

OPUNTIA

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WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION 2008

by Dale Speirs

Introduction.

For the first time, the World Fantasy Convention (WFC) was held in Calgary, which is Canada's petroleum capital. The WFC is a literary convention and is appropriate to Calgary, which has the highest library circulation in Canada.

There were no costumed fans roaming the halls, nor a masquerade. The Friday night of the convention was Halloween night, and many costumed people were roaming the nightclubs of downtown Cowtown. This led to the peculiar situation where the fans looked like mundanes and the mundanes looked like fans. It was still easy to tell that it was an science fiction convention because of all the people sitting quietly in the hotel lobby or corridors reading books. I never see that at philatelic shows, commercial trade fairs, or the Calgary Stampede.

The venue was the posh Hyatt Regency Hotel, in the centre of the downtown core, from October 30 to November 2, 2008. The LRT station is on its north side, and the Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall on its south side, so one can't get more convenient than that. Parking for cars, however, is impossible downtown, which is why I took the bus each day to the convention.

“So saying, Inspector Hector pointed his blaster at Zzyxx, who drew its pseudopods back in fear, and hissed at the guests assembled in the drawing room of the stately manor.” (from MURDER COMES TO THE SPACEPORT, not by Agatha Christie)

The theme of the WFC was “Mystery In Fantasy And Horror”. The Author Guests of Honour were Barbara Hambly and David Morrell, the Editor GoH was Tom Doherty, the Artist GoH was Todd Lockwood, and the Toastmaster was Tad Williams. I didn’t recognize the names of any of the Guests of Honour other than Doherty, which gives you an idea that I don’t normally read fantasy beyond Discworld. However, it was an opportunity to attend the panels and learn a bit about the subject, even if I don’t intend to read much in that area. My fiction reading favours Sherlockian pastiches, alternative history, and general SF.

There were only two tracks of seminars, plus two tracks of author readings. This, to me, is a better way to do it than a dozen tracks as done at most large conventions, because it brings convention attendees together in a common thread of narrative and forces them to mix more than they would otherwise. It meant that the panels were well attended; all the ones I went to had 80 to 100 people in the audience. In a general SF convention, one would usually only see that with a sci-fi actor GoH.

The WFC officially began Thursday afternoon, but the registration desk was opened Wednesday night. I decided to beat the rush and went downtown. Normally I use the #7 bus but just missed it, so I took the #13 instead. The bus driver was new to the route, but fortunately there were experienced passengers sitting near the front who advised him where to turn, and we wended our way downtown.

The WFC registration desk was quick and efficient, and I had my badge and book bag in less than a minute. The show committee were familiar faces I recognized from other conventions, the experienced con-runners that we need to see more of.

The book bag, a good quality tote bag with the WFC logo on it, held 5 kg of books (I weighed it on the bathroom scale when I got home), about one-third hardcovers and the rest paperbacks. I only kept one to read and the rest were donated to the Co-op book exchange. I am prejudiced against novels about a young farm boy/girl in a quest to gain a rightful place on the throne of the kingdom (no one wants to be Prime Minister, not that I blame them). I decline to soil my fingers touching books about computer game heroes, young girls mind-melding with dragons, or Volume 6 of the Quest for the Sacred Knickknack of Qwerty trilogy.

The only event advertised for Wednesday night was a meet-and-greet with the Guests of Honour and a folk rock band specializing in clichés, so I headed back home. I was at the hotel so briefly that I was still able to use my bus transfer, which are good for 90 minutes anywhere on Calgary Transit buses or trains. Two #13 buses arrived together at the stop. I don't know who was driving the second bus but fortunately the rookie driver wasn't in the one I took. I came back home to find a circus going on, with two Fire Dept. pumpers and an ambulance kitty-corner from my house. At first I thought it was my neighbours across the back alley, who do love their backyard barbecues, but they were rubbernecking on the sidewalk. It turned out that a different house opposite them had a kitchen fire. Alas, when the firefighters arrived and saw the smoke in my neighbours' yard, they jumped to the obvious but wrong conclusion. Everything seemed to be sorted out though.

