



**Broken Toys** is a personalzine by Taral Wayne, and in no way implies that my other zine, **New Toy**, is a dead letter – in fact, I feel the urge building to work on the next issue. The letter column this issue abounds with equal parts of news, good cheer, egoboo and bile. As has been the case for a third of my life, I live in partly self-imposed exile at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario M6K 1S6. However, contact or loc me at [Taral@Teksavvy.com](mailto:Taral@Teksavvy.com). The date is **December 2012**, not long before Christmas, and doubtless this is the last **Broken Toys** for the year. It is also ExtraTaraltorality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) **260**. Copyrighted past, present, future, and in all parallel Dimensions, even that one over there in the corner trying hard not to be seen.

## NOW WE ARE TEN

Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> issue. Who knew I'd persevere this long? I didn't. But here we are, not only come to the end of a year, but actually contemplating another 10 or 12 issues in the coming year. To see out 2012, I've put together an unusual issue. It's longer than any issue of *Broken Toys* so far, and – as you see – has a different sort of banner at the top of the page. I found the photo somewhere or other online and fell instantly in love. It's the blue hair and long neck. Of course, I couldn't just use the unknown girl as I found her – I've meddled just a little with her jaw line and the bridge of her nose. I've coloured her eyebrows to match her hair, which only seems right. And I silvered her eyes, which makes it official – this is Saara Mar, if she could be shaved all over to play Human. If you could enlarge it, I am reflected in her eye, taking the photo.

Does the special banner imply that I've given up the old style from the previous 9 issues? Not necessarily. But I *am* considering changes in the coming year. Covers, for instance. It seems to me that a cover on a fanzine that would only be 6 to 8 sheets long (if printed) is a bit overdone, but Brad Foster has been urging me to do it. I suppose needing covers would encourage me to do more colour art ... instead of sitting in front of a keyboard, trading insults on FaceBook. Then again, having to produce a cover every issue might just be enough to make doing *Broken Toys* a *chore*, and might have negative impact on the whole business of publishing an easy, frequent, entertaining little zine. So, we shall not commit ourselves to anything on the matter of covers.

In the coming year, I'd like to focus a little better. Rather than sweat full-time over a keyboard, trying to fill every possible issue of every fanzine with one of my articles, I expect to draw back

a little. I want to continue writing for my favourites – *File 770*, *Askance*, *Challenger*, and *Banana Wings* among them, but I may be somewhat less approachable to other zine editors. This should carve out some time for me to publish the next issue of *New Toy* – the last time I looked in its folder, I was somewhat surprised to find I had enough material for it. I would also like to revise and enlarge on the Reno trip report that was published in the last issue of *File 770*. In particular, I want to add more of the photos I took, and work up a nice cover.

Finally, I really really ought to make an effort to publish the new edition of *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*, along with the supplemental material I'd gathered. The original intention was to produce a CD-Rom, similar to the *Energumen* disk. If I publish as a .pdf document, I can still embed the additional material, but it won't seem the same to me. However, I haven't the money to front for even a small number of disks. And since I travel infrequently, I have damn few opportunities to sell them. A CD is still not out of the question, but I need to make a very hard decision first.

Finally, to summarize the year, Andy Hooper and I are on speaking terms again – which is a very good thing, and it was unfortunate that we had gotten under each other's skin in the first place. It looks as though Rob Hansen is on the verge of scanning the first edition of *The Enchanted Duplicator*, so that the complete collection of every printed edition will finally be available on eFanzines. I am on the verge of writing my 100<sup>th</sup> article for *Drink Tank* – which may or may not also be the last. Graeme Cameron has made me “Best Canadian Fanwriter” for 2011, back to back with being “Best Canadian Fanartist” the year before. (I wonder what I'll be Best Canadian for next year? Can I trade it for a FAAn?) I was actually nominated for an Aurora this year – the first time in the history of the award ... which boggles the mind. The pin looks nice next to the Hugo pins, actually – though I have no place to wear such things. And my disability tribunal is looming closer. If all goes well, perhaps 2013 will be a more prosperous year for me.

It could hardly be less.



Every year, so far, there I've made a small change to the art for the "Faned." Of course, this is only the second year in which Graeme has given out these certificates, but every tradition has to start somewhere.

## *In the Absence of Content*

They say that the sign of a good writer is that he (or she) can write at length about absolutely *nothing*, yet so entertain the reader that he doesn't notice that he's been bamboozled.

I suppose there's some truth to that. Myself, I've always preferred to have a topic in mind, along with ancillary facts and conclusions that pave the way from my opening remarks to final closing wisecracks. But as I have no topic at the moment, I'm thrown upon the less tangible resources of improvisation.

