

# OPUNTIA

## 258

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### ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY: THE TAPE RECORDER

by Dale Speirs

In the days before you could stream just about any radio station on the Internet, we had to get within broadcast range of the actual station. Radio fans recorded shows or representative samples of DJ chatter and swapped tapes. I have several racks of cassette tapes of Calgary shows and old-time radio programmes, but I have stopped listening to modern commercial radio because my tolerance for advertisements has dropped to zero. One can instead download podcasts, but they aren't quite the same thing, however convenient they may be for listening. Back in the 1950s, radio shows were fighting a rear-guard action against television, and eventually died out, to be replaced by disk jockeys, talk show hosts who confused opinions with facts, and news stations flooding us with trivia in the guise of breaking news.

Among the old-time radio shows I've taped on cassette are several programmes that based episodes on a new gadget that was making its way into suburban homes in the 1950s and 1960s, the tape recorder. Recording devices were around long before then but cheap, reliable, portable devices that the average person could afford didn't reach mass market status until after World War Two. The earliest versions were wire and open-reel tape recorders. I can remember in 1963 my father bringing home a portable open-

reel recorder that had the same prestige as owning a personal computer did in the late 1980s. In the 1970s, the cassette player became dominant and was how we listened to music on demand and made our own mix tapes.

Several of those old-time radio shows are reviewed here that had episodes revolving around the cutting-edge technology of the tape recorder. Most of these shows are available as free MP3 downloads from [www.archives.org/details/radioprograms](http://www.archives.org/details/radioprograms)

### **The Life Of Riley.**

This was a popular radio sitcom starring William Bendix as Chester Riley, a family man stumbling through suburban life and always jumping to the wrong conclusion. A 1949 episode "The Wire Recorder" represents his tangle with cutting-edge technology in the form of a home wire recorder.

It is the 18th wedding anniversary of Chester and Margaret. Their two kids remembered the date but Riley forgot and is feeling guilty. An insecure man, he worries his family think the worst of him for that, and goes next door to talk to his buddy Gillis. While there, Gillis shows him a wire recorder he just got and demonstrates it. Riley is so ignorant of technology that he doesn't recognize his own voice in the playback.

Gillis goads Riley into hiding the machine in his living room to hear what his family say about him when he isn't around. There is, of course, a glitch because Riley couldn't figure out the three switches. The recorder doesn't begin running until after Margaret begins telling the kids about why she doesn't like Gillis. Because she didn't mention his name while the recorder was running, Riley thinks they were talking about him. This sets up a Class A misunderstanding, and the complications pile up. He inadvertently reveals that he had taped them and winds up with egg on his face.

The simplistic Hollywood view of this episode is that wire recorders are complicated gadgets, still beyond the ken of ordinary folk. This was much like the simultaneous introduction of television, and someday I shall do some reviews of how OTR radio depicted the complications of operating a television set.

### **Our Miss Brooks.**

Eve Arden was an actress with one of the most distinctive voices on radio and television. In the days before television, she had a long running hit show on the radio called OUR MISS BROOKS, about a English teacher named Constance Brooks at Madison High School. Her boss was the school principal, Osgood Conklin, played by Gale Gordon, a character actor who specialized in pompous blowhards. He was forever suffering from catastrophes

inadvertently triggered by Miss Brooks or one of her pupils, regulars Walter Denton, Stretch Snodgrass, or Harriet Conklin (Osgood's daughter), or by her boyfriend Philip Boynton (the biology teacher). There were always misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication to complicate the plot and multiply the slapstick comedy.

"The Tape Recorder" started off with one of these typical misunderstandings. Osgood Conklin was on one of his economy drives, with teachers limited to one piece of chalk per day and one pencil per week. They didn't get a new pencil unless they brought in a small bag of shavings to prove they had used up the old one. Conklin went on the warpath when an electrician was called in to fix a problem and charged the school \$3.85. (Which, granted, was more money in those days than now.) The episode begins rolling when Miss Brooks comes into her classroom to find that Denton has procured a tape recorder for the school, entirely without authorization. Brooks has to be told what that strange box on her desk is, and Denton demonstrates it by asking her what she thinks of Conklin. She gives a polite answer, not her real opinion.

Denton has trouble operating the machine and is never sure if he is recording, rewinding, or replaying. As he demonstrates it, others in the cast wander in and out, with one major conversational thread being a large frog that Boynton had captured and which is not doing well. He decides to take it back

out into the woods. Brooks remarks that she doesn't like bulgy-eyed green things.

