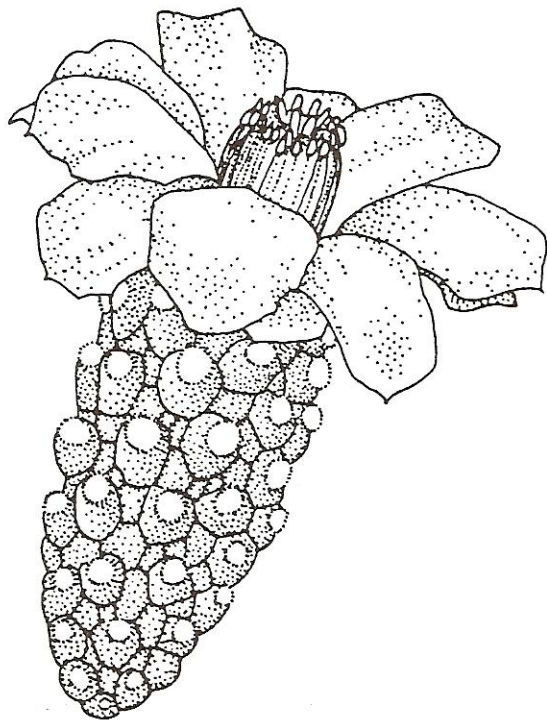


# OPUNTIA

45.1

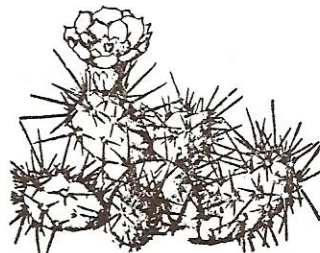


**OPUNTIA** is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

**ART CREDIT:** *Consolea moniliformis* is a new opuntoid species recently separated from *Opuntia* by A.E. Areces-Mallea, who also did the drawing. From the January/February 2000 issue of CACTUS AND SUCCULENT JOURNAL (U.S.), pages 41-46

**I ALSO HEARD FROM:** Robert Lichtman, Diane Bertrand, Ken Cheslin, Scott Garinger, Garth Spencer, John Held Jr, Ned Brooks, Chester Cuthbert, Scott Crow, Giovanni Malito, Harry Warner Jr, Chuck Stake, Harry Andruschak, Amanda Baker, Teddy Harvia, Sue Jones, Henry Welch, Giovanni Ravenna



[Editor's  
remarks  
in square  
brackets]

FROM: Scott Garinger  
Box 321  
El Segundo, California 90245

2000-02-12

With the exponential increase of information and its easy availability, it is futile to keep up. All one can do is keep your eyes open and absorb what interests you. Forget about reading everything; there is no need to. Read what you can and enjoy it. Get rid of the crap quickly.

[I've seen some writers roundly condemn categorization of zines and books (ex., punkzines, hard SF, police procedural mysteries) but that practice developed for a very good reason, to help speed up selection and avoid wasting time on things you don't like. Not since the early 1950s has it been possible for the average person to keep up with even one limited genre such as SF. What hath Gutenberg wrought?]

FROM: Mark Plummer  
14 Northway Road  
Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England

2000-04-11

Like you, I found problems with Durschmied's THE HINGE FACTOR, a book which sets out its over-arching theory and then attempts to illustrate it through a selection of often inappropriate examples.

In some respects the best example of a Hinge is that cited in the introduction. It was on the strength of weather reports that Hiroshima was selected from a short-list of four cities for the first combat nuclear strike. If that first bomb had been dropped on Kokura or Niigata it almost certainly wouldn't have changed the course of the war, but tens of thousands of people would have died who might otherwise have lived and vice versa. What effect might that have had ten, twenty, fifty years down the line?

But from there the book seems to lose track of its supposed remit almost immediately. Using the siege of Troy to demonstrate an historical theory might seem unwise, given that it's a largely mythical event, but Durschmied identifies its Hinge as what he terms "victory by stratagem", which immediately flies in the face of the scope of the book. Years of stalemate were broken by neither chance nor stupidity but simply by the Greeks coming up with a cunning plan.