The Problems Of Fantasy Novels.

The first panel of the convention, on Friday afternoon, was "Are Appendices Needed?". Modern fantasy novels have to set up a world for the reader, and the more characters and sub-plots there are, the more difficult it is for the reader to keep track of who did what to whom and where the Magic Springs of Qwerty are located in relation to the Mountains of Zzyxx. The question asked of the panelists was if maps, glossaries, pronunciation guides, and genealogies should be added to novels. All of them agreed on the

necessity for maps, not necessarily for publication, but to help them keep distances and places straight, and all of them said they had wall maps for their worlds for use when writing the book. They agreed unanimously that footnotes should not appear in fiction.

Susan Forest said she uses genealogies and maps to keep track when writing her longer novels, but as far as publishing them in the book, felt that with clear writing it is not necessary to add appendices. She did agree to them if they were bonus material, rather than necessary to understanding the novel.

L.E. Modesitt Jr has correct-scale maps of his fantasy worlds in his office to make certain that characters traveled the proper distance in the correct amount of time. He complained that his publishers include maps in his books that are not to scale, resulting in nitpicks from readers about why a character would need two days to go one league but could travel 200 leagues in one hour. On one occasion, his publishers printed the wrong map from a different series. He said that maps also keep the author straight on re-supply (characters do not get supplies or military reinforcements in one hour across a jagged mountain range) and climate (which depends on topography). Modesitt said political boundary lines on a map will indicate the technology level of a fantasy world. Low-tech cultures set boundaries between nations along natural barriers such as rivers or

mountain ranges, while advanced societies use artificial lines that ignore geography. Tad Williams finds maps crucial, not only for distances and time traveled, but because sometimes they suggest sub-plots or lines of action. He remarked that you can tell how many volumes a series is good for depending on the distance the hero must cover.

Julianne Lee agreed that a good novel doesn't need a glossary, but she had readers ask how some words were pronounced. Modesitt said that writers should pronounce names and neologisms out loud before adding them, and make it clear how they are pronounced, thus obviating the need for a pronunciation glossary. Williams said many readers, especially gamers, never stop to consider the practical economy of a fantasy world, such as what crops are raised and why. He mentioned some bad fiction, evidently written by city slickers, where livestock graze on what was previously indicated to be crop land.

The next panel I attended was "Location, Location, Location", on how the geographical setting influences a novel, although it tended to diverge to how setting influences novelists. Violette Malan said the setting of a novel helps determine interest and complexity of a story.

The panel topic diverged when Deborah Biancotti, from Down Under, said she dislikes the Australian bush country and prefers

to use the urban areas where she lives as a source for settings. Rebecca Bradley, a Calgary archaeologist in her day job, has excavated ruins around the world, but it was her experience living in Hong Kong that gave her the viewpoint of an alien in a strange setting and culture. Biancotti said ancient ruins give a sense of history, of people who have gone before, amazing to people from Australia or western Canada, countries with a young history. (Calgary, founded in 1875, considers a 75-year-old building to be an historical site.) Malan pointed out that it also worked the other way, with Europeans being amazed that Canada and the USA have vast forests and prairies never cultivated and seldom if ever traveled. (There are mountains within two hours drive of Calgary that no one has ever bothered to climb, and hundreds of unnamed streams and waterfalls in Alberta.) She said people often think of distance in travel time, not kilometres, which determines how far apart market towns are spaced. In fantasy worlds, good roads and horses means that town will be spaced further apart, but if footpaths are the only means of travel, then villages will be closer.

Mystery In Fantasy.