The shop that loaned the tape recorder phones and wants to know if Conklin will authorize the purchase for \$385, definitely big money in those days. There is a misunderstanding because everyone is saying "three-eighty-five" instead of "three dollars and eighty-five cents" or "three hundred and eighty-five dollars". Conklin tells the enquirer to send the bill to the School Board, thinking that it was the \$3.85 repair and not realizing that he was authorizing \$385 for the tape recorder.

Eventually Conklin discovers the tape recorder and a row ensues. Denton tries to pacify him by playing the questions and answers that were recorded. Unfortunately he garbled the recording, so the question "What do you think of Mr. Conklin?" is followed by Brooks' response "He's all right, I guess, if you like slimy, bulgy-eyed pot-bellied monsters.", and Denton's "I wish he'd croak". Both were talking about the frog but try explaining that to Conklin. Also recorded out of sequence is Boynton's remark, ostensibly about Conklin, "I've come to the conclusion he doesn't belong in a school. I think I'll take him out in the woods somewhere and toss him into a pond."

Conklin is calmed down by Denton demonstrating the machine and asking what he thinks



of Mr. Stone, Head of the Board of Education. But before he answers, someone tells him about the tape recorder's cost and asks what to tell the store owner. Conklin angrily replies: "He's a crook! He ought to be on the rock pile!", forgetting that the tape recorder is running and it sounds like he is describing Stone. Just then, Stone shows up, waving the \$385 invoice and demanding to know what is going on. Denton replays the segment about Stone, good for another outburst.

The show peters out with Brooks going to the School Board later and explaining the true facts. Considering how few buttons there are on a tape recorder, trying to operate it shouldn't have been a problem. The story plays on the general public's idea of modern technology being complicated to learn.

### **Boston Blackie.**

BOSTON BLACKIE was a detective series that had more than 200 episodes between 1944 and 1950. It was about as clichéd as they come. Blackie was a tough-talking private investigator who often worked on the wrong side of the law, and his nemesis was Inspector Faraday, a bumbling police officer. Whenever I listen to these episodes, I like to count how many misdemeanors and felonies Blackie commits while investigating a case and how many violations of police procedure Faraday does. Both are usually in the double digits.

"The Oscar Wolf Case" has Blackie investigating a racketeer and paying a visit to the mobster's office. On arrival, he sees one of the henchmen playing with a new-fangled device called a dictaphone. Blackie then threatens Wolf in no uncertain terms, including a promise to kill him, and while doing so completely ignoring the henchman casually standing next to the dictaphone.

There are no prizes for guessing what happens next. A few hours later, Wolf abruptly departs this world for the next life, helped along by high-velocity lead poisoning. The henchman, public-spirited citizen that he is, passes the dictaphone tape along to Inspector Faraday.

Talk about an open-and-shut case. Blackie has to go on the run from police. One expects that in the future he will pay more attention to his surroundings. While scurrying about in the shadows, he has to find evidence against the henchman and finally does so. An accomplice blurts out the secret in a staged meeting with Faraday present, and the henchman is brought to justice.

Blackie, who should have been removed from the gene pool years ago, carries on to the next case. He didn't get paid for this one, by the way, so one presumes his pro bono expenses came out of his own pocket.

## Bob And Ray.

Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding worked together for decades from the 1940s until Goulding's death in 1990. They did parodies of soap operas and commercials, and voiced dozens of characters including Wally Ballou (an interviewer who never listened to what he or his guests were saying), Barry Campbell (a B-movie actor who went from one flop to another), and Charles the Poet (who read somber verses but could never finish a poem without bursting into laughter). Bob and Ray seldom worked before a live audience because of the layers of voices and sound effects they used. They were mostly based in New York City.

The skit "Bob Demonstrates The Walner Slendervoice Machine" was aired on the CBS radio network in 1959, and involved a wire recorder that had been sent to Bob and Ray for demonstration from the Walner company. This was about the time that wire recorders were leaving the market as tape recorders came in. In the sketch, Bob and Ray pick a member of the audience to come up and help demonstrate it. In reality there was no audience, and Ray changed his voice for the character while Bob did the supposed interview.