Moving on to the Crusaders crushing defeat by the Saracens at the Horns of Hattin, the Hinge here is apparently "a merciless desert". However, this is scarcely an example of chance in action in the same way that a quirk of weather doomed Hiroshima. After all, it was certainly predictable that a desert region in modern-day Israel in July would turn out to be warm. If there was a decisive moment here, it was the decision to undertake the campaign in the first place.

The failure of the French cavalry to spike the British guns is identified as the decisive moment in the Battle of Waterloo. Well, maybe so, but it's only one of the numerous points at which Waterloo could have gone the other way. If Ney had supported his cavalry charges with infantry or artillery; if Grouchy had brought his considerable force in on the French right flank rather than ineffectually chasing the Prussians; if Prussian Field Marshall Blucher had been killed at Ligny, leaving Gneisenau in command, which would almost certainly have resulted in the Prussians failing to arrive on Wellington's left at a crucial time; all these and many other perfectly plausible events could have swung the battle, so it seems peculiar to single out the failure to spike the guns as the decisive event. More worryingly, this chapter does show up a string of remarkably basic errors in research. Most are not significant but it's not obscure or difficult-to-find information.

FROM: Lloyd Penney  
1706 - 24 Eva Road  
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

2000-04-20

I usually don't read trilogies of any kind. For me (and I've caught righteous hell for this opinion), most trilogies prove that some authors cannot write with clarity and brevity, and that some editors simply cannot edit. If you cannot tell a decent story within the pages of one book, you are writing for word count and money, and not writing for your audience.

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead  
25509 Jonnie Court  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

2000-02-18

[Note change of address.]

Re: Steve Jeffery's cover for OPUNTIA 44.1B. The performing hedgehogs are superb.

I am behind the times; congrats to Garth Spencer in the Canadian Unity Fan Fund win.

FROM: Carolyn Clowes  
547 Dover Road  
Louisville, Kentucky 40206

2000-04-10

Art and commerce: It's a problem, trying to live by making art while resisting pressure from peers and exploitation by the marketplace. Peers and politics are difficult enough to keep at bay, but the business world can be a treacherous place for artists.

So what's worse, academics or businessmen, dry rot or fungus? Academics say art must be defined and interpreted by them, and businessmen say art must be bought and sold by them. Both want a piece of the action. Both have an interest in keeping art elite and expensive, and in having us believe they're indispensable when they're not.

Stewart Home's comment about electronic communication is right on target. It's easy to say e-mail is for keeping in touch, and if you want deep thought, go write an essay. But the medium is the message and the tool shapes the work. In cyberspace, all dotcoms weigh the same. Conspiracy theory equals documented history. Matt Drudge equals Walter Cronkite. In human thought at electronic speed, as Home points out, the facile will always trump the profound because it's faster.



We can believe art is found only in museums, and artists are rare geniuses who take blocks of marble to chip away all the parts that aren't David. Or, with a nod to the formal disciplines and scholars, we can believe art is the use of imagination and design in what we do, that we should practice and perceive it in as many forms as possible. Then we would find art all around us, in the natural world, the things we make, the tasks we perform. We might even get the idea that everyone can do some art, that everyone can appreciate it, that it truly is in the eye of the beholder. The memorable will be remembered, and the forgettable will be forgotten, which is exactly what happens anyway.

Thanks to Ryosuke Cohen for that wonderful article [on mail art], and to Yukio Teratani for a charming translation. The world of mail art is the most fluid, diverse, and free medium I've heard about. Stamp art turns the very symbol of mass production into individual expression. That nicely decorated envelope with a nice postage stamp and appropriate postmark makes the utilitarian into something special.

## **VOTE EARLY AND VOTE OFTEN**

by Dale Speirs

Being a zine fan, not a convention fan, I don't get caught up in the politicking and expense of voting in fan funds, site selections, and awards. However, I do not entirely avoid SF conventions. I attend the local conventions in Calgary out of hometown loyalty. I went to ConAdian in Winnipeg in 1994 because it was a chance to attend a Worldcon without the fuss and bother of foreign travel.

As a member of ConAdian, I voted in the Hugo Awards because there was no extra expense, but did not bother about the Site Selection vote because I didn't care where a foreign Worldcon would be held.