So suppose you follow me through a typical day, and we'll see if any ideas turn up?

To start with, much as I hate going to bed, I *love* to sleep in. I may begin my day at virtually any hour from dawn to dawn. There isn't much ceremony to arising, either. Rolling out of bed, I push the cat off before she starts rubbing against my side. Strangely enough, for someone who loves having a cat, I can't stand all that affection. Once vertical, I head for the bathroom. The cat wants to be fed right away, but I listen to my bladder instead. After flushing, I swallow a fistful of pills for a battery of complaints. Then I schlep twenty feet into the kitchen to put coffee on. I like to grind fresh beans, but lately I've been unable to get to the part of town where the farmer's markets are, so I've been buying President's Choice ground coffee instead. It's decent, reasonably priced and available widely. I still have to grind it, though, since the claim that it's finely ground is laughable. Medium is more accurate. The coffee maker is basic, but it does the job.

(No ideas so far.)

About every other day, I have to make bread. This is not the arcane accomplishment it seems, since I use a bread machine that does all the work. I pour oil and water into the bucket, add various amounts of sugar, milk powder and salt that I have memorized, add 3-1/3 cups of flour (white, whole, rye or mixed), then top it all off with a small amount of granulated yeast. I press the "on" switch, then – 3 ½ hours later – I have fresh bread. *Almost* every time. Now and then the dough fails to rise, for reasons that are impossible to guess, and I end up with a heavy, rubbery, bagel-like lump the size of a small cantaloupe. I slice, fry and eat it all the same. Most often, however, there's no problem, so I slice off the rounded upper end – the traditional "heel" of the bread – then right away eat it hot, with cold margarine. Nothing like fresh-baked bread – straight out of a machine, the way Nature intended!

Usually my coffee pot is full by the time I finish loading the bread maker. I pour a cup, add a sachet of Equal and head for the computer.

(Nothing that looks like an idea there, either.)

Once the system boots up, time comes to a stop.

Now and then, the clock begins ticking again so that I can get up from the keyboard and fill my coffee cup. I usually make some sort of brunch after a couple of hours, too. I make sandwiches with No-Name cold cuts, Yellow Label tuna or the local brand of corned beef. Until recently, corned beef

was cheap, though lately it's becoming as expensive as a good cut of pork. What's with that, anyway? Is that the "global scarcity" that we've been warned about for half my life? Well, it sucks, so stop it! If I'm out of bread and still waiting for the bread maker, I may prepare Basmati Rice instead of sandwiches. I've three recipes – a pseudo-Spanish with chili powder, paprika, cumin, anise seed, basil, garlic and onion; a routine curry and plain rice with marg. Now and then, when there are eggs, I may fry up a toasted egg sandwich.

Once I'm back at the keyboard, time stops again. Most days, I tend to my mail, check on groups like DeviantArt and FaceBook that I belong to, download a small number of online comics and then read the news. I may decide to play music in the CD drive, but only if I'm in the mood. The *least* amount of time this modest agenda takes is three hours ... but should I find anything of interest to absorb my attention, I can easily spend twice that long.

(Still not much go on for a subject.)

On those occasions that I *do* find an idea, though, It's not uncommon for me to write a short article, 1000 or 1500 words, in a single day.

However, it's usually getting a little late by the time I finish my daily chores online. Reluctantly, I put my good intentions for the day off until tomorrow.

Every day I wake up *meaning* to do some drawing. It's rare, though, that I go offline and shut down the system while there's still plenty of time to pick up my drawing board to make lines on paper. As I grow older, it seems that the likelihood I'll do any drawing dwindles ever smaller ... along with my desire to draw. It isn't that I'd not *like* to see finished art in front of me, but the long, patient process of creating it has become more than I can endure, I think. Also, the decisions begin to overwhelm me. A background or no background? Black here, or not? A broken camera on the floor, or a left-over TV dinner? They're all good choices, but I can only pick one – unless I want to do the same art more than once.

Assuming I have time enough left for some drawing, my usual practice is to throw on a DVD. I have hundreds of used disks, a significant portion of them animated features and cartoon series such as *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, *Duckman*, *The Venture Brothers*, *Powerpuff Girls*, *Batman* and so on. I also have a wide choice of sitcoms, ranging from the inane (*Gilligan's Island*) to the sublime (*WKRP*). More often, I'll play a movie. Ever since I was a child, I've had to have something on the television while I drew, as though working with my hands didn't use enough of my brain to keep me fully occupied. Another possibility is that TV is as close to human company as I usually have for days on end. In a way, TV is better than having actual company. Unlike real people – who get huffy if you ignore them when they talk to you – I can listen to TV or tune it out, as I please.

