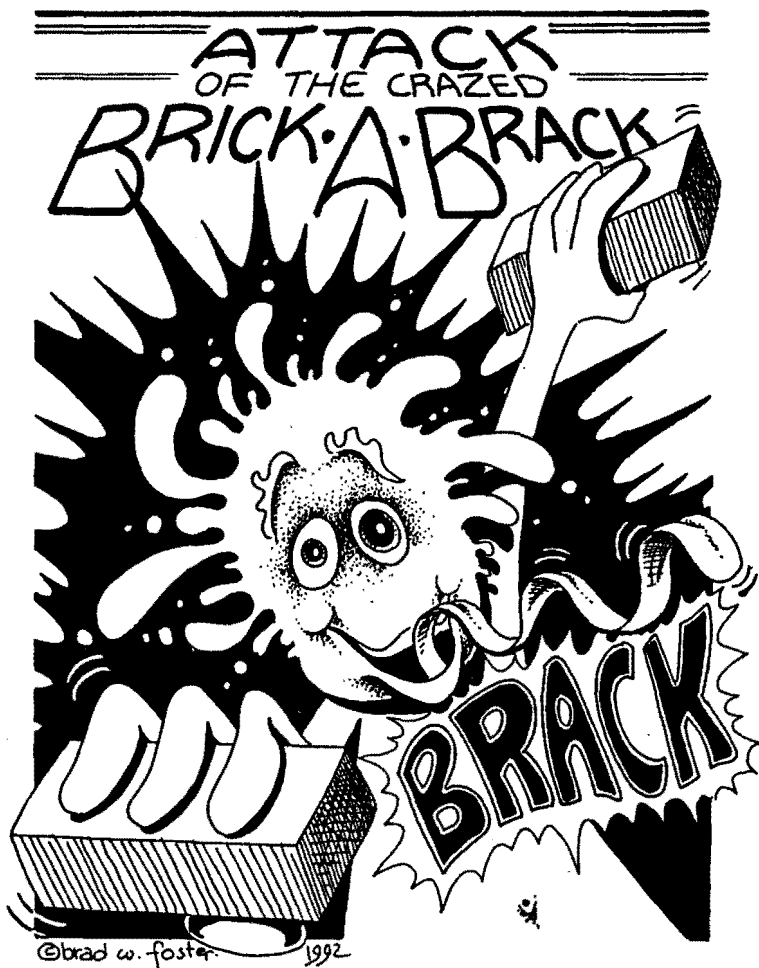


SERCON  
POP CULT  
*LITCRIT*  
FANMAG 5



This is SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG #5, first released August 1995 by e-mail (this print version may differ in some of its contents), edited and largely written by Garth Spencer, P.O. Box 15335, V.M.P.O., Vancouver, B.C. CANADA V6B 5B1.

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### Wanderings & Maunderings

#### - Corrections -

I ought to make some corrections to SPLF 4.

One of them is actually an apology to Bill Donaho. There was a WAHF note about a "Bill ?", which simply meant there was a piece of paper with Donaho's address but not his complete name. This tells you a lot about my desk.

Another correction, as Shane Conley pointed out, is a reference to local news. The Starwolves Event Services Society is not itself the group which will run A Forthcoming Con (name and so on to be announced by about 1996 or 97). What it is, the Starwolves set up *another* group, and *that* runs the convention.

The distinction may seem trivial and unimportant, but there's a critical detail involved. Skip the next paragraph if you're familiar with this: the party or parties responsible for a con can take a bath, in the worst-case scenario; creditors then go looking for the party or parties responsible for a con. For financial protection (in the setup I am familiar with), many fan groups set up a registered non-profit society. Omit this and your committee are severally and individually liable for all the bills. There are other critical reasons to set up a group specifically responsible for a convention, which is why Starwolves is not that same group.

I want to apologize for creating a misleading impression, and apologize again for taking this long to own up.

#### - Garth Not Understand -

A more important reason for setting up such a society is that the things you find out about holding a con need to be handed on, by a number of means. Diving in at the deep end and learning jobs by doing them doesn't quite cut it, not when you're coordinating a few dozen volunteers and investing some thousands of dollars to prepare an event. An ongoing society, separate from each year's con committee, seems to serve this purpose.

The keyword is "seems". Any group, organized for any purpose, is only as effective as the people in it. If they don't even know their constitution, then it won't matter.

Of course I'm going on about a con-coordinating society which I was in. I'm also going on about something else ... personal motivation. Or the lack of a motivation I was counting on.

That convention thang is only one example of a non-communication problem. I invite your opinion: is this problem a general problem with fandom, or is it just *my* problem?

Maybe my gut feeling is right, and I really was stolen by Anglos from the space gypsies as a child.

- Ia! Ia! Ph'nglui m'glwnaph xmodem download f'taghn! -

Well, it finally happened: I registered with the local Freenet, and got a modem for my birthday, and now I'm online. Sort of.

My e-mail address is [hrothgar@freenet.vancouver.bc.ca](mailto:hrothgar@freenet.vancouver.bc.ca). So far I have learned to receive and send e-mail, download and upload files (sort of), and access newsgroups and World Wide Web. Whoopee ding.

This fanzine started out incoherently asking the question: Is there something wrong with conventions?

Recently I picked up and reread *The Dispossessed*, by Ursula K. LeGuin. *The Dispossessed*, as you might know, is set in LeGuin's "Hainish" future history, and features a loner from a communitarian anarchist society contending with a hierarchical, capitalist world.

I was struck all over again with the impact LeGuin's novel had on my life and my mind. In fact, to my embarrassment, I have to admit I was trying to apply communitarian, anarchist standards of conduct to fandom. What I found, of course, was that my fandom was far from an Odonian society, however anarchistic it seemed.

Reviewing some of my old fanwriting, in BCAPA and elsewhere, has not been particularly edifying. Overtly, it seemed, I was confronted with people who demanded participation in their kind of fanac, and then rejected what I gave. Subliminally, I got the feeling that anything I said or did was somehow socially inappropriate ... not in obvious, correctable ways, but in ways just subtle enough to evade my grasp. I spent a majority of my time exhausted, frustrated and depressed.

So along about 1990 I was obsessing about what you might call "applied sociology", as conceived in several SF stories. I even wrote a paper about it for a convention program book that did that sort of thing. I may yet publish it somewhere ...

## LOCs and Chains

Dale Speirs, 14/10/94

... The Worldcon didn't at all seem like a behemoth; lots of room, no crowding, and most people kept to their individual cliques. The fanzine room was a tremendous success. Excellent location by the entrance, a bar, freebie and sale zines, and the standard place for everyone in zinedom to be when not busy elsewhere. I had a great time there meeting all the BNFs. I think one reason why ConAdian didn't seem so monstrous was that it ran very smoothly; one wasn't suddenly brought up against walls or jammed in lineups. There was no sensation of massive crowds even though it was crowded at times. A lot of Americans were down on Winnipeg, predicting disaster, but those who stayed away will regret not having gone. Some put their noses in the air and said Winnipeg was a boring town (it isn't), as if Louisville was a cultural capital.