### **Site Selection: 2003 Good Reasons To Vote For Toronto.**

Toronto is bidding for the 2003 Worldcon, and as a patriotic Canuck I have been doing what little I can from several thousand kilometres away. This meant also participating, for the first time, in a Site Selection vote. The 2003 site will be chosen at the Chicago Worldcon this year; it is a race between Cancun (Mexico) and Toronto (Ontario).

(I mention the Ontario part because some of my correspondents are not entirely certain

which is the city and which is the province. I also had one person ask if I intended to drive to Toronto, who was surprised to learn that it is three days driving time one way from Calgary. When I go to Toronto, I will fly, which is just as cheap and will not waste six days of vacation on a round trip across thousands of kilometres of treeless prairie and endless boreal forest.)

I sent off for a supporting membership in Chicon 2000, at US\$40, which one must have to vote. On getting the ballots, I found that the Hugo vote is free but site voting will cost another US\$35. In for a penny, in for a loonie, so I grudgingly sent it in. This means it will cost me about C\$108 at current exchange rates for one vote. I could see that it would eliminate ballot box stuffing, but just the same it seems a bit pricy.

### **What Hath Hugo Wrought?**

I read a number of current SF novels, but the only prozine I take anymore is ON SPEC. Most of the new material I read is science fact or history. Just how far out of touch I am I discovered in looking over the ballot. All of the fiction lists I left blank, for I have read none of them.

For Best Dramatic Presentation, I voted THE MATRIX as #1 and GALAXY QUEST as #2, the only two movies on the list I have seen. I actually enjoyed the latter more but it was a bit too self-

referential. The former had the usual plot holes that one expects of a Hollywood movie, but the special effects were nice so I gave it a slight edge. GALAXY QUEST was a take-off on Trekkies and funny, funny, funny, except perhaps to get-a-life Trekkies. I wonder if Sharyn McCrumb saw it?

In the Best Fan Writer category, I chose Evelyn Leeper as #1. She writes the best convention reports anywhere, with detailed summaries of panels and events. Compare this with the usual con report, which begins with an account "How we almost missed the plane flight", then goes on to a litany of complaints about the hotel and the concom, interspersed with checklists of restaurants eaten in and names of people met, none of which are of interest to the average reader. Leeper covers the useful content of conventions thoroughly, and is an example to us con reporters all.

For #2, I chose Mike Glyer of FILE 770 fame. The only other name I recognized was Dave Langford but I did not give him a vote (nor the others, of whom I never heard). He is an excellent writer, a dry humourist, and I enjoy reading his single-sheet, microprint zine ANSIBLE, but he is not a fan writer. ANSIBLE is not a fanzine, as good as it is. It is a poor man's version of LOCUS, covering the British publishing scene with flair and fun. Whatever it may be, it is not a fanzine "within the meaning of the Act", as the legal phrase goes.

For Best Fan Artist, I picked Teddy Harvia as #1, and not just because he has supplied covers for OPUNTIA. He has wit to go with his artwork. I enjoy reading the strips he does for Australian fanzines. The next three were a toss-up so I basically went eenie-meenie-minie-moe and chose Taral Wayne, Joe Mayhew, and Brad Foster as #2, #3, and #4 respectively. Freddie Baer didn't strike me as a familiar name. I may have seen his work in other zines but it wasn't distinctive enough for me to remember, so I left him as a blank.

As it happens, I get all those nominated in Best Fanzine. I ranked from first to fifth as PLOKTA, CHALLENGER, FILE 770, MIMOSA, and ANSIBLE. The last does not belong in the category, so I ranked it bottom. It was a toss-up between the first two for their positions, so I flipped a loonie. The Canadian \$1 coin is called a loonie because it depicts a loon bird on the obverse. The reverse side, as on all Canadian coins, shows Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada (and various other domains such as Britain). Since PLOKTA is published by fellow Commonwealth citizens, I called heads for them and the loon for my friend from the republic south of the border. Guy Lillian, who publishes CHALLENGER, will be disappointed to learn that Her Majesty came smiling through for her loyal subjects.

Best Semiprozine I left blank. I take only LOCUS among the nominees. As Charles Brown, the publisher, has enough Hugos

to build a picket fence around his palatial house with them, I figured he could get by without me.

## ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$2 or \$3 cash, trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

**The Knarley Knews #81** (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine, with Henry's latest summary of credit card offers he receives each year (\$2.5 million and 133 cards offered him). Lots of letters of comment.

**To Curse Or Not To Curse** (US\$2 from Scott Crow, Box 445, Clements, California 95227) A one-shot recording the debate between Scott Crow and Joshua Saitz about the validity of frequent use of obscenities in zines. (Crow against, Saitz for.) Both men make valid arguments, but I agree with Crow that four-letter words are not particularly shocking anymore, so why clutter up text with them? This zine deserves wider circulation; get a copy.



**Robbery With Violets** (L3 or US\$7 from Ken Cheslin, 29 Kestrel Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 2PH, England) This is a part of an ongoing series reprinting British zine writing from the 1950s and 1960s. The issue at hand is an anthology of fictionalized stories by John Berry about his early days as a police constable in the south of England. Set in the village of Little Snittering, not far from the ancient town of Much Feltham, these stories stand on their own as delightful humour.

**Vanamonde #348 to #352** (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly single-sheet apazine, which adds up to a regular size zine over two or three months. Comments on a variety of topics, ranging from how to cite a court case to haiku.

**Whizzbanger Guide To Zine Distributors #4** (US\$3 from Shannon Colebank, Box 5591, Portland, Oregon 97228) Very useful reference for those looking for places to get their zines sold. It includes international listings, not just USA. Most of the listings include brief summaries about the distributor.

**For The Clerisy V7#38** (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068-0404) Extended review of THE SIMPSONS cartoon series, various book and movie reviews, commentary, and letters of comment.

**Twink #17** (The Usual from E.B. Frohvet, 4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott City, Maryland 21042) SF genzine, starting off with an account of a typical workshop and its participants, rather off-putting to delicate egos, not that writers have them. Then to a warning about vanity publishers, who have updated with the times and are using new methods to milch neo-authors out of money. Thirdly, a report of e-mail workshopping. The rest of the issue is given over to short reviews and the letter column.

**Goon Daddy #1** (The Usual from Noel Kuhlman, 2170 Crisolita Street, San Andres Bukid, Manila, Philippines 1017) There is a common type of crudzine with badly drawn art and poorly thought out rants. It is saturated with obscenities by an editor who thinks that four-letter words will make it a cutting-edge zine. The heavy emphasis on sex and toilet humour makes it evident the editor is probably a young man, probably over weight, and almost certainly has never been with a woman. This type of zine is derivative, has been done many times before, and suggests that perhaps universal literacy is not such a good thing. This zine is one of them.

**Shouting At The Postman #37** (The Usual from Ken and Mary Miller, Box 101, Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940-0101) Perzine, this issue on moving house, with lots of down-to-the-wire stories about realtors, boxing things, and moving vans. Also a Thanksgiving dinner at the home of an bizarre acquaintance.



**Amapra #11** (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Single-sheet apazine, this time discussion of personal brushes with weather disasters, the after-effects of tree removals (buzzards sitting in his backyard looking for a home), and how his name is mis-spelt.

**Especially Henry** (\$3 from C.F. Kennedy, 39 Claremore Avenue, Scarborough, Ontario M1N 3S1) Chapbook about a man who discovers a junked computer with rather unusual software and peripherals that duplicate objects. But be careful what you ask for ...

**Plokta V5#2** (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG) Faanish SF fanzine with jolly good fun in the English style. Lots of miscellanies, and essays on shopping for a high-tech bed, cooking a Christmas turkey in March the high-tech way, and letters of comment.

**Flashpoint #3** (US\$3 from Shannon Colebank, Box 5591, Portland, Oregon 97228) Healthcare issue, with, unfortunately, too many unsupported or sweeping generalizations about the horror story that is the American healthcare system. Not all diseases such as cancer or AIDS come about because one wasn't a vegetarian. Not all doctors are drug pushers only interested in

shoveling as many patients through the system as possible. If you gets a runaround in finding out what is wrong with you, it is not necessarily because of stupidity. Diagnosis is not at all an easy task, and doctors, nurses, veterinarians, and pathologists simply cannot always infallibly spot the problem. It appears that as JFK conspiracy theories fade away with time, the AIDS as a conspiracy hypothesis is gaining ground. Blame everything on the government, of course. If you believe the CIA is to blame for almost everything, then this should be of interest. If you accept that 99% of the world's problems are due to stupidity, incompetence, or avarice, then you needn't bother with this one.