The panel "Real Life Villains" asked the authors where they got their inspiration for villainous characters. David Morrell mentioned getting story ideas from watching the behaviour of friends and family, particularly the ones who are quite sane in law

but make you wonder about them de facto. We don't know what is going on in the minds of others, and ordinary people could suddenly snap. It is a cliché that after the police arrest a murderer or rapist, his neighbours will say "He was a quiet man". Mark Van Name said one idea for generating story ideas is to write out fantasies about blowing peoples' heads off with a gun because they were bigots, cut you off in traffic, or stirred their soup in the wrong direction. My suggestion is that if you do this, don't keep it on your computer hard drive or post it on the Internet.

"Adding Mystery To Fantasy" started off with the proposition by the panelists that all fantasy has an element of mystery to it because the reader has to figure out the setting and culture. Laurel Anne Hill explained it in a rather unusual manner, posing in ballet positions and making analogies between a ballet move and how it connects mystery with fiction. This could start a trend, such as Robert Sawyer doing a Highland fling to explain his latest novel, or L.E. Modesitt Jr dancing a cakewalk while discussing fantasy world economics. Meanwhile, back at the panel, Hill also suggested an author use a seer or shaman to make prophecies to the characters which came true in unexpected twists. This would foreshadow the denouement, leaving the reader to figure out how the plot might go from A to Z.

An audience member cited a good example of mystery in fantasy in the Lord Darcy novels of Randall Garrett. Lord Darcy is a

homicide investigator in an alternative England where magic exists but follows definite rules, and is used, with limitations, to investigate cases. Hill mentioned one problem with mystery fantasy crossovers is that booksellers don't know how to classify them, putting them into the wrong genre or into the general fiction department. Jasper Fforde's books are an example, and are only in the general section of Chapters/Indigo.

Panelist Jana Oliver said she doesn't plot ahead when writing a novel but lets the characters lead her. She said too many fantasies have murders where there is little documented fallout. Someone is killed, characters shrug their shoulders, and move on to the next plot coupon, without showing ripple effects from the death. More realistically, the King's Men would investigate the death, vengeful brothers or fathers would seek retaliation, and the local mayor or sheriff would start a manhunt. She suggested an author could have fun with the readers by planting red herrings to distract the reader from an essential clue at the moment it is given.

"Medieval Mysteries" discussed, according to the programme book, "the use of mystery tropes in low-tech settings". Moderator David Keck got a good laugh from the audience when he read this out loud and confessed that he had always thought a trope was a small furry mammal scurrying about the underbrush. The battery in his wireless microphone then went dead, leading to more jokes about a low-tech environment.

Getting back to the subject at hand, mystery should be appropriate to the culture's level of technology, and less magic was more interesting than more magic. Keck said it was difficult to write a mystery if too many supernatural characters.

Barbara Hambly, whose microphone was working, said it was cheating to use unlimited magic to solve a crime in a medieval fantasy. Irene Radford said fantasy detectives would fail to get suitable evidence for a jury conviction, so the only alternative is to force a confession in front of witnesses. She said that too many writers create medieval worlds as wish fulfillment, rather than the way they would actually function. The panelists agreed that too many mystery fantasies assume behaviour that didn't exist then, such as liberated young women sassing their fathers, Negroes treated as equals, or citizens acting on rational information instead of superstition.

Other Aspects Of Fantasy.

"Sidekicks Who Try To Steal The Show" started off with Barbara Roden saying that Dr. John Watson was not the first sidekick but was the most famous. She pointed out that in the original canon, Watson was serious and is the actual narrator of the story, but movies don't need him to explain events so they turn him into a hero-worshiper and/or a buffoon. Roden noted that the more extreme the lead character, the more normal the sidekick must be.

Many sidekicks become as famous as their superiors. **-6-**
This is because in a long series of stories, the author will paint himself into a corner after writing everything that could be said about the lead character, so instead the sidekick is developed.

Dave Duncan said that after the Sherlock Holmes stories, sidekicks suddenly proliferated but often became more trivial. Most of them were merely used to as a proxy to explain to the reader what is going on. He noted that sidekicks can become smarter than the lead character, citing the Wodehouse stories about Jeeves. Charles Prepole said sidekicks are used as contrast to the heroic shining light of the lead character. He noted that sidekicks of opposite gender mean trouble, and it is difficult to avoid having sex and love intrude. Conversely it is difficult to imagine Dr. Who having a male companion.