The audience member is an out-of-towner wearing a convention badge with the name Tom Riber, and is so introduced by Bob. However, he corrects Bob, saying that the convention secretary,

Miss Eckmeyer, was in a hurry when she was typing up the badges and mis-spelled his name, which is actually Rimer. On that note, Bob offers the wire recorder microphone to Rimer and asks him to record something. Rimer has a bit of trouble with controls, and Bob has to guide him as to which is the Record button. After some fumbling, Rimer says his message. *"Hello, my name is Tom Rimer. R .. I .. M .. E .. R. I'm in this city on business. Miss Eckmeyer doesn't work too well under pressure. I think I saw Lowell Thomas walking down one of the corridors."*

Having finished his message, Rimer hands control back to Bob, who then re-plays the message, strangely distorted with different pacing and hesitation. *"Hello, my name is Tom Rimer. R .. I .. B .. E .. R. I'm in this city on business. Miss Almeyer ... Eckmeyer, doesn't work too well under pressure. I think I saw Frank Thomas walking down one of the corridors."* Rimer disputes that the playback was what he actually said, so Bob rewinds the wire recorder for another listen. The wire snaps and spools out onto the floor, making it impossible to settle the question. It's obvious that the Walner Slendervoice is one weird machine.

The background to this skit is how complicated it was to operate a recorder and its unreliability. Today the five keys on a tape recorder are child's play compared to the learning curve on personal computers and smartphones. But back then, this was cutting edge technology.

I circulate OPUNTIA through a science fiction apa called Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA). For those of you receiving this issue who do not know what an apa is, please read on.

Modern zine publishing as we know it today began in the middle 1800s as cheap, home-use printing presses became available to the general public. Zinesters developed a distro method called the amateur press association (apa) where members sent x number of copies of their zine to a central mailer (also known as the official editor). The zines are collated into bundles, and each member gets back one bundle of everyone's zines. There is an annual fee to cover postage, but this works out cheaper than mailing individual copies. Apas have a minimum level of activity required, such as publishing 8 pages a year. It must be emphasized that apas are not for passive subscribers; you must commit to the minimum activity level or you will be booted out.

The oldest apa is the National A.P.A., founded 1876. FAPA was founded in 1937. Details from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 94611-1948. In addition to articles, there will be mailing comments on other apazines in the last FAPA bundle. I quote the remark I am commenting on or otherwise make the context clear, so hopefully an outsider can still read the comments with interest.

FAPA bundle #301 received in Calgary on 2012-12-06. The Clearcut Award for the most zine pages went to Dale Speirs with 24 pages (48 half-size pages).

**For FAPA** You mention that Australia seemed to suffer from the paradox that there was a supposed housing shortage and yet a surplus of vacant units exist. This happened in the USA in 2007 before their housing bubble burst and is currently happening in Canada as our housing market begins to collapse. The apparent paradox is because in the late stages of a bubble the speculators start buying up multiple units on low down payments and cheap credit, thinking to make a profit in a year or two by flipping the properties. This is the end game currently being played out in Toronto, which has more condominium towers under construction than the rest of North America combined (see [www.greaterfool.ca](http://www.greaterfool.ca) for the details). As the bubble bursts, the speculators get taken badly when they can't find greater fools to buy their units at any price. Flipping real estate only works in the middle part of the boom. In the early part, prices rise too slowly to make a decent profit, and in the end game everyone is trying to unload at once.

*"Most Western governments are insolvent."* All Western governments are insolvent.



Re: the decline of Australian newspapers. Calgary's largest newspaper, the CALGARY HERALD, laid off 30% of its staff in November 2012 and discontinued its Sunday edition. The tabloid CALGARY SUN is boasting about how their circulation is still going up but that's because they give away free copies by the thousands to commuters inbound to downtown on the Calgary Transit system. They have to keep the numbers up because advertising rates are based on circulation.

**Lofgeornost #109** *"I am sure that a devoted Mormon would think this a shameful trivialization, but I must say that our guide's exegesis of pre-Columbian history reminded me of the extraordinary efforts of Sherlockian scholars to determine the chronological and geographical details of the Canon."* Perhaps a better analogy would be with Baconians determined to prove that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays. The Sherlockians do what they do for the fun of it, whereas both the Mormons and the Baconians are earnest about trying to prove their fallacies.

Re: Facebook and LinkedIn. Like you, I don't see the point. Anyone bound and determined to stay in contact via the Internet instead of the Papernet or face-to-face can just as easily use e-mail or the telephone. What concerns me is that many Facebookers don't realize how vulnerable they make themselves giving out information. Many burglars now search Facebook pages as part of their routine to find out who is away from their home for the

weekend. This happened to my neighbour across the street, who announced on Facebook that he had just bought a new large-screen television and was now skiing in Lake Louise for the weekend. He came home to find his back window jimmied and all the electronics gone. He told me that one of the first questions the constable specifically asked him was if he posted his schedule on Facebook or Twitter.