If I seem rather splenetic in reviewing this zine, it is because I had an aunt die from cancer who wasted her final years desperately trying all this lunatic advice. She lived her life on farms where chemicals were never used, and had a healthy diet, so the environment-as-a-cause conspiracy did not apply. She was a happy, loving mother who was a devout Christian and raised three well-adjusted children, so the it's-all-in-your-mind nonsense does not apply.

Unfortunately the Papernet has been no more immune to junk information than the Internet. This zine is an example of what happens when people who don't know the difference between an open mind and an empty mind have access to copy shops.

**The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #5** (The Usual from Garth Spencer, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) Convention reports, including a CUFF trip report, letters of comment, and fannish miscellany.

**Psyche Out - Voci Ai Confini Del Mondo** (The Usual from Silvano Pertone, via G. Gallesi no. 20/32, 16163 San Quirico, Genova, Italy) Multilingual compilation of readers' commentary on the arrival of year 2000, both looking back and looking ahead. Some interesting thoughts as we approach the millennium.

**FortyTwo #1** (The Usual from Mark Strickert, 2891 Canyon Crest Drive #58, Riverside, California 92507) This title replaces MARKTIME. Strickert has moved to California, and is settling down to a new lifestyle and job, which he documents herewith. Also included is radio fan commentary on radio stations, as well as apa comments.

**Challenger #11** (The Usual from Guy Lillian, Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153-3092) In the doorstep category of zines, we have this one, checking in at 100 pages, of which 55 are letters of comment. Lillian is a barrister, and this issue features legal combat stories. They clearly demonstrate that you should always be an honest citizen because you really don't want to put your fate in the hands of a capricious court system.

**Noods #5** (The Usual from Jeana, 10967 - 72 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0B1) Perzine of a young woman making the transition from the rural life of Camrose (east central Alberta) into the big city of Edmonton, and her hopes, fears, and memories relating thereof. It brought back memories of when I made that same transition to the University of Alberta in Edmonton from rural Red Deer. If you ever left the farm and headed off to the city lights, I think this will interest you.

**ConTRACT V12#2** (The Usual from John Mansfield, 516 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0G2) Newszine specializing in Canadian SF conventions. This issue starts off with a press release about a Prince Edward Island convention called Atlanticon, which describes itself as the Maritimes' largest annual convention. I never even heard a faint rumor of the name before, so I wonder about this. I cringed reading the P.R., which apparently expects thousands of members and “ ... *will put PEI in the spotlight nationally and internationally as well.*” Not unless Anne of Green Gables shows up and does a striptease, I suspect. This sounds like a disaster in the making. I can just see Mansfield struggling to keep a straight face as he typed it in. Elsewhere are brief hints and suggestions for con-running, con reports, and listings of upcoming conventions.

**Quasiquote #2** (The Usual from Sandra Bond, 46 Stirling Road, London N22 5BP, England) Commentary on zinedom, fan trip reports, and letters of comment. A faanish fanzine.

**Ethel The Aardvark #90** (The Usual from Melbourne Science Fiction Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Clubzine keeping abreast of media fandom, as demonstrated by the cover photo of Sigourney Weaver and her cleavage from GALAXY QUEST. The usual news and notes, reviews, letters of comment, fiction, and interviews.

**File 770 #134** (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) SF newszine, with convention reports, fannish notes, and letters of comment.

**Journal of the Writing Equipment Society #57** (US\$48 per year from Writing Equipment Society, c/o Maureen Greenland, Cartledge Cottage, Cartledge Lane, Holmesfield, Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 7SB) Not a zine, but I mention them because they reprinted my article on public letter writers. High-quality colour magazine, published three times per year. Most of the emphasis is on pen collecting, particularly antique fountain pens. However there is attention paid to items that might be classified as postal history. Copying devices, for example, produced problems for the Post Office, which couldn't make up its mind whether letters copied by pantograph were printed matter (cheaper

rate) or personal correspondence (higher rate). Stamp boxes are popular as a collectible among members of the W.E.S., not to mention ink wells and pen stands.