(Slender pickings for an article.)

Sooner or later, I notice that I'm tired, or the sun has come up, indicating the end of a long day. I feed the cat again, clean the litter box, feed myself some dinner, then read in my bed until I'm sleepy enough to turn off the light. But ... what's this?

Although I've found nothing to write about, I've just spent well over a thousand words in the search.

It appears that what they say about the ability of a good writer to entertain his readers regardless of content is true – to be perfectly honest, I don't think I've said a single thing, from beginning to end, to interest *anyone*.

# Three's the Charm



It had gotten so difficult for me to get to SFCOntario that, when November rolled around and it was time for the third year's con, I had decided not to attend. My plans were thwarted, however, by the announcement that Chris Garcia was the Fan Guest of Honour in 2012. I had always wanted an opportunity to spend some time with Chris, since both times I've met him it was impossible to make him sit still long enough to talk to. So, I went to SFC anyway, despite expecting to have a thoroughly miserable time.

In fact, I *did* have a thoroughly miserable time ... but it was the travel to and from the convention that was the source of it. Two hours each way, with three connections. By day the traffic getting downtown was impossible. The driver actually warned the passengers, still quite some distance from the subway entrance, that progress would be so slow that we might prefer to get out and *walk* the rest of the way!

The next day, a would-be passenger tried to board the car with an invalid transfer. The driver told him to leave the car, but the passenger refused to leave. A radio call to the supervisor brought a further warning over the loud-speaker system, but the passenger *still* refused to leave. Finally, he was threatened with arrest by the police, but ... without result. So the police had to be called. We other passengers were transferred to the car behind, since the one we were in would have to be taken out of service while the cops wrestled with their arrest ... but still, until the first car moved, we weren't going anywhere. This added another 30 minutes in getting to the con. All over a \$3 fare.

Going home on Saturday night, I had to wait on the street for all three connections, adding up to about an hour in the drizzle and dark as 3 a.m. approached. The last leg passed a stretch of nightclubs, filling the car with happy young men and women in various stages of intoxication, also on their ways home. The driver had to repeatedly remind the crowd not to stand on the rear door steps, or else the streetcar wouldn't start. By then I was suffering extreme back pain back from sitting on hard seats ... so much so I began to wonder if I hadn't developed another kidney stone after 30 blissful years without one. I got home sometime after 3.30 a.m.

All in all, I spent one hour in transit for every one I was at the con.

Under the circumstances, I think you'll understand why I skipped Sunday. Anyway, people customarily leave *early* Sunday, and all I was likely to miss was the dead dog. Compared to the prospect of a long sleep, *and no public transit torment*, there was no doubt in my mind I made the right decision.

For the first two years, I felt SFContario was a little too small and maybe a bit poky, but this year I enjoyed myself virtually every moment. Whether that's entirely because the con had reached critical mass or not, I'm not sure. Partly, I may just have been in a more receptive mood. But I felt welcomed from the start, recognized more faces and found more things to say to them. I ran into one of those welcome faces almost immediately. Jon was one of the guests of the con, and it was the first chance in many, many years to catch up since we had last seen each another. I had arrived late enough to miss all the programming, thankfully, and could ease into partying mode right away.

Saturday was much the same. I arrived late, in spite of *trying* to arrive earlier. But among other delays, that day there was a police incident on the streetcar. I barely walked into the con in time for my scheduled program event at 6.

The panel was on fanzines and fanzine writing, and the other participants were Chris Garcia (the moderator), Neil Jamieson-Williams and myself. Colin Hinz joined us late, after the panel began. The audience wasn't large, but it was attentive and friendly, which is half the battle. When I posted photos on Facebook that night, I described Chris as "The Wild Man of Fandom" -- which is too self-evident to need explanation. Neil I described as the "Punk Academic of Fandom," which *does* need explanation. Neil is a sociologist who feels a duty to describe fandom to itself in a way that would make his fellow academics happy, using words like "matriliteral," "polyfrenetic," and "diverse etherealcentrism," which mean little more than we already know about ourselves but sound vastly more educated. But he also publishes a fanzine using a type font that literally cannot be read, and consciously rejects any illustration or layout tricks that would make the experience of reading *Swill* more pleasurable -- a "punk" attitude if ever there was one. I captioned myself in the photo as "Supreme Being of Fandom," a truism you need not question. Since Colin came late, he wasn't in the shot and has no caption.

I thought the panel was more successful than most I've been on. We seemed to know what we wanted to say, said it, didn't repeat each other, and avoided name-calling and fisticuffs throughout. Afterward, the audience had a few questions that we did our best to answer.

