driving in winter as if it were a hot August afternoon ("But Constable, the road was slippery! That's why I missed an iced-up curve when I was only doing 120 klicks!") Other subjects include married women changing their names or not, and taking kids on vacation trips.

MOSHASSUCK REVIEW May 1996 (Zine trade from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) An apazine specializing in Lovecraft and his circle. Book edition bibliographies, genealogies, and textual analysis.

SPACE CADET GAZETTE #5 (The Usual from R. Graeme Cameron, Apt. 110, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) Starting off with a report of not being able to find the convention he was attending despite staying in the same hotel, then the continuing saga of the editor's grandfather in WWI. Also travels in Mayan country, locs and capsule reviews, and Patri on the cover.

ZERO-G LAVATORY #6 (The Usual from Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, British Columbia V0R 1S0) The latest installment in the saga of V-Con 21, which bids fair to become a faan-fiction novel. Lots of locs, which also explains the editorial announcement that in the future no one gets more than four pages. And, lest you might think Patri is mellowing, lots of Trekkie bashing.

DRIFT #79 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) A genzine leaning toward mail art but also covering zines from other interests such as SF. Some fiction and collages in a stream of intermixed capsule reviews, locs, and editorial comments. Nice new digest format.

PINKETTE #15c (The Usual from Karen Pender-Gunn, Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia) A small perzine filling in the gaps between issues of the main zine PINK. Some personal news of Karen's life, news clippings, and Internet ish stuff) I always liked the PINKETTE logo, a sullen koala punk with a mohawk and a sour look probably occasioned by the tutu the punk is wearing.

WILD HEIRS #13 (The Usual from Arnie Katz, 330 South Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, Nevada 89107) 100-page annish from an editorial collective. Life in Las Vegas and ManureCon, lots of locs, and personal stuff. The centerpiece is an extended essay on early SF fandom, with an attempt to fit it into a theoretical framework

beyond the usual Numbered Fandom hypothesis. An essay to be read in one sitting, as Katz builds on his idea of fans and numbered fandoms being in one or more stages ranging from Scientism to Commercialism. I was thinking afterward that Katz's ideas would also fit the aquarium hobby, an indication that the ideas may have universal truth rather than being an artifact applicable only to one small set of well-tailored facts. The stages proposed are Scientism, Sercon, Communicationism, Trufannish, Insurgentism, Professionalism, and Commercialism.

BIBLIOZINE #45 (The Usual from John Held Jr, Box 410837, San Francisco, California 94141-0837) A two-page zine specializing in networker culture, with particular reference to mail art. This zine lists contacts in mail art, the issue at hand devoted to capsule reviews on mail art zines of long duration. All but one address is from non-anglophone countries. As Held writes: "Their longevity indicates that they have found a particular networking niche global artists find of benefit. Finding this niche is a very satisfying aspect of the network experience. Once a structure is found, one concentrates on the task on hand, leaving behind the uneasy search for direction." I suppose this can be summed up with the biblical phrase that where there is no vision, the zines perish.

FOSFAX #179 (The Usual from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville Kentucky 40233-7281) No need to worry about perishing for lack of vision here. 68 pages of microprint with lots of essays, lengthy book reviews, and of course the famous (or infamous) lettercol. 30 pages in the latter of people arguing from undefined terms or unreferenced citations, in a Right versus Left verbal slugfest. Most of it is about American politics, but the zine is not ashamed to mention SF frequently.

SOUTHERN FANDOM CONFEDERATION BULLETIN V6#4 (The Usual from Tom Feller, Box 13626, Jackson, Mississippi 39236) A clubzine that covers the news of SF fandom in the American South. Con reports, lists of zines, lists of clubs, and Web addresses. A very useful resource for those interested in the fandom of that area.

ANSIBLE #105 (Edited by Dave Langford, available for The Usual from Janice Murray, Box 75684, Seattle, Washington 98125-0684) British newzine with two pages of microprint. One of the funniest zines around; Dave reports the doings of British fans and pros with a dry commentary that is also witty.

APPARATCHIK #57 (US\$3 for 3 months from Andy Hooper, 4228 Francis Avenue North #103, Seattle, Washington 98103) A bi-weekly SF zine with con reports, comment on the state of fandom, locs, and personal essays.

FILE 770 #112 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, Box 1056, Sierra Madre, California 91025) Newzine of fandom, with con reports from around the world, obits, and locs. The LOCUS of fandom; together with ANSIBLE will keep you well informed.

I HEAR THE WINDMILLS CALLING (The Usual from Bruce Barabach, 3130 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21218) An account of a trip to see the Burning Man ceremony in the Nevada desert, one of the most famous underground events in the USA. This weekend gathering of the counterculture finishes off with the ignition of the Burning Man, a 40' wooden effigy loaded with fireworks, explosives, and any flammable material at hand. Basically a modern variation of harvest festivals. Reminds me of our family and other local farmers burning straw stubble in the fields after harvest. Burning Man is an annual event; telephone 415-985-7471 for details. Certainly sounds more interesting than the local SF conventions. Burning Robot, anyone?