**Squiggledy Hoy #4** (The Usual from Bridget Bradshaw, 19 Hill Court Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3JJ) Perzine with a bit of everything, from upgrading one's job by volunteering to do computer work to nice guys in fandom and nature. Plus, of course, letters of comment.

**The Thought #118** (The Usual from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona 85318-0760) American libertarianism, Y2K I-told-you-so, the evolution of consciousness, target policing, and miscellany, plus letters of comment.

**Mimosa #25** (The Usual from Nick and Richard Lynch, Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885) Fanhistory zine, with articles about Worldcons past and present (i.e., Australia), Swedish fandom, early American fandom, and tributes to the late Walt Willis, an Irish fanwriter of the 1950s.

**Never Quite Arriving #8** (The Usual from Christina Lake, 12 Hatherly Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8QA, England) Perzine with accounts of celebrating Y2K, the Indonesian installment of her round-the-world trip report, working in a government job, and letters of comment.



## WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

by Dale Speirs

Long, long ago the Tethys Sea dwindled away. Once it circled the planet, but as Africa pushed north against Eurasia, it was crushed out of existence, leaving only remnants such as the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Not so long ago, scientists drilling cores into the sediments at the bottom of the Mediterranean discovered huge layers of salt and arid zone deposits. The Mediterranean basin had not always been filled with seawater, as from time to time the Gibraltar Strait had been pinched shut by tectonic forces. With no ingress of water, the Mediterranean evaporated under the sun. The most recent dessication was during the Miocene, 7 to 5 million years ago, but at the beginning of the Pliocene period which succeeded it, the barrier was breached and the water came in again [1].

**Down In The Bottomlands And Other Places** is a collection of three alternative history novelettes by Harry Turtledove and L. Sprague de Camp (Baen, 1999, mass-market paperback, ISBN 0-671-57835-9).

**“Down In The Bottomlands”** by Harry Turtledove is the story of Radnal vez Krobir, a tour guide working in the desiccated Mediterranean. The alternative timeline is equivalent to ours in technology; they have helicopters,

drill for oil and minerals in the Bottomlands, and have a tourist trade.

-12-

Radnal conducts mule tours down into the furnace of the seabed, and his lectures to the tourists about the ecology and geology of the place serve to inform the reader as well. The ecological aspects are reasonably well thought out. The basic principle is that a desiccated Mediterranean would be colonized mostly from Africa and Arabia, which are the two closest desert habitats. Jerboas have filled many niches, from shrub nibblers to the carnivorous bladetooths, which feed on insects and smaller species of jerboas. Birds did well since they excrete urea in a drier form and thus don't need as much water. The plants are about the same as our timeline, which is logical because the Bottomlands would not be a major habitat change from the deserts for them. There are constant earthquakes, just as in our timeline, for the remnants of the Tethys Sea are tectonically active as Africa pushes and shoves against its neighbours.

Humans live in the Bottomlands, but Eurasian history and geography is unrecognizable from such a long divergence. Starbombs were invented about fifty years ago, and now the world lives in fear of nuclear confrontation. There are just as many cultural variations in the Bottomlands world as ours. The details are filled in with passing mentions such as a game that obviously derived from chess but with differently named and shaped pieces.

A member of the tour group is murdered. Was he a spy from a hostile power? Will his government declare war? The authorities are called in. The tour is allowed to continue while the investigation goes on, since there is no escape from the bottom of a salt desert and they might as well keep busy instead of sitting about the lodge threatening to sue. A plot is discovered to plant a starbomb in the Barrier Mountains, in the right seismic fault, and bring in the Western Ocean to destroy the Bottomlands. This would not only take out a geopolitical power, it would give other nations bordering the Bottomlands their own warm-water ports. The story proceeds with sabotage, transportation and communication cuts leaving the group isolated, and a few other plot twists as the race to locate the starbomb runs down to the wire. And not just figuratively, for the final twist involves a bird stealing the detonator wire.

