

# OPUNTIA 579

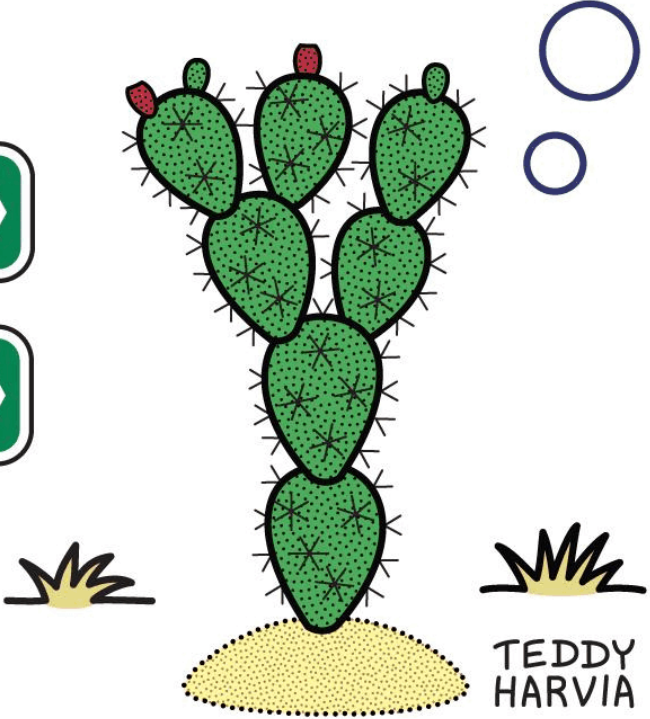
I tried to enter the ancient Olympics but I was told I had to be naked to compete.



**ATTENTION**  
BEYOND THIS POINT YOU MAY ENCOUNTER NUDE ATHLETES



I can't picture you without your helmet and spear.



**Early August 2024**

**Opuntia** is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) and [www.fanac.org](http://www.fanac.org). There is also a cumulative subject index to all issues available at those sites. My e-mail address is: [opuntia57@hotmail.com](mailto:opuntia57@hotmail.com) When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

**YAY TEAM!**

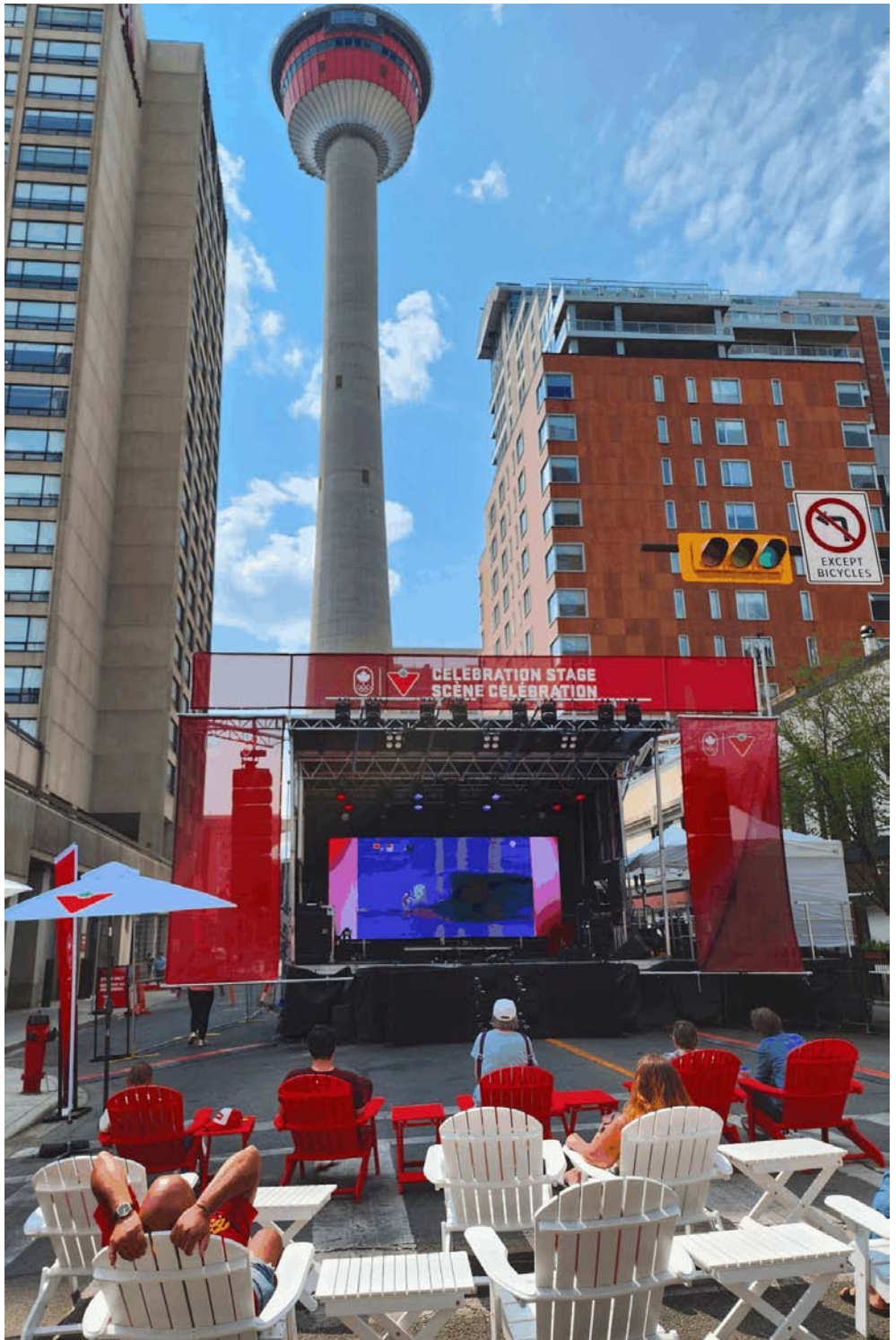
2024-07-28

photos by Dale Speirs

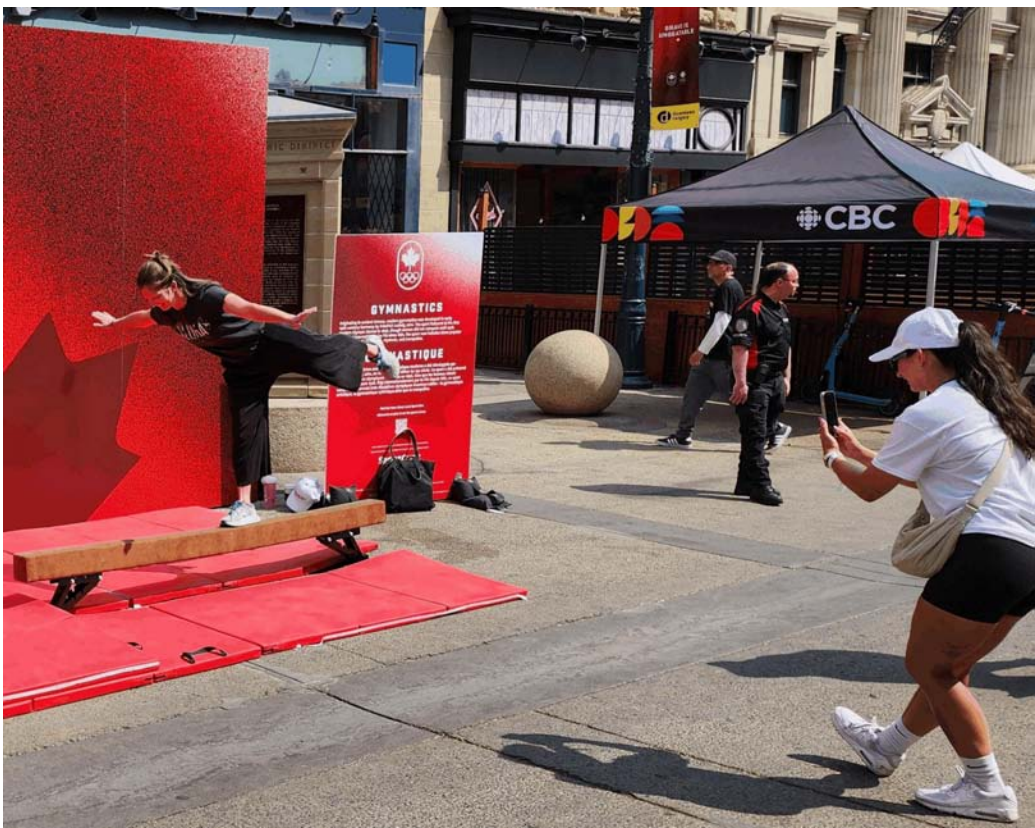
Big doings in Paris, France, and Team Canada was there at the Olympics. I don't follow sports but I like a party as much as the next person. Here are some photos from the Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall in downtown Calgary. Below was what the well-dressed Olympian Canuck wore in Paris.



For the weekend, Centre Street South was closed off for a large screen broadcasting events live from France.



At left: Passersby could try out some of the sports.