THYME #108/AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS #68/ARTYCHOKE #15 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Three zines in one. THYME is a genzine with the usual reviews and locs; this ish also has commentary on the bid by Australia for the 1999 WorldCon. ASFN deals with the publishing scene in Australia, with lots of book reviews. ARTYCHOKE is an artzine with some general commentary, highlights and a portfolio of a selected artist (Franz Miklis in thisish) and the comic strip TIME SHIP (my personal favourite).

NETSHAKER V3#1 (US\$12 per year for hardcopy or free online from Chuck Welch, Box 370, Etna, New Hampshire 03750-0370 or e-mail via Cathryn.L.Welch@dartmouth.edu) A mail art zine; this ish starts off with apologies for lateness as Chuck is an at-home dad for a 5-year-old daughter and newborn triplets. Elsewhere some remarks about mail artists in eastern Europe before the Iron Curtain rusted away, and a good list of mail art sites on the Internet.

LITTLE FREE PRESS #138 was the final issue put out by Ernest Mann. I was shocked to learn that on March 27, 1996, he was murdered by his grandson, who then committed suicide. In retrospect, issue #138 foreshadows what was to happen; Ernest mentioned some of the difficulties he was having raising his grandson singlehanded. Ernest had published his zine since 1969 and advocated the Priceless Economic System, a world where money would not be needed. A good enough as any cause to devote one's life to. Back issues of LITTLE FREE PRESS are available on the Web at <http://www.smart.net/~banneker>, or hardcopy from Duncan Ryan, Box 640, Elk River, Minnesota 55330. Ryan advises that a memorial issue is in the works.

BUSSWARBLE #28 (The Usual from Michael Hailstone, 14 Cecil Road, Blackheath, New South Wales 2785, Australia) Spellchecker problems, a continuing trip report of his travels to Peru and return therefrom, a bit of fiction, and Frankenstein thoughts.

8-TRACK MIND #85 (US\$2 from Russ Forster, Box 90, East Detroit, Michigan 48021-0090) One of the nicest zines I've yet received. Card cover, 40 pages, and the top corners clipped on this digest-sized zine so as to make it resemble an 8-track cartridge. The rest of us going on about demon CDs normally think only of vinyl and cassette, but there is still an enthusiastic bunch of 8-track collectors active. I wasn't too surprised to see the buy/sell/trade queries, but was astounded to learn that 8-tracks are still being issued. I read a lot of musiczines, all of them filled with ads for new releases on vinyl or cassette, but I'm sure I would have remembered had I ever seen any 8-tracks. But they are out there. Most of the activity is in the thrift stores of North America, as trackers search for that elusive John Lennon cartridge "Roots" or the infamous Sex Pistols "Never Mind the Bullocks", supposedly worth \$100. This issue also contains the history of 8-tracks, from the premature inventors to its initial success when William Lear (of Learjet fame) convinced Ford to put players in their cars. As someone whose entire audio collection is on cassette, their Statement of Purpose got my sympathy: "We of the 8-Track Mind are dedicated to our one pursuit: to keep analog alive (in whatever form) for the coming day of its ultimate victory. We will supercede all formats yet to emerge." A noble cause. Although dealing almost entirely with 8-tracks, this zine does mention another icon of the same era, quadrophonic sound, and the ongoing search by the American FAA for vacuum tubes for the computers that control American air traffic. Think about that the next time you fly the friendly skies.

ADVENTURES OF AN UNEMPLOYED ENTOMOLOGIST #6 (US\$2 or zine trade from Box 3026, Worcester, Massachusetts 01613-3026) Just what the title suggests. In between the job hunt chronicles are some essays on mice, ants, and insects preserved in fossils.

ANGRY THOREAUAN #16 (US\$3 from Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) Now gone to colour covers and good paper stock, leading to cries of "Sell-out!". Reminds me of the adage that an underground rock band is any band not yet lucky enough to be signed by a major label. However the content of AT carries on much as before, with editor Randall Tin-ear slagging and being slagged, phone sex mistress Monique on what the job is like, lots of reviews of books, zines, and music, and even more ads for underground bands. The main interest this issue is an article "Motormanslaughter", a rant about motoring on L.A. freeways, speed limits, parking tolls, and (the best part) photos taken by Tin-ear of car accidents and fires on the roads.

ATTITUDE #7 (The Usual from Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge CB1 3QF, England) A nice 62-page SF fanzine about British fandom. Attitude the convention goes in 1997, lots of locs, some articles by women that tell me more than I care to know about corsets and bras, and a Yankee reviews Britzines. In that last one, Andy Hooper hits the nail on the head when he says: "... 90% of the impression [British] fandom makes on American fans is dependent on what Dave Langford has to say."

PHILOSOFY #2 (The Usual from Alexander Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge Drive, San Antonio, Texas 78239-4022) Letters and essays on philosophy, religion, and introducing in this ish, the death penalty. Since the zine RADIO FREE THULCANDRA died there has been a gap for those who contemplate the Next World, which this zine seems to be in the process of filling.

