
Bento 22



A zine by Kate Yule and David D. Levine
for Renovation—August 2011

Welcome, Welcome

Hello, nize pipples. This issue is being assembled as a break from the process of planning BentoCon, which is zooming up at us like the planet approaching that whale in *Hitchhiker's Guide*. (BentoCon: The One, The Only, as Kate insists on calling it.)

Yes, we are throwing a convention. And square dance. (That's always good for a reaction from the hotel reps.) It celebrates 50 years of Kate, 50 years of David, and 20 years since we got all dressed up and said "I do."

Invitations went out to assorted famiy and friends in February, primarily by email. We know that at least some vanished en route, and truly regret the missed communications. As, however, the venue is neatly at capacity with the yeses that did come in, we are prepared to say the Flying Fickle Finger of Fate had a hand in the guest list and leave it at that.

Welcome back to Bento, the Welsh Corgi of fanzines. We hope something within inspires you to write back.

Contact Info

David Levine and Kate Yule

1905 SE 43rd Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97215

kate@bentopress.com david@bentopress.com

kateyule.livejournal.com davidlevine.livejournal.com

www.bentopress.com

The Matter of Cake

First, let's clear the air: no Marie Antoinette jokes, *s'il vous plaît*. The oblivious noble saying "No bread? Let them eat cake!" was an established anecdote before she ever came along, and continuing to burden her with it is like making cracks about Al Gore inventing the Internet. We can do better than that.

One step in preparing for BentoCon is getting The Cake. There has to be cake, right? Two birthdays plus the anniversary of a wedding, simply have to have cake. They go together. At a small book-launch party chez Jay Lake, his niece refused to go home until we'd sung The Song. Even at four—especially at four—she *knew*: party + cake = Birthday.

The problem with cake being a ritual is that you start getting ritual cake: cake that lets you tick off that part of the checklist but has nothing further going for it—perfunctory cake. Think office going-away party. Think Safeway bakery counter, and airbrushed SpongeBob Squarepants characters. Now back to me. Now back at the cake. Now back to me.

We can do better than that, too. Dozens of bakers in town tout delicious "occasion cakes" or "celebration cakes." (Call it a *wedding* cake and prices from the same baker sometimes triple; a surcharge, perhaps, in anticipation of overwrought brides and dueling in-laws?) I spent a happy evening trolling through on-line photo galleries and lists of filling choices.

Mexican chocolate mousse with apricot conserves, mmm!
Raspberries and lemon curd! Rum-caramel-banana!

It's far too late to commission a realistically sculpted bento box, or a marzipan "mosaic" like our beautiful bathroom seahorse. I'm told that nine times out of ten, those smooth fondant sheaths aren't something one would actually want to eat, anyway.

When all is said and done, I realize that my image of A Birthday Cake is a simple hatbox shape, frosted in white with wavy spatula marks all over, or perhaps coconut, and colored sprinkles. David's sense of the rightness of the universe will be maintained with a second, chocolate-chocolate cake. And the practicalities of serving might lead us to have much of this in the form of cupcakes. Not all: there will be something to cut, something to divide and share out among people. That matters, somehow.

Cake matters.

— KY



Paper vs. Plastic

Frowny-making moment at the grocery store just now. It came to a little more than I had on me, so I paid by credit card. With prompting from the cashier because I do this so rarely, I swiped, signed, punched “OK” once or twice on the little screen. Done.

I’m used to the fact that many businesses and individual cashiers are too sloppy to bother comparing the presenting customer’s signature to the one on the back of the card (right above the words “Not valid unless signed”).

But this system was such that the cashier never sees what the customer scrawls, nor do they see or handle the card. I could have written *anything*. I could have been using plastic stamped “Hermione Potter” with a photo of Barack Obama and the notation SEE DRIVER’S LICENSE, and as long as the mag tape matched any valid credit card anywhere, I’d have walked away with the merchandise.

This is nuts. No wonder ID theft is so bloody profitable. Meanwhile someone is paying for it, and that someone is us.