## TOUR DE BOWNESS

photos by Dale Speirs

Meanwhile, Calgary had its own grand sports competition on the long weekend of August 3 to 5, called Tour de Bowness. This was a series of bicycle races in the Bowness district of northwest Calgary, at one time an independent village until it was swallowed up by the city in 1961.

Bowness was founded in 1911 when it was far out in the country. In 2011, as part of centennial celebrations, a bicycle race was sponsored by Bow Cycle, the largest bicycle and motorcycle dealer in southern Alberta. Their premises are on the main drag of Bowness Road NW and the race goes past their store.

Not being a sports fan, I paid no mind to the race in past years but this year the weather was bright and sunny. As a retired old geezer, my time is nothing, so I used the race as an excuse to visit Bowness.

The village got its name because the north and east boundaries are a great bend in the Bow River where it makes an S-curve before flowing into the central city. I took a few photos of the races but spent more time strolling the banks of the river.

The 2024 event was the 21<sup>st</sup> running of the race. The arithmetic doesn't add up because the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the race for two years, as indeed the virus did for so many other events.

The first day of Tour de Bowness, on the Saturday, was a country race far upstream in the coulee district of Cochrane, so I did not drive out to see it. The second day was a hill climb event up Mackay Road NW, a steep road which goes up the north escarpment of the Bow River at about a 45° angle.

In winter the road makes a popular toboggan slide for over-confident SUV drivers who don't understand that when your vehicle begins sliding it doesn't matter if you have 4WD and snow tires.

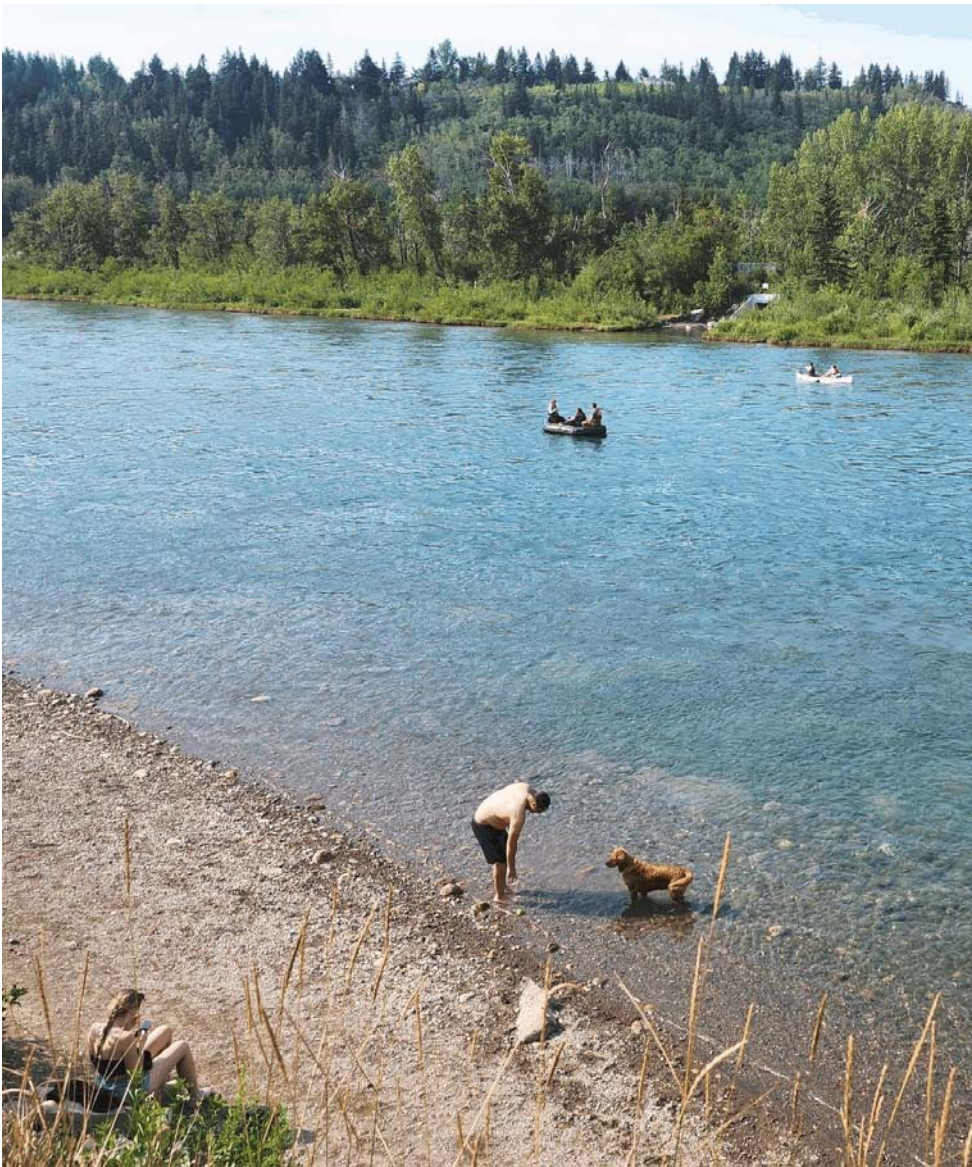
The third day, on the holiday Monday, was a street race around the centre of Bowness. This was a flat race of 30 laps with many right-angle turns. For the Sunday and Monday events I took the #1 bus out to Bowness and then walked back into central Calgary along the Bow River.



**Tour De Bow River.**

2024-08-04

I watched about five bicycle racers take off for the climb up the hill. Not the world's greatest spectator sport, so after taking a few photos I turned about and walked down to the Bow River. The weather was warm, about 25°C. There was more traffic on the river than Mackay Road.



Looking downstream toward the city core.



**Tour De Bowness Flat Race.**

2024-08-05

I went back out to Bowness on the holiday Monday and watched the bicycle racers zip past in bunches at ten-minute intervals.





**Tour De Bowness Road NW.**

That part of Bowness Road not in use for the flat race was given over to a street festival. If you've seen a group of bicycle racers zip past three or four times, then you've seen enough for the remainder of the day. I therefore moseyed on over to the adjacent street festival.



Above: I didn't bother to ask them for the answer.





Above: Alberta is not a tree fruit-growing province so we get our fresh fruits from British Columbia. The harvest season is underway across the border and every Alberta town has roadside stands and street fair kiosks selling fresh cherries, peaches, apples, and plums.

At left: The Foothills Writers Group had a table on the street. I asked the woman if she would be at When Words Collide in a couple of weeks time. She confessed she had procrastinated buying a membership and was caught out when the readercon sold out a few months ago.



Top left: One of the acts on the street.



It was only about 25°C but all that walking made me thirsty, so I bought a lemonade.

A real lemonade drink, made on the spot with fresh fruit, crushed ice, and glacier water. No sugar added.



**HERE BE DRAGONS**  
photos by Dale Speirs

2024-08-10

The following weekend was busy for me. The annual Dragon Boat races took place on Glenmore Reservoir, not far from Chez Opuntia. This year there were 66 boats entered from across western Canada.

Up on the banks there was a festival with food trucks, merchants, and Chinese cultural organizations.

The races were the full weekend but I went only on Saturday.



I was surprised at how sloppy traffic control was this year on the reservoir. In past years other traffic, such as the sternwheeler S.S. Moyie and sailboats from the south shore sailing club were kept out of the north bay where the races were.

This year they circled the track rubbernecking. When the Moyie went past, its turbulence delayed the start of a race.





# MARDA GRAS STREET FESTIVAL

2024-08-11

photos by Dale Speirs

On Sunday I went to the Marda Gras Street Festival in my neighbourhood. Note the spelling: Marda, not Mardi, as the neighbourhood is called Marda Loop. Back in the 1940s when the suburb was only just beginning to grow at the city limits, Mark and Mada Jenkins operated a movie theatre they called Marda Theatre. The theatre closed in 1988.

The district along 33 and 34 Avenue SW became known as Marda Loop because the buses only went as far as the theatre before turning around and heading back downtown.

Over the past two years the two avenues have been constantly torn up for utility upgrades and urban renewal. As a result, Marda Gras this year was confined to a much narrower road. Above right is the view down the festival, while the photo below shows what was behind the scenes. Fortunately the construction crews were off work.





## FOOD COZIES: PART 29

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 28 appeared in OPUNTIA's #432 to 434, 436, 438, 441, 442, 444, 447, 450, 454, 456 to 458, 460 to 462, 465, 475, 507, 512, 524, 530, 538, 550, 565, 573, and 576.]

One important rule about food cozies: Never read them on an empty stomach.

### **Drink And Be Merry, For In The Next Chapter You Shall Die.**

ICED IN PARADISE (2019) by Naomi Hirahara was the first novel in a cozy series about Leilani Santiago of Kaua'i, Hawaii. After graduating from college in Seattle, she returned home to help with the family shave ice shack.

Her mother had multiple sclerosis, she was estranged from her father, her young sisters and grandmother needed care, and she had a long-distance relationship with her boyfriend. Trouble never travels singly but in battalions.

The business was shave ice, not shaved ice or smoothies as everyone outside the islands would say. The novel began with a description by Leilani of some of the ice flavours.