SPLF #4 received and read with enjoyment. You have more news, it almost seems, than some of the ostensible newszines which mostly reprint Hollywood news. ...

*(As of a month or two after ConAdian I have seen three printed reports on that Worldcon, uniformly favourable. Hence the rather defensive remarks John Mansfield wrote in Con-TRACT read very oddly.)*

*(I have heard different stories via oral report, but then I mostly hear from a travelling dealer who met with repeated communication foulups within the committee. I conclude that any con looks different behind the scenes than out front, and it may not particularly matter anyway. If ConAdian was a) smaller than usual and b) more smoothly run than usual, I am not surprised and am quick to infer a causal connection.)*

Clifton Amsbury, 18/10/94

Thanx for the zine. I believe I wrote to you after the last V-Westercon, but that this is the first I've heard from you.

Some references in your zine hint that things were a bit disorganized in *that* timeframe. We had a great time (me, wife and two grandchildren) and I have not and did not then hear that others were disappointed with the con. Until from you.

Joseph Major is correct that Marx and his studies at the British Museum were subsidized by Engels, who (in exile from Prussia) was managing his father's enterprises in Britain. Assuming the father to have

been at least 40 years old by 1848, he might well have lived past 1878, but not likely much past Marx's death in 1883.

As to being liberated from one's class, Marx was sufficiently a creature of the affluent (not rich) Prussian and English middle classes to beget a child on his housekeeper, but sufficiently liberated from those classes that he did not fire her when she got pregnant.

Engels retired about the time Marx died and *then* considered himself "liberated" to the point where he could again take up the fight for working class organization. He wrote about it, but didn't use the word "liberated". He just wrote that now he had *time* for such activities. (Which also meant that he had enough independent income — presumably from those same investments.)

Why should a "Marxist" object to Engels being a capitalist? Under any social system you do what you have to. Marx and Engels considered it a division of labour between them.

Come to think of it, my last letter to Joseph got buried before I got around to typing it and I'm now about a year behind on such things. About the same time I picked up at a free book exchange a copy of *Bimbos of the Death Sun*, which is still on my to-be-read shelf.

*Fallen Angels* I haven't even seen.

About your comments on page 11: "scanning" from voice or audio might be OK for Castilian, but English or French and probably German need some revision before it can be successful. A lot of printing errors lately seem to be due to dictated homophones. Even human transcribers and computer spelling programs are failing this test.

*(Boy, you're sure on top of some history, aren't you. It might be interesting to introduce you to my father on some pretext and see what kind of conversation you have. Leslie Spencer worked rather hard for a hospital employee's union in Victoria, for some years. He has a lot to say about the movement in England, I'm sure.*

*(I'm rather embarrassed that I neglected you between 1991 and 1994. I could say that life got a little much to handle, both fannish and mundane, but that's an excuse. I have gone on a bit about the convention activity behind the scenes, haven't I? What your remarks bring home to me is a) how much people make their own convention — the majority who enjoy themselves, and the ones determined to carp and criticize, alike; and b) as Taral told me years ago, how little impact fannish conflicts make, and how quickly they are forgotten, for anyone but the principals.*

*(When you think about it, homonyms occur in all languages. I should think the biggest hurdle to audio "scanning" is the distance between a language's spoken and written forms. Modern English is held up as a really*

*blatant example of non-phonetic representation, but just take a look at Modern French. Or worse yet, Scots Gaelic and Erse. Go on, take a look. Now compare that, as you mention, with Castilian Spanish, or Italian, or Finnish, or for that matter Welsh.*

*(Well? Any takers?)*

Michael McKenny, 18/10/94

Many thanks for *Sercon Popcult Litcrit Fanmag #4*, which just showed up in my mailbox today, along with the latest issue of *The Frozen Frog* and *Phoenix* Vol. XLVIII no. 2, among other stuff. That last is a journal of the Classical Association of Canada. *The Frozen Frog*, though, is of fannish interest, being the perzine of Benoit Girard ... and well worth the reading.

... I sent you a copy of *Bardic Runes* IX and hope you enjoyed it. This past weekend, *Bardic Runes* was at the book fair held at the National Library. That went well, and it was great getting to meet the other publishers (almost all mundane, of course, though a few had SF and fantasy stories included in mainstream publications), and there were at least two comics publishers, Ironlungfish Press out of Kingston, and Egesta Comics out of Toronto.

The latest issue of *The OSFS Statement* should give a little update on the fanhistory project. I've been putting a lot of work into *Bardic Runes*, and trying to get people in the best position to do so to write about LILAPA, etc. The next major project will be to get something down on the circle of people here ca. 1970, which included Bink Tait (by whatever name). Some of these flowed into the current Ottawa SF Society, and some are still around and in a much better position to provide firsthand information. I've interviewed Bink, written to a few others, and will continue on this.

I talked to those guys here, Owen Oulton, Dave & Trish Slater, who could contribute more than a little to your Maritimes material, and I'm sorry for the lack of response on this. It is possible there may be something to come. It probably requires a lot of determination and diplomacy on my part, and I'm sorry that I've not been able to get much done yet. ...

At present I've been having lots of fun plunging into fantasy from the 20s. I just got *The Devil's Guard* (Talbot Mundy, 1926) two or three days ago, and have already read half of it. This is one of a series of at least four books by this author on the theme of the magic, mystery and adventure to be found in early 20th Century India and vicinity. I've already read the others, though this one may lead me to re-reading them.

I've also been reading a large hardcover collection in one volume (double-columned) of four Sax Rohmer novels: *Dope*, *The Yellow Claw* and two Fu Manchu novels. He writes very well, though of course the threat of the Yellow Peril seems a bit funny today.