ERG #133 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) Locs, remembering school teaching, X-8 and X-9 missiles, the continuing series on first issues of SF prozines, and some book reviews.

YOU SAY YOU WANNA REVOLUTION ...

In searching for material on the history of zines, I stumbled across an interesting book THE UNDERGROUND AND ALTERNATIVE PRESS IN BRITAIN: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE WITH HISTORICAL NOTES (Harvester Press, 1974). The author was John Spiers, a name that caught my eye for obvious reasons. Careless readers will please note the slight difference in spelling; he is a Spiers, I am a Speirs (pronounced 'spires').

Any fond feelings of pseudogenealogical nature were quickly dispelled when I read the opening statement: "In 1965 the Underground Press did not exist. Since then it has invented itself.". I find it difficult to believe that the Brits were so mild-mannered that no underground newspaper or zine existed before 1965. Not having much knowledge of British bibliography, I leave it to others to refute this claim. I'm sure Marx must have read the occasional underground publication when not otherwise engaged at his desk in the British Library.

Leaving that aside, this book is a good introduction to underground newspapers in Britain during the 1960s and early 1970s. The book is a companion piece to a microfilm series of those newspapers. It covers the general history of the scene, then goes to capsule reviews of the microfilmed papers. It is not necessary to see the microfilms to get useful information out of this book.

Like underground newspapers in Canada (see OPUNTIA 26.1:10), British newspapers were usually ephemeral, badly designed, and more often destroyed by internal strife than police raids. As Canada had Québec and Alberta separatists, so did the Brits have Ulster and Scottish nationalists. The British papers, from what I see of the capsule reviews, seemed to place greater emphasis on local community affairs.

Looking at some of the papers listed, I start off with ARSE, published by the Architects for a Really Socialist Environment. Well, anything to make an acronym fit. In Brighton, ATTILA began publishing in 1971, and hit out at friend and foe alike: "Why does macrobiotic food cost twice the price of the synthetic garbage sold in supermarkets? ... Can bookshops claim to be "alternatives"? The books don't cost any less, the same percentage of profit goes to the manufacturer, which doesn't change anything."

CHINA-CAT SUNFLOWER noted that "Birmingham's greyness pervades everyone and everything", which must have been true, because the paper died after one issue in 1969. A Glasgow paper HORSE FEATHERS wore its Marxist beliefs on its sleeve: "The Krishna movement is doubtless one of the major disguised capitalist organizations.". NEWSWAVE (1971-72) specialized in pirate radio, ceasing publication due to government pressure such as wiretapping and mail tampering.

How little things change. Underground zines today are, like their ancestors, often their own worst enemies. In the rush to be liberated from capitalist monetarism they ignore common sense in ensuring there is enough income to pay the printing bill. Denouncing authoritarianism, they forget why few editorial collectives last very long. Erratic publication schedules may be forgiven by most readers, but are not conducive to encouraging subscriptions from new people. Undocumented facts hastily run in one issue and retracted in the next do not instill confidence in the publisher. Unrestrained experiments in typography, colour, and layout often render the content unreadable.

The British underground newspapers, more so than in Canada, emphasized the news that the mainstream papers were not covering. For all their troubles in Canada, editors here did not have to face the Official Secrets Act, and were not in as dangerous a position as the Brits.

SPEIRS ON INTERNET SHOCK HORROR!

Well no, I haven't got a computer yet, but the University of Calgary Library is changing over to a new card catalogue system. The old text-only terminals are being replaced by new machines which not only provide a library catalogue search in Windows format, but also provide Netscape and Excite to search the Net. I cannot download to a disk, print out paper copy, or e-mail anyone since I am not student or staff, but I can browse freely. And so I did, with visions of running Net reviews in my zine. Alas, the content of Internet has been vastly exaggerated.

In looking through hundreds of Web pages and newsgroup postings, I found little and gained only a sore wrist from all that mouse clicking. Web pages in general are like travel brochures, with pretty pictures and a few paragraphs of basic information that don't tell you much that is new. Newsgroups are name-calling and arguing from undefined terms. I checked out sites I thought might be interesting, but most disappointed. I will review some sites here, but do not expect to do much of it in the future.

<http://worchester.lm.com/lmann/timebinders/tbstart/html> is the home page of The Society for the Preservation of the History of Science Fiction Fandom, more commonly known as The Timebinders. I checked it on 1996-3-31 and noticed the last update was 1995-9-9. Brief notes on the group, out-of-date minutes, a lettercol dated 1994, Garth Spencer's brief intro to the state of Canfanhistory research, and two essays on How I Became A SF Fan, neither of which have much to do with history. This site has potential, but they've fallen into a common Web problem, not updating it.

rec.arts.sf.fandom was like apazine mailing comments. Lots of ingrown chitchat about who did what, little in

the way of useful information. Not as bad as alt.zines, though, which was filled with trivial news and squabbles and a few minor bits about cybercensorship. Lots of Seth Friedman (FACTSHEET FIVE) bashing, and political debates such as "Visit Holland and I'll personally smash your fascist face in five seconds!". If some of these zinesters would put as much energy into publishing a decently laid out zine as they do in name calling, they would be surprised at how well their zines would turn out. Also for the flamer crowd was alt.fandom.cons.