*"One of these days I mean to read Pierre Berton's THE IMPOSSIBLE RAILWAY: THE BUILDING OF THE CANADIAN PACIFIC, which I understand to be the best history of the railroad that created Canada."* A few decades ago, Berton's books were made into a top-rated television series. The theme song for the show, "Canadian Railroad Trilogy", was written and performed by Gordon Lightfoot, and was a Top Ten tune. Afterwards, Berton approached Lightfoot and told him that he had done in six minutes what it took Berton three books to say, and done it better. Download the mp3 and I'm sure you'll be impressed. Calgary is a CPR town. Before the transcontinental arrived in August 1883, Calgary was a tiny hamlet of no importance. The railroad turned it into a major city within ten years.

**Outlier #1** The transcription of the interview was interesting but would have been better without transcribing all the ums and ers. I enjoyed reading it though.

## TRANSIT FANNING IN CALGARY:

### PART 2: THE WEST LEG

by Dale Speirs

December 10, 2012, was a big day in Cowtown as the West Leg of the LRT system officially opened. (We don't get much excitement here outside of the Stampede rodeo.) The South, Northeast, and Northwest legs have been running since the 1980s, but the middle-class suburbs due west of the downtown core had only one freeway to serve them. The West Leg had been held up for years by a wealthy inner-city suburb who didn't want a line running through their enclave, but eventually the increasing number of voters in the outer suburbs overcame the Old Money.

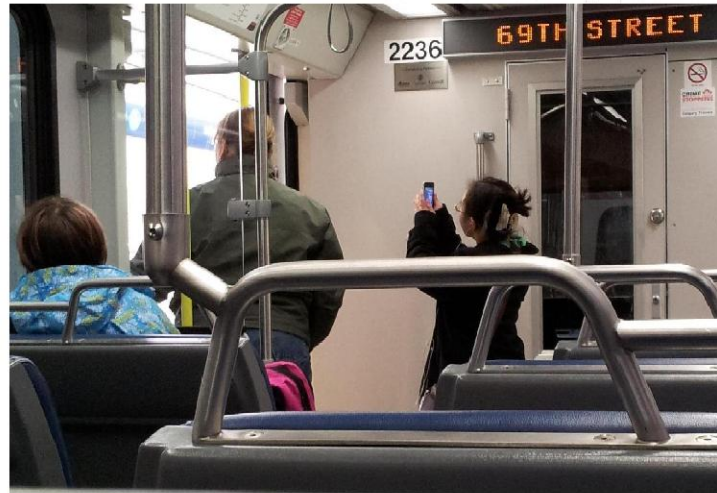
The West Leg has the first underground station in the entire LRT system (all the older legs have street-level platforms) and the first elevated station (which had to be built three stories above the CPR transcontinental railroad because of limited rights of way). The elevated section was shown under construction in OPUNTIA #70.5B. There are also videos at [www.westlrt.ca](http://www.westlrt.ca)

On opening day I went for a ride up and down the line after the morning rush hour was over. I stopped at each station en route and took photos. There is nothing along the line that I would need to visit in the future, so this will probably be the last trip I take up the West Leg.

I wasn't the only transit fan out that day, and saw many people toting cameras or raising up smartphones.

The photo below shows one young woman on the train taking snaps with her smartphone at each station, proving that trainspotting isn't just for anoraks.

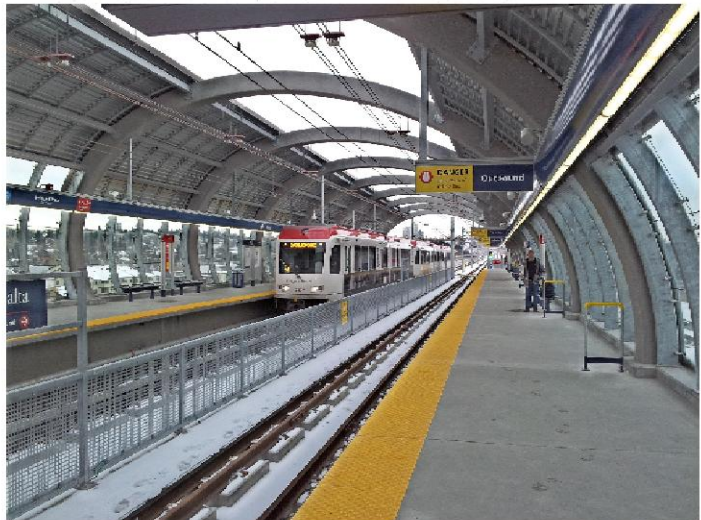
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The first station on the West Leg is Sunalta, named after the aforementioned enclave. It takes two flights of very long escalators to reach the platforms.