*(I forget; is that name spelled Benoît or Benoit?)*

*(Interesting to hear about the appearances at the book fair. I will probably try to rope the comics publishers into my next update on writers' markets.*

*(As I think I wrote to you under separate cover, it's not your job to apologize for others' lack of response, Michael. Despite apparently infecting you with the fanhistory bug, the subject just does not seem to motivate a lot of people. Somehow I think some people have the notion my efforts boil down to muckraking; this would make a general lack of enthusiasm understandable. Much more likely, though, the whole idea that fandom has a past rouses no enthusiasm in contemporary fans. Well, not much reason it should.*

*(Yeah, Fu Manchu as originally conceived is a bit hard to believe ... but I started asking myself whether we can expect a rash of anti-this, that and the other thing hate literature. I gather that a lot of Canadians have been unimpressed by recent immigrants, especially from Hong Kong ... and the unimpressed Canadians include a lot of Asian Canadians. Add to this that the economy has been down for a while, and to judge from the posters on Commercial Drive, the Klan and the neo-Nazis are recruiting in B.C.'s Interior in a big way ... and what would you foresee?)*

Steve George, 20/10/94

Thanks for SPLF 4. Very much enjoyed the loccol discussion about what fandom is, was, could be. I don't feel as if I've been truly active in fandom for quite some time. *Zosma* 21 came out in 1982, and at that time a number of large changes came about in my life: met my wife to be, started taking university seriously, etc. Even at that point I was a far different person than the 17-year-old who met Decadent Winnipeg Fandom in 1977. Now, I am so far removed from that 17-year-old kid that I hardly recognize him! Of course, a wife, a home, a dog, and two children can change a person considerably. As Chester Cuthbert points out, however, there's something about fandom that keeps drawing me back, at least to the point of responding to the zines I receive. As for the four I knew, we all see one another occasionally. There are only 3 of the original D.W. Fen still living in Winnipeg: myself, James A. Hall, and Mike Nichols, and we three get together fairly frequently to play cards or just to chat, drink beer, and listen to music. When Randy Reichardt, J. Pascoe,

or Garth Danielson are in town, however, we have big gatherings with family and kids. It can be very strange, since my memories of DWF revolve primarily around mimeographs and beer.

Despite less favourable opinions from some other ex-DWFen, I still consider fandom unique and worthwhile. There's nothing like it in the mundane world. Then again, my definition of "fandom" has always been very narrow ... fanzines and small gatherings of friends. I don't like cons, and have never felt even remotely connected to mediafans, costumers or gamers. So, by my definition, fandom hasn't changed much at all, and that's probably why I still feel attracted to it.

In recent years I've also spent some time BBSing, even set up my own BBS last year, and there's certainly some potential there for interesting activity. Unfortunately, the level of discourse on most SF/F echoes is fairly juvenile. Some of the Usenet groups, however, have facilitated lively discussions on various aspects of fantasy/horror/SF in which I have participated and enjoyed.

Mike Glicksohn once pointed out to me, when I was a neo and he was a BNF, that as one matures one's expectations of fandom and fanzines changed, so that one eventually sought the company of a small group of friends and correspondents. At the time, all fired up to get *Zosma* on a regular schedule and to push my mailing list over 200, I didn't believe him. Now ... I seem to have followed, to some degree, in his path. For instance, most of my fanac now involves correspondence with a handful of others, and if I ever decide to put out another zine, its circulation would be severely limited. The idea of APAs now appeals to me, where once I considered them inbred and only marginally fannish. Ah, well, I guess age breeds insularity. The point I guess I'm trying to make is that even after 12 years of inactivity, I still value fandom. Garth Danielson recently gave me bound copies, in 3 volumes, of all his fanzines. This amounted to well over 1,000 pages. It's hard to believe that he wrote and published that much. Reading them, caught up in the day-to-day minutiae that was his forte (and for which he was repeatedly berated in the fannish press), I almost felt as if I relived those days. I'm glad somebody had nerve enough (or the lack of it) to write such detailed descriptions ... So I guess I like fannish history after all ... hahaha ...

*(The observation you attribute to Mike Glicksohn is a new one to me, and it fits my own experience. I usually put down "insularity" to the fact that everyone has a focus to their interests, and a limit to how much output and input they can handle, anyway. After 30 or 35, I discover, I only had so much energy and enthusiasm to spread around; I infer that the same is true of other fans my age.*

*(The impression I had of APAs from the outset was, they were fannish, all right, and later that they also tended to get too inbred, that was for certain. I base that impression on experience. One of my programmer roommates and I have had talks about how "flame wars" look remarkably like the level to which apa mc's repeatedly descend. I guess the same dynamic is at work in both cases, and the upshot illustrates Sturgeon's Law.*

*(I'm perplexed that while you edited Zosma, one of your objectives was to get your circulation over 200. Why? I guess I'm speaking from an eccentric viewpoint, here. One of the commonest attitudes I ran into in contemporary fandom was "Bigger is Better", and I'm reacting against that.)*

Chester D. Cuthbert, 23/10/94

Your autobiographical editorial and your detailed responses to the letters you receive are the most valuable parts of SPLF. These convey your views clearly, and tell your readers what they need to know about your experiences.

Harry Warner Jr. always writes instructively, and his range of knowledge shows the breadth of events he must have witnessed as a reporter. My desk job and family responsibilities gave me little information about the world, and my early decision to live at second-hand through books has never been regretted. It kept me shielded from dangers to which my ignorance would have exposed me, and taught me more about people than I could have learned by personal observation of the few individuals who became my friends and acquaintances.

Your declaration that you have been a hermit startles me. A lot of fans are loners but you are so well-known and active that "hermit" can't fairly describe you.

Yet Winnipeg's top authority on science fiction, David H. Blair, is practically unknown to fandom. He receives no fanzines, is not interested in them although he subscribes to *Locus*, but he has done more reading, research and writing about his hobby than some professionals.

*(Chester enclosed a copy of a description of events he enjoyed during ConAdian — visits from attending members, although he didn't attend himself.*

*(Chester, I used the "hermit" line to substitute for an editorial the fanzine did not need. The short version is that I am out of the loop as far as local fandom is concerned. I have been a hermit in the sense, I think, that Harry Warner is called a hermit — not that he never leaves his house but he doesn't do the con thing. For the entire calendar year of 1994 I did without cons, largely for financial reasons but mostly for emotional reasons. I needed*

*to get back to "real" fanac, as I define it, and get away from trying too hard to have a good time and only winding up broke, exhausted, hung over and probably trying to live down something humiliating.*

*(Now, what were you saying about me being "well-known"? Like, where??)*

Jon Gustafson, 07/11/94

A quick comment about Scott Patri's letter: he has an unfortunately erroneous idea about Aldus PageMaker — it is a very powerful desktop publishing [program] that can do a lot of very complex things, but it is not "complicated and hard to use" like he says. When I got the program, it took me about 10 minutes to get to the point of being able to use it. Obviously, it takes longer to discover all the things it can do, but that is the same with any computer program. I used PageMaker to produce the 172-page MagiCon Program Book, for example, in about two weeks. I did the MosCon PB ... in about four days. Without it, I don't think I would have even tried something that complex and interesting.

*(It took me a little longer to learn to use PageMaker, mainly because it wasn't another word-processing program so it organized a different range of capabilities, quite aside from being organized differently than a program I already knew. I think that may be what Scott was referring to.)*

Joseph T. Major, 9/11/94

"SF ... did not smoothly evolve from one fad to the next," Dale Speirs points out, and even offers a hint as to why. In stamps, the change, Dale explains, came from within. Same for fish [fanciers]. Fandom, on the other hand, is irregularly inundated by hordes of outsiders, unaware of the rules of the game.