<http://sflovers.rutgers.edu> was a long download with all kinds of lists, literary archives, and convention lists, although the fandom link came up empty. The best source of fandom data came from <http://www.dcs.gla.ac.uk/SF-Archives/>, with lots of solid text such as back issues of the British newsmagazine ANSIBLE, the history of British SF written by Rob Hansen, and reprints of classics such as "The Enchanted Duplicator" and "The Last Deadloss Visions". This is a good one to download for future reference.

<http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/events/sci-fi/esci-fi.htm> is the Web page set up by the National Library of Canada for its 1995 exhibit "Out of This World". This is a brief selected overview of Canadian SF history. As with all NLC output, it is available in French. Too many graphics slow the download; the University of Calgary uses 11 lines, and even then I had a long wait. SF Canada is at <http://helios.physics.utoronto.ca:8080/sfchome.html> and is aimed at pro writers and wannabes. A new site that is trying to be the central location for SF info in Canada is <http://www.magi.com/~gonzo/cansfrg.html>. The Canadian SF&F Resource Guide has links and lists for a few zines and groups, but certainly needs to collect some more. The Vancouver SFers have info on their club and links to other SF-related data, not to mention their zine BCSFAZINE, at <http://vanbc.wimsey.com/~lisac>. In Calgary, go to the Convention 16/ConVersion 13 home page at <http://www.tjproductions.com/conver.htm>.

<http://www.greenwoods.com/onspec/> has all the basic information about ON SPEC, Canada's only prozine. Past and current issue indexes, submission rules, history. Heavy graphics, so beware.

On the mail art side, I was unable to get EMMA, the site set up by Chuck Welch, which is rather strange as his book ETERNAL NETWORK was recently published by the University of Calgary Press. However, I did locate an interview he did which explains the basic principles and history of mail art, located at the site <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/issue.193/pop-cult.193> (If I were World Dictator, the first thing I'd do would be to order all Internet addresses to be short). Somewhat similar to mail art but including other aspects is the Fluxus site <http://www.fluxus.org/~museum>, which includes links to Fluxus Home Page and the Xanadu-fluX Art Gallery. A nice use of icons instead of a traditional index to the page.

<http://members.aol.com/aapa96/> is the home page of the American Amateur Press Association, which includes an introduction to the history of zines since the 1800s.

Using the Excite search engine, the word 'opuntia' turned up quite a few Web pages. Not surprisingly all of them were put up by cactus fanciers. 'Speirs' gave me numerous citations by Robert Speirs, a freelancer specializing in financial reportage. Jim Speirs had a scouting page, and Sandy Speirs of Callandar (no country given) got a page for having golfed two holes-in-one over a three day period.

Some of the problems of the Internet are more in the nature of teething troubles rather than any defect of the medium itself. I expect that over time the number of solid reference sites will increase. By 'solid', I mean sites with substantial content on the page, not flashy graphics or links to other pages that lack content as well. As computers improve their ability to

download massive slugs of text and graphics, reference sites will improve. It is obvious that the inability of people to keep their pages properly updated will provide a strong market for commercial sites. Instead of trivia and 'Under Construction' signs on a page being accepted as the norm, viewers will bypass them and go to properly set up pages with content, not links, and with evidence that they have been edited by someone who knows what he or she is about.

Much has been churned out about how the Internet is a new media with new rules (actually I think it will end up as television and radio did), but one point I haven't seen elaborated on is that this is apparently the first media where incompleteness is common. From the beginning of handcopying and printing, works were normally fully completed before release. Occasionally an author might die before finishing a novel, but historically publishers and propagandists would not think of printing a book that stopped in mid-chapter, with the note that the printer was still working on the rest of the book. Even the endless trilogies and sequels of our time are at least published one full book or movie at a time. Stories may be serialized over several issues of a magazine, but even if the author is still scribbling it as it is being published, the expectation is that it will be completed.

Excite seems to be a better indexer than most search engines on the net, as it searches by concept, not just keywords. Just as content will gradually improve on the Internet, so will indexing and search engines. The undue emphasis on 'cool sites' and flashiness at present comes from the preponderance of computer nerds and young adults on the net. As more people move online who view Internet as a tool, not a way of life, the quality will improve. The flamers and alt.sex nuts will be hived off into a few fringe BBSes, particularly if governments start enforcing obscenity and libel laws rigidly. The fuss about telecommunications decency laws by netizens demonstrates their lack of awareness that Big Brother can crush them with existing laws if so motivated.

