

OPUNTIA

69.1B

ISSN 1183-2703

Victoria Day 2010

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.

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WAY DOWN YONDER: PART 1

by Dale Speirs

Jules Verne knew how to tell a story, and the proof is that many of his novels are still in print 150 years later, and many movies and television shows have been based on them. The science may be outdated, but the brisk plots and the characters still keep the reader's interest. This review will look at the novel JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH, first published in 1864 and compare it to some of the many movie versions made of it. I will use an 1876 translation reprinted as a trade paperback by Dover in 2005. Reviewing in translation presents hazards if one is trying to discuss fine points of characterization. Instead, I shall do a comparison of the plot with various movies.

Scientists such as Sir Edmond Halley (of the comet fame) speculated on hollow Earths, geology back then not being what it is today. JOURNEY also inspired a later rewrite by the Russian scientist Vladimir Obruchev, who published PLUTONIA in 1924 (which I reviewed in OPUNTIA #23.1A in 1995). Obruchev was a geologist who rewrote the story according to the scientific data known in his time. He set it as a hollow Earth entered through the North Pole, via a giant hole punched into the planet by an asteroid hundreds of megayears ago. Edgar Rice Burroughs and other also wrote hollow Earth stories.



Jules Verne

There are numerous movie versions of JOURNEY, -2- too many to list them all or to attempt to review. The movies take liberties with names, such as Lidenbrock versus Lindenbrook, or Axel versus Alec. I could never understand the compulsion of producers to change names for no logical reason.

The movie that Boomers, myself included, remember is the 1959 version with Pat Boone, James Mason, and Arlene Dahl. It has been the standard against which other JOURNEY movies are measured.

A 2007 television version was filmed in British Columbia with some B-list actors and Peter Fonda. The locale of the novel was moved to Alaska, presumably because cinder-cone volcanoes are rare in B.C., whereas one spruce tree looks much like the next along the Pacific coast. This version follows the 1959 movie more than it does the book. The 1959 movie and 2007 television versions are set in the late 1800s circa the same time period as the novel.

The 2007 movie version has been updated to modern times. It is also self-referential, as the protagonists are Vernists, who believe the author was writing fact disguised as fiction, and they consult his novels as if the events actually happened.

Book: The German geology professor Otto Lidenbrock comes across an ancient manuscript written by an Icelandic alchemist named Arne Saknussemm. Assisted by his nephew Axel, who narrates the story, Lidenbrock deciphers the manuscript, which tells of a method to reach the centre of the Earth by descending through an Icelandic volcano. The method is to approach the volcano Snafeljokul in late June, and determine the entry point into the tunnel by seeing where the shadow of the adjacent volcano Scartaris falls.

1959 Movie: The Scottish geology professor Oliver Lindenbrook is given a curious lava specimen by Alec, one of his students. He discovers embedded inside of it a surveyor's plumb bob, with a message on it by Arne Saknussemm, which tells of a method to reach the centre of the Earth by descending through an Icelandic volcano. The method is to approach the volcano Sneffels on May 31st, and determine the entry point into the tunnel by seeing where a sunbeam through a notch of the adjacent volcano Scartaris falls. (The name of the volcano varies in spelling in different movie versions but this is a function of how umlauts are transcribed in translation.)

2007 Television: In a complete change of names and locales, the story begins with Martha, wife of explorer Edward Dennison, seeking the assistance of University of San Francisco anthropologist Jonathon Brock to help find him. Edward disappeared somewhere in the wilds of the newly-purchased territory of Alaska. Assisted by his nephew Abel, who narrates the story, Brock uses a map which tells of a method to reach the centre of the Earth by descending through an Alaskan volcano. The method is to approach the volcano on September 23, and determine the entry point into the tunnel by seeing where a sunbeam through a notch of an adjacent volcano falls.

