

OPUNTIA

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Whole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines.

HOW ARTISTAMPS CHANGED MY LIFE

by Anna Banana

While I was living in San Francisco in the 1970s, I received and created my first artistamps, ie, postage-like stamps made by artists. The initial stamps that inspired me came from Ed Higgins (Doo Dah Post) and Carl Chew (Triangle Post). My friend and neighbour Eleanor Kent had rented a colour Xerox machine and invited me to do some work on it. She had discovered Jeff Errick (Ephemera), now living in Victoria, British Columbia, and still stamping. He had an antique pinhole perforator that he allowed artists to come and use, so I did a couple of sheets of stamps at that time (1986-87). The other early maker of stamps was Ed Varney, who invited participation in one of his "anthology sheets", collections of stamps by artists he printed at his Intermedia Press and perforated on his antique perforator.

I moved back to Vancouver in 1981, and when my two years of grant support ran out, I was without income or employment. I owed Intermedia Press for a set of postcards I'd had printed with the final issue of VILE magazine, the book ABOUT VILE. I had overspent the budget for the book and owed the company for the cards. I was hired so I could pay my debt. My part-time paste-up job eventually worked into full time, with design and camera-work becoming part of my job. While I had supported myself in San Francisco doing design and production work, the job at

Intermedia Press became an apprenticeship in full-colour printing. In 1986, I went freelance but continued to work with the sales people at Intermedia, until I did my first solo tour of Europe, presenting my installation Banana Split.

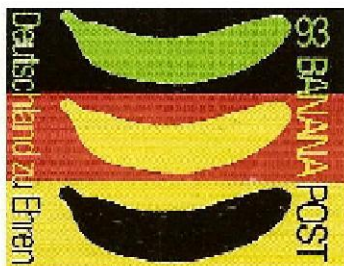
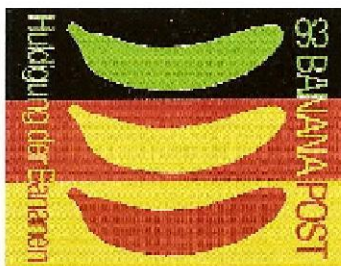
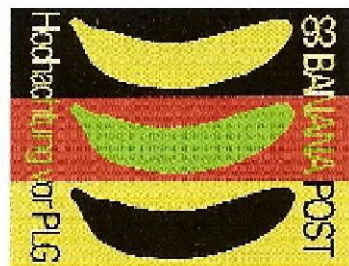
It was my intention at the outset of this tour to produce a sheet of stamps in each of the cities visited, but unlike the inexhaustible Netmails, I found I hadn't the energy or quiet time/space for such work.

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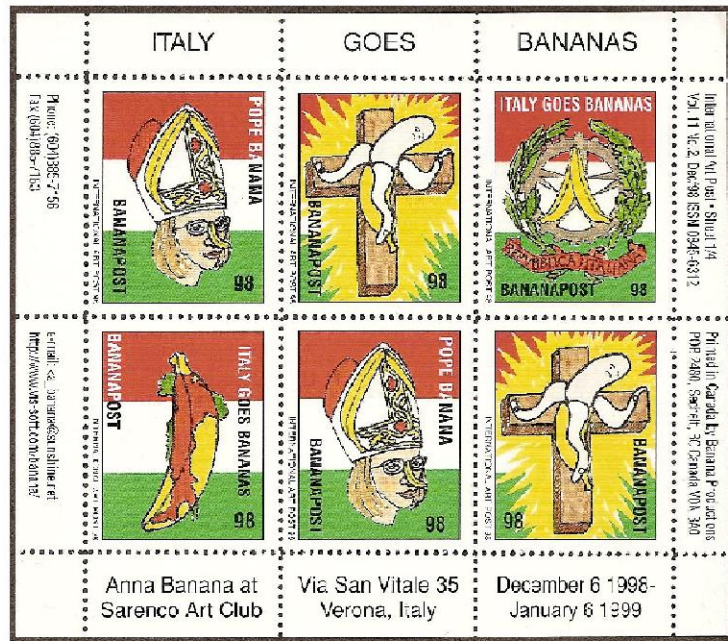