Blue Monster was blueberry, root beer, and chocolate ice cream, which Leilani thought was disgusting but the tourists liked. Waimea Wonder was her grandmother's shave ice creation, made of Japanese red beans, haupia coconut, pineapple, and condensed milk. I'll pass on that one in favour of a Blue Monster.

The shave ice shack was at a trailhead into a canyon, so thirsty hikers returning from the trail provided good business. But even paradise has problems. Leilani opened the shack one morning and stepped on the body of a young surfer as she entered.

Her father was a suspect, which began her career as a Miss Marple. Lots of digging turned up lots of back stories and romantic entanglements, including a surfer who had a swastika on his surfboard. Ultimately it was revealed that the killer was angry at Leilani's father. She laid in wait in the darkened shop after hours but killed the wrong man by mistaken identity.

In the denouement, Leilani had a confrontation in the shop with the murderer but the police were there. She didn't even get her hair mussed. Leilani celebrated in the epilogue with her new shave ice recipe, made from three kinds of coffee, sweetened condensed milk, and almond bits. I'll pass.

A DASH OF DEATH (2022) by Michelle Hillen Klump was the first novel in a food cozy series about Samantha Warren of Houston, Texas. She had the standard beginning of Miss Marples, viz, dumped by her fiancé, losing her job, and trying to start her own business.

Her plan was to market exotic flavours of bitters, premiering at a catered event. One of the drinks she served killed Mark Brantwell, a sharp practice man. Someone spiked his drink with oleander. Samantha had to protect her mixology business and thus became a Miss Marple.

There were many suspects, such as Mark's wife Gabby, his girlfriend Darcy, political enemies, and others who had grudges against him for sufficient reason. The ugly history of Mark's life was uncovered.

Mark had been blackmailing a local man who decided to cut his losses and Mark at the same time. Samantha survived the final confrontation with the murderer since she was needed for the next book in the series. The final line of this novel was "*I'll drink to that.*"

A woman cannot live on bitters alone, so the recipes appendix began with Gingersnap Cookies. Following on were Lasagna, then some drinks. Attorney's Privilege was a mix of whiskey, orgeat brandy, and cherry bitters. Just the thing after a bad day in court. Finishing up was Cherry Gin Fizz, which actually had as much lime juice and champagne.

FIDDLING WITH FATE (2023) by Diane Kelly was the third novel in a cozy series about Hattie Hayes of Chattanooga, Tennessee. She brewed legal moonshine corn liquor and occasionally sleuthed. At the Hamilton County Bluegrass Festival, she had a booth and was looking forward to hearing a bluegrass band called the Bootleg Brothers.

Hattie and her grandfather Benjamin had a trailer to sell their three featured flavours of moonshine, viz Blueberry Bluegrass Tea, Rosemary Lemonade, and Sucker Punch. Recipes for these blends were in the appendix. I don't drink so I have no idea if moonshine is readily available outside southeastern USA.

As the bands played, the booth did good business. When the Brothers came on stage (Brody, Josh, and Garth Sheridan), the latter tripped and broke his moonshine jug, an empty one used as a musical instrument. Hattie rushed forward and supplied Garth with another jug.

After the festival concluded, Hattie asked the band to write and perform a 15-second jingle for her radio commercials. The moonshine was marketed as Granddaddy's Ole Timey Corn Liquor.

The plot continued into the set-up, with bad blood in the Sheridan family and several non-related disputes. Hattie lost her cellphone. Brody's Jeep went missing and was later found in the river. In the back seat was a jug of moonshine. Granddaddy's, of course.

Brody's body was found buried in a vineyard. The verdict was blunt force trauma. He had been slugged with the full moonshine jug. Alarums and excursions followed over the countryside.

Revealed in the final confrontation was that Brody had been killed in a dispute over the band's performance fee, about \$900. People have been murdered for less. All turned out well for Hattie and Granddaddy. They made a fortune selling empty jugs to people who heard the news and wanted to start a bluegrass band.

DEATH BY IRISH WHISKEY (2024) by Catie Murphy was about Megan Malone of Dublin, Ireland. She was a limousine driver who Marpled on the side.

The Dublin Whisky Festival was underway. The novel didn't waste time getting underway. Angus McConal, guest of honour at the festival, died in the first sentence, with his head in the punch bowl.

The occasion was a formal opening ceremony filled with 1,000 rich and powerful people and many people who thought they were rich and powerful. The gardai had their hands full trying to keep order. One of the dignitaries announced he was the sponsor of the festival, which did not impress the gardai.

Megan thereupon got into an argument with her girlfriend Jelena Kowal, who thought Guinness were sponsoring the festival. Megan pointed out that a brewery would not be sponsoring a whiskey festival.

A tablecloth was put over the suddenly deceased but not before lots of smartphone videos were taken. Before the Millennium, crowds would be shocked at witnessing a murder. Now everyone waves a smartphone in the air, hoping to get some good views for their podcast or social media page.

Megan's uncle Rabbie Lynch was a retired harbourmaster. He went into partnership with actress Niamh O'Sullivan to produce a whiskey called Harbourmaster. The forensics team found the secret recipe for the whiskey in the dead man's pocket.

Angus had many enemies, so half the festival members were implicated. Uncle Rabbie became the prime suspect not only for his stolen recipe but because he had an affair with Angus' mother. Her son resented that.

Megan went into Marple mode, as did many podcasters. The police had their problems trying to restrain everyone from interfering with their investigation. The medical examiner's report was a surprise. Angus had died of anaphylactic shock from kiwi fruit. I had to Google that one but yes, some people are allergic.

The festival staggered on, pardon the expression. The following day was the tasting bourse. Tickets were expensive, good for five tastings. New whiskies were a separate ticket.

The tastings brought out the worst in a lot of people, what Canadians of a certain age refer to as "Jacques Parizeau truth serum". Instead of interrogating suspects, Megan just let them run off at the mouth. She made the mistake of tasting too much, which threw her off as well.

Everyone was thrown off when the police came and arrested one of Megan's friends for the murder. The fluttering in her dovecote was still ongoing when screams provided another brouhaha. At this point Danny Keane was introduced into the plot and then immediately departed as the second death. Possibly a heart attack. He had been one of the competitors in the new whiskey class.

The podcasters went berserk. So did Jelena, who was tired of living with a murder magnet and dumped Megan. Then Uncle Rabbie went missing, although he was quickly found. Megan and many of her friends drowned their sorrow in whiskey.



Not all was lost. A surviving new-whiskey competitor was seriously thinking of a new label called Survivor's Whiskey. The publicity would write itself.

The day came and went. Megan attended another festival event where she collected gossip and hearsay and blended them together like whiskies. Erin Ryan, who had been Angus' publicity agent, was at the event. She departed and soon became the third suspicious death.

The final event of the whiskey festival was the awards ceremony, a grim affair. Funereal was the best description. The spectators all wore black. With only 25 pages left in the book, something had to be revealed.

Megan started the fireworks by quietly sidling up to her latest suspect from behind and whispering in her ear "Did you kill Erin Ryan?" The results were spectacular. The suspect screamed like a banshee, leapt up onto the stage, and tried to kill the show sponsor.

All the while she shouted a confession at full volume. The motive was a mixture of romance and corrupt business doings. The final pages wrapped up the loose details. The Murder Whiskey Festival, as everyone now called it, gasped to a closure.

**KILLER CHARDONNAY (2020)** by Kate Lansing was the first novel in a food cozy series about Parker Valentine of Boulder, Colorado. She had just opened a winery.

Her grand opening was a cringer. A married couple got into a fight and the wife threw a glass of wine in his face, right there at the table. Quite a floor show for the other customers.

A pretentious food critic Gaskel Brown then walked in, had a glass of chardonnay, and promptly keeled over dead. The arrival of police and paramedics added to the show. Lots of customers took lots of photos to post online. All on that day.

Trollers on social media went wild, attacking both Parker as a server of bad wine and Gaskel, who had many sins of his own. Walk-in customers for the winery vanished.

Various alarms followed, becoming more serious. A second murder, then the Valentine family's house was trashed. The final confrontation with the murderer revealed Parker was betrayed but she survived.

Once the police cleaned up, she carried on with a wine-tasting. An influencer helped to chase the trollers away. Customers returned in droves, the sun came out, and all was right with the world. Everyone had a glass of chardonnay.

Each recipe in the appendix included a wine suggestion. Mango Chutney Grilled Shrimp with sauvignon blanc, then Italian Ratatouille with pinot noir. For dessert, Dark Chocolate Espresso Truffles with cabernet sauvignon.

### **Candy Is Not Always Dandy.**

**SIX SWEETS UNDER (2023)** by Sarah Fox was the first novel in a food cozy series about Becca Ransom of Larch Haven, Vermont. She worked for her grandparents in their chocolate shop.

The gimmick was that the village was on the shore of Shadow Lake and had canals, not streets. There was a parking lot on the inland side but in the village everyone walked or boated. Gondolas served as taxis.