About the only consolation I can derive is in the increasing fragmentation of the media scene. There is no longer any one show that "everyone" watches, hence no source from which the barbarians can arise and strike. This seems even to have shaded over into the single-author fandoms; there has not been, for example, as single-minded or noticeable a clique around Mercedes Lackey as there was with Marion Zimmer Bradley or Anne McCaffrey. (In spite of inspiration by the publisher.)

Depending on one writer can lead to problems, or perhaps should lead to problems but nobody notices them. FOSFAX #171 contained a short article on some of the Pern fictionzines. (The author felt the need

to point out that these were not available for "The Usual"; another example of how the new people deviate from accepted standards.) No one seems to have noticed that in "the last Pern Novel" (but by no means the *latest*) McCaffrey made the settings of the two main threads (sorry, but I had to say it) of fan fiction stories impossible. I wonder why?

In one of my long-lost copies of *Patchin Review*, I remember seeing a question on the order of "Is a BNF of convention-going a 'long-standing member of condom'?"

Going further along Harry Andruschak's comments on finding about the Duke of Rothesay, if *Burke's Peerage* is unavailable, the inquirer can look into *Who's Who* or even *Whittaker's Almanac*, both of which list the nobility, and also mention who that duke actually is. (Looking for a more balanced wife? Never mind.)

You will remember, though, that the original intent of science fiction was to enlighten people about science nonfiction. Was it T. O'Connor Sloane who used to add footnotes to the SF works he published explaining the science issues? You get the idea. We used to hope that being interested in science fiction would lead to interests in science nonfiction. For most of the new barbarians, no such luck. Like, why go to the Moon? I want to play Mighty Morphin' Megazord? If I get to the next level I get a free video?

... Seeing the world as "a random collection of disconnected facts and processes" is one of the states of mind that science is intended to change, and one of the reasons for the current prevalence of nonscience. Which is where your comment on sciences being badly taught applies. One of my more recent purchases has been *Higher Superstition* by Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt (Johns Hopkins University Press; US\$25.95), a book discussing some of the consequences of that view and that failure. A somewhat self-reassuring theme in earlier discussions of the decomposition of higher education was that at least the sciences were immune from that insanity. No such luck. Worse yet, the people so criticizing, so deconstructing science, know next to nothing about what they are discussing! (One suspects that this applies to their previous works, outside the scientific field, the difference being that in science, there is a standard of comparison.)

But this mode of mental process has a broader application. The same patterns of thought apply to pseudoscience as to conspiracy theories, for example. And in just the same way, the flashy but unsound theory becomes entrenched in the public view, making it impossible to discredit though it is discredited repeatedly, and encouraging the spread of other related views, opinions, and pseudofacts.

Chester Cuthbert and the Editor discuss the nature of fellowship. One problem in any such grouping is not so much people who fail to form such attachments in the first place, but those who form such attachments and end up exploiting them. It was not so much that [Claude] Degler stole from people (which apparently he actually did not do), but that he would move into your house, use your mimeo to issue two dozen Cosmic Circle fanzines, and in compensation name to a new senior supervisory CC position. (Also, or so Joe Hensley once pointed out to me, his acquaintanceship with hygiene was long past.) He was not the worst example of that sort of person. If you looked over all your acquaintances and experiences it should be possible to find more of that sort of person, and even worse examples. Degler, however, is *ours*.

It is that sort of exploitation that is more disruptive to that sense of fellowship than merely ignoring its possibility.

The other source from which I learned of the lives and career of the Cosmic Circle Chief also has something I can relate to. That attitude that Harry Warner noted, of fans saving "their energies in order to have plenty of strength to criticize unfavourably the projects that get done without their help", has other consequences. The effort at the last Corflu to revive the FAAN Awards failed even to get ballots in double digits; yet the plaint of the fannish fanzines will be "the ignorant masses vote for unworthy zines, while that faanish masterpiece *Used Rounds*, authentically mimeo'd on genuine Twiltone and full of the editor's daily doings, is ignored." And likewise, the retrospective Hugos will suffer the slings and arrows of those who did not bother to take part.

Harry is lucky that his old reel-to-reel tapes are still playable. Much of the recorded data from the space probes of the 60s is less fortunate. The tapes could still be usable, but nobody knows for sure, since the *machines* are no longer working. The manufacturers no longer support outdated technology. Excuse me, I have to go get a file off an 8.5" hard-sector floppy ...

My sympathies to David Bratman for having been belittled in college for the mighty sin of having an intellectual viewpoint. My college careers (with four different institutions of higher education under my belt, I think the plural is not undeserved) had all kinds of problems, but never anything like that!

*(So mediafandom is fragmenting too, huh.*

*(You know, I get the impression that fandom has been getting more mundane; like mundania as I know it, fandom is getting more and more subdivided into smaller groups that don't communicate. In a sense it has to*

be that way, you can only relate to so many people, and the total population keeps on increasing. Something analogous is happening to broadcast media — the mass effect that Presley or the Beatles had is unlikely now that cable channels have broken up the viewing audience. Also, people have pointed out to me that mundania is getting more fannish; not only "zines" and "cons" as memes and buzzwords spreading outside fandom, but the prevalence of membership in one or another eccentric interest group.

(I'm not surprised if Anne McCaffrey and some of her fans are working from conflicting plot premises. It struck me that Trek fanfiction did the same thing discovered in the Nag Hammadi manuscripts — well-known story figures, in the latter case the ~~characters~~ major players in the Christ biography, were used "creatively" to make up stories inconsistent and contrary to the orthodox New Testament story. I want to call the Star Trek figures "iconic", as if I knew what I was saying, and claim that this sort of "creative"/"heretical" mythopoesy happens whenever such iconic figures become popular.

(Um, as I understand it, the idea that SF was meant to popularize science was Gernsback's Fallacy. Both writers and readers took SF as entertainment, mostly. I would be surprised if one in thirty fans are even aware of Gernsback's Fallacy these days. A number of practising scientists had a background as SF fans, just as a number of practising scientists are SF writers. But enough to be statistically significant? What do you think?

(I think I pointed out to you in private correspondence the emotional significance pseudoscience or the occult have for many believers, but I don't know if I was clear enough. At some level, "religion" is a territory, "science" is a territory, and pseudoscience or the occult are territories. To some extent we are territorial creatures. At that emotional level, received science is somebody else's territory, and either we feel it encroaches on properly religious turf [I can expand on that another time] or it denies us our personal turf. I think quite a lot of people cling to the occult or make up pseudoscience to claim their own territory and push back at the encroachment. "This is real, and true, and anyway it's mine so back off!" That's the only way I can explain why people who tell ghost stories or UFO stories go just so far, assert that "this stuff happens no matter what the Scientists say" ... and stop there. They rarely go on to explore implications or play with them imaginatively.