1993 GERMANY
GOES BANANAS

A. BANANA GOES
TO GERMANY 1993

COMMEMORATIVE
STAMP EDITION

However, I collected materials as I traveled, maps being primary, along with used books of imagery that attracted me. After my return in 1987, I created a set of 16 "European Tour Commemorative Stamp" (ETC) sheets, in a limited edition of 15 copies of each sheet, using the then-new Canon laser colour copier.



Maps formed the background of these sheets, over which I collaged the figures and symbols in the subsets: "Putting Physical Fitness On The Map", "Signs & Symbols", and "The Unknown Artist".

In the following year, the Art Bank section of the Canada Council, which rents art to various government agencies in Ottawa, purchased one set of the ETC. After a year, having found these editions much in demand, the Art Bank purchased a second set, along with newer artistamp works I had created in 1987 and 1988. Much to my surprise, in 2000 an article entitled "Art In Office", by Jonathon Gatehouse, appeared in the April 25th edition of Canada's national newspaper, the NATIONAL POST. The article was about art rented from the Art Bank hanging in offices in the Parliament buildings. Pictured in full colour was my sheet of stamps "Twenty Years Of Fooling Around With Anna Banana". While I never did find out who chose the work, I learned it was hanging in the Liberal party caucus room.

After my European tour in 1986, I got into stamp making big time, participating in a series of exhibitions Jim Felter curated at the Davidson Galleries in Seattle starting in 1989, an exhibit of artistamps in the Bumbershoot Festival in Seattle, and a three-person show with Varney, Felter, and myself in Vancouver in 1992.

My artistamps were also exhibited in a number of exhibitions in Canada, Switzerland, Paris, Chicago, Verona, Boston, and Moscow.

In 1988 I began International Art Post, a collaborative publishing venture making high-quality full-colour printed stamps in useable quantities available to artists. IAP continues to

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this date, with 32 editions produced over the past 21 years. In 1991, I converted the BANANA RAG to ARTISTAMP NEWS (ASN), reflecting my interest in the burgeoning field of artistamps. Between 1991 and 1996 I published eight 12-page editions of ASN. Each issue had a number of actual artistamps, 4 to 8 per issue, tipped in over the printed versions, and

One-of-a-Kind
Books

by Anna Banana

©11/30/06

the
SHOCKING
TRUTH
ABOUT
A BANANA

International Art Post Vol. 19, Dec. 2006

the
WEIRD
habits
OF
A BANANA

International Art Post Vol. 19, Dec. 2006

TRUE
STORY
of
A BANANA

International Art Post Vol. 19, Dec. 2006

International Art Post

Vol. 19, Dec. 2006

Sheet 7/7

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included a profile of one or two prominent artiststamp makers with reproductions of their works. Each issue contained a "new editions" section which briefly described sheets of stamps received, with many illustrated in black-and-white, and a section for feedback where controversial matters were discussed.

Having acquired, through the publishing of ASN, a huge collection of sheets of artiststamps, I curated an exhibition of these works by sixty network artists. Initially called "Artistamps From The Mail Art Network", it was shown at the Sechelt Art Centre in March 1998. A sheet of 20stamps, Coast Art Post, was produced from submissions in a stamp design contest that ran with the exhibit. The exhibit proved to be so popular that I offered it elsewhere as The Popular Art Of Postal Parody (PAPP). In September 1999, the Richmond Art Gallery hosted it, and in 2000, Open Space in Victoria hosted both the exhibit and the stamp design contest, which resulted in the stamp sheet Open Space Post, with works by 26 Victoria artists.