At this point, a passing mention was made about the disappearance of Lexi Derendorf ten years prior. Her name appeared again at intervals through the text, so the reader will be alerted that this was a Chekhov's Gun.

Local blowhard Archie Smith was against all progress, not to mention the gondola races which were about to begin. He hated tourists. Becca's grandfather was on the race organization committee and had a loud public argument with Smith.

Not long after, Smith was found in a canal floating face down. Smith wasn't mourned even by his illegitimate daughter. The list of suspects was basically everyone who knew him.

Becca didn't find the body but she saw the police retrieving it. Hurrying to the chocolate shop, Becca immersed herself in preparing bonbons to clear her mind. The description of how chocolate candies were prepared took a couple of pages. You might gain weight just reading this.

Grandfather was questioned by the police as a suspect, so Becca went into the Marpleing business. The chocolate shop kept busy. There's no such thing as bad publicity. Becca's boyfriend Justin arrived from California to add to the mix.

Becca was obsessed by the case, digging up dirt on everyone in her wide net of suspects. She kept seeing a man stalking her but didn't have enough to justify contacting the police. Justin threw her off track when he said he loved her but only if she moved back to Los Angeles.

She had to make her decisions while working in the shop. Chocolate gondolas were a timely sales item, cast in special moulds. The gondola races seemed the only bright spot in her day. A steady flow of tourists kept the shop busy.

All of Becca's spare time was devoted to Marpleing, interrogating neighbours and snooping around properties. What was surprising was that her obsessive behaviour didn't get her run in by police or at least a restraining order.

She broke off with Justin and he returned to Los Angeles. Keeping busy, Becca indulged in a favourite activity of Miss Marples, that of criminal trespass. Smith's house had been gone over by police but Becca found his stash of stolen goods. One item was a pendant last worn by the missing Lexi Derendorf.

The alarums began to increase in frequency and seriousness as the final chapters approached. Another favourite activity of Miss Marples is to be trapped with the killer and be rescued in the nick of time.

Becca did not disappoint. Smith's murderer was being blackmailed by him. She had accidentally killed Lexi in a hit-and-run accident and buried the body. Smith discovered traces of the corpse and tried to take advantage.

Once the details were explained away, on to the recipes appendix, beginning with Mint Melty Truffles. Following on was Peanut Butter Pretzel Truffles. And that was all.

BAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT (2023) was the sequel. 'Twas the Christmas season. The canals were frozen and now used for skating. Becca Ransom was busy in the shop churning out gingerbread men, eggnog truffles, and endless chocolate Santas and snowmen. She was courting Sawyer Maguire, a local Deppity Dawg. A very low-key courtship.

Becca was talked into competing in Larch Haven's winter holiday bake-off even though she was only trained as a chocolatier. Professional bakers were allowed, so the competition was stiff. The first round began with 16 contestants.

Becca and four others reached the final round. Correction: three others, as one of them, Irma Jones, was beaten to death in the staging area. She wasn't liked much by anyone and feuded with numerous people, including her grown daughter Juniper. Later it was discovered that about the same time Irma was murdered, someone ransacked her house looking for something.

The weapon was a chocolate chipper belonging to Becca, stolen from her work station at the competition. I had to look that one up on Google. A chocolate chipper resembles a miniature garden fork, with a half-dozen strong tines capable of shredding a slab of hard baking chocolate.

The police didn't suspect Becca because anyone could have taken the chopper. Nonetheless she went into Marple mode even as the police were questioning a plethora of suspects. After a two-day pause the bake-off resumed. A competitor claimed to have received a death threat. Becca was shoved down a flight of stairs. Just an average bake-off in Marpleland.

Becca managed to finish her round. She didn't win the competition but a friend did, so she was satisfied with the results. Back to the shop to earn a living pouring chocolate into moulds.

Lots of Marpleing ensued, with Becca using all the subtle tactics of the Gestapo. Sawyer had to warn Becca more than once to stick to chocolate instead of sniffing for bloodstains. The flow of alarums included a snowmobiler trying to run down Becca. She discovered who had pushed her down the stairs but the guilty person denied having murdered Irma.

A MacGuffin emerged, a notebook Irma had compiled for blackmailing purposes. Becca managed to find the notebook, which had been in the possession of one of the bake-off competitors.

As per standard cozy practice, a peripheral character suddenly came to the forefront in the closing chapters. Daniel Hathaway had been lurking about here and there. He was stabbed by an unknown assailant and the attack witnessed by Becca.

That didn't stop her from attending the snowmobile parade the following night. Straying into a dark corner, she was taken at gunpoint by the killer. He didn't realize that Miss Marples are always rescued at the last second by police, and so she was.

The murderer had been forging paintings. Irma caught on but forgot that blackmailers have shortened lives. Hathaway was a descendant of the painter whose canvases were faked, on the trail of the culprit.

Becca and Sawyer plighted their troth on the final page. The anticlimax (pardon the expression) was the recipes appendix. There were only two: Candy Cane Truffles and Almond Creams.

BLUEBERRY BLUNDER (2023) by Amanda Flower was the eighth novel in a food cozy series about Bailey King of Harvest, Ohio, in the heart of Amish country. She had a television show "Bailey's Amish Sweets" and was building a candy factory.

Bailey and her grandmother Clara operated a candy store as the basis of their business empire. The network picked up a reality series about the construction of the factory. The project was behind schedule, creating a lot of drama. Bailey fired the general contractor Wade Farmer on camera. He vowed revenge.

She was plagued by Margot Rawling, a community organizer who was in charge of the first annual Blueberry Bash. The intended Blueberry Princess came down with influenza.

Margot tried to substitute Bailey but she was, ahem, somewhat thick waisted and couldn't wear the costume. Bailey was going to be maid of honour for her young cousin Charlotte Weaver, a lapsed Amish. Fortunately Charlotte fit the costume.

The Blueberry Bash got underway in the town square with good crowds. The candy store faced the square so their sales were good. Food trucks everywhere. A pie eating contest of course.

After the party was over for the night, Bailey went with Charlotte to the unfinished factory just to check. That was where they found Wade's body. He had many enemies but Bailey was at the top of the list. The sheriff was out to get her and so was the television crew.

There was a subplot which an experienced cozy reader will recognize as a setup for the climax of the novel. Emmaus Linzer was an Amish farmer who operated a petting zoo. He hired a private detective Aiden Brody to investigate irregularities in his operation.

Aiden was Bailey's sort-of boyfriend, although he was seldom around. Occasional mention was made throughout the book of the Linzer case without any details. That would come, based on the principle of Chekhov's Gun.

Life in small villages wasn't as idyllic as many think. Charlotte's father was shunning her because she had left the Amish faith. Bailey was barely tolerated as an Englisher.

That mattered because Wade's dismissal meant she would have to hire Amish contractors to finish the candy factory. They were willing to do the work but not with television cameras around due to the Amish prohibition against graven images.

The sheriff chose Charlotte's father Sol as the suspect to arrest. The Blueberry Bash carried on so Bailey was distracted by long hours in the candy shop. Nonetheless she managed to find the time to sleuth and found plenty of people who might have killed Wade for good reasons. For added troubles, she barged into Amish farms and churches to upset them.

Since the candy factory construction had come to a dead stop, the network cancelled the reality series. The producer had stayed on because she wanted to make a true crime show. Indeed, that was her motive from the beginning after she learned Bailey was a murder magnet.

The denouement was rather abrupt. Although there was only one murderer, a tangled conspiracy existed of several types of financial fraud. Wade had been a victim of catfishing and was silenced to prevent exposure of the culprits.

For once, common sense prevailed. Miss Marple, pardon me, Bailey, was trapped with the killer in a warehouse. She found a piece of lead pipe and knew how to use it. Just a single recipe in the appendix for Blueberry Cream Fudge.

## ALIEN INVASIONS: PART 10

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 9 appeared in OPUNTIA #407, 424, 460, 474, 479, 494, 512, 518, and 560.]

### We Come In Peace.

THE COSMIC MAN was a 1959 British movie written by Arthur C. Pierce, which I saw as a colourized version on YouTube. Notwithstanding the colour, this was a pale imitation of the 1951 movie THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.

This time the UFO landed in the American desert instead of the District of Columbia. The spaceship was a sphere only about two metres in diameter, hovering about the same distance above the ground.

The alien was much the same as in TDESS, bringing a stern admonition that humans must give up atomic bombs and live together in peace. Likewise it went in disguise among the people, checking into a boarding house and observing how average humans lived.

The military blasted away to no avail. After assorted contretemps, the alien cured a paralyzed boy. The Cosmic Man was apparently killed by a human superscience device but its spaceship flew off into outer space.

BRIGHT MORNING STAR (2019) by Simon Morden was a novel whose narrator was an alien space probe. It landed on Earth in a forest but soon discovered evidence of a civilization that could build mechanical devices. The Mother Ship, also an automaton, remained in orbit.

The probe landed in the middle of a war zone, which gave it plenty of misinformation to misunderstand. Mother was soon surrounded by satellites, which were vapourized if too near or aggressive.