Look, I like credit cards. They are useful. They are convenient—except when they aren’t. Can’t count how many times I’ve been stuck in line waiiiiting for someone else’s transaction to go through, when I just want to throw down a few Universal Payment Tokens, take my goods and get on with life. (Admittedly, easier in Oregon, where we approach the register already knowing what the object will cost.) They

bring merchants more custom... for a fee. They promise us “cash back!” & luxury vacations & a big honkin’ free lunch.

Ain’t no such thing.

Please. Educate yourself about the fees that Visa imposes on vendors. Stock your wallet with a few dead presidents. Don’t fund airline upgrades and “free” “rewards” out of the pockets of local merchants you’re trying to support. And stop giving Big Banking a cut of every last damn latte and pizza slice. Thank you. — KY

*“We’ve replaced their Exocet missiles with
Folger’s Crystals...”*

The Alchemy of Film

In the wake of the Borders closing, the rise of e-book readers, and general angst about the book industry, there’s been a considerable amount of ink (and, ironically, e-ink) spilled about the potential loss of the paper book. There’s been a lot of nostalgic encomium about books—the smell of the pages, the snap of the covers, the feel and heft of the physical artifact in the hand—and how the world will be made a lesser place if this ancient, delightful piece of human culture is allowed to pass from the world.

But there's another area of human culture where this transition has already occurred... almost completely, almost overnight, and almost unnoticed.

No, I'm not talking about vinyl records. I'm talking about *film*.

Here is how movies used to be made in the days before computer graphics: a strip of transparent plastic coated with light-sensitive chemicals is loaded into the camera and then exposed, frame by frame, to the scene being recorded. The light bouncing off the actors, focused on the film by the camera lens, creates tiny chemical changes in the coating. The exposed film is then bathed in other chemicals which "fix" the image; the chemicals in areas of the film exposed to light remain stuck to the film, while areas not exposed wash off. The result is a negative of the image—the "original negative" from which all other prints are directly or indirectly derived.

The original negative is then "printed" by taking another piece of film coated with light-sensitive chemicals and pressing the two tightly together while exposing them to light, so that light passes through the original negative and strikes the second film. The second film is processed in the same way as the first and becomes a negative of the negative: a positive, which now resembles the original scene. This "work print" is then cut up and reassembled by the director and editor according to their artistic vision.

Once the film has been completely edited using the work print, a skilled technician takes the original negative—that

same piece of plastic that passed through the camera in the presence of the actors—cuts it up, and glues it together into an exact frame-by-frame copy of the work print.

This edited original negative is now printed to create an “interpositive,” which is in turn printed to create an “internegative” that spawns the theatrical prints which are physically shipped to the theaters. From this point forward the original never has to come out of its climate-controlled vault—prints are made from the internegative, and if that wears out from the printing process the interpositive can be brought back into play.*

Now consider what you are experiencing when you see a film in the theatre. As you sit in a dark room with a bunch of strangers, the light that enters your eyes has just passed through a piece of semi-transparent plastic that is the end product of a chain of intimate physical, chemical, and luminous contact with the *original film* that ran through the camera in Tunisia, not ten feet from Alec Guinness and Mark Hamill. Or, if *Star Wars* doesn't float your boat, make it Bogey and Hepburn in the Belgian Congo, or Laurel and Hardy on the *Music Box* steps.

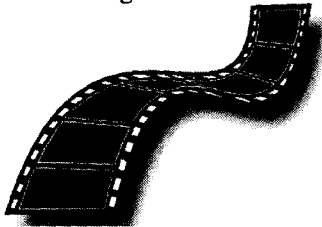
* Unless and until the originals decay with time, which is a whole separate essay—see <http://secrethistoryofstarwars.com/savingstarwars.html> for more on *that!*

There's a kind of... alchemy to that. This mysterious process, using arcane chemicals, takes place in total darkness—but the end result is a moving image of light and color. When you watch a film made in the old-fashioned way, in a sense the photons that carry that image have been handed down to you direct from the original sound stage.

But when you watch a film in a theatre that uses the digital projectors that are now nearly universal, the photons that strike your eyes are entirely new. They are directed to the screen by a computer, following instructions laid down by another computer which may never have been anywhere near the original actors. If, indeed, there were actors at all.