All issues of IAP and ASN are available in a limited edition of 49 copies (only 3 left) of the ARTISTAMP COLLECTOR'S ALBUM. This is a cloth-bound 3-ring binder with 2-colour silk-screened cover, containing essays by Jas Felter, Dogfish, and myself, and all issues of ASN and IAP, which are mounted on black sheets in protective sleeves. The album also contains all Private Editions, as many again as there are IAP editions. These are stamps

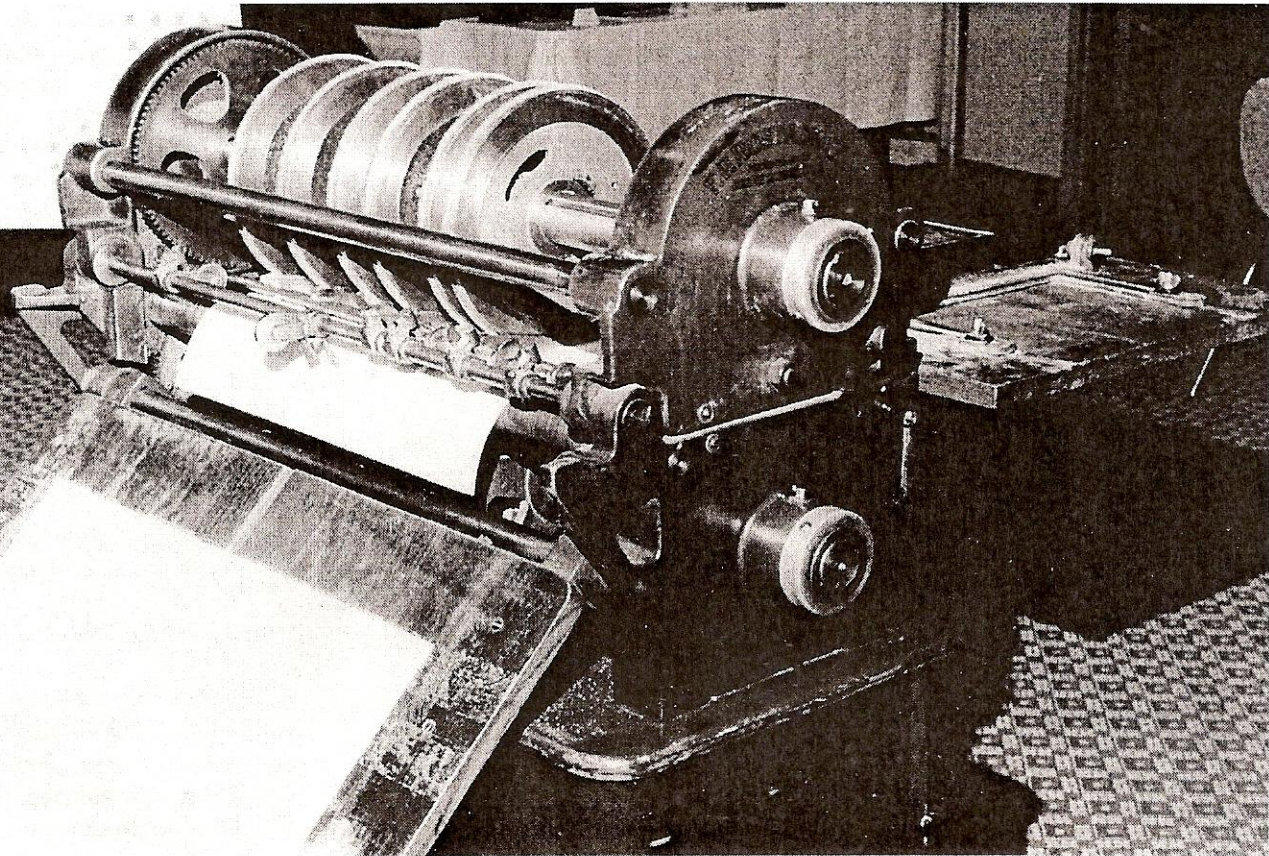
produced for publishers, museums, and various individual artists and businesses. Also contained are copies of reviews of the PAPP and other artiststamp exhibitions. Hand-assembled over the years, it sells for \$650 plus shipping. Back issues of IAP are also available as individual sheets. [Real mail address is: Anna Banana, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2, or eek-mail via www.annabanastamps.ca]

The machine I use for perforating is a 1915 Rosback rotary pinhole perforator, hand fed but powered with an electric motor, which enables me to perforate editions of 1,000 to 10,000 sheets.