(We won't have any more success teaching the sciences unless, at a gut level, we are teaching students that the sciences are their turf. Apparently that doesn't happen a lot.

(Another outcome of this alternative-worldview dependency is, if you don't really understand how your world works, it offers the consolation of telling yourself at least you know the score, even if you can't do anything about it.

(Perhaps I should explain, for some people, that Claude Degler was a fan in the States in the 1950s who actually believed in the Great Shaver Mystery, and fans being a superior breed, and his special role and mission to organize the emerging race with his Cosmic Circle organization. It's hard to tell whether his wanderings across the States (and Canada, he said) were connected with any member clubs at all, or just a sustained delusion. A footnote to Canadian fanhistory is Taral Wayne's hoax on a space cadet in 1970s Toronto, who believed that he was organizing a Cosmic Circle branch when he was really corresponding with Taral through the address of a fellow hoaxster.

(The problem that Corflu members ran into with the FAAN Awards seems to be promoting the idea of the awards in the first place. John Mansfield and I don't have a meeting of minds about this kind of promotion, as applied to Canada's Aurora Awards. I think he did his part OK as far as talking up the awards, and the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, in his own zine; the point is, all sorts of zine editors and cons and clubs should have joined in on the act, and nobody organized such a concerted effort. I don't think that had to be Mansfield's job, he had far too much on his plate, but somebody has to be doing it, each year. In both cases, who is doing it? Or do the majority of fans even grasp the concept of the award? I think that's quite separate from the continuing criticism of non-participants.

(Dave Langford saw a similar phenomenon to NASA's 60s space probe data being unreadable: he once mentioned a British publisher which carefully preserved 8.5" data disks for which no machine readers still exist ...)

Peter Motte (Belgium), 21/11/94

It's quite a long time ago I got some news from you, although I seem to remember to have read something by you in one or other fanzine.

In the meantime I and some friends started organizing a con in Geraardsbergen (Belgium), about which hereby included PR's report more in detail. SPLiF Spring 1992 did contain some useful information for us. We actually started illegally copying "Mary and Martha (the Problem with Conventions)". I suppose a lot of people would judge the article to sum up things they all knew about, but the merit of the piece is exactly that it does bring it all together. I also liked the experiment with the formulas a lot.

Harry Warner, Jr. wrote an encouraging letter in SPLiF Aug. 1994. Editors and publishers of magazines sometimes feel disappointed because television gets the main attention nowadays. But if videotapes deteriorate that fast, then in the future the printed material could be the



only survivor of this period. Maybe we don't have the loudest voice anymore, but we sure still have the last voice.

I could even add, that the life expectations of computer discs are even more limited. I actually experienced the mixing up of files on a disc of two years old. People who want to publish their mag on disc should be aware of that, just as the buyers should keep it in mind.

*(Oh, dear. Now my opinion pieces are being used as reference materials. I've already been slammed for pretending to be a know-it-all, on no more grounds than a questionnaire I circulated in Calgary soliciting some convention history; now I'm really for it. [HHO½K])*

*(Shortly after Christmas I picked up a copy of Scientific American with an article on how fast different media degrade. But some years ago, I saw an article on how fast modern paper degrades — it's far higher in acid content than paper made a few centuries ago.)*

*(This presents a problem for conservators of valuable documents. The solution, I think, is the one offered by Gregg Press — print "classics", however you select them, on acid-free paper.)*

J.R. "MadDog" Madden, 22/12/94

Please note my *new mailing address* above!

I received SPLF 3 on 26 Sept. 1994 and found your fanzine to be most interesting.

Please do not worry too much about the delay in getting SPLF 3 into the mail. It took me a year to notice my subscription to *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine* was not being delivered to my postal box. Donald Franson, who publishes *Trash Barrel*, found he had missed two years (I think it was that long) of publication.

For a while, I had two (2) Rex-Rotary M4 mimeos and one (1) AB Dick Model 320 Duplicator (offset press) in my home office. But the reality of life today made it apparent I would never run them again. However, I was able to find a home for them: Russia! I transported the devices, paper, stencils, ink, and miscellaneous items to Shreveport, Louisiana and the Broadmoore United Methodist Church. That church has a close relationship with a new Methodist congregation in Ekaterinaburg, Russia. All the materials were crated up and shipped over for the use of the new congregation. I wonder what thy will think when they read the little stick-on labels affixed to the mimeographs? One label read "Ned Brooks Memorial Mimeograph" while the other has a similar "inscription"!

*(This suggests that no technology is obsolete as long as it's appropriate somewhere ... as long as the Russian congregation has access to mimeo-appropriate paper.)*

Clifton Amsbury, 04/01/95

*(After a letter/package in which I talked about the 'fandom community' issues I'm trying to figure out, Clifton responded:)*

Forget a community. Fandom is a mess of individuals and communities. Some of them are well-organized, but most are there because they refused, or are only reluctantly accepting, mundane-type organization. Most consoms have at least one who enjoys playing with it enough to steer a con past the worst of the demands the mundanes make (insist on). Unfortunately, not all of the players are winners, but enough of them are to make most cons very enjoyable to me.

Westercon is in Portland this year, and Portland puts on good cons.

As to voice-into-print: lately an awful lot of the typos in books I've been reading have been steno errors (homophones), as if they're doing it already. Context makes the true meaning clear, but the steno didn't get it. And neither did the spelling program.

The review of *Bimbos of the Death Sun* struck some bells. My copy (retrieved from the exchange shelves at the local recycling center) still sits unread, and the quotes and descriptions here are all I know. Let's see:

"Working six months on a costume ..." But that's what being an amateur is: not 6 months, but "spare time". "Only get to wear once or twice ..." But a profession takes all your time (except the "spare"), and you *never* get to wear what you produce.

After all, *amateur* comes from *amar*.

McCrumb's assumption: "Fans are ... rejects from mainstream society." No, they are rejecting mainstream society. See "The World of Fandom", enclosed.

"Rather than coming to grips with mundania ..." No, we enjoy relief from being at grips the rest of the time.

"The big fish in this little pond ..." well, if it's a *local* gaming con, it is a fairly small pond.

As for "reasons" for being involved, if it doesn't appeal to one personally, no reason would appear to me.

Your guess that the gamers would not "venture out of their gaming room at all" reminds me that at the first Vancouver Westercon (XXX, also referred to as "the X-rated con"), I took my 12-year-old

grandson. The first morning we passed a room labelled Dungeons and Dragons. He disappeared into it and only reappeared when the place shut down. He's still into it.

As to the "eco-fascist future", that is pure Jerry Pournelle. he put the same stamp on *Oath of Fealty*. There the issue was that *anything was justified* to protect "the spaceship", but that was what the eco-nuts were also thinking.