Okay, this is all pretty esoteric and theoretical. I'm not going to argue that digital projection isn't superior in just about every technical sense (have you seen a print of *Aliens* recently? Even in the best surviving prints, the blackness of outer space is *brown*. And that's assuming the film doesn't snap irreparably during the first reel). But with the unreeling of film from our lives, I feel that something is being lost, and we should at least watch it go.

— DDL



Notes from the Passenger Seat

February 2010

For the most part, the border between Oregon and Washington is unambiguous: the Columbia River. You may have heard of it. I make my home on its south bank. My parents do too, 200 miles away and in a different world.

Glacial Lake Missoula was half the size of Lake Michigan. It drained, suddenly, repeatedly, right through here around the end of the last Ice Age, carving out a miles-wide gash in the earth. Now multiple hydro-electric dams keep the relative trickle that is the Columbia River still and wide.

I passed along this highway 20+ times in my first years at college. Didn't tire of it as much as you might think. The Columbia Gorge is simply magnificent. Waterfalls, lush forest, sweeping vistas. Westbound, Mt. Hood and Mt. St. Helens welcome me home.

Eastbound, one usually looks up at some point and says "Wait—weren't there trees a minute ago?" "Nit eny murr," as Clouseau would say. The trees stop about an hour out of Portland. Wave bye-bye! From here on, the vegetation is scrub and grasses. Across the river, the rounded hills look velvety. On this side the land rises up sharply, basalt bones with a draping of pale green.

Sometimes after all those dark spiky evergreens blocking the sky, this can be downright restful for the eyes.

I always pictured the edges of the Gorge as long ridges, cutting off this thin riverside strip from the interior of each state. Of course that's not it at all—climb up to the top, be it basalt cliff or rolling hill, and the land goes on at that level. Giant gash in the ground, remember? (In Scotland, I found the glens beautiful. Put water in it—make it a loch—and something inside me yawns and says “Got one, thanks.”)

These days, where the trees leave off, wind turbines appear. Last year I spotted over 200 of the giant white tooth-picks—and more being trucked in, in pieces. Those things are *huge*.

Next rest area, 88 miles. I'm pretty sure there's a town before then. Hope so.

Ah yes, Arlington. Grain elevator, gas station, cell phone signal. Big letter A carved into the hill above town by the high school's senior class. I always think of trumpeter Doc Severinsen when we pass through: he was born in Arlington. (Moved to Portland at some point; a cute little storefront near our house was the dentist office of Doc Sr.)

David just saw two old railroad cars being transported by semi. Isn't that usually the other way round? Each one was on its side, the top of the car hanging off one side of the truckbed.

Long freight trains come through here, on either side of the river. We made a road trip once in college with a friend from the 50th State—he was galvanized by the sight. Hawaii: not so much with the trains.

Entering Morrow County. Still paralleling the river, but no more Gorge. From here to the Horse Heaven Hills the terrain is flattish, level. Cows, grain, field-spanning center-pivot irrigation structures. Tumbleweeds. Somewhere near Irrigon we once detoured to gaze upon still-extant Oregon Trail wagon ruts.

We must be near another dam; hundreds of power poles and transmission lines march away in all directions bearing electrons to (from?) the masses. No masses here, that's for sure. Coming up is Umatilla, where the Army used to stock-pile chemical weapons. They say they're down to just mustard gas now.

We turn left there and cross into Washington. When I rode the Greyhound bus home during college, we'd barely be off the bridge before half the bus had lit up. (Oregon was way ahead of the curve on smoking laws.) Cigarettes and fruity toilet deodorizer: the scent of the intercity bus.

The Columbia also curves after this. Although we cross it here at right angles and head away to the north, it reappears across our path an hour later, flowing left-to-right this time but otherwise pretending it never moved. This always makes my brain hurt.

Kennewick Man lived here 9,300 years ago. Grand Coulee Dam brought irrigation in 1941; the Hanford Project brought plutonium production in 1943. The site was chosen on the basis of isolation (once they relocated a few farming towns) and access to water: the Columbia. Richland High

School's logo is still a mushroom cloud. Technically I don't think I'm a "downwinder" — Westinghouse didn't transfer Dad to Hanford until '75.

As I said, it's a different world.

And here we are at RadCon.