[Editor's note: the photo of the Rosback machine on the next page is of a similar machine that was on display at CALTAPEX, the annual show of the Calgary Philatelic Society.]



Rosback perforating machine. The wheels have pins mounted along their edges. As the paper passes along the table underneath the wheels, they are perforated..



AMOS OF TEKOA

by Dale Speirs

Prelude: Jdimytai Damour.

Black Friday is the day after the American Thanksgiving, and is so called because it supposedly represents the day that their retail stores move into the black on their financial statements for the fiscal year. It is considered the official start of the Christmas shopping season by Americans, and most stores offer specials and large discounts. On the 2008 Black Friday, November 28, at a Long Island, New York, Walmart, a crowd of shoppers had lined up at the doors at 05h00, waiting to enter for the Black Friday specials. In what has to be one of the worst cases ever of mindless consumerism run amok, the impatient mob pushed the doors down and rushed into the store, trampling a Walmart employee named Jdimytai Damour to death. As fellow store employees and later paramedics tried to revive him, the bargain hunters continued to push past. When police ordered the store closed, angry shoppers denounced them.

To me, this sad episode represents what is wrong with our society. To line up in the early morning hours for cheap electronic doodads that will be obsolete in a few years is the epitome of consumerism for the sake of consumerism. I don't condemn only the Americans. Canada observes Thanksgiving in October, so we

don't have the Black Friday event, but our equivalent is Boxing Day, on December 26. On that day, every mall in Canada is overloaded as stores clear out their merchandise at steep discounts to make way for the new goods of the next year. I live not far from the Chinook Centre mall, which is about five blocks long and a block wide, on two levels. For the Boxing Day sales, crowds start lining up Christmas Day evening. Chinook Centre gets 50,000 people in the mall at any given moment on that day. Stop and think about that; the equivalent of an entire city jammed in there. The mall brings in security guards by the bus load to control the flow. We haven't had any Walmart disasters but this is just dumb luck, not because Canadian mobs are better behaved.

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HAPPY
HOLIDAY

A Black Friday postmark from a letter I got that was mailed the same day and from the same state as Damour's death.

Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Of The Coming Of The Lord.

After the death of Damour, I got to thinking about Amos, invariably described as a minor prophet by Biblical scholars. He was a farmer from Tekoa, near Bethlehem, who received a vision and left his plough. He went north from Judah to Israel to preach. The two were separate kingdoms in his day. Judah was basically Jerusalem and the surrounding fields, and Israel was the rest of the Hebrew homeland, with its capital city at Samaria. Scholars have dated Amos' sermon to the autumn of either 750 or 749 B.C., based on his references to current events of the time. Amos' sermon to the people of Bethel was written down by scribes in the audience, and he is the first biblical prophet whose words were directly transcribed into a book, rather than being passed along by word of mouth before eventual transcription. The Book of Amos is accepted as canonical by Jews, Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants. Human nature was the same 2,760 years ago as it is today. Like prophets before and since, Amos didn't have much luck in getting results. As he said: *"They hate him who reproves in the gate, and they abhor him who speaks the truth."*

In his time, Israel was prosperous and materialistic. They had the good fortune that their enemies were distracted by other enemies. Syria, for example, was battling the armies of Assyria on the far side. With buffer states around Israel forced to concentrate on other borders, the Israelis became a complacent and greedy

society. The rich were becoming richer, and the poor becoming poorer. Farmers, instead of growing food crops, switched to cash crops such as wine and olive oil. The sober and prudent way of life was overrun by the trendy and reckless way. The parallels seem obvious today, and if Amos was brought forward in time, he would see that only the names and places have changed but not the circumstances. The cash crop today is corn for ethanol, and an iPhone is more important than settling down with a good book.

"Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the midst of the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music; who drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!"

Today Amos would speak of large-screen television sets and Guitar Hero video games. The harp has been replaced by the stereophonic sound system, and people drink beer from glasses instead of wine from bowls. The Wall Street banksters, with their culture of entitlement to multimillion dollar bonuses for running the world's economy into the ground, are another obvious comparison.

He Is Trampling Out The Vintage Where The Grapes Of Wrath Are Stored.

The first five chapters of the Book of Amos are a lengthy list of transgressions of the various peoples and the various punishments God proposed to deliver on them, as seen by Amos in his vision. I won't recite the whole catalogue, but some of the culprits are Tyre (the capital of Phoenicia, which was Lebanon, southern Spain, and Carthage), Edom (roughly the Sinai peninsula), Judah, Israel, Moab (between Edom and Syria, east of Israel), and the Philistines (Palestine).

"For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever." There are far too many people and nations today in a perpetual state of anger and self-righteousness. Ideologically motivated terrorists add fire to the bonfire of wrath, cast off any pity they should have, and pursue people with the sword. It does not matter to me that my doctor worships in a mosque instead of a church, or that my Finnish ancestors had Karelia stolen from them by the Russians. I will not pursue people with the sword. There are too many others who still fight today over who stole whose chicken 500 years ago.

"For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. They that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and turn aside the way of the afflicted."

The Panic of 2008 was the end result of the "greed is good" crowd, who felt that the marketplace should be allowed to run untrammelled without regulation or effective oversight. It was not so much the exotic financial derivatives that were later reclassified as toxic paper, but rather the amount of the excess, several times more than the actual value of the real economy. CEOs began to live in a world where \$20 million in annual salary and bonuses was considered as an entitlement. If the janitor got too uppity about his hourly wage, then his job was contracted out to a company that paid minimum wage to new immigrants still learning English.

The Fateful Lightning Of His Terrible Swift Sword.

"Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down. Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day."

"An adversary shall surround the land, and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered. As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed."

The punishments that Amos predicted for the sinners were not necessarily to be delivered directly from God. Amos recognized that if any of the buffer states collapsed, the Assyrians would come sweeping through and the soft Israelis would be destroyed. This is exactly what did happen. Damascus finally fell in 732 B.C. and in 721, Israel followed, with the Ten Lost Tribes being carried off that year by the Assyrian king Sargon II. In today's world, the attacks are not necessarily set-piece battles with invading armies. Economic disaster entered through the gates of the USA in late 2007. It developed into the Panic of 2008, which destroyed global economic fundamentals as the Wall Street bankers crippled the world economy.

His Day Is Marching On.

Amos, in his vision, convinces God to revoke the punishments if the people reform themselves. *"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore*

the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat the fruit of them. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land which I have given them."

Countless people who survived the Great Depression have commented that they managed to survive without many consumer goods or luxuries we take for granted today. I think of my father, who grew up on a south Saskatchewan homestead during the Dirty Thirties, and never saw or ate an orange until he was a teenager. As the legacy of the Panic of 2008 stretches on, one can only hope that many will have learned this lesson. There is a tendency among people to think that current conditions will continue indefinitely, and, as the famous saying goes, "This time it is different". The boom was going to last forever, and now the pessimists predict a decade of ruin. The time shall come again, however, when we shall plant gardens and eat the fruit of them. The generation surviving the Panic of 2008 will have been scarred just as the Greatest Generation was by the Great Depression but we will survive.

LET'S LOOK AT A WAY TO VISUALIZE INFLATION

by Andrew Lin

Let's say you had a US\$1,000 bill in 1900. At that time, this would be the equivalent of letting the government safeguard 50 ounces of gold for you. In 1933, Franklin D Roosevelt devalued the dollar, and as a result gold's price rose from \$20/ounce to \$35/ounce. Equivalently, you could also say the 50 ounces of gold the government held for you now became 28.57 ounces of gold. The government stole 21.43 ounces of gold from you overnight!