"Is Fantasy An Inherently Violent Genre?" was answered by the panelists in the negative. Having quickly disposed of the topic, they then veered off to the Vietnam War and never came back. David Drake, a Viet vet, writes mostly fantasy but is best known for his military SF. He complained that this is because publishers slap a picture of a tank on the cover of all his books, whether or not military. Drake wrote the Hammer's Slammers stories as a way to heal from the Vietnam War. David Morrell, who created the Rambo series, said that any violence in fantasy should be honest emotionally, and not gratuitous.

The panel "Killing Significant Characters" was standing room only. George R.R. Martin mentioned that in his Wild Card series there were characters who had been specifically plotted to die in the third volume. They were minor red-shirt figures with only a few lines but when they were killed off, many readers wrote in protesting. Deaths of the bad guys are particularly satisfying. Tad Williams said fantasy novels with final wars or other apocalyptic scenes are unrealistic if only the extras are killed and all the significant characters escape. In writing long multi-volume epics, characters tend to accumulate, so it is good to thin them out occasionally.

Steven Erikson joked that death is almost as traumatic as marriage, and an author can tease the readers by killing off a significant character not because the plot requires it but purely by randomness. That is how it happens in the real world; someone is walking along a sidewalk in apparent good health and suddenly falls dead to the ground from a stroke. All the panelists agreed that not just the death is important but the grieving and coping by the survivors. Bad fiction has the remaining characters shrug and move on without a backward glance. Erikson said that reviving dead characters a la Mr. Spock is cheating, to which Martin heartily seconded. The most famous significant character death was Sherlock Holmes, causing a reader uproar which forced Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write a new series based on the cheat of Holmes not really dying at those waterfalls.

"The Language Of Fantasy" panel discussed the idea of reading fantasy for the atmosphere or mood. Farah Mendlesohn said vague descriptions by words were better for the reader than explicit visual description. To suggest upper-class life or high quality, use French-sounding words, because even though the Conquest is a millennium in the past, anglophones still associate French with the ruling class and Germanic words with the serfs. Kay Kenyon defined melodrama as the use of undeserved emotional language and SF as deficient in emotional language.

Zinedom, Or Not.

There were a couple of panels on fantasy zines, but the term was not used in the way that is commonly accepted in the Papernet. "Fantasy Zines Online" had panelists who all published on-line fiction magazines intended as prozines (professional magazines) rather than a fan Website. Sean Wallace said his online magazine is charged off by his publishing company as a marketing expense in order to sell books and other merchandise. He said there is not yet any way to make money as a pure Internet magazine. Their books sold about 600 copies via traditional distributors through bookstores and newsagents, but did much better online because they could reach a far larger audience of targeted demographics. Notwithstanding that, it is difficult to publicize online magazines.

Wendy Delmater emphasized that publicity requires cross-media advertising. She distributes business cards that state how much her magazine pays writers, postcards, and badge ribbons at SF conventions. (The last item, I note, seems to be a bigger tradition in the USA than Canada.) Jennifer Dawson said online magazines were considered the best method to advertise new fiction on a minimal budget. She noted that print magazines are still considered as more important. Online magazines carry a stigma despite having better demographics.

“Fantasy Zines Around The World” dealt with print prozines, the panelists being editors from Canada, the USA, and the Netherlands. Diane Walton said she doesn’t see any trends in the slush pile but does see the same old tired cliches such as Harry Potter clones and Gonad the Barbarian stories. Gordon Van Gelder said that fantasy tends to predominate in the slush pile because it is easier to write. Shawna McCarthy gets 3,000 manuscripts a year, so the story has to grab her quickly. And no talking cat stories, please. The audience was asked how many had submitted manuscripts to a publisher and about half raised their hands. When asked how many had sold to publishers, about a dozen hands stayed up.