— KY

"I wonder how long it took before Rodgers and Hammerstein admitted that 'La: a note to follow So' was the best they were going to do?"

How I Met Your Editor

Once upon a time, there was a New Year's Day brunch that went on until 11:00 at night, and a young man in a puffy puffy blue parka standing in the coat-filled front hallway who said "I've really enjoyed this and I'd like to see more of you. May I have your phone number?" But our story doesn't begin there.

In a way, the story begins the preceding May, on the sidewalk outside a suburban movie theater. Two young women showed up to claim a place in line for *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. They were the second ones there, but the man ahead of them said "There's actually about twenty of me; you'll want to leave some room." Throughout the afternoon, as the young women played cards and brainstormed details of an old age home for retired D&D players, members

of what proved to be the Portland Science Fiction Society trickled in and proved him right.

One of the SF fans was intrigued enough by the two women's conversation that he sat with them and their (gainfully employed, thus late-arriving) friends during the movie instead of staying with his fellows; afterwards they invited him along to T.G.I. Friday's for food, drink, and venting about Kate Capshaw.

Thus it was over french fries and foofy drinks (alcohol-free for one of the group, for he had not his ID, and protests that he was the eldest of the entire bloody bunch of us fell on deaf ears) that I heard tell of a large science fiction convention called the Westercon to be held six weeks hence, not two miles from my home.

That Westercon was my first SF convention. I knew two people there, and walked around the block twice before getting up the nerve to go in. I commuted by bus or on foot from my apartment each day. Suzy McKee Charnas sat beside me and shared a box of raspberries. Besides that, I barely ate. There was no need. I was fueled by adrenaline.

The fan from May was there, of course, looking surprisingly dashing in doublet and tights. I went to panel after panel, learned why Irish Coffee is the perfect drink for SF writers, substituted my own private 2am smoke alarm drama for the hotel-sponsored one most people attended—but the important thing for our story is that I followed up by attending the next meeting of PorSFis.

And the next, and the club picnic after that. According to my diary, the very first meeting featured "a Turkey Reading. Turkey hell, those were *dogs*. Classic (or obscure) SF garbage, read aloud to the miming of volunteers until it was decreed by audience bid (yes, folks, cash) that This Has Got to Stop. Some very inspired mimers there; people were far too eager to cut them off." I'm surprised I didn't mention the most inspired of all, capable of portraying both Crab Monster and Slime Beast with exuberant flair.

He had a girlfriend, though, so nothing to pursue there. (How did I find out? Observe, overhear? Surely not ask: I barely said Boo for weeks! This whole venture was so far outside my comfort zone I needed spare oxygen.)

In private, Mr. Doublet-and-tights and I spent hours that summer and fall talking books, talking music, talking SCA, talking Firesign Theater. Whole lotta talking there. He was engaged. Oh well.

By December I was venturing out to PorSFis social events. A going away party; impromptu inauguration of Marc & Patty's home espresso machine; *Dune* in the big Fox theater downtown. I sat on the end next to the Crab Monster, who made puns about the "worm turning" and very dubiously accepted an offer of homepopped popcorn, hand-scorched in olive oil. (One works with what one has.)

PorSFis did New Year's Eve dinners in those days, and 1984's was prime. Spaghetti, then dancing, in a back room at the Pine Street Theater. Drunk mundanes filled the main hall.

I made a mix tape to contribute: “Pink Cadillac,” “Little Red Corvette,” Talking Heads, Rolling Stones: “Time is on My Side.”

D&T gave me a gift out of the blue: two *boxes* of cassettes, everything we’d talked about, everything he thought I’d like. PDQ Bach to Holly Near by way of Fairport Convention. I thought it was awfully sweet of him.

My sister, visiting overnight, had a more trenchant observation. “If that boy’s engaged, I’m a doorknob.”



Cut to: Marc and Patty Wells’ house, New Year’s Day, late morning. Or mid-afternoon, or early evening—really, it was all much of a muchness. Turkey in the oven, garlic in the turkey, champagne in the orange juice and people everywhere! Card and board games were everywhere too—we were younger then, we could sit on the floor and still hope to get up again. People and food came and went. I remember being in line for the bathroom and wondering whether someone had tacked a sign on my back reading “Rub Me.” When half the living room joined in a chorus of “Deck the Halls with Boston Charlie,” yea verily, I knew that I was Among My People at last.