**“The Wheels Of If”** by L. Sprague de Camp starts off with a couple of historical vignettes about our timeline to inform the reader about the points of divergence to follow. The hero is Allister Park, who awakes and finds himself sliding between alternative timelines each day, such as a modern New York City with Union Jack bunting to celebrate the King, and sports scores from the Inter-Colonial Football League (Massachusetts beat Quebec). Park finally ends up permanently as a Bishop in the Celtic Church in New Belfast, Vinland (read New York City).

North America never consolidated into two nations as it did in our timeline. The two major divergences were the Celtic Church triumphing over the Roman Catholics in northern Europe of the 600s, and the Arabs making it all the way to southern France and staying there, instead of being turned back at the gates of Vienna. The Norse, English, and Irish settled North America by the 1000s, and Vinland became an established colony. Since Spain never was because of the Arabs, the Incas survived as an independent nation.

Park settles in and becomes mixed up in local politics. It turns out that he is a victim of Joseph Noggles, a scientist who knows how to shift minds between alternative universes on ‘wheels of if’. Noggle messed up and trapped himself on a wheel of if that is still rotating him with five other men, a turn each day, but which inadvertently locked Park into the Bishop’s body. Noggle is desperate to get off his wheel of if, but Park finds he is happy where he is.

Park gets entangled first in local politics, then federal Vinland politics, then a war equivalent to the American War Between The States. The war is fought with the same muddleheaded army thinking, lack of resources, and green troops as our timeline.

**“The Pugnacious Peacemaker”** by Harry Turtledove is a sequel to “The Wheels Of If”. The Inca Empire has come up against the Arabs in Brazil, and the two parties have agreed to arbitration by Vinland. Vinland sends Park, who has since resigned his Bishopric to become a judge. Both the Incas and Arabs are religious fanatics, the faith of the Sun versus Islam. Both are using sabotage, spies, and all the usual paraphernalia of diplomacy. Car bombs are used by zealots of both sides to disrupt peace negotiations.

Park manages to broker a deal, firstly by convincing the Incas to write down their religious texts and thus become Peoples of the Book, not pure pagans or infidels to the Arabs. He then points out to the Arab leaders that while they are obligated to pursue pagans mercilessly, they can do as they do elsewhere with Peoples of the Book, and levy a jizya tax, which allows them toleration in exchange for the privilege of filling the Emir’s coffers. A few border adjustments, and all’s well that ends well.

### Reference.

- 1] Hsu, K.J. (1974) The Miocene desiccation of the Mediterranean and its climatical and zoogeographical implications. *NATURWISSENSCHAFTEN* 61:137-142

## MAIL ART LISTINGS

**Sciort Comics** (Gianmaria Punzi, Via Corgiano 13, 84080 Capezzano (SA), Italy) I am preparing a new issue. Please send cartoon and/or comic strips. Free theme. Size maximum A4, black and white, also photocopies. A free copy will be mailed to all contributors. Deadline is 30 August 2000.

**Stampzine:** (Picasso Gaglione, 450 Taraval Street, #276, San Francisco, California 94116) Edited and published by Picasso Gaglione and friends. STAMPZINE is an assembling collection of rubber stamp art featuring the hand-stamped works of international artists. Anyone wishing to contribute should send 75 hand-stamped copies of rubber stamp artwork on 8.5 x 11 pages. All contributors will receive a free copy.

**From Cover To Cover V15#5** (Membership details from Art Cover Exchange, c/o Rudy Viol, 15550 Paulding Boulevard, Brook Park, Ohio 44142-2932) Newsletter of the A.C.E., a group of philatelists who exchange event and first-day covers each month. This club requires a commitment to be active; each month you would prepare 15 covers on suggested themes to trade with other club members. The newsletter illustrates a selection of members’ covers in colour, and very nicely produced some of them are.