*(I reread McCrumb's books and decided McCrumb means her picture of fandom quite seriously.*

*(Even professional publications seem to omit careful proofreading these days, and their staffs seem not to tell homonyms apart on grammatical or any other grounds: "discrete" from "discreet", for instance.)*

Lloyd Penney, 06/01/95

(#3) I'd never do a repeat of *The Whole Toronto Fanac Guide*. Conventions, clubs, comic shops and SF bookstores come and go, as has my interest. Besides, these days, fandom in Toronto has become very Trek-heavy. One enormous Trekcon, two small ones and upwards of 25 Trek clubs in the Greater Toronto area. There's still plenty of litfans, but the numbers of Trekfen have really swelled. ...

My interests have changed quite a bit lately, and so has my involvement. After two years of chairing Ad Astra, and a total of 13 years of working on the con, I retired from the con, as did Yvonne. This coming year will be Ad Astra 15, and I will be Chairman Emeritus. My departure was welcomed by some, and we are now on the outside of things. That's fine with us; there's other cons to work on. We'll be running the consuite at FilkONTario 5 in Toronto in March, and we'll be operating the fanzine lounge at the Los Angeles and San Antonio Worldcons. (This reflects my main interest today.) I've had my share of running the show; all I'd like to do now is work with others to do the job.

Over my years on working on cons, I found that I had to balance what fans wanted with what government and law wanted. That was just plain common sense; knowing your market and knowing corporate law. Gathering together people who had that knowledge was fairly easy, and we've been able to defend ourselves with the law the odd time a hotel thinks they could screw us around just because they thought our interests were childish. The fannish coin of the realm seems to be competence, and our con appeared very competent for a long time, and still does, even with new people at the helm.

I'd like to see what Dale Speirs would do with a Scientologist. The last time one knocked on my door, and asked me if I'd ever read Hubbard's *Dianetics*. I replied no, and then I asked him if he'd ever read *Ole Doc Methuselah* or *Slaves of Sleep*, or any of the other Hubbard SF books, and we'd discuss Hubbard's SFnal writings. He'd have to go, we'd say goodbye, and we were both happy. I didn't have to hear about Dianetics, and he got to talk about Hubbard, but I had to wonder how long it took for him to realize he never discussed Scientology with me.

The local Trekcon's consuite always has a wide-screen TV cranking out Trek reruns constantly. I can barely hear myself think in it, but I'm in the minority. The room is usually full of Trekfen watching it. The only hospitality this suite offers is chips, cheesies and other junk food, plus limited amounts of pop and beer. There are small bedrooms down the hall where those of us who'd like to sit and talk can go, but we can't do that in the main consuite. The room has become just another video room. At Ad Astra, the TV is disconnected, electrically and cable-wise, and it's removed, if possible. We provide good food for voluntary donations, plus plenty of good bheer. The Trekcon is four times the size of Ad Astra, yet Ad Astra spends four times more money on the consuite than the Trekcon does.

Re the cover of the second issue ... I merely wrote the first thing that came to mind, seeing there was no accompanying text with that illustration. *Rune* seems to have died again, and in chatting with some of the Minneapolis folks, it looks like it's going to stay dead this time. SMOFCon was full of good intentions, but it was my first time chairing a con. I think the con would have done better if I'd been concom instead of chair. The understanding attitude came from all quarters, except maybe for John Mansfield. He relayed the opinions of other fans, which made me think he was trying to disguise his own opinions. He's now on the receiving end ... I gather that while American fans praised John for his efforts at the bitch panel of ConAdian, Canadian fans raked him over the coals. Correct me if I'm wrong ...

I believe I read Dan Bernstein's report on Timecon in another fanzine ... I was amazed then, and I'm still amazed. With some of the behaviour listed in the report, I can understand the hotel taking action. However, I can't believe the hotel wouldn't discuss the situation with the con first, unless they took the same attitude I mentioned earlier in this loc, that the hotel assumed the interest was childish, and treated the committee the same way. I agree with Dan, these Gestapo-like tactics, especially Rule 6, should have been reported to the hotel's head office, and I also agree with his two conclusions. I've seen outrageous behaviour

at cons, but nothing like that reported, and nothing like that in public places, like the lobby.

I don't think anyone would characterize me as a megalomaniac, but I have tried to get the word across that fanzine fandom is the thinking man's fanac. I was able to show some friends what it's all about by bringing them to the fanzine lounge at ConAdian, and some other fans from this area have dabbled in fanzines, but not to the extent that I've gotten into them.

Your review of *Bimbos of the Death Sun* seems to be the same [as that of] a good deal of fandom, although you must admit she hits pretty close to the mark in many areas. The most stinging criticism is usually the most accurate one. I can imagine what you'd think of the sequel, *Zombies of the Gene Pool*. I have been asked three times by different fans if I'm Diefenbaker, asking in a positive light, of course. Never having met Sharyn McCrumb, I say no, although I'll never totally discount the notion ... I am optimistic enough to think that while McCrumb's very negative of fandom in the book, it was meant more as a satire than anything else. She's written satires of other literary genres. McCrumb's a guest of honour at this year's Wiscon in Madison, Wisconsin. I don't think she'd go if she didn't have some liking for fandom, and if she thought she was going to get lynched once she arrived.

(#4) The last address I had for Dan Cawsey was on Midgard in Victoria, but I think he's somewhere in New Westminster now ...

Try the catalogue of NW fandom, and then promote like mad in *BCSFazine*, *Northwind* and other zines. With the *Fanac Guide*, we produced 100 issues as an experiment, and that was about right.

The second paragraph of Dale Speirs' loc is a concise summary of what's happened in Toronto and many other areas, and may indeed summarize the fate of fandom over the past 25 years. "No knowledge of what went before, nor any interest in obtaining such knowledge ..." No truer words written. (I will offer a hint of redemption though ... the early Trekkers came from general fandom. At that time, *Star Trek* was a breakthrough series. With the early constructive fans in mind, the Star Trek Welcomittee may set up a First Fandom kind of organization to honour those early fans, and keep them in touch with each other. I idly asked if I qualified for membership and they said yes.) ...

Fanzines like *Mimosa* and *Stet* have set off new fanzines from returning fanzines, like Arnie Katz and Ben Zuhl and Bill [Donaho]. I'm getting the fannish history fanzines I'd hoped to find.

... I still stay relatively positive about local fandom because even stupidity can come from good intentions. Take care, and see you next issue.