All of the editors discouraged artists from sending in art because they have all they need and prefer to rely on a stable of regular artists. A monthly magazine only needs twelve covers per year,

which makes the odds worse than for selling stories.

For those determined to become professional artists and authors, the traditional advice still applies: “Don’t quit your day job”.

Denouement And Epilogue.

Sunday had little programming other than the afternoon awards banquet. I skipped the banquet and just caught the last five minutes of the GoH speeches, where Tad Williams was amusing the audience by claiming there are no Canadian fantasy writers, just geographically confused Americans. Robert Sawyer doesn’t exist and is a hoax perpetuated by the Ontario Ministry of Culture.

There will probably be a local SF convention in Calgary next year, but if so, they were conspicuous by their absence at the WFC. I did not see any publicity for Con-Version, not even a flyer on the freebies table. There were, however, flyers for the 67th Worldcon, being held in Montréal in 2009 at the Palais des congres de Montréal. The event will be August 6 to 10, and is called Anticipation, a name which fits in both official languages. GoHs are Neil Gaiman, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Ralph Bakshi, Taral Wayne, David Hartwell, Tom Doherty, and Julie Czerneda. Further details at www.anticipationsf.ca

All told, the WFC went quite well, and I enjoyed my time there.

WHITHER PEAK OIL?

by Dale Speirs

The short answer is that it was ambushed by the Panic of 2008. Oil production is still declining worldwide, and the new production predicted is not an addition to existing supplies but a make-up for declining oil fields. Thanks to the Wall Street bankers, demand for oil went into the toilet along with everything else. The price of oil did not fall because there is a glut in the market as happened in the 1980s, but because the market itself collapsed. When demand falls faster than the supply declines, the result is falling prices, or deflation. The chart on page 10 shows a selection of oil price years. The good news is that gasoline and houses are cheaper, but the bad news is that people still can't afford them because they are now unemployed.

In Alberta, new oilsands projects are being postponed left, right, and centre. Because of projects already under construction, not only oilsands but also skyscrapers and road projects, Alberta hasn't yet felt any pain. If the financial panic lasts into late 2009, then Alberta will start to feel the effects. Oil is still relatively high for conventional oil projects, although not for oilsands. The King of Saudi Arabia himself has finally publicly admitted that they need about \$75 oil in order to keep their economy rolling, but since all the OPEC countries cheat on their production quotas, it is only the Saudis who can cut production faster than the world

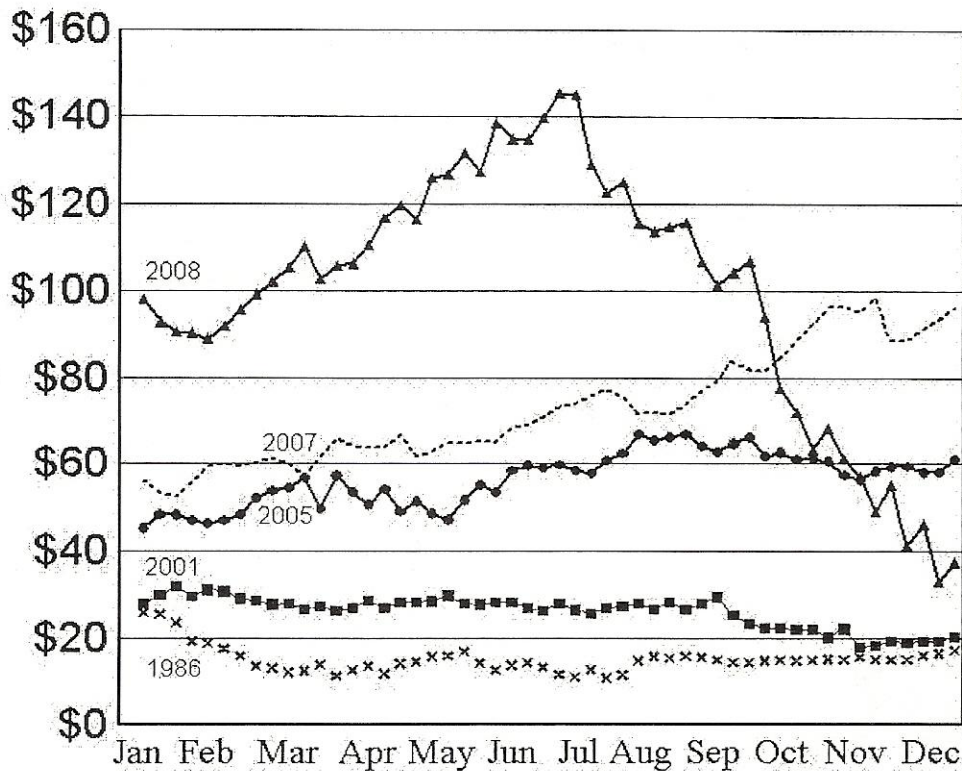
economy declines. On page 11 is a table of oil reserves claimed by OPEC. Notice how they suddenly jumped a couple of decades ago despite no new oilfields being discovered, then just as suddenly plateaued despite all the oil pumped since then. This was done by OPEC countries so they could cheat on their quotas.