In 1971, Richard Nixon ended the Bretton-Woods gold standard for good, and by 1974, gold had risen to \$200/ounce. You now had 5 ounces of gold. Thus, between 1971 and 1974, the government stole 16.43 ounces of gold from you. In 1999, gold bottomed out at \$250/ounce. You now had 4 ounces.

With gold nearing \$1,000/ounce today, you are down to 1 ounce. Over the last 10 years, the government has stolen roughly 3 ounces of what little gold you have left.

Now instead of paper money, visualize that you did indeed have 50 ounces of gold in your safe in 1900 and that year after year the government broke into your home and stole gold from your safe at this rate. Would you find that acceptable?

CON-VERSION 25

by Dale Speirs

Introduction.

The revived Con-Version was held in the Metropolitan Centre on 4th Avenue SW in the downtown core of Calgary, where a few previous conventions have been held. It was held on the weekend of August 21 to 23, 2009. This site was formerly a movie theatre, and was later renovated into a cluster of meeting rooms and auditoriums. This provides a variety of room sizes adaptable for the panels. The fanzine panel can be held in the broom closet next to the men's washroom, and the Trekkies can use the main auditorium for their trivia quiz. Author readings are held upstairs in the boardrooms where they will be safely out of the way and won't frighten the horses.

The Centre is in the heart of the hotel district, some of which are connected to it by the Plus 15 pedestrian walkway system that connects most of Calgary's downtown buildings. I find it to be a convenient site by bus, and the LRT system is three blocks the other way for the more adventurous out-of-towners. 4th Avenue is the southern boundary of Chinatown, and there are a multitude of restaurants within easy walking distance. Naturally most of the currency-challenged con-goers used the Tim Hortons next door for a diet of doughnuts and double-doubles. -11-

The convention committee was made of newbies and there were numerous minor glitches, which I won't bother enumerating as they were the same old mistakes one sees repeated throughout fandom. I put up with them and didn't let them get to me.

Steampunk.

Calgary fandom is usually a year or two behind in the latest fads, but steampunk has arrived in full force. The Cowtown version seems to be women wearing Irish leprechaun hats and wrap-around skirts, and the men wearing 1930s aviator costumes with one or two brass gadgets attached.



There were several panels on this genre, and the first one I took in was on steampunk costuming. Strangely, most of the women in the audience were in anime costumes, with lots of Sailor Moons. The main speaker was Chelsea Anderson, who remarked to the menfolk present (all three of us; there were about 30 women) that if we wanted to get to see a lot of naked women, then learn how to properly lace up a corset for them. The panel began with an interminable discussion of what steampunk is, not helped by the majority of those present being anime or media fans who had no idea that there were steampunk novels that long predated their favourite television shows. Anderson sorted out that mob by providing a bit of history on the literary aspect, and then moved on to costuming.

Steampunk cannot exactly copy the Victorian fashions and ways of making clothes but only relies on that era as a general guide. Victorian women wore several layers of petticoats because of the cooler climate back then and the poorly heated houses of their time, so trying to wear multiple layers today makes one excessively warm. Anderson showed slides of an excursion of Calgary steampunkers to Heritage Park, our local historical village and steam train museum. They didn't look that far out compared to the park staff, who also dress Victorian but without the brass gadgets. Anderson remarked that men's styles have changed little in two centuries and even today one could wear a Victorian business suit to the board meeting.

Costuming can be done on the cheap by visiting garage sales and dollar stores for accessories, and learning to sew from patterns and bolts of cloth. Avoid the “vintage clothing” boutiques, which are expensive, at least in Calgary. Anderson also showed slides of goth steampunks, which just goes to show there is no genre that can’t be subdivided further. (Q: Why do you never see any Cockney goths? A: They’re too cheerful.)