*(Isn't there any contact between the Trekkers and the people who circulate around the Merrill Collection?)*

*("The fannish coin of the realm seems to be competence"? Hmm. I kept thinking it was reputation, or maybe just rumour ... and I'm not being cynical when I'm saying that; just pointing out what lowest denominator people settle down to. Unfortunately.)*

*(Your story about the local Trekcon makes me want to say "not clear on the concept" ...*

*(I've been fairly blunt to John about his coming up with weird ideas not entirely supported by fannish phenomena; at least that's the way I see it. I've also been blunt about the fact that, in print, I've heard nothing but good reviews about the Winnipeg Worldcon. He seems to feel generally abused south of the border, though.)*

*(Tell me, what do you think was accurate about Bimbos of the Death Sun characterizations? The chair sucking up to pros? The overweight girl selling cheap sex for meals? The overweight nerd pushing impenetrable apas on any new face? I didn't buy the same fans who were readers or fanzine fans getting involved in a live-action role-playing game. I would have accepted scenes in which very scanty costumes get by because it's a con, when otherwise the police would be called in; or after-midnight clothes-optional parties in the hot tub room. I would have accepted scenes in which the fanzine fans and the arts/academic types stay up talking until 4 a.m. in the consuite. But that isn't the image McCrumb published and made generally available for mundanes to pick up.)*

*(I was once told the "Diefenbaker" character was based on Taral; didn't sound to me like Taral's self-presentation, at all.)*

*(I have *Zombies of the Gene Pool*. I haven't reviewed it because I don't want to attach more importance to this sort of work than it deserves. I briefly considered whether to consider McCrumb's work satire, but it doesn't make it. Something usually signals that a writer neither infers nor implies that the story is realistic. I didn't see any such signals.)*

*(Paula Johanson tells me Dan Cawsey is in the Lower Mainland, too, but I can't prove it by the phone book.)*

*(Yeah, promotion. That's where I keep falling down.)*

*(I might have gathered that Toronto fans are unaware of, and uninterested in Toronto's fanhistory from my wanderings through Toronto's Freenet.)*

Charles Broerman, 2815 School St., Alexandria, VA 22303, 14/2/95

Thank you for sending me a copy of SPLF. At this point I am just taking my first halting steps in fandom, so it's helpful to hear about

the maxim that you only achieve anything fandom-wise by your own unaided efforts. The letter I sent you asking for a copy of SPLF was one of 16 I mailed at the same time, basically to every fanzine mentioned in *Thingummybob*. To date I've received 4 zines, including yours. On the one hand I guess I'd be more likely to get a copy of someone's zine if I sent one of my own, but on the other hand I'd like to have some idea of what's going on before I throw in my own 2 cents. So I need to read other people's fanzines. But they don't want to send me one if I don't send one in turn (I guess). Kind of a catch-22.

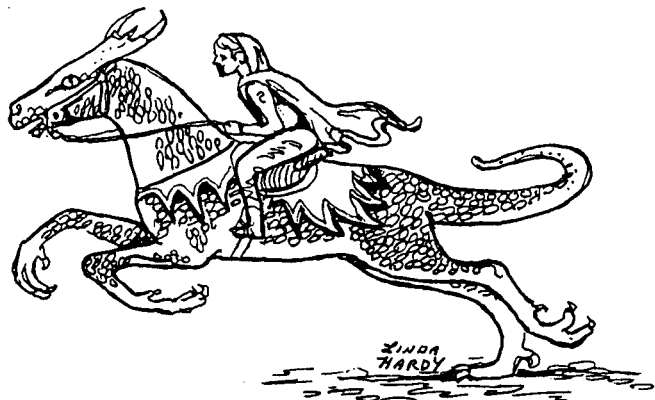
But I'll just keep moving forward. Maybe you could put in a word to any faneds you're especially tight with and have them send a zine or two my way.

I was interested in the discussion between you and Joseph Major on the Teflon coating of cultists' minds. You're right of course. The only thing is that people are quick to see the closed-mindedness of others (those people over there) and not of their own little clique. As an example you might take, oh, I don't know, say *FOSFAX*? It's a little amusing to hear a believer in the One True Rush and His Only Begotten Gingrich go on about the twisted logic of Marxists. I remember from Sunday school something about the mote in your brother's eye. ...

*(I recommended that Charles write to SCIFI and get a copy of their Neofan's Guide to SF Fandom, if I remember the title correctly, and also that he keep sending letters like his to me. I print his address here and encourage other faneds to send him spec copies.)*

#### We Also Heard From:

Janice Murray & Alan Rosenthal, John (Seattle) Berry, Mike Glicksohn (gafiating), Yolande Goodwin (now in Surrey, BC), R.K. Hinton, John Mansfield, Lyn McConchie, Michael McKenny, David Thayer, Linda Leach-Hardy, & R'ykandar Korra'ti.



## The 1994 V-Con (Which Did Not Occur)

From a letter by Scott Patri:

... I [have] discovered something disturbing. It deals with Robert Runté and V-Con 21 that WAS held this May of this year.

Just follow me on this. From you and other sources, the "secret lives of Robert Runté" sounded like a great and hilarious joke, but upon reading each story, something clicked in my mind, and I recalled meeting him at V-Con 21. It's sketchy, vague, and I can only come up with bits and pieces, but I do *remember* going to V-Con 21 and meeting Robert Runté, even though I *know* I didn't go to it, that I *never* met Robert Runté before in my life, and that there *wasn't* a V-Con held this year.

Yet, I did suspect that a V-Con was held this year, and by following a trail of seemingly unrelated clues, I discovered that it did happen, and why no one seems to remember it.

Time had somehow been altered, and Robert Runté was the key to figuring it out.

I had two leads: the memory of Robert Runté, and V-Con 21. They were totally unrelated, yet connected somehow, and even though Robert was only associated by the fact that he was at this Con That Never Was, his mention was the key fact that unlocked my supposedly false memory of the event. Let me describe what I could recall.

The convention was the pits. It seems that a certain "person" that was running it had done a piss-poor job. It was during the dead-dog party that the events become sort of coherent. A bunch of people were haphazardly connecting all the audio-visual equipment and a blender together; there was talk of "time travel", and the removal of the "person" responsible for this con; me talking to Robert Runté and convincing him to try my deadly tequila/orange crush mix; us leaving the dead-dog party to get the mix; someone shouting "turn on the blender" ... and then it cuts off.

Mind you, this sounds like a fever dream, but I am on the verge of having proof that one of the fans at this convention discovered a way to make a time machine with the A/V equipment at the convention, and tried to alter time.

It was with my recollection that I tried to re-create the setup of A/V equipment and a blender with what I have at home. When I guessed I had the proper configuration, I set the blender to "purée", and turned it on.

And I succeeded in creating a temporary portal to an alternate reality, and learned the god-awful truth of that convention.

There before me lay a world populated with nothing but pink multi-legged fuzzy things with really cute goshgollygeewow eyes ... and the 58 people that were in the room the dead-dog party was held in.