Oilsands projects take about five years to build, which means that if the world economy suddenly improves there will be a lag in new production and thus another oil price spike. It must always be remembered that the new production is only partially compensating for the steady decline in existing oil fields. The Bakken formation of the North American interior and the Tupi field off the coast of Brazil (which will be at least five years to come on-stream) do not add new oil, they replace old oil that isn't there anymore.

What has been clearly demonstrated by the current financial panic is that conservation really does make a difference. Americans are driving less, trading down to smaller cars, and moving into smaller houses with smaller heating bills. A significant part of the conservation is because the devastated economy doesn't use as much fuel, so when the economy improves again, oil prices will rise. This will create a ratcheting effect. If no practical replacement is found for oil, the ratcheting will be on an upward price trend. If alternative energy sources spread, then the ratcheting will be on an even keel.

Oil prices 1986 to 2008

Dollars per barrel



The chart shows a selection of years since the dark days of 1986 when oil prices were down to \$10 a barrel. I couldn't fit all the years in without making the graph too cluttered or too skinny, however the years shown are representative of the trends.

As of early January 2009, when this issue went to press, oil was back up over \$40. Who knows where it will be by the time you receive this issue. Even the daily bloggers can't keep up with the gyrations of the stock and commodities markets.

I don't buy publicly traded shares, so the stock market is of no concern to me. Such a chart would look roughly the same. My investments are in private equity, which don't trade and which have stable values equal to the book value of the company, or bonds which pay a reasonable rate.

Claimed oil reserves - OPEC 2006 Annual Report

	UAE	Iran	Iraq	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	Venezuela	Neutral Zone
1983	32.3	55.3	65.0	67.0	168.8	25.9	5.7
1984	32.5	58.9	65.0	92.7	171.7	28.0	5.6
1985	33.0	59.0	65.0	92.5	171.5	54.5	5.4
1986	97.2	92.9	72.0	94.5	169.7	55.5	5.4
1987	98.1	92.9	100.0	94.5	169.6	58.1	5.3
1988	98.1	92.9	100.0	94.5	255.0	58.5	5.2
1989	98.1	92.9	100.0	97.1	260.1	59.0	5.2
1990	98.1	92.9	100.0	97.0	260.3	60.1	5.0
1991	98.1	92.9	100.0	96.5	260.9	62.6	5.0
1992	98.1	92.9	100.0	96.5	251.2	63.3	5.0
1993	98.1	92.9	100.0	96.5	261.4	64.4	5.0
1994	98.1	94.3	100.0	96.5	261.4	64.9	5.0
1995	98.1	93.7	100.0	96.5	261.5	66.3	5.0
1996	97.8	92.6	112.0	96.5	261.4	72.7	5.0