WHEN IT'S RAINING, HAVE NO REGRETS

On the unlikely chance that years from now some graduate student in literature who is desperately seeking a thesis topic chooses me, I should like to save that person some trouble by declaring my literary influence is Harry Golden. I find myself constitutionally unable to write at length; the brief essay is my *métier*. It seems strange that a New York Jew could have such influence on a western Canadian Baptist, that an urban dweller in one of the largest cities in the continent would affect a young lad in the prairies.

Herschel Goldhirsch was the son of Jewish emigrants from eastern Europe, and grew up in the slums of New York City in the early 1900s. During the 1920s, Harry Goldhurst, as he now was, married a Roman Catholic and started a family while dealing in stocks. In the runup to the Great Depression, he got into trouble for sharp practice, and was sent up for five years in a federal prison. On his release, he tried various jobs, but as his marriage broke up under stress, he decided to make a fresh start. He moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, changed his name to Golden, and began publishing a personal newspaper called THE CAROLINA ISRAELITE. He preached civil rights, labour unions, and an intellectual way of life in a part of the country that opposed integration, lured manufacturers with cheap non-union labour, was suspicious of them that has read a book, and was anti-Jewish. Golden deliberately went into the lion's mouth on the grounds that the American South was the big story of the future, and he was going to report it from the frontlines. With no family, and living on the edge of poverty, he had nothing to fear. He published as an outsider, able to view the passing events with detachment, and as he later remarked, "My only worry was that I shouldn't die laughing".

THE CAROLINA ISRAELITE consisted of essays and notes squeezed into whatever space there was between ads. In

it, he told stories about his life growing up in a slum, interspersed with political anecdotes, history, and essays on civil and labour rights, all mostly written as humour. A collection of this material was released in 1958 as the book ONLY IN AMERICA, and was an immediate bestseller (my copy is a 14th printing). Over the years, additional collections were released and sold well, and in 1969 Golden wrote his autobiography THE RIGHT TIME.

Golden had noticed that segregationists did not seem to be bothered by integrated lineups at bank tellers' windows, nor supermarket checkouts that served both black and white folk. He remarked: "It is only when the Negro sets that the fur begins to fly". On this basis, he proposed the Vertical Negro Plan of integrating schools whereby desks would be replaced with those standup kind that old-fashioned bookkeepers used. Golden pointed out that since kids didn't seem to be learning that well sitting down, maybe having to stand up would help, both white and black children.

Golden wrote about the trials and tribulations of the Southern Jew, remarkably like those of the Christians. Both were worried by status, living in houses they couldn't afford, trading up cars to live up to their neighbours' expectations, and indulging in temple/church politics. When Golden wrote that "our mothers were happier when they had to empty the pan under the icebox" he meant that while it was more labour, neither was it a status symbol, as refrigerators and cars had become.

Golden's stories range from Tammany politics of New York (who said they only took 'honest graft') to a list of people who never met a payroll (Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein). He argued that Shakespeare wrote the works of Bacon, that anti-Semitism could be reduced by instituting a National Cheese Blintzes Week, and that the ugliest word in the English language is 'victuals'.

For the longest time I had difficulty in finding any books by Vladimir Voinovich in English translation except the ubiquitous MOSCOW 2042, of which every secondhand bookstore in Calgary seems to have at least one copy. But I did finally locate his essay collection THE ANTI-SOVIET SOVIET UNION (HBJ, 1985). These essays are serious in intent but written in his usual humorous style. He is sort of a Russian Harry Golden.

Voinovich starts off with a brief autobiography. He comes from Serbian stock ('voin' is the Serbian word for 'soldier') but only distantly, and is thoroughly Russian. One of his ancestors founded the Black Sea Fleet. The account of his life and development as a writer culminates in his expulsion from the Soviet Union. In 1980, Voinovich wrote one protest letter too many, and on the day that elections for the Russian Supreme Soviet were held, he was visited by a Party bureaucrat.

"Standing in the middle of my living room, this Bogdanov said, in the tone of a colonel announcing terms of capitulation to a defeated army: "I have been instructed to inform you that the patience of the Soviet authorities and the people has come to an end". I thought he was going to execute me on the spot, but that was not the case at all. Unlike other Soviet citizens, I was presented with a real choice that election day ...".

Voinovich goes on to discuss the evolution of the new Soviet man, Homo sovieticus, the species with three-fold awareness. That is, a species who thinks one thing, says another, and does a third.

The essays discuss a wide variety of topics, starting off with Soviet internal passports and going on to all the petty details that make up the life of a Soviet

citizen. Food shortages, sacred cows, and why the Soviet pilot shot down that Korean Air Lines passenger jet.

The title of the book comes from the constant change in Soviet propaganda and what effect it had on its citizens. Little surprise that the comrades didn't know what to believe as the propaganda kept reversing. Past leaders first glorified then denounced; Stalin as the Great Comrade, then the Great Madman. Policies made the next step in the progress to withering away the State, then later denounced as retrogression. What the agitprop comrades didn't realize was that these constant reversals ended up in the long term as anti-Soviet Soviet propaganda. Thus it was not too surprising that a group of workers were once arrested for distributing copies of the "Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", a document too embarrassing to have in circulation.