Somewhere in all that, I found a moment to ask D&T about the state of the girlfriend. He allowed as how he was, in fact, recently disengaged. Ah. Well then. Yup. Longggg pause.

Reader, this is not the story of how he and I then fell into each other's lives to live happily ever after. No, this is the story of how close he came! and might perhaps even have succeeded in shifting my life onto a very different track, had the silly git but spoken up sooner.

For just as he was beginning a tentative courtship, with his mix tapes and his earnest discussion under the Christmas tree of fantasy in children's books (we both favored the "children visit elderly relative with interesting house, fall into alternate universe" subgenre), I say just as he finally got off the stick, someone else was also taking an interest. John (for that was his name) was not the only one hovering around me much more than chance would account for, that day.

He did walk me home that night, when brunch threatened to become midnight supper and Marc & Patty threw out the stragglers. But not before the indigo Michelin Man, aka Slime Beast, aka David Levine, had stopped me in the front hallway and said his awkward, polite, ineffably charming "I'd like to get to know you better."

Which began a sudden, dizzying interlude of me dating two boys at once. My mantra: "Don't do anything Laverne & Shirley would do." If I found myself hurriedly stuffing one of them in a closet, I'd know I was doing it wrong. David and I went to see *2010*. John and I went to a comedy club. I arrived at PorSFis with one and left with the other. This lasted not quite a fortnight. Mantra or no mantra, I was a basket case! I had to pick one.



David had a membership at Rustycon in Seattle, which I couldn't afford. A neutral third party offered me a membership plus transportation and crash space, as a belated Christmas present. This happened to be the same weekend that John had invited me to an SCA banquet in Eugene. North? or south? SF? or fantasy? David? or John?

There really wasn't much question. I went north. I didn't need the crash space.

A quarter century later, David is still the best friend I've ever had. He's still entertaining the SF world, sometimes with bad puns and improv. And Marc and Patty still throw a heck of a New Year's bash.

— KY

Mars Year

On December 7, 2009, on the occasion of the rollout of SpaceShipTwo, I posted an entry to my blog in which I listed my space travel wish list, starting with an actual stay in orbit (\$35 million) and ending with a zeppelin ride (\$500). #2 on that list was to participate in a simulated Mars mission (cost unknown, time commitment substantial).

The Mars Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the exploration and settlement of Mars, maintains a couple of simulated Mars habitats—the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in Utah and the Flashline Mars Arctic Research Station (FMARS) in Canada—where volunteers perform real research on geology, astronomy, and medicine in a simulated Mars environment, complete with space suits. But I didn't know all of that at the time; I had just heard of it, and thought it sounded cool.

Well, my old college friend Steve Sywak commented on that post that he knew someone in the Mars Society and could put me in touch if I liked. I did, and he did, and eventually I got an email saying that “The current season is underway, so you would probably need to wait for next season; however, it can't hurt to apply now, because sometimes there are crew cancellations.” So I sent off my application to the Mars Society on the evening of December 23.

I awoke on December 24 to an email from Artemis Westenberg of the Mars Society. Even the little snippet of the message I could see in my inbox made me go “Guh?!”

I have no idea how flexible in dates you are
but for crew 88 we indeed have an opening (9-23 January 2010)
the lady who was supposed to be part of that crew works at
Johnson Space Center in Houston
and her bosses told her very recently that she can not be part of
that crew this season
I have read your resume and would like to invite you to be part
of that crew

I accepted that invitation at noon on December 24 and bought my plane tickets that night. Two weeks later I was on my way to “Mars.”

You know the character who joins the mission at the last minute? The non-expert—under-trained, ill-prepared, and in over his head—who gives the reader someone to identify with and the author an excuse to info-dump? Well, that was me.

The two weeks I spent in Utah were amazing. I got to experience first-hand the isolation, self-reliance, interdependence, and improvisation that are always going to be part of life on the frontier, and I became fast friends with a wonderful bunch of people from all around the world. I also learned about the beauty of the desert and the joy of barreling across it on an ATV. You can read my daily blog entries from the experience at <http://www.bentopress.com/mars/>.