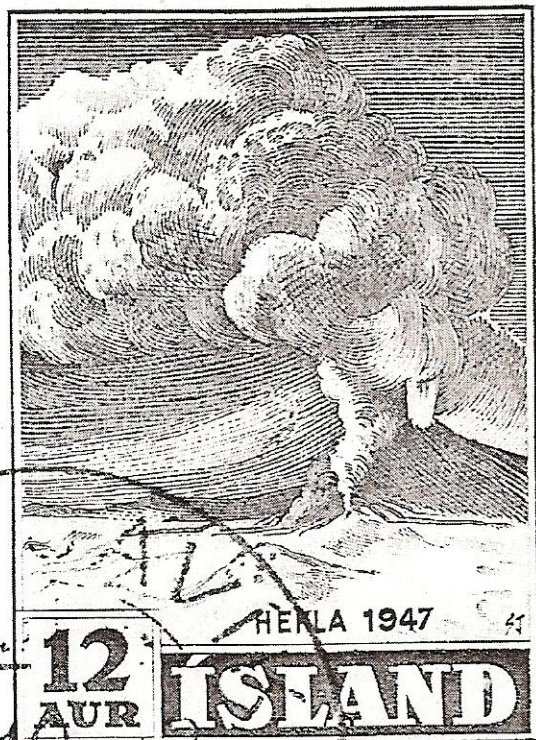
2007 Movie: The American geology professor Trevor Anderson comes across an annotated copy of JOURNEY that belonged to his brother Max, missing for several years and presumed dead. Assisted by his nephew Sean (son of Max), Anderson deciphers the annotations, which tell of a method to reach the centre of the Earth by descending through an Icelandic volcano. The method is to approach the volcano Snaffels which, as it happens, has a remote-broadcast seismic sensor installed many years earlier and which is indicating subterranean activity.

Book: Lidenbrock decides to go on an expedition. Axel objects on the basis that the Earth's centre is molten lava, but Lidenbrock offers up several sophistic arguments in favour of a tunnel existing into the Earth, mostly about how little we know about the Earth's core and that geologists have it all wrong about pressure/temperature/depth relationships. Off they go, and upon arrival in Iceland engage the services of a guide named Hans Bjilke to take them to Snafeljokul and accompany them into the volcano.

1959 Movie: Lindenbrook decides to go on an expedition. He writes to Prof. Goetaborg at the University of Stockholm for advice but gets no reply. He soon discovers that Goetaborg decamped to Iceland after getting his letter, then bought up all the climbing supplies there, leaving Lindenbrook no way to equip his expedition. Goetaborg is murdered by Count Saknussem, descendent of Arne, who also wants to beat the crowd. Goetaborg's wife Carla arrives, and allows Lindenbrook to use her husband's equipment only if she can come along. Off they go, with a guide named Hans to take them to Sneffels and accompany them into the volcano.

2007 Television: Brock decides to go on the expedition but is in financial straits. Martha, a mining heiress, will fund the expedition only if she can come along. Off they go, with a guide named Sergei to take them to and accompany them into the volcano.

2007 Movie: Anderson decides to go on an expedition, cashing in his piggy bank to buy the Air Iceland tickets. Off they go, with a guide named Hannah to take them to Snaffels and accompany them into the volcano.



Book: The three men locate the entrance into the depths and begin their descent. Axel's narration reveals him to be a manic depressive of the worst kind, alternating between "We're doomed, Uncle!" and "Nothing can stop us now!". It's a wonder the other two men didn't bash him on the head with a lump of lava so they could get some peace and quiet. The first stage is a deep vertical tube which they rappel down into. After resting the night, they find an old descending lava tube and follow it.

1959 Movie: The three men and one woman locate the entrance into the depths and begin their descent, but so does Count Saksussemm and his manservant. They find an old lava tube and follow it, but so does Count Saksussemm and his manservant. Saksussemm decoys the Lindenbrook group into the wrong tunnel, and there are many adventures subsequent.



Snæfellsjökull, Iceland

2007 Television: The three men and one woman locate the entrance into the depths and begin their descent. They find an old lava tube and follow it, then go down a vertical descent.

2007 Movie: The two men and one woman are chased by a lightning storm into a tunnel and subsequently trapped by a rockfall. Their only hope is to go forward, rappeling down a deep vertical tube. They find a mine stope and ride some old quarry cars down into the depths. (Cue the 3-D rollercoaster effects.) After a crash ending they find another vertical tube, mainly by falling into it, and take a very long fall onto a water slide and hence into a lake.



Book: The next turn in the narrative is Axel somehow getting himself separated from the other two men and lost. After a chapter of manic emotions (padding the word count in novels is nothing new), Axel is reunited with the others. They find themselves in a vast chamber with its own sea and winds, lit by an electrical glow from an aurora emanating from the walls and roof of the cavern. There are forests of giant mushrooms lining the shore.