**Voices At The Edge Of The World:** (Silvano Pertone, via Gallesi 20/32, 16163 S. Quirico, Genova, Italy) The 20<sup>th</sup> Century is ending. The powerful, who have been establishing rules for a long time, are planning a taken-for-granted future for us. They are telling us to carry on, just trying to control our minds and emotions, and to make us forget ourselves and our past. PSYCHE OUT is asking you for your help in order to fight against any kind of false new century celebration, because it's from our roots that we want to start the future. Why don't we try to leave a sign of our presence in the century that we're going to leave? Send us your free musical, graphic, or written message expressing fears and hopes about the future. Your message and a lot of other underground artists' ones will be collected and published as a someone looking beyond self-interest, indifferences, and "HAPPY OBEDIENCE!!" track. I hope to receive your news as soon as possible.

**Artist Trading Cards:** (Chuck Stake, 736 - 5 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1P9, Canada) ATCs are works of art created on 64 mm x 89 mm card stock. They are the same size as hockey trading cards, but the similarity stops here. Cards may depict anything, be 2-D or 3-D, they may be original, a series, an edition, or a multiple. Cards are signed on the back by the artist and, if necessary, an edition number is included. ATCs are paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubberstamp works,

mixed-media, etchings, found images, recycled works of art, assemblages, etcetera. In effect they are miniature works of art, the only stipulation being that the card fits in the standard plastic sheets that hockey cards are normally stored within. Cards can be traded in person or by mail.

**Home:** (Ginger Mason, Postfach 126, 5612 Villmergen, Switzerland) I've recently moved from Canada to Switzerland and am struggling with the concept of 'home'. I know it's not about changing flags, the four walls, or even necessarily where the heart is. Do you carry 'home' within you? Or on your back like a snail? What do you need to feel "at home"? Deadline October 2000. Free medium and size. Documentation to all.

**Mani Art:** (Pascal Lenoir, 11 Ruelle de Champagne, 60680 Grand Fresnoy, France) 60 copies of 15 cm x 21 cm artwork or 60 postcards. No black-and-white photocopies. Leave 1 cm margin on longest side. Nicely bound volume of mail art assembling, with the postcards slipped into a pocket. Addresses of the contributors are included as part of the usual "doc to all".

**Nobel Peace Project 2000:** (Smith and Gold, R.R. #1, Box 257, Nobel, Ontario P0G 1G0) In a remote corner of Ontario, the village of Nobel was part of the arms build-up in the early years of the 20th Century. This build-up culminated in the horrors of WW1.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st Century, as arms production and war economies are on the rise, Nobel will be on the site of the Nobel Peace Project. Nobel, named for Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel, is just north of Parry Sound on the Georgian Bay in the Canadian Shield.

From 1912 until its final closure in 1985, Nobel was the location of the large C.I.L. (Canadian Industries Ltd.) explosives plant. Massive amounts of explosives were manufactured; cordite, TNT, dynamite, nitroglycerine, and gelatin explosives. At one time the plant employed 4000 people, mostly women. After Armistice Day in 1918, the demand fell off, but again expanded in preparation for WW2.

It is tragically ironic that Canada is again sending troops to foreign wars at the beginning of the 21st Century and is part of another arms buildup, the New World Order. Since we know that the Armistice in 1918 caused a fall in demand at the C.I.L. plant in Nobel, we would like to challenge this direction by stimulating an armistice mentality with the Nobel Peace Project.

Send mail art, visual poetry, postcard fictions. No jury, no media or size limitations, no returns, documentation to all. All work received will be exhibited at Upland Studio in Nobel, Ontario, and then the project will travel. All poetry received will be read at every opening. Deadline July 1, 2000.

## STATISTICS - ZINES RECEIVED

Year	Australia	Canada	Britain	USA	Others	Totals
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### Robert Lichtman

1987	32	4	33	58	3	130
1988	15	1	51	67	4	138
1989	12	2	61	55	0	130
1990	16	2	30	66	5	119
1991	16	1	44	85	1	147
1992	18	17	50	104	2	191
1993	16	12	51	91	2	172
1994	13	14	60	109	2	198
1995	12	16	52	143	0	223
1996	11	14	47	108	0	180
1997	9	19	58	109	0	195
1998	12	16	64	91	0	183

### Dale Speirs

1998	23	31	39	244	7	344
1999	14	51	67	213	19	364

The lament that zinedom is dying and the Papernet ain't what it used to be doesn't seem justified.