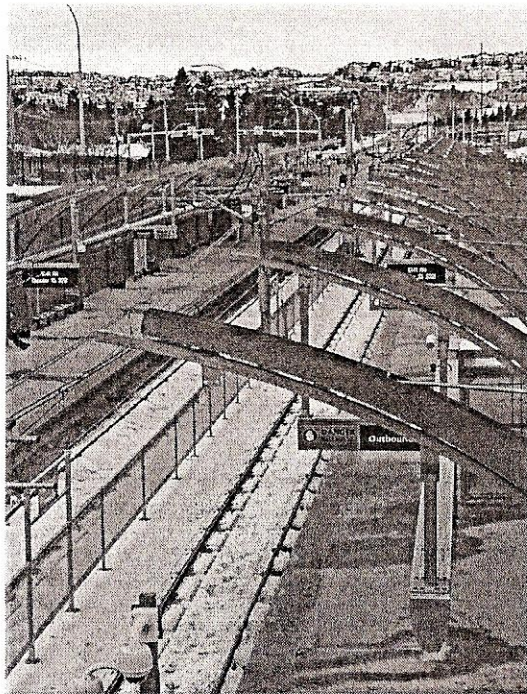
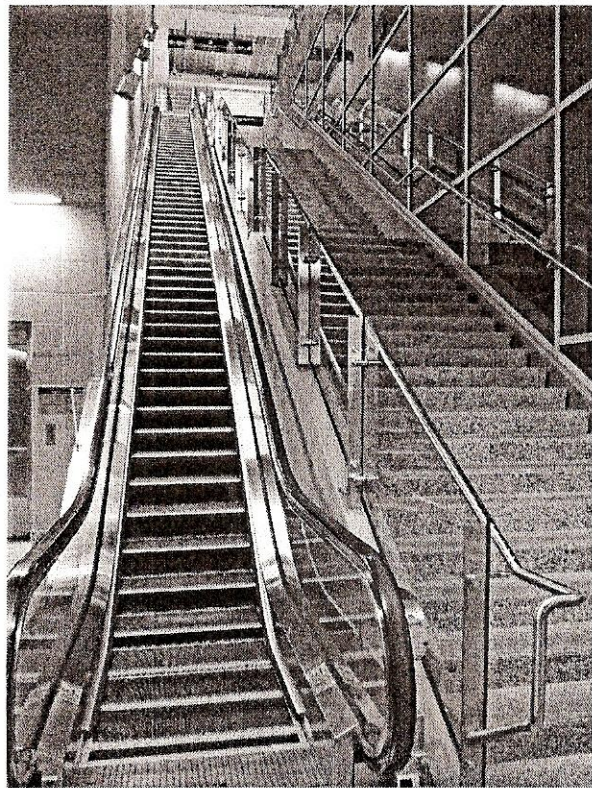
The photo at right was taken from an adjacent pedestrian overpass and shows the side of the station high above the transcontinental railroad. To get a better idea of the scale, look closely at the bottom left of the photo where you can see a black pickup truck parked directly under the station.



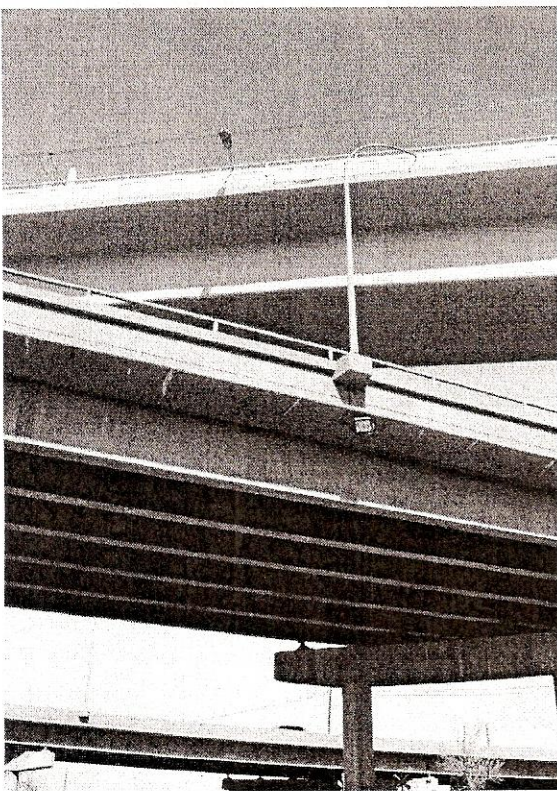


The Westbrook station is third along the line and the first underground station in the system, about three levels deep. Instead of two-stage escalators, there are single-stage three-story tall escalators from the platforms (photo at right).