1959 Movie: Alec gets separated from the others and lost. Lindenbrook and the others are flooded out when a spring breaks through the cave wall and can't search for Alec. He is rescued by Saknussem, whose manservant died from heat stroke, but then is shot in the arm for refusing to become the Count's new servant. The Lindenbrook group track the sound and overpower Saknussem. All of them are forced to co-operate for survival whether they like it or not. Alec discovers a cavern with giant mushrooms.

2007 Television: Abel gets separated from the others after he falls off a cliff and is lost for about ten seconds before being reunited with the others. Evidently the producer wanted to get to the special effects in the next chapter in a hurry. They find themselves in a vast chamber with its own sea and winds, lit by an electrical glow from an aurora emanating from the walls and roof of the cavern. There are forests of spruce trees lining the shore.

2007 Movie: Sean doesn't get lost and they find themselves in a vast chamber with its own sea and winds, lit by an electrical glow from an aurora emanating from the walls and roof of the cavern. There are forests of giant mushrooms lining the shore, and extinct trees towering above them.

Book: The explorers build a raft from logs, and launch themselves onto the sea. En route, they do a bit of fishing and catch some armoured fish of the Devonian era. An ichthyosaurus decides to do the same thing with them, but is fortunately distracted by a plesiosaurus, and the two fight to the death in view of the rafters. They are shipwrecked, and after recovering their goods and food from the waves, go exploring along the beach. They find bonebeds of ancient creatures and the remains of early humans. Pressing on, they find a boulder with the initials A.S. carved in them, clearly indicating that Arne Saknussemm had been this way.

1959 Movie: The explorers build a raft from logs, and launch themselves onto the sea after being attacked by slurposaurids on the shore. (A slurposaurus is an iguana with a sailfin or horns glued to it, very popular with cheapskate producers.) En route, there is no fishing or sea monster battle, presumably because the slurposaurus attack covered that part of the novel. There is a shipwreck though, and they find the ruins of Atlantis. Count Saknussemm is killed in a rockfall. The survivors find the skeleton of Arne Saknussemm, pointing to an escape shaft back to the surface.

2007 Television: The explorers build a raft from logs, and launch themselves onto the sea. En route, they are attacked by giant SFX birds, while a hungry plesiosaurus circles the raft. They solve both problems at once by shooting down the birds, which are gobbled up by the plesiosaurus as they splash. We are informed by one of the characters that the creatures are from the Pleistocene era of a million years ago. I still can't make up my mind if this was bad Hollywood science or if they were quoting Victorian-era geological knowledge still in its primitive state. (It wasn't until the 1900s that geochronology reached a reasonable level of accuracy.) There is no shipwreck, but they are taken captive by natives after landing. The tribe is under the control of Edward Dennison, who has set himself up as a living god.

2007 Movie: The explorers build a raft from logs, and launch themselves onto the sea. En route, they are attacked by a shoal of carnivorous flying fish but are saved when a pod of plesiosaurs surface and start gobbling the fish. There is a shipwreck though, and at this point Sean does his duty for the plot and gets lost. Trevor and Hannah are attacked by giant Venus flytraps. They are reunited with each other, just in time to be attacked by carnosaurs. They flee down a passageway, using an old carnosaur skull as a sleigh.

Book: Following in his footsteps, the trio come to a passageway blocked by a rockfall which evidently had happened in the years since Arne Saknussemm had gone by. They blow it open with guncotton, but enlarged it too much, as a result of which the sea starts draining into it. After being washed down a long passageway, they terminate at a vertical well, which, filling up with seawater, lifts them up endlessly. They are eventually spit out onto the slopes of Mount Etna in Italy. All's well that ends well, other than the professor being disappointed that they didn't make it to the actual centre of the Earth.

1959 Movie: The passageway is blocked by a rockfall which evidently had happened in the years since Arne Saknussemm died. They blow it open with gunpowder he had in his backpack, but enlarged it too much, as a result of which lava starts bubbling up around them. They shelter in a giant stone cauldron and then are lifted up to the surface by the lava. They are eventually spit out into the sea near Mount Etna in Italy. All's well that ends well, and Prof. Lindenbrook marries Carla.

2007 Television: After various alarms and excursions, Edward Dennison is exposed to the natives as a mortal, and all of them have to make a run for it. He leads them to a passageway, then sacrifices himself holding off the natives so they can escape. After being washed down a long passageway, they terminate at a vertical well, which, filling up with water, lifts them up endlessly. They are spit out into the lake at the base of the Alaskan volcano whence they started. All's well that ends well, and Prof. Brock marries Martha.