The probe made contact with the bipeds and soon became a celebrity. It toured the planet, cutting ribbons at grand openings and preaching universal peace. The latter work was not successful. However, Mother transmitted details on how to build a starship, which went over very well with the planet's inhabitants.

The novel read well and was written in the style of so many past utopian novels. The kind where the protagonist, let's call him Gulliver, moralized about nonsensical human behaviour and why can't we all just get along. Call the probe Gulliver and you have the story.

### Successful Invasions.

30-DAY WONDER (1960) by Richard Wilson was a humourous novel now available as a free download from <https://gutenberg.org>. Aliens landed, saying they came in peace and asking to join the United Nations.

The narrator was Sam Kent, who worked at a copy desk in New York City. His wire service subscribed to all the news feeds and redistributed the copy around the world. He saw the world through teletypes and telephone lines, not with his own eyes.

On the morning of the day the aliens landed, he and everyone else scrambled to learn the truth. No one knew anything but the copy went out on the wires anyway. After the initial facts were confirmed, there was a lull.

As Sam noted, *The overnight file consisted of about 10 percent fact and 90 percent speculation*. The aliens were humanoids and called themselves Monolithians. They hired a reporter Eurydice Playfair as their publicity agent.

The author got in a dig at his genre. The aliens visited the United Nations:

*They ignored a ramshackle group of writers who were picketing in UN Plaza. Two of the writers wore beards and all of them looked self-conscious. One of the placards they carried said: SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS' GUILD — ALIENS UNFAIR TO SCIENCE FICTION. Another said: SPACEMEN GO HOME; YOU'RE RUINING OUR RACKET.*

*A handful of subteenagers, clutching copies of Galaxy and Fantasy & Science Fiction, gave them an occasional cheer and occasionally a new arrival sought an autograph. The UN police looked on tolerantly. One of them said: "Poor guys. First sputniks. Then Moon rockets. Now this."*

The story became dull, with meetings, treaties, and press conferences. The conspiracy theorists, and yes, they existed back then, went into action on the Papernet.

The Monolithians took Earth laws at face value and made enforcement their mission as part of being good citizens. They visited a village that passed a Sunday store closure law and prevented a church minister from working on a Sunday.

Another Monolithian had brown skin and refused to sit in the back of the bus, triggering a race riot. The trouble spread as all over the world Monolithians enforced laws exactly as they were written.

They began duplicating people, such as Sam Kent and using the doppelgangers to do the good works. The leaders of the major countries were invited to a conference on board a mothership orbiting in cislunar space. They did not return but their duplicates did.

The Monolithians began spreading conscience gas around the planet. Utopia arrived as humanity began to live in peace and harmony. The Monolithians left. Their work here was done.

“The Deep Space Scrolls” by Robert F. Young (1963 May, AMAZING STORIES, available as a free download from <https://gutenberg.org>) was set in 1969 when the American space programme had put a two-seat spacecraft into orbit that circled Earth three times.

They spotted and rendezvoused with a giant dark spacecraft, a derelict from outside the Solar System. Entering inside for a brief look before their orbits diverged, they found it was an ancient ark. There were scrolls, collected and brought back to Earth to decipher.

The evidence subsequently revealed that Noah’s Ark had been real, only not in the way of the Bible. The human race came from outer space as refugees carrying what they could of their animals. They occupied Earth and made it their own. Their far descendants corrupted the origin story and forgot the species came from space.

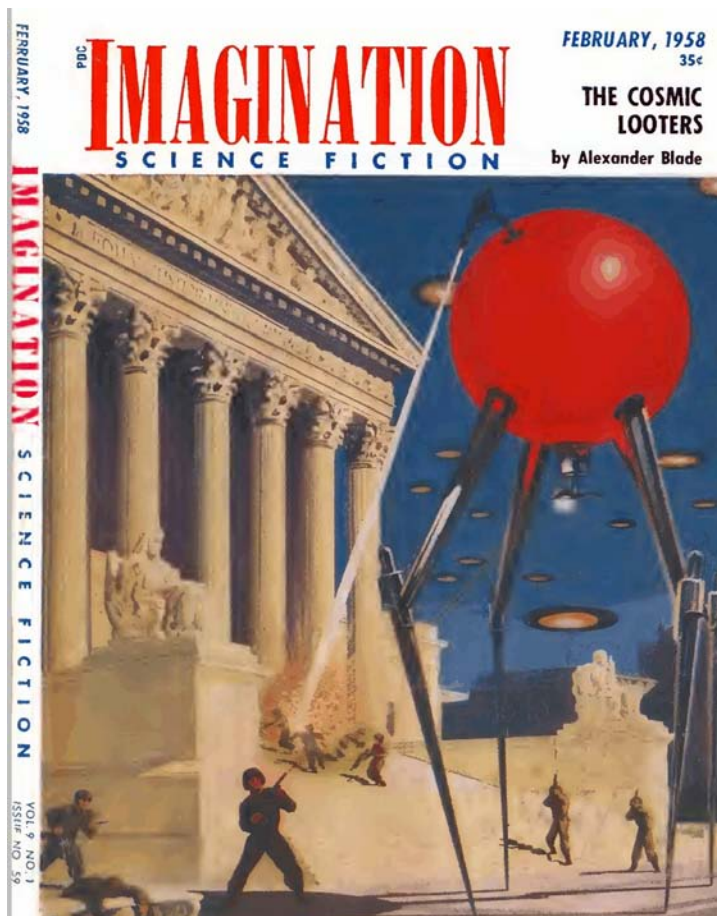
### Unsuccessful Invasions.

“Classified Object” by John Victor Peterson (1954 July, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, available as a free download from <https://gutenberg.org>) was about an uncrewed UFO landing, as they so often did, in Manhattan, New York City. The authorities were all over it at once. The spaceship contained a fission bomb which the protagonist George Winthrop disarmed.

Some technical manuals were found and good progress made in analyzing the spaceship. The aliens came from Sirius and were a warrior species. One thing noted was that some alien technician had made a mistake and mis-wired one connection. That was a plot point I don’t recall any other science fiction story making. After all, aliens would not be infallible. It seems reasonable that some seven-jointed humanoid might forget to install bolts in a bulkhead door.

Winthrop and a helper figured out that the cross-wiring saved Earth. The spaceship was a carbon-destroying bomb which would have sterilized the planet. Not coincidentally, it had been launched nine years ago, just after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sirius is 9 light years from Earth.

The spaceship was reprogrammed by the simple expedient of inverting its course, then arming the carbon bomb. Off it went. Nine years after that, a sudden bright flash was observed on a planet orbiting Sirius.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets. Please include your name and town when sending a comment. Email to opuntia57@hotmail.com]

FROM: Lloyd Penney  
Etobicoke, Ontario

2024-08-09

OPUNTIA #576: I have to make it to the Calgary Stampede some year, if only to chow down on some free breakfasts. None to be had in this crazy city.

The closest we were are the ribfests all over the place, and you could spend hundreds on sampling the best ribs and sauces. Not on our budget, and not on the budgets of those generous companies and events who might have to dish up hundreds of thousands of free breakfasts.

[Most free Stampede breakfasts in shopping plazas or community groups usually plan for about 1,000 pancakes per breakfast. Pancake dough is cheap. The sausages and drinks run some money but wholesale food distributors offer discounts for Stampede breakfasts.]

[There are hundreds of breakfasts across Calgary, so that spreads the load. The Chinook Shopping Mall, the largest in Calgary, treats 60,000 people with dozens of grilles but that is the only event they stage in the year.]

[All the businesses charge off the breakfasts on their taxes as a marketing expense, and non-profit groups have sponsors or donors. Stampede in Calgary is bigger than Christmas and all the other events of the year combined.]

[re: food cozies] Cheese stories...cheesy? You bet. We have lots of cheese around us in the form of independent cheese manufacturers and farms, and some of it is terrific. Italian cheeses are available in some of the high-end food stores, as well as some cheeses from all over the world. We especially like Double Gloucester and Red Leicester, not often found around here.

[My favourite is Applewood smoked cheddar but I try all kinds except the ones that have fruit added. I particularly like Huntsman cheese but Calgary stores seldom stock it.]

[re: AMAZING STORIES BEST OF 2023] Thank you for printing the graphic [of the cover]. Getting this book in print was an old dream come true. Hope you got the book, and hope you enjoyed the stories within. Sales have actually been pretty good, close to a hundred sold at last inquiry. Already, we are planning the Best of 2024.

[I bought the trade paperback from Amazon print-on-demand. I won't review every single story but have done a general review plus some of the stories will be mentioned separately in my thematic reviews. Look for them in future issues of this zine. For other readers, by all means get a copy.]

We have made our hard decision, and will not return to Anime North as staff or vendor. It's just been too stressful for us, especially Yvonne, to have to deal with 40,000 people, and who knows how many will come next year? We will definitely be looking at street festivals, yard sales, park markets, and craft shows.

[re: Calgary mall replaced by LRT station and condo towers downtown] Only some of the condo developments here have the first floor pedestal for shopping, and those who have those stores, most of them are empty. The rents for these stores are simply too much for sales to cover, let alone salaries and maintenance.