2005	97.8	136.3	115.0	101.5	264.2	80.0	5.0
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PRELUDE TO CON-VERSION 25

by Dale Speirs

Calgary's annual SF convention is Con-Version. I missed the first two but attended #3 through #22 (2006). By then the Internet generation and atomized fandom took over, and not surprisingly they ran the convention into the ground. Con-Version 23 was declared cancelled, then they went ahead with it, but so late was the announcement that I could not get vacation time (I work weekend shift). Con-Version 24 was held in 2008, the same year as the World Fantasy Convention, suicidal to begin with, but made worse by lack of publicity. I didn't even find out about it until after the fact.

Hint to convention organizers: people will not seek out your Website nor will they do Google searches if they don't know you're there. In fact, many of them won't bother even if they do know you're there. Keep the real-mail addresses of your previous several years memberships and do the mail-outs. Get posters or bookmarks in local stores, not just book or game stores. The Internet will not substitute for old-fashioned publicity. Update your Website with real, substantial information, not "coming soon!" blurbs.

The Calgary and Area Fandom Enhancement Society (CAFES; you can tell they were struggling to find a good acronym) was

created in October 2008 to administer

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Con-Version because the previous leadership forget important details such as filing annual reports with the Registrar of Societies, resulting in the dissolution of the previous society. With no incorporated status, this meant that the convention committee were personally liable for debts of Con-Version.

Leading the struggle to revive Con-Version are Rob Hilton and Laurie Lalonde. Their Website at www.cafesalberta.org was empty of any useful details as of January 2, 2009. Information at the old Website (www.con-version.org) advised that Con-Version 25 will be held on August 21 to 23, 2009, but no venue was announced. BCSFAZINE #427 (December 2008) had a letter from Rob Hilton in which he explained the matter. Excerpts follow in italics.

"First, the point that many deem the most important: there is a CV25, and it will be held August 21-23, 2009. The confirmed guests of honour to date are Terry Brooks and Tanya Huff. We are currently working on bringing in additional guests."

"The Calgary Science Fiction and Fantasy Society does not exist [at law]. It has not existed for three years. Those individuals elected to board positions and entrusted with running Con-Version have been operating the society 'in good faith'."

"This is an admirable goal; however, it has created a set of issues that had the potential to toll the death knell for Con-Version. We had been told that the CSFFS would be reactivated with new bylaws; however the society was never officially dissolved, and was stricken from provincial records in 2005. We were unable to go back and try to fill in the blanks over the last few years with the records available to us. The financial and society records, as well as the list of the membership, are insufficient for auditing. The bylaws proposed and posted were also deemed deficient or in contravention of the Alberta Societies Act, and would not have been accepted had they been submitted."

"A new society has been formed and registered, under the name CAFES (the Calgary and Area Fandom Enhancement Society). The CV name and logo are in the process of being copyrighted under that society's name to protect them. This was done as soon as we had determined that the Calgary Science Fiction and Fantasy Society would not exist again, as time was a critical issue in order to ensure CV25 would be possible. The change in name for the Society has happened before, though there are few records of previous actions taken prior to the change. The two issues that made this critical to have completed as soon as possible were the financial status CV24 in which ended in debt, and the necessity to be able to have concrete plans for CV25. ... The costs resulting from CV24 had put the books thousands of dollars into the red and several of us are currently paying off those debts from our

personal finances ... For reference, the amount that we have had to provide to date is over \$9,000 combined. It has been a great deal of work to initially attempt to revive and continue with CSFFS, then additional work when it was discovered that the initial course of action would be impossible. It was after reviewing several years of forum posts, the records available to us, the options available to us, and the Societies Act of Alberta that this decision was made. Despite claims that the current board has been inactive or not planning, we have actually put out a few hundred hours and several hundred dollars thus far."