2007 Movie: The trio come to a vertical well. Just in time for the suspense factor, magma starts rising from the bottom without provocation, so they punch a hole in the tube wall which, filling up with water, lifts them up endlessly. They are eventually spit out onto the slopes of Mount Vesuvius in Italy. All's well that ends well. Prof. Anderson and Hannah set up housekeeping together and establish an institute for tectonics.

[Part 2 will discuss stories and movies which use drilling machines to reach the centre of the Earth.]

THE FOLLY OF THE PAPER BUGS

by Dale Speirs

Prelude.

Since Canada and the USA are each other's largest customers, and because the Panic of 2008 didn't confine itself to Wall Street but wrecked the global economy, we Canucks are forced to pay attention to the shenanigans of Wall Street banksters and the White House. THE DOLLAR MELTDOWN by Charles Goyette (2009, hardcover) discusses the on-going depreciation of the American dollar, its consequences around the world, and how to evade the worst of the damage.

Goyette, an Arizona broadcaster and former stockbroker, begins with a summary of the events leading up to the Panic of 2008, as the mortgage companies began to stagger and then fall under the burden of foreclosures due to bad loans. That set off a chain reaction, as financiers who had bought mortgage derivatives found themselves holding worthless paper. The politicians were stampeded into bailing out Wall Street, although nothing then or now has provided equivalent trillions of dollars to bail out the average taxpayer.

Meanwhile, the official debt of the American government has soared to \$12,000,000,000,000, not including off-the-book debts

of \$59,000,000,000,000 for Social Security and other entitlement programmes. Goyette blames both Republicans and Democrats, bought and paid for by lobbyists and Wall Street.

Money And Currency.

Goyette provides a brief history of gold as money. When countries were on the gold standard, prices and exchange rates in a peaceful nation often remained unchanged for decades. Fiat currencies (unbacked by gold or anything else) are subject to inflation. If kept low, say 3% to 5% per year, the sheeple are lulled into thinking that they are getting more money with their pay rises instead of less. Older Baby Boomers can recall when our mothers could go shopping and completely fill the back seat of the car with \$20 worth of groceries. Today, of course, \$20 will get you one plastic bag of groceries, easily carried by hand.

Governments and central banks do not like citizens to own gold because it cannot be devalued the way that paper currencies have been. In ancient times, it was physical work to debase gold or silver coins, but nowadays the currency supply is easily inflated by typing some extra zeros into a computer database at the central bank.

Goyette repeats the standard axiom that inflation is the result of too much currency being created, but

reminds us that the reason for such creation is unending wars. He points out that the USA has been fighting an extended war in the Middle East for two decades now, and all those soldiers and overseas bases must be paid for.

During times of inflation, creditors suffer most and debtors can clear their debts in depreciated currency. The hyperinflation of post-WW1 Germany was supported by factory owners and businessmen because they were able to pay off their fixed capital in a year, while wage earners struggled with wheelbarrows full of money that would only buy a loaf of bread. Governments everywhere are the largest debtors in any country, so one can see why central bankers allow a “target” of 2% annual inflation. The true rate of inflation is 6% to 9% over the past few years (see www.shadowstats.com for the data). The official measure of inflation is the Consumer Price Index, which is deliberately falsified to come in low. Food and energy are stripped out as too volatile compared to “core” inflation, which is the price of large-screen televisions and automobiles.

Goyette explains the remarkable system by which currency is created. The American government sells Treasury bonds to a select group of dealer banks, who then re-sell at a profit to the Federal Reserve, which pays for them by giving the dealers a credit balance on its computers. The dealers can then loan ten times as much currency as they were credited with. This credit

balance is simply a bookkeeping entry created out of thin air. The borrowed currency from the bonds is immediately spent by the American government and eventually ends up as deposits in commercial banks by taxpayers or contractors lucky enough to get that currency. The commercial banks also have the right to loan ten times as much currency as they have on deposit, which they do by borrowing it from the Federal Reserve and re-lending it at a higher interest rate. Goyette goes into more detail about how this shell game works and how it has constantly messed up by creating booms and busts, and by distorting investments. After the Panic of 2008, the Federal Reserve not only has been buying most Treasury bonds but also vast amounts of toxic mortgages, commercial bonds, and other debt instruments. The money it pays out for this scrap paper is one way of pumping more currency into the economy.