Next down the line is the 45 Street SW station, partially buried in a trench alongside 17 Avenue. The photo at left looks due west at Signal Hill, the first of the Rocky Mountain foothills. About halfway along the horizon is a notch where both 17 Avenue and the LRT run up into the western suburbs.

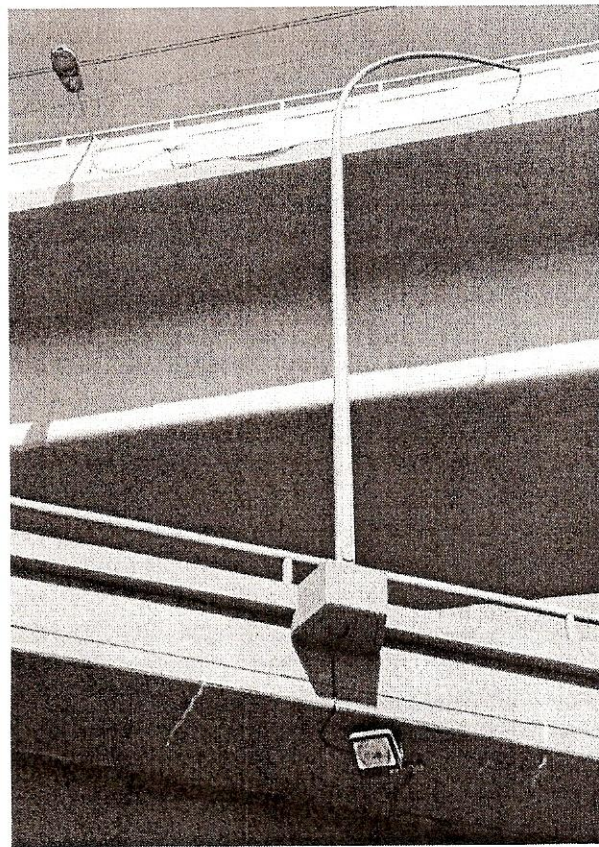






What were they thinking? I spotted this weird method of installing a streetlight, located where the LRT passes over the Bow Trail freeway.

Why didn't the contractor just turn the pole 90° instead of fastening the light to the side of the track bridge and then running ten extra metres of power line to the fixture?





## BOOK REVIEWS

by Dale Speirs

VET IN THE SADDLE (1978, hardcover) caught my interest because my father was a livestock veterinarian. As a young boy I often went with him on farm calls. He graduated from veterinary school in 1951 and became the first veterinarian in west central Alberta between Calgary and Edmonton. This book is about John L. Poett, who was the first veterinarian on the Canadian prairies.

Poett was born in 1840 in Scotland and took his veterinary training at the University of Edinburgh, graduating in 1860 and joining the British Army. In those days, the number one employer of veterinarians was the army. However, the British Army weren't fighting too many big wars at the time, and laid off many of their veterinarians, including Poett, who had little seniority. He made his way to Canada, and by 1868 was in private practice in Ontario. In 1873, the Canadian parliament legislated into existence a paramilitary force called the North West Mounted Police, who were to travel out into the poorly-known prairies and establish peace, order, and good government in advance of settlers. The NWMP was to drive out American whisky traders on the prairies who were taking advantage of the native tribes. In 1920, the NWMP absorbed the Dominion Police, a federal force based in eastern Canada, to become a national police force called

the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Although the Dominion Police were formed in 1868, they were not as significant as the NWMP, and the Mounties officially date their founding year as 1873. Because the NWMP was originally a paramilitary force, the personnel had both military and police ranks mixed together. After the merger, the RCMP went to the British system of police ranks. -12-

In 1873, Poett applied for the position of veterinary surgeon in the NWMP, at the rank of lieutenant. He was responsible for the health of more than 300 horses. In the famous long march of 1874, as the redcoats made their way across the prairies into what is now southern Alberta, Poett was hard pressed to keep up the health of the animals in the severe climate where no one had any experience of the terrain. The line of march had 275 men plus as many camp followers, such as families and teamsters hauling supplies with ox carts. In addition to 310 horses, Poett had to look after a large number of oxen, steers for slaughter, and cows and calves for breeding. The line stretched for kilometres.