[Still too many vacant storefronts in Calgary. Skyscrapers are being converted to residential towers with help of City and provincial politicians.]

OPUNTIA #577: The return of Teddy Harvia cover art!

Very soon, we will have the Canadian National Exhibition, or the Ex, here, and to be totally honest, we haven't gone to the Ex in more than 25 years. Too costly, too many people, and not much that caters to what we like.

Must be wondering, well what do they like? We had ourselves a marvelous time at the Buffalo NASFiC convention in Buffalo, New York, and we are looking to go to a couple more big conventions before the year is done.

With the passing of Frank Skene and recently, Taral Wayne, their fanzine collections are looking for new homes. I will add to that list Murray Moore and myself. We're still around, but we'd also like to move our zine collections along. So much to offer, and so few who are interested.

[That is why I scanned all issues of OPUNTIA and got them posted as free pdfs on [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) and [www.fanac.org](http://www.fanac.org) The modern generation of zine readers is online. The Papernet is almost dead.]

OPUNTIA #578: It seems like we've already had our maximum temperatures in late June, and while this summer has been very pleasant, we haven't had the 30°C-plus temperatures since.

[In Calgary, temperatures cooled in August to the 20° to 25° range. Evening thunderstorms and occasional hail kept the grass green. Usually I go a month or more in summer without having to mow the lawn but it looks like I may have to do a final cut for the season at the end of August.]

At the Paris Olympics, with only a few days to go, Canadian athletes have won more than their usual share of medals, and a lot of medals will be given out between now and the end. We simply haven't had the time to watch much, but we try to catch the highlights.

[Typing this at the end of the Paris Olympics on August 11, Canada earned 9 gold medals, 7 silver, and 11 bronze, for a total of 27.]

[re: mystery fiction set in theatres or movie sets] I can imagine that the stories of actors and performers, and murder mysteries, made them out to be as hammy as the authors possibly could. I understand actors and performers have to emote to get their emotions and dialogue across, but sometimes...

Yvonne is in the kitchen, making jambalaya and pâté Chinois. The Glasgow Worldcon is on right now, and one of the first things that happened there was for First Fandom to announce their inductions into the First Fandom Posthumous Hall of Fame.

Yvonne and I have been members of First Fandom, or now, the First Fandom Foundation, for several years. When we realized we could nominate for any of these honours, immediately nominated Mike Glicksohn for that Hall of Fame.

The vote was taken, and Mike was acclaimed. Chaz Boston-Baden and his wife Lynn Baden will take the award from Glasgow to Toronto, as they plan to spend a few days here. We are planning a little do one evening to honour Susan and Mike, and present her with the award.

## FREE STUFF ONLINE

I provide sources for the scientific pdfs and old-time radio mp3s reviewed in this zine. Here is a summary of some good resources, all of which are free.

In particular, the "Seen In The Literature" column cites only peer-reviewed papers. For topics such as climate change or social media effects, more people should be reading these papers instead of blogs where commentators confuse their opinions as being facts.

For scientific papers I cite for which free pdfs are available, the easiest method is to Google either the title of the paper or its digital object identifier, the phrase beginning with doi.org.

Many papers are behind a paywall, so unless you have access to a university library computer, you can only get the abstract. However, the abstract is often enough to understand the gist of the article.

Every scientific periodical has free email notifications of each new issue's table of contents. I subscribe to dozens of notification services, in case you were wondering how I manage to keep up with the literature.

For zines, [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) provides current pdf zines as well as some older ones. A club called Fanac at [www.fanac.org](http://www.fanac.org) does the reverse; they provide thousands of old zines from the 1930s to date, with a few current zines. Both sites have a free email notification service you can subscribe to.

The Old Time Radio Researchers have 90,000+ old-time radio shows (1930s to 1950s) covering all the genres, such as comedy, science fiction, fantasy, and mystery. Visit [www.otrr.org/OTRRLibrary](http://www.otrr.org/OTRRLibrary).

They also publish a free bulletin OLD RADIO TIMES, available at [www.otrr.org/?c=times](http://www.otrr.org/?c=times), with an email notification service. Don't pay money for audio books and listen to a droning voice when you can listen for free to full-cast shows such as Jack Benny or Inner Sanctum from the OTRR.

For pulp fiction magazines from all genres, visit [www.archive.org/details/pulpmagazinearchive?&sort=-downloads&page=2](http://www.archive.org/details/pulpmagazinearchive?&sort=-downloads&page=2) Books in the public domain are free from <https://gutenberg.org>

# SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

## Physics.

Clough, K., et al (2024) **What no one has seen before: Gravitational waveforms from warp drive collapse.** ArXiv.org Preprints arXiv:2406.02466v2 [gr-qc] (available as a free pdf)

Authors' abstract: *Despite originating in science fiction, warp drives have a concrete description in general relativity, with Alcubierre first proposing a spacetime metric that supported faster-than-light travel.*

*Whilst there are numerous practical barriers to their implementation in real life, including a requirement for negative energy, computationally, one can simulate their evolution in time given an equation of state describing the matter.*

*In this work, we study the signatures arising from a warp drive 'containment failure', assuming a stiff equation of state for the fluid. We compute the emitted gravitational-wave signal and track the energy fluxes of the fluid.*

*Apart from its rather speculative application to the search for extraterrestrial life in gravitational-wave detector data, this work is interesting as a study of the dynamical evolution and stability of spacetimes that violate the null energy condition.*

*There is (to our knowledge) no known equation of state that would maintain the warp drive metric in a stable configuration over time.*

*Therefore, whilst one can require that initially, the warp bubble is constant, it will quickly evolve away from that state and, in most cases, the warp fluid and spacetime deformations will disperse or collapse into a central point.*

*This instability, whilst undesirable for the warp ship's occupants, gives rise to the possibility of generating gravitational waves.*

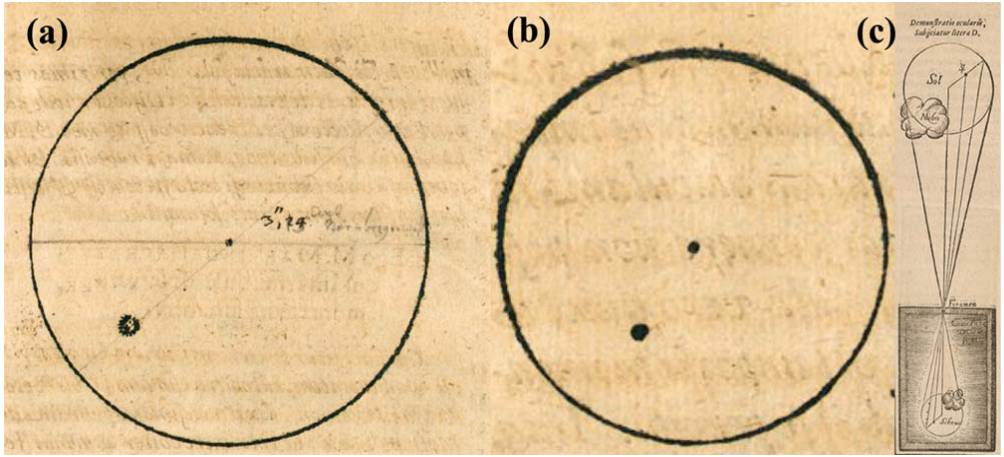
## Stars.

Hayakawa, H., et al (2024) **Analyses of Johannes Kepler's sunspot drawings in 1607: A revised scenario for the solar cycles in the early 17th century.** ASTROPHYSICAL JOURNAL LETTERS 970:doi.org/10.3847/2041-8213/ad57c9 (available as a free pdf)

Authors' abstract: *Telescopic sunspot observations began in 1610 and captured subsequent solar cycles. In combination with proxy reconstructions on an annual scale, these data sets indicate a gradual transition between regular solar cycles and the Maunder Minimum.*

*The telescopic sunspot observations missed the beginning of the first telescopic solar cycle (Solar Cycle -13), leaving room for considerable uncertainty as to its temporal evolution. Before these early telescopic observations, however, Kepler made solar observations using camerae obscurae and recorded a sunspot group in three solar drawings in 1607.*

*Here, we make use of Kepler's sunspot drawings and descriptive texts to identify his observational sites and time stamps. We have deprojected his sunspot drawings and compared the reported positions with our calculations of the inclination of the solar equator as seen from these sites at that time.*



*These results locate the reported sunspot group near the solar equator eastward from the central meridian. This contrasts with telescopic sunspot drawings from the 1610s that show sunspot groups in the higher heliographic latitudes.*



Therefore, what Kepler saw was probably a sunspot group from Solar Cycle -14, rather than one from Solar Cycle -13. These records allow us to place the beginning of Solar Cycle -13 between 1607 and 1610.

In comparison with the <sup>14</sup>C-based solar-cycle reconstructions, our result supports regular solar-cycle durations around the 1610s, rather than any suggested extreme extensions of the solar-cycle duration(s) around the 1610s.

[Images are Kepler's observations of the Sun on 1607-05-28 using a pinhole camera.]