Deflation is said to be disastrous by mainstream economists because an economy cannot grow when everything, prices and wages alike, declines in currency value. Goyette points out that in the days of the gold standard in the 1800s, peacetime USA did in fact prosper during long-term deflationary periods. Nonetheless, the Federal Reserve has said it will run the printing presses overtime in order to keep some inflation going and prevent any tendency to deflation. The current situation in early 2010 appears to be stagflation, where the real economy stagnates while food and energy costs rise.

The Elephant In The Room.

Pause for a joke from Goyette: The Federal Reserve gets a new supercomputer which will be used to run the American economy. They ask the computer “What is the optimal money supply for the USA?”. The computer replies: “87.3127 trillion Chinese yuan”.

It is impossible to discuss the depreciating American dollar without mentioning China, the USA’s largest creditor. If China were to suddenly dump the large amounts of US dollars and Treasury bonds it holds, the rest of the world would follow so as not to be the last one left holding the paper. Those dollars would then return to the USA to trigger massive inflation because of the sudden oversupply. Although China would get its hair mussed from such an event, it could live with it. The American people, however, would suffer a severe drop in living standards.

The power of being a large creditor was demonstrated during the Panic of 2008. China and Japan held large amounts of bonds issued by the mortgage agencies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, who both defaulted during the panic. The American government was forced to take over the two agencies and guarantee the debt, otherwise China would have dumped all its American bonds and dollars. This would have triggered a second financial tsunami that would have made the original panic look like a walk in the park.

An irony arising from the panic is that the USA has moved into a top-down command economy as China has moved away from it. This is not the Politburo style of Communism but rather the bureaucrat style seen in post-war Britain with nationalizations and rationing. Almost every mortgage in the USA is now backed by the two FM agencies or owned outright by the Federal Reserve.

Goyette discusses the history of wage and price controls, which have always and everywhere ended in failure. As at early 2010 as I write this review, inflation has not attracted public attention and there is no demand for the government to do something. At least not just yet. From the government view, the beauty of wage and price controls is that they shift blame to manufacturers and landlords instead of the central banks who caused the problem. The results are shortages, black markets, and corruption.

Goyette points out that the budget deficit arising from the USA’s foreign wars does not constitute the whole of the military’s impact. Oil prices frequently spiked during the two Iraq wars, which meant that additional dollars went out of the country to pay that price premium. Other countries made nervous by the USA have rushed to set up countervailing alliances, not necessarily military, but economic, such as currency agreements to bypass the use of American dollars in international trade. China and Russia, who once clashed along their common border, have hastened to patch up their disagreements.

What Is To be Done?

Having described the current situation and what is coming, Goyette then looks at how to protect oneself from being a casualty. He notes that there is opportunity in every crisis. He recommends four categories of investments: 1) real money, the only two forms of which are gold and silver, 2) real energy (oil), 3) real things that people need (food and raw materials), and 4) realistic assessment of life with depreciating currency and high interest rates. The average person will not invest like this. They will put their money in term deposits which pay less interest than the rate of inflation, or buy a mutual fund invested in paper, or think their house is an investment (houses are actually liabilities).

The majority of Americans will pay no attention or be in denial until it is too late. The sheeple will buy large-screen TV sets but refuse to buy gold coins "because they are over-priced". Wage earners will complain they can't get ahead, and they can't get their credit card paid off, without understanding or acknowledging the reason why. They don't want to know; they'd rather watch a sexy-teenage-vampire-in-love movie.

When Goyette gets into specific recommendations, gold (and silver) naturally heads the list. Few Americans own even one ounce of gold and the general public are thus fully exposed to a currency collapse. Individuals should buy 1-ounce coins because

when it comes time to sell them, you probably only need small amounts at a time, not \$500,000 from a 400-ounce gold bar. Always take possession; if you don't, you own paper, not gold. -12-

Goyette reviews Peak Oil and the nonsense of American energy self-sufficiency. He doesn't recommend petroleum stocks in the USA because when (not if) oil prices spike again, he thinks the American government will likely go for either windfall taxes or nationalization (as they did with the financial and automotive industries after the Panic of 2008). Instead, he suggests buying petroleum index funds based on crude oil futures contracts. I agree with him that you shouldn't buy publicly-traded shares but for a different reason; the Wall Street banksters have rigged the stock markets and individual investors are just plankton to be fed upon. He also suggests Canadian petroleum trust funds, but as they are being phased out by 2011, this is a moot point. My suggestion is that Americans who live in petroleum-producing states are better off buying limited-partnership units, which are shares in the cash flow from a group of producing oil wells. I buy them for Alberta wells but they are difficult to find because they are seldom advertised; you have to know people or make cold calls. I also own mineral rights but these are impossible to buy nowadays on either side of the border; the time to buy them was when oil was \$10/barrel. Stay away from ethanol or biofuel companies, none of which can survive without massive subsidies.