Selected at random:

Defectors: "How do you make a string quartet?"
"Send a Soviet orchestra abroad."

KGB: Not always the terrors that one might expect. The first time that Voinovich was arrested by the KGB, the agent taking him back to the station got lost.

Censorship: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are filmed for Soviet viewing. The historic first meeting begins with those famous words by Holmes: "I can see you've just come from a certain Eastern country". The Glavlit censors would not allow Holmes to surmise that Watson had been in Afghanistan, as that might bring up some unpleasant thoughts in the minds of loyal Soviet viewers.

Hazards of writing: In the era of Stalin, it would be wisest not to write any fiction that included a man with a mustache, in case Stalin read it and thought it was himself.

BLACK RAINBOW

The Iranian equivalent of Vladimir Voinovich or Harry Golden is Hadi Khorsandi. A satirist who departed his native country two days after the Islamic Revolution, at the request of a howling mob shouting for his execution, he now lives in exile in London, England. He has been flattered by an attempted assassination which was uncovered by Scotland Yard in 1984. Although he keeps a low profile personally, he continues to publish his magazine ASGHAR AGHA, which pokes fun not only at the Hezbollahi but also the multitude of ineffective and quarrelling opposition groups.

A collection of his short pieces has been translated into English and published as the hardcover THE AYATOLLAH AND I (Readers International, 1987). The cover art depicts a rainbow touching down in an Iranian village, and, where it touches down, a mullah is painting the rainbow black. The artist is anonymous at his/her request, for obvious reasons. In fact, even the translator used a pseudonym.

Besides writing as himself, Khorsandi uses several characters to put across his point. The schoolboy Sadeq Sedaqat writes essays on democracy, learning, and other topics, illustrating them with anecdotes about the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and what they did to his uncle. The boy seems to have a lot of unfortunate uncles. From the essay "What is Democracy?" comes this opening paragraph: "Our esteemed teacher last week gave us a very good subject for an essay, namely democracy, and this week, while that esteemed teacher is in prison, we explain democracy for the new teacher and our beloved fellow students."

Khorsandi also writes in the guise of Bani-Sadr, the Iranian President whose main role was to be used as a doormat by the mullahs. Khorsandi's other favourite character was Orié Fallacy, a female reporter from the

FUNDAMENTALIST WOMAN, who interviews the wives of government ministers, inadvertently exposing hypocrisy and the ills of Iranian society along the way.

THE AYATOLLAH AND I is divided into three chronological sections. Part One covers Iranian affairs from 1979 to 1981, and is titled "In Which Mr. President Dr. Bani-Sadr is completely surrounded by worries". It covers the Revolution, the Iraq-Iran war, and how the mullahs took over the country.

Part Two (1981 to 1983) is "In Which everyone waits for the Imam to die", a hilarious deathwatch on the Ayatollah. Khorsandi reports phone calls to his editorial offices which run to the same pattern:

"Hello, ASGHAR AGHA? Is it true that Khomeini died?"

"No, sir, it apparently isn't."

"I'm terribly sorry."

"The sorrow is ours!"

The schoolboy Sedaqat pops up with another essay on the subject "What will you do if the Imam dies?". He explains that he will put nails in his shoes so that he will be crying as he walks down the street, and thus be left alone by the Revolutionary Guards, who will assume he is mourning the Ayatollah's death.

Khorsandi pokes fun at the disorganized and disunited opposition to the Islamic government. When the government announces a Five-Year Plan, the Paris exiles declare their own Five-Year Plan. If the Interior Minister talks about what he will be doing eight years from now, the opposition match him, each side trying to convince outsiders that they are in for the long haul.

Part Three (1982 til Lord, how long?) is titled "In Which nothing quite works out." Change the appropriate words and Khorsandi could be writing about the Soviet Union, with its shortages, corruption, and terror.

THE WRONG BORDERS

More than a few people have observed that North American political borders could use some alteration, although it is doubtful that such will happen. On the eastern side of the continent are tiny places like Prince Edward Island or Rhode Island. On the western side are huge empty spaces like Saskatchewan or Wyoming.

Joel Garreau discusses this subject in *THE NINE NATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981). As an editor with the *WASHINGTON POST*, he kept asking his reporters on the road "What's it like out there?". They kept replying in terms of regions, not states or provinces. Garreau compiled his thoughts into an article published in 1979, suggesting that North America was really nine nations. He was swamped with letters to the editor. Generally the audience agreed with him, but there was much quibbling about exact boundaries. Political boundaries can never match up to socio-economic boundaries because the latter are fuzzier and better described as gradients. Granting that people will not agree on the boundaries of the Nine Nations, one can still agree on the basic outlines.

Garreau notes, correctly in my opinion, that Calgary has more in common with Denver than Ottawa (even down to the physical geography), the Maritime provinces with New England, and the industrial area of southern Ontario with Michigan and New York State. He sets up the Nine Nations as follow.