## Planets.

Ansari, S., et al (2024) **Feasibility of keeping Mars warm with nanoparticles.** SCIENCE ADVANCES 10:doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adn4650 (available as a free pdf)

Authors' abstract: *One-third of Mars' surface has shallow-buried H<sub>2</sub>O, but it is currently too cold for use by life. Proposals to warm Mars using greenhouse gases require a large mass of ingredients that are rare on Mars' surface.*

*However, we show here that artificial aerosols made from materials that are readily available at Mars, for example, conductive nanorods that are ~9 micrometers long, could warm Mars >5 × 10<sup>3</sup> times more effectively than the best gases.*

*Such nanoparticles forward-scatter sunlight and efficiently block upwelling thermal infrared. Like the natural dust of Mars, they are swept high into Mars' atmosphere, allowing delivery from the near-surface.*

*For a 10-year particle lifetime, two climate models indicate that sustained release at 30 liters per second would globally warm Mars by >30° Kelvin and start to melt the ice.*

*Therefore, if nanoparticles can be made at scale on (or delivered to) Mars, then the barrier to warming of Mars appears to be less high than previously thought.*

## Origin Of Life.

Fru, E.C., et al (2024) **Hydrothermal seawater eutrophication triggered local macrobiological experimentation in the 2100 Ma Paleoproterozoic Francevillian sub-basin.** PRECAMBRIAN RESEARCH 409:doi.org/10.1016/j.precamres.2024.107453

[This may have been a false start to life that was wiped out just as it got going.]

Authors' abstract: *It is thought that the global predominance of small-size unicellular prokaryotic life in the oceans until the emergence of large-size multicellular organisms to ecological dominance in the Ediacaran Ocean after 635 million years ago (Ma), was partly constrained by paleo-dynamic nutrient limitation, with phosphorus (P) being the principal limiting resource.*

*Here we couple an episode of intense submarine hydrothermal alteration of a nutrient-rich seafloor reservoir to the collision of the Congo-São Francisco cratons at ~2,100 megayears ago, to unravel a paleo-geodynamic incident of seawater P enrichment in the Paleoproterozoic Francevillian sub-basin.*

*We propose that this previously unrecognized local pulse in dissolved seawater P concentration, of comparable magnitude to Ediacaran seawater levels, set the stage for Earth's earliest biospheric experimentation towards macrobiological complexity ~2,100 million years ago.*

[Image is from this paper.]



Abderrazzak El Albani

**Paleobiology.**

Pruss, S.B., et al (2024) **Dead clade walking: The persistence of archaeocyathus in the aftermath of early Cambrian reef extinction in the western United States.** PALAIOS 39:doi.org/10.2110/palo.2024.005

[Coral reef extinctions have occurred repeatedly since animals evolved. Each time the extinct species were replaced by others. A clade is a line of evolutionary descent.]

Authors' abstract: *Archaeocyaths, the first metazoan reef builders of the Phanerozoic, faced their ultimate demise during early Cambrian Age 4 but the exact timing of their local extinctions varied globally.*

*In this study, we report archaeocyaths in strata that overlie the last robust archaeocyathan reefs of the western United States (Laurentian Cordillera). These are found in small microbial mounds in the upper unit of the Mule Spring Limestone near Split Mountain, Clayton Ridge, Nevada, as well as in storm beds in the Thimble Limestone Member of the Carrara Formation in Echo Canyon of the Funeral Mountains, Death Valley, California.*

*Thin-section analysis revealed the presence of modular archaeocyaths, with Archaeocyathus being the only genus present. The small microbial mounds of the lowermost upper unit of the Mule Spring Limestone preserve frame-building Archaeocyathus in situ, a few meters above the well-known Bristolia beds of the Mule Spring Limestone.*

*As some of the youngest known archaeocyaths of the western US, these occurrences represent the last gasp of archaeocyaths in the early Cambrian of Laurentia and one of the latest occurrences globally of archaeocyaths.*

*We thus interpret Archaeocyathus in these units as an example of a dead clade walking, some of the last true archaeocyaths that locally persisted into the later Age 4 Cambrian following the disappearance of diverse archaeocyath reefs in western Laurentia.*

*These last archaeocyath communities exhibited low diversity and disparity before the total extirpation of this reef-building hypercalcified sponge and their ecosystem.*

Zhang, G., et al (2024) **A Cambrian spiny stem mollusk and the deep homology of lophotrochozoan scleritomes.** SCIENCE 385:doi.org/10.1126/science.ado0059

Authors' abstract: *Mollusks encompass enormous disparity, including familiar clams and snails alongside less familiar aculiferans (chitons and vermiform aplacophorans) with complex multicomponent skeletons.*

*Paleozoic fossils trace crown mollusks to forms exhibiting a combination of biomineralized shells and sclerites (e.g., scales, spines, and spicules).*

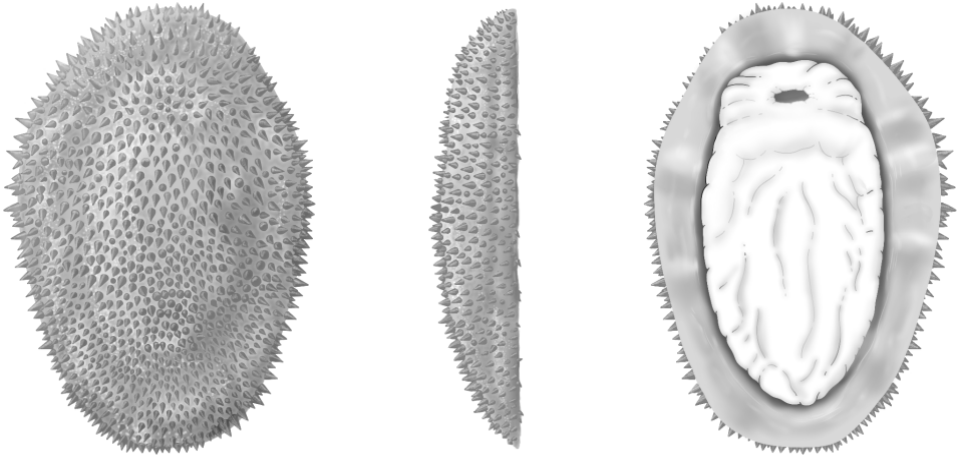
*We describe a shell-less, Cambrian stem mollusk, Shishania aculeata gen. et sp. nov., with conical, hollow chitinous sclerites and a smooth girdle, broad foot, and mantle cavity.*

*The sclerites have a microstructure of narrow canals consistent with the impressions of chaetal microvilli found in annelids and brachiopods.*

*Shishania sclerites provide a morphological stepping stone between typical chaetae (chitinous bristles) and the external organic part of aculiferan sclerites that encloses a mineralized body.*

*This discovery reinforces a common origin of lophotrochozoan chaetae and the biomineralized aculiferan sclerites, suggesting that the mollusk ancestor was densely covered with hollow chitinous chaetae.*

[Image is of the new species *Shishania aculeata*.]



Griffin, B.W., et al (2024) **Modelling take-off moment arms in an ornithocheiraeon pterosaur.** PEER J 12:e17678 <http://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.17678> (available as a free pdf)

Authors' abstract: *Take-off is a vital part of powered flight which likely constrains the size of birds, yet extinct pterosaurs are known to have reached far larger sizes.*

*Three different hypothesised take-off motions (bipedal burst launching, bipedal countermotion launching, and quadrupedal launching) have been proposed as explanations for how pterosaurs became airborne and circumvented this proposed morphological limit.*

*We have constructed a computational musculoskeletal model of a 5 metre wingspan ornithocheiraeon pterosaur, reconstructing thirty-four key muscles to estimate the muscle moment arms throughout the three hypothesised take-off motions.*

*Range of motion constrained hypothetical kinematic sequences for bipedal and quadrupedal take-off motions were modelled after extant flying vertebrates.*

*Across our simulations we did not find higher hindlimb moment arms for bipedal take-off motions or noticeably higher forelimb moment arms in the forelimb for quadrupedal take-off motions.*

*Despite this, in all our models we found the muscles utilised in the quadrupedal take-off have the largest total launch applicable moment arms throughout the entire take-off sequences and for the take-off pose.*

*This indicates the potential availability of higher leverage for a quadrupedal takeoff than hypothesised bipedal motions in pterosaurs pending further examination of muscle forces.*

Berv, J.S., et al (2024) **Genome and life-history evolution link bird diversification to the end-Cretaceous mass extinction.** SCIENCE ADVANCES 10:doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adp0114 (available as a free pdf)

[Before the asteroid that wiped out all dinosaurs except birds, that group consisted of small inconspicuous species. The extinction of their kinfolk allowed avian theropods to expand into vacant ecological niches.]