In the real things category, which seems to be miscellaneous commodities, Goyette suggests agricultural commodity index funds for the obvious reason that food is the most essential item we all need to buy. He does not recommend water companies because they go hand-in-hand with government interference everywhere. Timber investments are subject to the housing market, and we all know what happened there. Mines and base metals are cyclical but tangible in a way that paper currency is not, and there will be a rush to them when the excrement impacts the rotating impeller blades.

His fourth category, the rather unusual “realistic assessment of life with depreciating currency and high interest rates”, is more of a what not to invest in category. Stay away from U.S. Treasury bonds because their yield will not compensate for inflation. These bonds trade inversely to interest rates. Since interest rates have nowhere to go but up, this means older bonds paying little will fall in value. I might add that currently I have a number of Canadian bank bonds paying 4.5% to 5% interest but not for more than a five-year term. Once inflation really starts to grow, I will be rolling them over into shorter terms in order to track higher rates above the inflation rate.

Goyette is also down on non-American currencies because they are all fiat currencies, not backed by gold or silver. This has made exchange rates volatile for decades.

Finis.

Goyette’s book is a good overall guide to the slow-motion train wreck that is American fiscal policy. His recommendations are somewhat thin for choices, but I have no serious dispute with them. My readers in Canada, Australia, Britain, and South Africa should read this book as much as my American readers, for we are all in this together.

Let me add a Poor Folks version of investing for those of you who always have money for the latest SF movie but claim you can’t afford a gold coin, or who live hand-to-mouth in unstable jobs.

Bullion: Buy 1-ounce silver coins (American Eagles, Maple Leafs, etcetera), currently about C\$21. Buy one a month at a minimum; one a week is even better. You won’t regret it years from now, when the coins will still be worth something, while those movie DVDs are obsolete trash.

Energy: Not much you can do here if you live on the margins.

Food: Buy extra non-perishable food items such as boxed snack crackers, tinned soup, and bottles of non-alcoholic beverages. I try to keep at least a month’s supply on hand so that if we have an ice storm I won’t have to line up at the supermarket.

Don't buy those specially-made preserved foods; they are overpriced and mostly of things you wouldn't ordinarily like eating.

Realistic assessment of life with depreciating currency and high interest rates: Minimize your term deposits that pay less than inflation, or chequing accounts that pay nothing. Put spare cash into bullion or non-perishable food. If you were not an adult during the late 1970s and early 1980s when double-digit inflation topped out at 22%, ask an older Baby Boomer what it was like.

Spend less than you make, a piece of advice millennia old but frequently ignored. Forget those exotic vacations and visit places near where you live. And no, you do not need the latest iGadget from Apple. No you don't, no you don't; you only think you do because you have been brainwashed by peer pressure and the consumerist society. There was life before texting.

Most people will ignore or not even be aware of this advice. They will go through life just scraping by, from one dull job to another, and never being able to catch up. Napoleon Hill, who wrote the classic book THINK AND GROW RICH, remarked that 98% of his readers would never take effective action. No matter how much they complained, they were happy in their warehouse job with a boss-from-hell and no spare cash. Because, after all, if they really were unhappy, they would change.

KA-BOOM!

by Ken Sanford

A new book from the Wreck and Crash Mail Society is THE HISTORY OF MAIL BOMBS by Dale Speirs.

This 128-page 8.5 x 11 softcover book, with 60 colour pages, provides a complete history of letter and package bombs. Hacking communications systems is not a new thing that came in with the Internet. The postal system is just as susceptible to abuse of trust, be it theft, fraud, or striking out at enemies via mail bombs. The first recorded mail bomb was in 1764 in Denmark. A mail bomb is known from 1881 in Australia, and in 1895 a letter bomb was sent to Baron de Rothschild in France, which exploded when he opened it. Letter bombs and package bombs have been sent through the mail for various reasons, such as revenge, political causes, terrorism, personal vendettas, or crazy people who have a grudge against society, like the famous Unabomber.