Ecotopia - Pacific coast from Anchorage to northern California.

Mexamerica - Mexico, southern California, southern Texas, Arizona

Empty Quarter - the American Rockies states to Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Arctic, the Precambrian Shield, Greenland

Québec - Garreau uses the existing boundaries, but I think him mistaken. The northern half of Québec is not francophone but aboriginal; the Inuit and Cree should be in the Empty Quarter. Québec could be extended to include Acadia and the Ottawa region.

New England - the Maritimes and the New England states. Garreau writes: "... if North America had been settled from west to east, instead of the other way around, New England would still be uninhabited ...".

The Foundry - southern Ontario, Michigan, and across to New York City.

The Breadbasket - the Great Plains from central Texas to Winnipeg.

Dixie - east Texas to the Atlantic.

The Islands - the southern tip of Florida, Caribbean

Garreau points out that each of the Nine Nations resent interference by outsiders, although he forgets to allow for the difference in Canadian lifestyle that adds an extra layer. Each of the Nine Nations can often solve problems internally (not always, granted) without interference from Washington, D.C., or Ottawa. The emotion raised in Alberta by the National Energy Program is still not understood by Ottawa mandarins, who wave aside the fact that Ontario and Québec looted \$50 billion from western Canada by keeping oil prices artificially low during the boom while at the same time protecting their own manufacturers from cheap imports. Water rights in the American Southwest are still a sensitive matter for rancher and city dweller alike out there; an easterner is not likely to fully appreciate the emotions over who gets what share of the Colorado River.

The homogenizing influence of mass media is levelling a number of marginal differences between the Nine Nations but the core differences remain. Accents and eating habits are less extreme than they used to be, but geography still controls clothing and architecture.

DRAWING A LINE IN THE SNOW

Michael Moore first came to general notice with ROGER AND ME, a combination of farce and documentary about his attempts to interview General Motors chairman Roger Smith concerning the auto factory layoffs that crippled Flint, Michigan. Moore later had a television show called TV NATION, which was sort of an updated CANDID CAMERA. He also made a movie called CANADIAN BACON a number of years ago, starring the late John Candy. It never got distributed until recently though, because the major movie houses wouldn't touch it.

CANADIAN BACON is about an unpopular American President who wants to boost his ratings in the usual way by invading somebody. Unfortunately the Cold War is over, and the public can't get too worked up about yet another banana republic like Panama. But a target is found: Canada.

Moore made this movie as a protest against the Arabian Gulf War. It is his comment about how easy it is to stir up the public by propaganda even in this modern age. The movie also trots out every joke and stereotype that the Americans and Canadians believe of each other. This might be part of the reason why it bombed Stateside, although it has done well in Canada. Many of the jokes are best appreciated if one has familiarity with Canadian issues. The police constable (played by Dan Akroyd) who pulls a truck over because the writing on it is in English only, is much funnier with a knowledge of the language laws. And the night I saw the movie at the theatre, the audience fell into the aisles with laughter at the scene of a hockey team singing "Oh Canada!". (Calgary is the headquarters of the Reform Party, which pushed to have the national anthem sung regularly in the House of Commons, not so much from patriotism as to annoy the Bloc Québécois.)

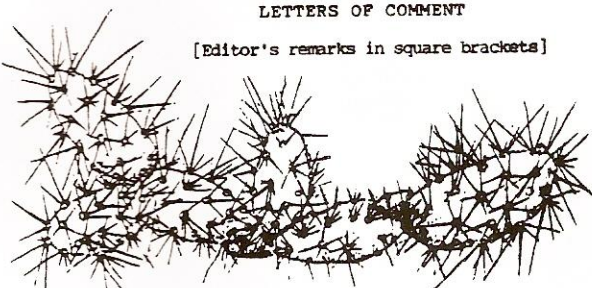
All the usual clichés about Canadian-American life are brought out. There is a scene in Niagara Falls, N.Y., where a bankrupt munitions factory has its surplus guns and missiles sold by public auction. Across the river in Niagara Falls, Ontario, all the Mounties wear dress scarlet while on normal duty and ride horses.

John Candy plays the part of a Niagara Falls sheriff on the American side, assisted by faithful sidekick Rhea Perlman (the barmaid from CHEERS). The propaganda has its greatest effect on those two. They decide to launch a pre-emptive strike against Canada by paddling across the river and spreading litter in a park. Unfortunately Perlman is caught by the Mounties. This gives the American government an excuse to start a crisis, and the TV networks go berserk covering the hostage situation. The patriotic citizens panic when they find out that Canadians look just like them and can't be easily told from Americans except by speech. Suspected Canadians are asked "Who is the pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals?" and those who say 'aboot' instead of 'about' are as good as lynched. Proof of Canada's evil intentions are the fact that 90% of its population is massed within a day's drive of the American border (true) and that the CN Tower in Toronto was built because of a national inferiority complex (no comment).