Both men and horses suffered terribly. The southern prairies they traversed are semi-desert at the best of times, and they happened to be traveling across them during a drought. No good forage was available for horses, and as the expedition fell behind schedule, they had to march longer and longer hours, with little rest. There wasn't much Poett could do except sort out the worst horses and

move them to the back of the line as stragglers. The horses had been bred in Ontario, were riding breeds that were put to work as draft animals, and had no hardiness for drought. 83 horses died out on the prairies, a 26% mortality rate. On arrival in what is now southern Alberta (the province wasn't created until 1905), the march was in such desperate straits that Commissioner G.A. French, the commanding officer, ordered the line further south to the Sweetgrass Hills, today just over the border in Montana. There was water and good pasture in the hills. After recuperating, the force decided to return to Winnipeg, the American whiskey traders having skedaddled when they heard the NWMP were coming.

In the following summer of 1875, a better equipped and more experienced force rode west again. This time Poett brought his wife and children, as did many personnel. With the lessons learned from the first march, things went better this time. Poett only went part of the way this time, as he was responsible for much more, and it made better sense for him to work at central posts in what is now Saskatchewan and let people bring the animals to him. (Saskatchewan did not become a province until 1905, but like Alberta, most people referred to those areas by their district names even though they were still part of the Northwest Territories.) Part of the force kept going west, one detachment of which built a post in August 1875 at the junction of the Elbow and Bow rivers, which eventually became the city of Calgary.

In Poett's day, little was known of disease pathogens or treatment. Oral or external applications of carbolic acid was a standard cure used by Poett, as it is a bactericide. The Metis scouts and drivers of the ox team carts heard Poett constantly calling to his assistant for more carbolic, and it became a catchphrase among them. "*Fetch along the carbolique, dere's goin to be a stampede!*", they would shout to each other apropos of nothing.

Poett's main duties were to isolate infected animals and ensure they had good feed and living quarters. Clean sanitation was 90% of disease prevention, then and now. After the first march west, he put out strong recommendations that oats be brought along to feed the horses, because the dryland grasses were not sufficiently nourishing. He also recommended that a distinction be made between riding horses and draft horses, and that each trooper be assigned his own horse to ensure better care.

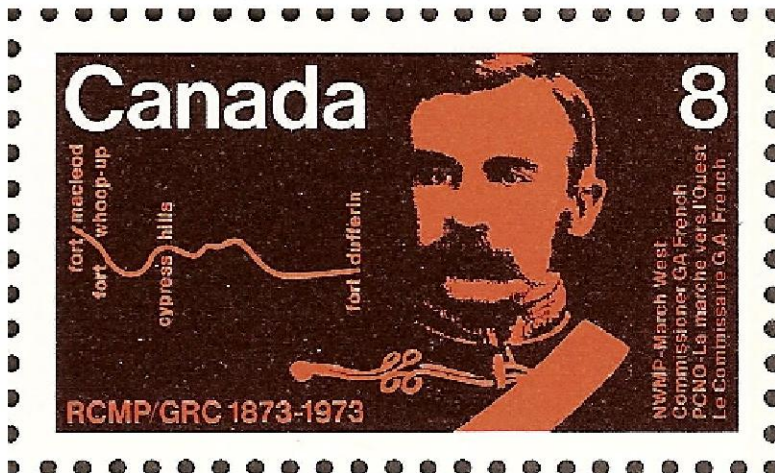
In 1877, the federal government went on an austerity drive, and among other things decided that the NWMP didn't really need veterinarians. Poett returned to private practice in Ontario. By the early 1880s, financial conditions had improved somewhat, and in 1884 veterinary surgeons were restored to the NWMP but only as NCOs. Poett, like so many others, had been impressed with the prairies as the frontier to the future, and re-enlisted as veterinary sergeant. He was posted to Fort Macleod in southwestern Alberta, not only looking after the NWMP horses,

but also acting as government inspector for the ranching industry. The Second Riel Rebellion broke out in 1885, and while Riel never went near Alberta, no one could be sure that he wouldn't. The NWMP detachment was doubled at Fort Macleod and many experienced personnel were drawn away to the fighting in Saskatchewan.

In 1886, Poett was re-assigned to Battleford, Saskatchewan, where his family re-joined him. Although still a NWMP veterinarian, Poett spent most of his time as a government quarantine and health-of-animals inspector. His children were young adults by now. His son John joined the NWMP at Battleford as a constable, and father and son briefly served together. Three of his daughters eventually married Mounties. In 1890, Poett was transferred to Maple Creek, also in Saskatchewan, and here he ended his days. His work was almost entirely disease control and livestock inspection, as well as looking after NWMP horses and selecting remounts. By 1894 he began suffering from cancer, and died relatively young in April 1895 at age 54.