Authors' abstract: *Complex patterns of genome evolution associated with the end-Cretaceous [Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg)] mass extinction limit our understanding of the early evolutionary history of modern birds.*

*Here, we analyzed patterns of avian molecular evolution and identified distinct macroevolutionary regimes across exons, introns, untranslated regions, and mitochondrial genomes. Bird clades originating near the K-Pg boundary exhibited numerous shifts in the mode of molecular evolution, suggesting a burst of genomic heterogeneity at this point in Earth's history.*

*These inferred shifts in substitution patterns were closely related to evolutionary shifts in developmental mode, adult body mass, and patterns of metabolic scaling.*

*Our results suggest that the end-Cretaceous mass extinction triggered integrated patterns of evolution across avian genomes, physiology, and life history near the dawn of the modern bird radiation.*

Bierman, P.R., et al (2024) **Plant, insect, and fungi fossils under the center of Greenland's ice sheet are evidence of ice-free times.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 121:doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2407465121 (available as a free pdf)

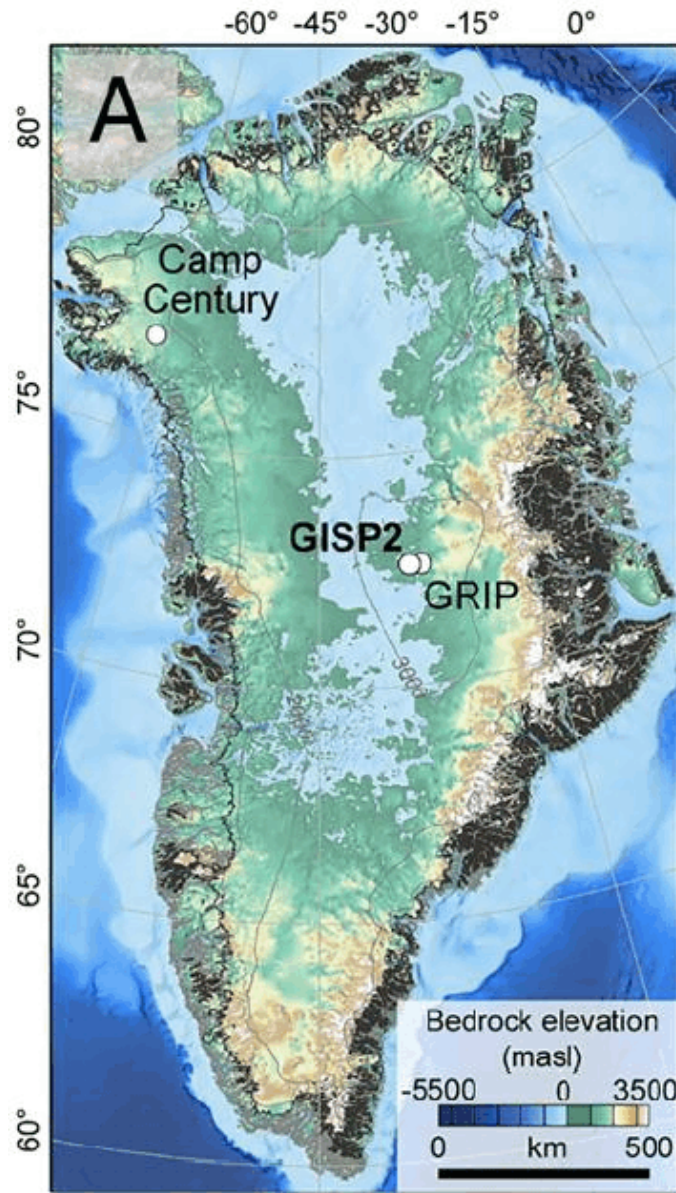
Authors' abstract: *The persistence and size of the Greenland Ice Sheet (GrIS) through the Pleistocene is uncertain. This is important because reconstructing changes in the GrIS determines its contribution to sea level rise during prior warm climate periods and informs future projections.*

*To understand better the history of Greenland's ice, we analyzed glacial till collected in 1993 from below 3 km of ice at Summit, Greenland.*

The till contains plant fragments, wood, insect parts, fungi, and cosmogenic nuclides showing that the bed of the GrIS at Summit is a long-lived, stable land surface preserving a record of deposition, exposure, and interglacial ecosystems.

Knowing that central Greenland was tundra-covered during the Pleistocene informs the understanding of Arctic biosphere response to deglaciation.

[Image from this paper shows Greenland as it looked during its tundra phase.]



**Environmental Science.**

Ben-Yami, M., et al (2024) **Uncertainties too large to predict tipping times of major Earth system components from historical data.** SCIENCE ADVANCES 10:doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.adl4841 (available as a free pdf)

Authors' abstract: *One way to warn of forthcoming critical transitions in Earth system components is using observations to detect declining system stability. It has also been suggested to extrapolate such stability changes into the future and predict tipping times.*

*Here, we argue that the involved uncertainties are too high to robustly predict tipping times. We raise concerns regarding (i) the modeling assumptions underlying any extrapolation of historical results into the future, (ii) the representativeness of individual Earth system component time series, and (iii) the impact of uncertainties and preprocessing of used observational datasets, with focus on nonstationary observational coverage and gap filling.*

*We explore these uncertainties in general and specifically for the example of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation. We argue that even under the assumption that a given Earth system component has an approaching tipping point, the uncertainties are too large to reliably estimate tipping times by extrapolating historical information.*

**Human Prehistory.**

Crombé, P., et al (2024) **Human response to the Younger Dryas along the southern North Sea basin, Northwest Europe.** SCIENTIFIC REPORTS 14:doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-68686-z (available as a free pdf)

[As the North American continental ice sheets melted away during the end of the Pleistocene, 12,900 years ago, they released huge quantities of cold water into the North Atlantic Ocean. That water cooled northern Europe so much that human populations collapsed, an era known as the Younger Dryas.]

Authors' abstract: *Currently in northwestern Europe little is known about the human response to the extensive cold reversal at the end of the Pleistocene, the*

*Younger Dryas (ca. 12,850 till ca. 11,650 cal BP), mainly due to the poor chronological resolution of the archaeological sites belonging to the Ahrensburgian Culture.*

*Here we present a series of 33 radiocarbon dates performed on the seminal cave site of Remouchamps, situated in the Belgian Meuse basin.*

*Combined with a revision of the available radiocarbon evidence along the southern North Sea basin (Belgium, southern Netherlands, western Germany), it is suggested that the first half of the Younger Dryas, characterized as extremely cold and wet, faced a significant population reduction.*

*Repopulation started around the middle of the Younger Dryas, from ca. 12,200 cal BP onward, probably in response to a slight climatic improvement leading to somewhat warmer summers. This might be considered a prelude to the subsequent population boost of the Early Holocene (Mesolithic).*

Sweatman, M.B. (2024) **Representations of calendars and time at Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe support an astronomical interpretation of their symbolism.** TIME AND MIND 16:doi.org/10.1080/1751696X.2024.2373876 (available as a free pdf)

*Author's abstract: Göbekli Tepe, an archaeological site in southern Turkey, features several temple-like enclosures adorned with many intricately carved symbols. It is located centrally among a group of Tas Tepeler pre-pottery Neolithic sites which include Karahan Tepe and Sayburç.*

*Here, an earlier astronomical interpretation for Gobekli Tepe's symbolism is supported and extended by showing how V-symbols on Pillar 43 in Enclosure D can be interpreted in terms of a lunisolar calendar system with 11 epagomenal days, which would make it the oldest known example of its type.*

*Furthermore, it is shown how Göbekli Tepe's 11-pillar enclosures and a megalithic 11-pillar pool structure at nearby Karahan Tepe can also be interpreted in terms of the same lunisolar calendar system.*

*Other V-symbols at Göbekli Tepe are also interpreted in astronomical terms, and it is shown how the Urfa Man statue, a wall carving at Sayburç and a statue at Karahan Tepe that display V-symbol necklaces can be interpreted as*

*time-controlling or creator deities. Symbolic links with later cultures from the Fertile Crescent are explored. Throughout, links are made with the Younger Dryas impact and Cauvin's theory for the origin of the Neolithic revolution in the Fertile Crescent.*

*Humans have been carefully observing the stars for more than 50,000 years. Indeed, widespread myths involving the Pleiades are often so similar, typically involving stories of six or seven sisters or birds, it is suggested that they have a common origin in the middle Palaeolithic.*

## **Human Health.**

Lumey, L.H., et al (2024) **Fetal exposure to the Ukraine famine of 1932-1933 and adult type 2 diabetes mellitus.** SCIENCE 385:doi.org/10.1126/science.adn4614 (available as a free pdf)

*Authors' abstract: In 1932-1933, Ukrainian food supplies were deliberately obstructed by Soviet interventions, leading to about 4 million excess deaths in the short term. This famine in Ukraine is called Holodomor (death by hunger) to underline these events.*

*We report on the long-term impact of the Holodomor on type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) cases diagnosed seven decades after prenatal famine exposure. We used the setting of the man-made Ukrainian Holodomor famine of 1932-1933 to examine the relation between prenatal famine and adult type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM).*

*This ecological study included 128,225 T2DM cases diagnosed from 2000 to 2008 among 10,186,016 male and female Ukrainians born from 1930 to 1938.*

*Individuals who were born in the first half-year of 1934, and hence exposed in early gestation to the mid-1933 peak famine period, had a greater than twofold likelihood of T2DM compared with that of unexposed controls.*

*There was a dose-response relationship between severity of famine exposure and increase in adult T2DM risk.*