I learned a lot on Mars. I learned some things I expected

to, like technical details about daily life in a harsh environment, the difficulties of working in a space helmet and gloves, and the interpersonal dynamics of being trapped in a small, isolated station with people you don't know. But more important was that I learned habits of "protagonistiness"—taking action to change the plot—which I've tried to hang onto in my day-to-day life since returning to Earth. I think I'm still a lot more likely than before to stick my neck out, take risks, commit to uncertain plans.

But the adventure didn't end after I got back.

The Young Adult fantasy novel I was working on in the latter part of 2009 was blown right out of my head. Instead I wrote a short story, "Citizen-Astronaut," based on my experiences and submitted it to the Jim Baen Memorial Writing Contest, where it took second prize. Later that year it was bought and published by *Analog* (June 2011). I also wrote the first draft of a YA science fiction novel about Mars, which is currently awaiting revision (in the queue behind a bunch of projects with shorter deadlines).

Articles about my trip appeared in *Willamette Week* and the *Oregonian*, and I made



appearances on KGW-TV and KATU-TV. I don't know if this media exposure did my career any good, but it sure can't hurt and I had a blast doing it.

I prepared a slide show about the trip and presented various versions of it at Radcon, Potlatch, Powell's Books, the Nebulas, Wiscon, Aussiecon, and OryCon. I was invited to speak to students at the Washington Aerospace Scholars Program and Clarion West. And I'll be giving the talk again at this year's Worldcon in Reno.

Have I mentioned Google? Yeah, I gave my Mars talk at Google.

At the Nebula Weekend, Kate and I got to see a Space Shuttle launch (from the VIP viewing area no less!) and hang out with all kinds of extremely cool people. I presented to a packed house at the Bagdad Theatre as part of Ignite Portland. I got to visit the Museum of Flight after hours. I met Robert Zubrin and the other Mars Society movers-and-shakers at their annual conference. I got to be on a couple of program items with GoH Kim Stanley Robinson at the Australian Worldcon. None of these things would have happened if I hadn't gone to "Mars."

I collected together the blogs of all the members of the MDRS-88 crew in a trade paperback, *The Mars Diaries*—my first experience with self-publishing. Doing this was fun and educational, though I don't think it's any way to make a fortune, or even a living, from one's writing.

And I got a fabulous new author photo.

It's been almost one Mars year (686 Earth days) since I made that fortuitous blog post. It's been an amazing time, and my heart is full of love and wonder from all the things I've experienced and people I've spent time with that I would not have done otherwise.

I wonder what the next Mars year will bring? — DDL

Letters of Comment

Guy Lillian <ghliiii@yahoo.com>

Sun, 23 Aug 2009

Wanted to thank you for the *Bento* and y'all's unique manner of distribution. I'm rushing down a hallway on some foolish fannish business and suddenly this palm-sized fanzine appears in my hand... Quite wild!

Ed Meskys <edmeskys@localnet.com>

Sat, 5 Sep 2009

Your relationship with coffee yogurt was enjoyable. I had never bought plain yogurt and added flavoring. We sometimes use our yogurt maker and make our own plain yogurt and flavor it. I *do* love coffee ice cream but had not thought of making coffee yogurt. Next time I will have to try it. And I have to try instant espresso.

That reminds me...I have a mini-espresso maker in the attic which I have to dig out. My father brought it home from Argentina in the 1930s. It makes exactly two tiny cups, and

spits them out thru a double spout. You fill the machine with water right to the top, and the coffee holder right to the top, no measuring. The spout is like an inverted Y and you put the two cups under the two openings.

Jerry Kaufman <JAKaufman@aol.com>

Sat, 10 Oct 2009

I liked the newest *Bento* as much as ever. David's last line for the Male Kluge Syndrome article was the perfect exit for the piece. Kate wittering on about your idiomatic use of language was illuminating. The piece on Flight School was potentially useful knowledge, and entertaining, too.