Candy and his cohort re-invade Canada to rescue Perlman from detention. A news report said she was being held in Canada's capital city, so Candy naturally heads to Toronto. Singing the first line of "Born in the USA" as they go (they can't remember the rest of the song), they, and Perlman, who escaped from Ottawa, wind up at the top of the CN Tower. The CN Tower is the tallest freestanding structure in the world. Candy easily runs up the stairs to the top despite his weight problem but a commando team following him collapse from exhaustion partway up.

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



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

1996-2-28

Recorded filksongs still rely on the cassette, though there are a few CDs of the more popular singers. Or braver ones, if they produce their own. Firebird says this is because on the selling end a cassette can break even on a 500-copy run, while a CD requires a 1000-copy run, and few filk recordings sell that many.

The term 'zines' originated with mail artists? Sorry; SF fanzines originated in the 1930s, and were now and then called 'zines' in the 1950s.

FROM: Tom Feller
Box 13626
Jackson, Mississippi 39236

1996-2-29

Years ago I read a book promoting the 4-day work week as a panacea for all our economic problems. Of course that is ridiculous, although they did describe some interesting alternatives to the 5-day 40-hour week. In an office environment, a good solution is flextime, in

which the worker makes his/her own 40-hour schedule, ex. four 10-hour days. The most interesting experiment was in a factory where management and workers agreed that if a certain number of items that passed quality control inspection were made in less than 8 hours, the workers could go home and still be paid for 8 hours. The goal was set about 10% above the largest number ever made at the factory in an 8-hour period. Soon after the program was initiated, the workers were usually able to go home after 4 hours. People who have become telecommuters often work more hours than they did before. However, they make up some of it by not having to commute. More importantly, they are able to schedule their own time to their own convenience. A parent might send the children off to school, work until they get home, spend time with the children until their bedtime, and then work some more.

[I've been on a four-day work week for 15 years; it would be very stressful to have to go back to a 5-day week. I get an extra day to decompress from the stress of work. The work day is 10 hours with two 20-minute coffee breaks but no lunch hour. A lot more gets done because crews waste less travel time and are out at the jobsite longer hours. In fact, two years ago our mowing machines went to 12-hour shifts; the operators work 3 days on, 4 days off, and work an extra day every sixth week to bring up their hours of pay to the average. Telecommuting is not practical for parks maintenance of course, but when my brother and I were young lads, my father (a farm-animal veterinarian) would take us with him on his farm calls and give Mom a respite from us.]

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

1996-1-28

A few years ago I was informed by a fan in Ottawa that he'd been contacted by CSIS and asked about this fandom network, what it's about, and any possibilities of subversive content. I wouldn't be surprised if many of our names are in the files of CSIS, on a just-in-case basis.

FROM: Rodney Leighton 1996-2-25
 R.R. 3
 Pugwash, Nova Scotia BOK 1LO

The National Library idea is sound in concept. I just find it sad that the thing has such Communistic overtones. Set up and allow people to voluntarily submit their publications; yeah, it's a great idea. But when you have a bunch of politicians passing laws that we poor people MUST send our small zines to them, so that bureaucrats can pretend to do something to justify their salaries ...

FROM: Randall Tin-ear 1996-3-28
 Box 2246
 Anaheim, California 92814

While I am opposed to the manner by which CDs are produced (converting analogue to binary digits), I do enjoy the clarity provided when listening to a band who anticipated such audio output, (Pink Floyd, for instance; their mid-1970s albums were phenomenal) or to well-recorded modern recordings. Still, such sentiments do not interfere with my day job (CD and cassette duplication and graphic arts), and I enjoy the occasional CDR (Compact Disc Recordable) mastering that I have done in our adjacent recording studio.

Cassettes I have always found annoying. I prefer to collect vinyl and then put onto cassette that to which I most listen.

FROM: Brant Kresovich 1996-3-3
 Riga Business School, Riga Technical University
 Skolas 11, Riga LV-1010, Latvia

I think the fringe serves a useful purpose. When I read a zine, I can identify the creator's agenda easily and quickly. When I read a mass-circulation weekly, I

rarely let down my guard. I'm always thinking critically, always wondering what opinion or evaluation some spin doctor or adman wants me to adopt. I try to follow the progress that has been mapped out as to what I should think and do. Tiring, a bit, that skeptical and wary habit of thinking.

The highlight of your mailing was the 1885 issue of BRIC-A-BRAC. Its editorial was simply marvelous because the issues are still alive today. People still make zines to connect with each other. There is still an 'in' language: 'dom/zinedom, exchange/trade, etc. Back then, there was the discussion "whither 'dom" just like there is a "whither fandom" dispute going on in zines like ATTITUDE. The dismay over lack of response and feuds, still here. The excuses for being late, the pleas for submissions, zine reviews, derision from the professional press, still with us. Nice to know we are really descendents of people who publish for the love of it.

[Ecclesiastes 1, 9]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Chester Cuthbert, Henry Welch, John Held Jr, Chuck Welch, Joseph Major, Harry Andruschak, Sue Thomason, Murray Moore, Harry Warner Jr, Vicki Rosenzweig