At this point, the book is only one-third done, and the rest of it is devoted to various histories. First is a lengthy consideration of saddles used by the NWMP. The standard cowboy saddle with its saddlehorn and rigs for handling livestock was not suitable for Mounties, who seldom if ever lassoed an errant steer. They originally used the British Army saddle, then converted to the

California saddle, the American West being much the same as the Canadian prairies when it came to long-distance riding. There were strong opinions among the Mounties about the best saddle, and Poett often wrote about them in his annual reports. Commissioned officers could bring their own saddles and tack, so there was never any universal standard among them. Much like owning a car, everyone had their own preferences.





The book goes on to consider the history of veterinary medicine in Canada and particularly the Northwest Territories. The profession at home and abroad had difficulties establishing itself as a respectable occupation. Since until the 1900s not that much was known about livestock disease organisms, it was difficult for veterinarians to treat sick animals, and they had to rely mostly on prevention and quarantine methods. One reason my father was the first veterinarian in west-central Alberta was because it wasn't until his time that antibiotics became widespread enough to make a difference. Prior to that, farmers didn't see the sense in paying for a veterinarian who couldn't do much about a sick animal beyond home remedies.

The final section of the book are reprints of Poett's annual reports and letters home. This is a valuable consolidation of documents scattered over a wide variety of sources. One interesting document is a list of veterinary supplies purchased for the 1874 long march, which included aloes, gum opium, belladonna, tartar emetic, gentian, camphor, arsenic, juniper oil, saltpetre, iodine, digitalis, and potassium carbonate. You try ordering some of those today and the pharmacist will phone the police!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Bob Jennings  
29 Whiting Road  
Oxford, Massachusetts 01540-2035

2012-10-29

I never heard of vending machines dispensing amateur fanzines before. What kind of publications are these machines stocked with? Where would they be located anyway? I cannot envision this being a successful enterprise at any level. The cost of the machines would be a major deterrent in itself.

[The machines are old snack vending machines refurbished by volunteers; their cost was next to nothing. They dispense alternative and underground zines. As far as I know, the ones set out in Calgary in 2012 are a first for Cowtown but they have been used in other cities at other times to dispense zines or small art pieces from the alternative community. I don't think anyone seriously considers them as a new method of distribution but rather a novelty that will attract attention to zines from those who would not look at them on a bookshelf. After all, if vending machines can be used to dispense gold coins in Europe and Arabia, why not zines?]

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead  
25509 Jonnie Court  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

2012-11-02

[Re: Nero Wolfe] I found an old radio show site when I searched for Rex Stout and went on to listen to what is obviously (to me at least) the precursor of JEOPARDY in INFORMATION PLEASE.

[For anyone interested in old-time radio, there are hundreds of shows which can be downloaded as free mp3s from:  
[www.archive.org/details/radioprograms](http://www.archive.org/details/radioprograms) This site includes great comedies such as Jack Benny and DUFFY'S TAVERN, mysteries such as Nero Wolfe (with Sidney Greenstreet as Wolfe) or DRAGNET, and SF series such as X MINUS ONE. Much better than listening to today's talk shows.]

FROM: Joseph Nicholas  
15 Jansons Road  
Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England

2012-10-31

Perhaps there's a sociological reason that pulp fiction (whether film, comic book, or trashy paperback) is where to go if you really want to understand the hopes and fears of the period in which it was produced. With the schlock monster films you're reviewing, it was of course the Cold War and the threat of nuclear

annihilation. At the more sophisticated end of this monster movie spectrum, one is dealing with McCarthyite fears of Communist infiltration.

-16-

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

2012-12-04

Some years ago when we lived elsewhere in Etobicoke, the strip mall behind our place was the site of a CBC Christmas special. It was shot in August, so the producers used powdered styrofoam, light and cheap. They got their shots of a snowy day, and the carolers singing in their Victorian clothes, and they left. They left behind the powdered styrofoam, which blew everywhere. Mall management threatened the CBC with a lawsuit if they didn't come back and clean up their mess, so the CBC did. That took more than a week to find all the little pockets of styrofoam. For a month after that, we'd see bits of styrofoam in the gutters of the local streets.

**I Also Heard From:** Chuck Welch, John Held Jr, Frederick Moe, Anna Banana, Murray Moore, Franz Zrilich, Theo Nelson, Phlox Icona