John Purcell <j_purcell54@yahoo.com>

Sat, 17 Oct 2009

Y'know, doing a once-a-year zine sounds like a lot less pressure. [*Yeah, and blowing it off for a year makes it even less so!*] Not only that, but this little shirt-pocket sized zine is always a pleasant read, and I thank you kind folks for sending it my way. I really must get into the habit of mailing copies of my zine to folks. I've been such a bad boy, Abbott!

The worldcon is always a great impetus for producing fanzines, maybe not as much as Corflu, but there are still people (like you two) who try to get a zine ready for handing out at the worldcon. Maybe not as many as before, especially now with the Internet changing the fan-publishing playing field so much, but the tradition lives on.

Brad Foster's loc struck a familiar chord with me. I do the same "age to history" math equation with my students when drawing comparisons with my college student years to theirs. It's frightening in a sad way that many members of the rock bands of my musical youth are dying off or at least getting very old. You do realize, f'rinstance, that next year Ringo Starr will be 70 years old? *[Tell me about it. We just saw the Beach Boys, gray hair and all...]*

Lloyd Penney <penneys@allstream.net>

1706-24 Eva Rd.

Etobicoke, ON

CANADA M9C 2B2

le 17eme octobre, 2009

Bonjour de Toronto! Good to hear you were in Montréal; we didn't see you in the fanzine lounge. Wish you'd made it, it was often a busy place. Fortunately for me, Yvonne often took care of dealing with our hotel, and by speaking in perfect Québec French, our stay at the Embassy Suites was very comfortable.

I hope you enjoyed reading *Canada: A People's History*. Few people outside Canada realize what kind of history we have. *[History education is extremely parochial. I've been told that English schools have almost nothing to say about the origins of America, for example.]*

"The first little Druid built his henge from straw..."

Aahz Maruch <aahz@pobox.com>

Wed, 12 May 2010

If two years to publish a LOC is not beyond the pale, surely submitting a LOC four years late is at most barely beyond the pale. [*Clearly, we at Bento Press have no problems with this time scale.*] I found Bento #18 while doing some cleanup and finally got around to reading it. It's interesting that one can know people for years (for minimal values of "know") and still not know basic facts about them.

In particular, I didn't know you two were square dancers; I've been a Plus-level dancer for more than two decades, and I still consider myself a square dancer even if my declining hearing now makes it very difficult to impossible for all but the most clear-voiced callers (and even then it is "only" difficult). I use my square dance nametag when I go contra dancing, although I admit that's partly for practical reasons because I like the magnetic attachment that doesn't tear holes in shirts.

Brad Foster <bwfoster@juno.com>

PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016

October 19, 2009

Ah, Bento 21. Old enough now to drink, vote, get married, and probably do other unspeakable acts beyond the reach of the law!

Regarding your comments on having "...the Internet in my shirt pocket," I think you truly have hit on the real sign

that we are in the future. Not those impractical jetpacks that everyone is whining about not having around. (I mean, do you *really* want any idiot out there to be able to bop over into your back yard or onto your roof whenever they want?) Nope, it's that we can now walk around and call up a real-time live picture from outer space of the weather around us at this moment. Just think of the folks back in ye old days being surprised and almost wiped out when a hurricane suddenly swept in from the sea to crush them flat. Now I can tell if a rain shower will pass in a few minutes, or if there is a larger storm on the way. Of course, at the present time I can only find this out by asking someone around me with an iPhone to look up that information. But, one day, I hope to have a little pocket magician myself!

Loved the "Charging Rhino" 'toon!

And, to follow up my own loc this issue about the festival foods at the Texas State Fair, this year the big new thing was the fried butter. Yes, fried butter. I am led to understand it wasn't as bad as you might imagine. In my own mind I saw a full stick of butter, dipped in batter, fried, then stuck on a wooden stick and served up with a side of garlic dipping butter. What it actually was was a small nugget of butter inside a ball of dough, fried and served in bite-size morsels. Think of it more as a buttered dinner roll turned inside out and you'd probably have a pretty good idea about it. Still, one hell of a scary thing to think what they were creating while they worked out the final formula!



Art Credits

Cover: Photo by David of mosaic in our bathroom by the marvelous Margaret Kuhn (www.mkuhndesign.com)

Back cover: Brad W. Foster (www.jabberwockygraphix.com)

All the rest: Arthur Clipp (images.google.com)