The book gives a history and background of all types of mail bombs and the people who sent them. Many different types of letter bombs are shown and described, as well as the various types of markings and labels used by postal authorities to indicate that a letter or package has been inspected to check against bombs or chemicals, such as anthrax.

The book is available for US\$37.50 or UK£26.00 plus postage. Postage within the USA is US\$3.00 (media mail), to Canada is US\$6.00 (1st class), and to the rest of the world is US\$13.45 (Global Priority Mail). Payment may be made by US\$ check or money order made payable to Ken Sanford, or by PayPal to: kaerophil(a)gmail.com. For PayPal payments, please add \$1.75. For orders in UK£, please inquire on postage and payment. Order from: Ken Sanford, 613 Championship Drive, Oxford, Connecticut, USA 06478-3128

DO NOT ORDER FROM DALE SPEIRS. He has no copies for sale, and will just return your order. It is the Wreck and Crash Mail Society that is selling the book through Ken Sanford, not Dale.

MINDEN: MAIL ART CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

by Dale Speirs

THE JUBILEE BOOK (2003, privately published) is a 300-page compendium of the mail art and performance works and associated history of Peter and Angela Netmail of Minden, Germany. It comprises numerous multi-lingual essays, tipped-in mail art, and illustrations of other mail art and performances the Netmails have been involved in during the period 1983 to 2003.

There are lots of photos in the book of mail artists in session, which, to be honest, look much the same as a gathering of SF fans or philatelists. This is an information-dense book, with far too many items for me to review individually. I don't know the availability of the book but you can enquire of Peter Netmail at Box 2644, D-32383 Minden, Germany.

Peter and Angela have traveled the world delivering their mail art in person and staging performance art. They have accumulated a massive archive of mail art, and Peter assures the reader that he does not use it, as rumour has it, only to prepare funeral eulogies.

Among other subjects, the book highlights artistamps, home-made postage-like labels. Why wait for your post office to issue a stamp when you can make your own? Rubber-stamping is a given with mail art to decorate the envelopes. You can buy rubber stamps ready-made, or carve your own from erasers. Artist trading cards likewise enable you to express yourself and trade with other mail artists.

The Netmails have personally delivered some of their mail art to far-flung countries, dressed as posties. They also mail to others such as myself from foreign countries. I probably get just as much mail from Peter with non-German stamps as from Germany itself.

noticed by Dale Speirs

Docampo, S., et al (2010) **High incidence of *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* spores in the atmosphere of the cave of Nerja (Malaga, southern Spain).** AEROBIOLOGIA 26:89-98

*"The cave of Nerja, which is visited annually by more than half a million people, is a karstic cavity situated in the east part of the province of Malaga (southern Spain), with internal conditions of humidity and temperature that make it a space highly conducive to the development of fungus. This study was carried out over an uninterrupted period of 4 years (2002–2005) with the aid of a Hirst-type volumetric pollen trap (Lanzoni VPPS 2000) situated in one of the halls of the cave. The results show that the spores of *Aspergillus*/*Penicillium* type represent 48.6% of the annual spore index, June, July and August being the months with the highest rates of these spores, with an average incidence for the 4 years of 11, 63 and 15% of the annual total, respectively. However, the most interesting observation was the sudden increase in the concentration of these spores that occurred during 1 day of the year, when levels might reach nearly 300,000 spores/m³ of air as daily mean. Finally, it was concluded that these peaks were due to human activities carried out inside the cave, coinciding with celebration of the annual festival of dance and music. On the other hand, the intradiurnal study showed that the highest*

concentrations are reached between 1200 and 1400 hours. Although there are no standard indices related to the risk of exposure to spore concentrations, we think that the values obtained were high enough to be considered as a potential risk factor capable of producing harmful effects on human health. We therefore recommend taking the necessary measures to prevent such high increases in the spore levels inside the cave."

WORLD WIDE PARTY #17

2010 will have the 17th annual World Wide Party on June 21st at 21h00 your local time. Invented by Benoit Girard (Québec) and Franz Miklis (Austria), the idea is to get a wave circulating the world of zinesters, mail artists, and SF fans toasting the Papernet. At 21h00, you are requested to raise a glass to your fellow denizens of zinedom. Face to the east and toast those who have already celebrated the WWP. Then toast to the north and south for those in your time zone. Finally, face to the west and toast those yet to celebrate. Write it up for a zine or do some mail art. Have a party, or devise your own method of celebrating.