The World Fantasy Convention in Calgary was run by the old guard of Calgary fandom, not the inheritors of Con-Version, thus explaining why the WFC ran so smoothly. At the WFC, I got to talking with Cath Jackal of Edmonton, who told me that the Edmonton fans put on a tiny convention called Pure Speculation. Minimal publicity, held in a cheap community hall, and far below the radar of Outer Fandom. She said the one advantage of it was that the show only cost \$300 to put on, so no one would be out of pocket much. Expectations are low, and thus always met.

Back in the day, OPUNTIA published Garth Spencer's history of SF fandom in Canada, which was replete with many disasters of the same sort that has afflicted Con-Version. All it takes it one sloppy committee that doesn't know or care about details. There is no new thing under the sun.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Franz Zrilich
4004 Granger Road
Medina, Ohio 44256-8602

2008-09-09

I hope Canada cheats a lot if OPEC agrees to limit oil exports.

[Not a chance. Our remaining oil is high cost and we're not going to give it away. Albertans are hoping OPEC cuts back drastically to keep the prices, and our fortunes, up.]

You can discuss what you know about it with us: the Bakken Formation under Saskatchewan, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana.

[The Bakken Formation has been touted as a 400 billion barrels oil field, but cooler heads say only about 20 to 30 billion barrels will be recoverable, which would be a ten-year supply of oil for the USA at current production rates. Bear in mind that this would not be an addition to existing oil fields but a replacement for depleted fields, and the USA would still be importing oil.]

[Since the 1990s, worldwide oil fields have been depleting faster than new supplies have been found. The mass media never make

this point clear because they don't understand it themselves, that oil production is in a Red Queen's Race. Peak Oil is not about reserves or prices; it is about daily production. It doesn't matter how large reserves are, only the actual production. The Panic of 2008 has destroyed demand for oil faster than the production of oil has declined, so prices have declined. When demand picks up again, oil production will still be declining so prices will jump again. Oil prices have not declined due to a glut but because the economy has collapsed.] -14-

FROM: Ned Brooks
4817 Dean Lane
Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720

2008-11-02

Feinman's explanation of the financial panic is colourful at any rate. I think it was the fragility of the economy that allowed it to be so afflicted by the selling of sub-prime mortgages as investments. The fragility was caused by Bush's mindless spending of money created by massive debt on military adventures that have no purpose other than to provide a honeypot for his cronies.

[What is interesting is that the Iraq war debt is now pocket change compared to the multi-trillions being flushed into the economic system by the Federal Reserve to save the Wall Street bankers.]

After a panic here in the Atlanta area because the flow through the pipelines from the Gulf coast failed [because of Hurricane Ike], the price of gas has dropped from the \$4 high to about \$2.20 at Halloween. I was lucky; I have two cars and both had full tanks when the gas began to run out. I use about one gallon a day, and so never had to search for gas or wait in line before the supply was restored.

I Also Heard From: Ken Bausert, John Held Jr, John Hertz, Lloyd Penney, Pholx Icona, Mike Dickau, Heath Row, Mark Strickert, Sue Jones, Langley Searles, Jason Rodgers

Game Over -- You Win X

Mundanes	Sci-fi	Fans	Slans
0	26	26	26
0	52	52	52
0	78	78	78
0	104	104	104

WORLD WIDE PARTY #16 IN 2009

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria), the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Face to the east first and toast those who have already done the WWP, then north and south for your time zone, and finally to the west for those yet to celebrate. If you are a zinester, it is a reminder that you are not alone, but a node on the Papernet.

It isn't too soon to mark your calendar for June 21 and start planning some sort of event. Throw a party, do a one-shot zine, create some sort of mail art, or just do a quiet toast at 21h00. Let me know later this year how you celebrated. No matter what the price of oil or the unemployment rate, take the time to enjoy your personal connections to the rest of the world.

**FANTASY IN
THE PARK**

by Dale Speirs

Walking past a boardroom at work, I saw this whiteboard. I don't know what the committee was discussing, but it seemed more interesting than the usual budget review. Although, come to think of it, whoever drew this may well have been discussing next year's budget.

Panasonic