A subsequent panel “The Culture Of Steampunk” discussed its history. Steampunk became a self-aware genre in 1983 when it was first defined. One panelist mention dieselpunk, which is the first I’ve heard that term, and he included in it such things as Hellboy and Sky Captain. Precursors that fit the definition of steampunk are William Gibson’s novel DIFFERENCE ENGINE, and the 1960s television show WILD WILD WEST. Good steampunk doesn’t swap out too much of Victorian culture. On the lighter side, we saw slides of a steam-powered Dalek, Star Wars done as steampunk (such as Darth Vader in a Ned Kelly cast-iron helmet), and steampunk bands that use steam whistles or release valves as part of their music.

Not steampunk but I’ll wedge it in here because it is Victorian, was a panel on Sherlock Holmes. I don’t recall Con-Version ever having such a panel before. The panelists were pastiche writers and mentioned that the trend of writing pastiches began because of Watson’s throwaway lines about other cases that were never

written up for the canon, such as that of Wilson the notorious canary trainer. One of the panelists said that there was a disconnect between Doyle’s belief in spiritualism and the way he wrote Holmes’ logical behaviour. Film versions made Watson a buffoon but he was not that in the stories. Some authors feel it is okay to add supernatural elements to pastiches, but the character of Holmes should not be altered, such as making him a womanizer.

Words, Words, Words.

“When We Write” was a panel of two novelists, Dave Duncan and Tanya Huff (who was one of the Guests of Honour). Duncan said that writing is an ongoing learning experience. You never reach the stage where there is nothing left to learn or no new side road to take. Huff said she preferred writing fantasy because it gave her a broader brush to paint with. She let the characters drive her stories. Literature genres come and go in waves much like fads in television and movies. Sexy vampires are on the way out and steampunk is the next big thing.

I brought a bag full of surplus zines and spread them out on the freebie table. Digressing a moment, the Boomer generation has mostly faded out of Con-Version and the Internet generation are now dominating.

I mention this because it was funny/sad for me to watch the table from a distance and see how the latter reacted. They are used to the idea of freebie tables being flyers, advertising postcards, and convention posters. When confronted with a spread of Papernet zines, they weren't certain what to make of them. Young congoers delicately picked through them with obvious lack of comprehension, hesitantly picking them up, paging through them, and putting them back with a bewildered look. In retrospect I should have put up a sign "These are zines. They are hardcopy blogs. They are free; take some home!".

Writers At The Improv.

An annual feature of Con-Version is the writers' improv, sponsored by a Calgary group called the Imaginative Fiction Writers Association. Eight writers, a mixture of guest pros, IFWA members, and one or two conscripts volunteered from the audience, form into four teams. The audience suggest a word, and each contestant has one minute to write a sentence incorporating the word. After time is called, the team members decide between themselves which of each pair has the best sentence, then read them out loud. The audience votes on their favourite, and the process is repeated until a short-short story is built up. Humour is the important aspect here, and this event is always the jolliest of the convention. This year's immortal text is reproduced below, with the suggested words underlined.

"The voluptuous velocipedes varoomed via the variable vacuum of space. This was especially incongruent as space cannot propagate sound, especially of the varoom variety, and velocipedes are silent anyway, but what the hell, this was no ordinary day. Velocipedes had a problem passing gas, having only a semi-colon, and wound up burping instead. The sublimated condensate entered the gate and ate and ate and ate and ate, as foretold by Fate, the mate of Nate, god of Whoville. And then the plot exploded and three characters** appeared from the nethermost regions of the imagination, like the semi from the colon of a velociraptor caught in an unfortunate accident in the voluptuous but not silent vacuum of space. First came the Nema Toad***, golden and flashy, then came the Bile Toad, given to whimsey, and finally the Mother Lode, oddly and rhymey. The three of them were embarking on a quest to defeat the evil Australopithecus who had somehow armed himself with a zweinlander and taken the condensate hostage, almost causing it to sublimate in fear."*

** This word was suggested after a debate between panelists and the moderator about whether or not they could combine two sentences into one with a semi-colon and thereby make it legal.*

*** This word was suggested by the audience after the moderator complained the panelists hadn't yet introduced any characters into the story.*

**** Actual word suggested was 'nematode'*

Science Panels.