The portal could only transmit sight and sound, and I learned most of the story of what happened from one of the fans:

During the dead-dog party, the remaining disaffected fen (who were contemplating gafiation at the time) did indeed discover a way to travel through time by a random hooking-up of all the audio-visual equipment at the convention with a blender set on "frappe". Having a means to travel to any point in time was a great temptation to these disaffected fen, and their first act to alter time was to remove the "person" responsible for the con's pathetic condition from the committee, and replace that "person" with someone competent.

As we all know by watching *Star Trek*, muddling with time is a dangerous venture, and the person selected to go back and remove that "person" botched the job, removed the wrong person, and wound up altering the timeline so much that he prevented V-Con 21 from happening in the first place.

Due to the multitude of paradoxes created from this act, and the "frappe" setting on the blender shorting out, the shifting of the timeline effectively erased the V-Con 21 event from everyone's memory, and created a temporal vortex that sucked the fans that were in the room in the previous timeline into an alternate reality, populated with nothing but pink multi-legged fuzzy things with really cute goshgollygeewow eyes.

And to top it all off, the pink multi-legged fuzzy things with really cute goshgollygeewow eyes — instead of treating the sudden appearance of the fen as gods, as you would normally expect — made slaves of the fans, since (scanning their mental patterns) they discovered the lot was made up of volunteers, and assumed that they were supposed to be treated like scum.

At this point, my portal shorted out. I could not re-establish it, and was afraid to. I had been lucky to escape their fate, since I had left the room with Robert Runté before the blender was turned on. But I had an explanation of why I remember going to a con that didn't happen, and why Robert Runté is associated with it.

With the stories of "the secret lives of Robert Runté" I surmise that there is *something* about this person that leaves a definite impact on the memories of others. I suspect that when the time was shifted from a reality where V-Con 21 took place, to a reality where V-Con 21 DIDN'T take place, we were all swept through a host of alternate timelines, and

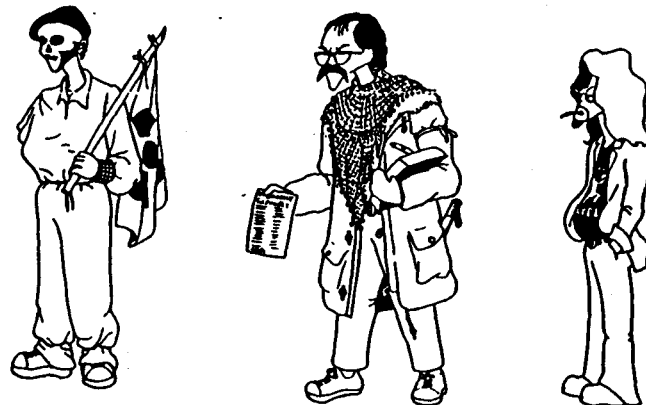
in each timeline existed a Robert Runté that was actually an alien; the head of a secret cult; a CIA-trained Vietnam Vet; and a whole slew of other alternate identities. When these "joke" biographies were written, each person wrote about the Robert Runté they had actually met in an alternate timeline, due to that *something* he possesses that can imprint his image on our minds, that can survive a chronological disruption of such magnitude that it erased an entire convention from history!

As of this time, I am working to create a safe portal to rescue the fans trapped in this alternate reality of pink multi-legged fuzzy things with really cute goshgollygeewow eyes, or at least acquire concrete proof of this incident by acquiring a V-Con 21 program book. At most, I can only pass bags of Cheetos through the portals I create. Hopefully, either by creating a stable portal or figuring out a "Cheeto solution", I will not only prove the existence of V-Con 21 that occurred in May of 1994, and discover the identity of the "person" who was responsible for it sucking so bad, but solve the greatest mystery that has plagued mankind this century.

I will figure out who Robert Runté really is.

*(Robert Runté is a former Big Name Fan of former ginormous Edmonton fandom; he has inspired fans, fanzines, a pro SF association, rumours and legends galore. He is currently working 80 hours a week at the University of Lethbridge, and is a member of the Books Collective as well, the consortium that bought the Tesseract book line from Beach Holme Press, thus ensuring its continuance.*

*(Scott Patri is a fan on Vancouver Island whom I am leading down the primrose path. It is too late to save him. He writes that he is completing his own fanzine, The Zero-G Lavatory, and has given up smoking in order to do it.)*



## Zines Received

- Ansible* 72 & 75-87, October 1993-1994 (newszine from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks. RG1 5AU, England).
- Attitude* 2, mid-1994 (genzine from John Dallman, Michael Abbott and Pam Wells, c/o John Dallman, Flat 4, 27 Terront Road, London, N15 3AA, U.K.).
- Bardic Runes* IX (small-press heroic fantasy fiction digest from Michael McKenny, Ottawa, Ont.)
- Blatl* 3, Spring 1994 (genzine from Dan Steffan, 3804 South 9th Street & Ted White ).
- Canadian Journal of Détournement* 1-? (turning cartoons to your own purposes), Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, AB T2P 2E7.
- Communiqué* 18, May-August 1994 (public journal of SF Canada), 10523 - 100 Ave. Edmonton, AB T5J 0A8 (editor: Dale Sproule, 1019 Colville Rd., Victoria, BC V9A 4P5).
- Con-TRACT* 6:4 & 6:5, July-Aug. & Sept.-Oct. 1994 (con listing from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 2B9).
- Ethel the Aardvark* 55, June 1994 (bimonthly club newsletter from the Melbourne SF Club, P.O. Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vict. 3005, Australia).
- FOSFAX* 170 & 171, August & October 1994, c/o FOSFA, P.O. Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281.
- Habakkuk* Ch 3 vss 1-4, Bill Donaho, 626 58th St., Oakland, CA 94609.
- Mainstream* 16 (genzine from Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins, 8618 Linden Ave. N., Seattle, WA 98103, U.S.A.)
- The North Wind* 180, July 1994, c/o #5 - 7576 Humphries Court, Burnaby, BC V3N 3E9.
- Opuntia* 19.5 to 21.1, to September 1994 (personalzine) Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, AB T2P 2E7.
- The Ottawa SF Statement*, c/o A.G. Wagner, 251 Nepean St., Ottawa, ON K2P 0B7 (newsletter of the Ottawa SF Society).
- The SF Con Register*, Autumn 1994 (con listing from Erwin "Filthy Pierre" Strauss, 101 S. Whiting #700, Alexandria, VA 22304, U.S.A.)
- Thingumybob* 12 (a loc supplement to Chuck Connors' regular zine from Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, nr. Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF, England).
- Thyme* 97 & 98, May & July 1994 (the Australian SF newsmagazine from P.O. Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vict. 3005, Australia).
- ZX* #5, 1994 (personalzine from Andrew Murdoch, 2563 Heron Street, Victoria, BC V8R 5Z9).

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