The science track is always popular with con-goers. “Cosmic Distance Ladder” was a talk about how astronomers measure distance in space. The basic units are the metre, the Astronomical Unit (distance between Earth and Sun), the light year (equals 63,239 A.U.), and the parsec (equals 3.26 light years). Distances were gradually refined over the millennia step-by-step as the ancient and modern astronomers improved their methods. Star distances can only be measured to 100 parsecs. Thereafter, the dimness of the light from certain categories of stars is used as a measure. Cepheid variable stars are used as the next distance measure out. Supernovas have a standard brightness which enables the distance to other galaxies to be measured, but because they are rare it is difficult to do much with them.

“The History Of Units” by Dr. Jason Donev discussed the Earthbound measures. Our ability to measure phenomena is limited by our ability to define our measurements. The trend in establishing measurement standards has been first to use a physical specimen against which all others are compared. As technology improved over the past decades, units have been redefined by vibrations of atoms or the distance that light travels in a split second. The physical standard for the kilogramme is still a cylinder of platinum, but it is slowly evaporating away at the rate of 50 parts per billionth. The USA has been technically

metric since the Kassan Metric Act of 1866, but only in the sense that the American units are defined in metric units.



“Unanswered Questions In Astrophysics” by Dr. Larry McNish looked at the sort of stuff that keeps astronomers awake at night, or perhaps I should say, awake during the day. We don’t know the cause of the Big Bang or what drives the inflation of the universe. We don’t know if ours

is the only universe and may never know. We do not know what 96% of the universe is made of (the dark matter problem). And what is the Great Attractor towards which most of the universe is moving?

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

noticed by Dale Speirs

Li, Z., et al (2009) **Warfare rather than agriculture as a critical influence on fires in the late Holocene, inferred from northern Vietnam.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 106:11490-11495

"Most previous research suggests that frequent-fire regimes in the late Holocene were associated with intensification of human activities, especially agriculture development. Here, we analyze fire regimes recorded in the Song Hong delta area of Vietnam over the past 5,000 years. In the prehistoric period, 2 long-term, low-charcoal abundance periods have been linked to periods of low humidity and cool climate, and 5 short-term fire regimes of 100–150 years in duration occurred at regular intervals of ~700 years. However, over the last 1,500 years, the number, frequency, and intensity of fire regimes clearly increased. Six intensified-fire regime periods in northern Vietnam during this time coincided with changes of Vietnamese dynasties and associated warfare and unrest. In contrast, agricultural development supported by rulers of stable societies at this time does not show a positive correlation with intensified-fire regime periods. Thus, warfare rather than agriculture appears to have been a critical factor contributing to fire regimes in northern Vietnam during the late Holocene."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney

2009-01-19

1706 - 24 Eva Road

Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

[Re: World Fantasy Convention in Calgary in 2008] I remember the fuss about Ottawa fandom trying to attend the WFC in 1984 and being turned away, especially those in costume. Montréal in 2000 had a great WFC. We had a good time there, all the time keeping in mind that it wasn't really a convention, but a professional writer conference. The right expectations always serve you well. Ottawa fans 25 years ago had the wrong idea, and in Montréal our good time was assured by knowing exactly what would happen.

[There were no costumed fans at the Calgary WFC. Since the convention weekend was held over Halloween the downtown streets were filled with office workers in costume, and it struck me as very strange to see SF fans dressed like mundanes, while the mundanes were dressed like SF fans. But you could still tell it was an SF convention because of all the people sitting quietly in lobbies and hallways, reading Volume 10 of some fantasy trilogy.]

I Also Heard From: Mike Dickau, John Held Jr, Heath Row