Someone else will have to write about the other programming. I believe there *was* some. Arriving as late as I did, I never saw the art show or dealers' room either, though the program book assures me that SFContario had one of each. For me, it was once again party time.

Highlights among the parties were the Detroit NASFiC bid, the Kansas City in 2016 and Spokane in 2015 Worldcon bids, the birthday bash for Yvonne Penney and the festivities in Robert J. Sawyer's room (both nights). Also notable, *but not for everyone*, was the Mike Glicksohn Memorial Poker Game. I found Chris Garcia, David Clink (a poet), Carolyn Clink (rob Sawyer's wife) and several others deeply immersed in their poker faces when I arrived to take a picture. Okay ... in *reality* they were laughing and gesticulating like madmen, and I didn't see a poker face among them.

For me, the highlight of the con was Saturday night, when I bought a funny hat from the Kansas City

bid people. It was a dapper little number in black and pinstripes, just like Sammy Davis Jr. used to wear, and was *supposed* to remind one of gangsters of the 1920s. It was too modern for that – real gangsters in the Roaring ‘20s wore snap-brimmed Fedoras, or even Derbies. I was able to convince myself I wouldn’t look too silly in one, though, and since I had sold a small number of my CD-ROMs, I felt I could afford an extravagance that weekend.

Also, Diane Lacey had brought my Hugo pin to give me. At last, I had all eleven!

This year Geri Sullivan ran the con suite and was present almost around the clock. She did step out at least once, and when she returned I collapsed at her feet and whimpered something like “Where were you, I had to fill the coffee machine with water myself ...” which she seemed to find excruciatingly funny for some reason. Geri had bought about 6 flavours of gourmet potato chips and a Canadian cheese to put out. There was hot pulled pork, candies and soft drinks as well, keeping everyone well fed. Unlike some cons I remember, there didn’t seem to be a mass exodus from the hotel around dinner time of fans, leaving a few broke unfortunates or alienated loners behind. This was a good thing, as I am both kinds of fan.

I don’t want to appear *wildly optimistic*, but having had a surprisingly good time at SFContario 3, I may have to consider returning next year ... The guests will be Seanan McGuire (author), Dave Kyle (fan) and Chandler Davis (science). Dates are November 29 to December first.

<http://sfcontario.ca>





Friday (Cont.)

Rob Sawyer



Diane Lacey

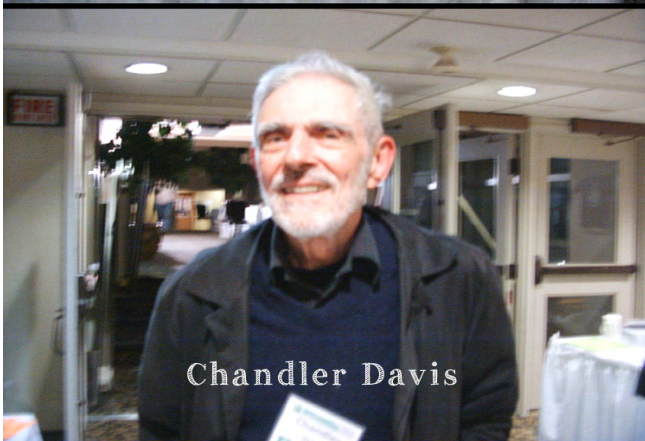


Saturday Montage

Chris Garcia  
Neil Jamieson-Williams  
Taral



Hope Leibowitz  
Chris Garcia



Chandler Davis



Mike Glicksohn Memorial  
Poker Game



Yvonne Penney

Lloyd Penney



Catharine Crockett

## *To Write or Not to Write*

I'm kind of in a mind to write something, and kind of not. You see, I recently finished a rather large project that has been published and posted, and for the most part ignored ... if I may say so. Consequently, my motivational energies are at a low ebb. I also have several lesser jobs ahead of me, that have been put off long enough that I now face actually doing them. I don't want to do them very much, but I have to – I promised the art or was paid money for it, so my options are limited.

Not that I haven't been *looking* for ways to procrastinate. I just haven't found much to inspire me on the internet of late.

I usually look forward to reading the news, for instance. But all I see are stories such as one today about our Prime Minister, Steven Harper, whose sucking-up to militarist solutions has embarrassed the nation once again. This time he sucks up to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The latest move to erase Palestine from the map – so similar in spirit to another Head of State's remarks about erasing Israel from the map – was so blatant that neither the staunchly pro-Israeli US nor the United Kingdom were able to support the announcement of new settlements on the West Bank. But, there was *our* Prime Minister, showing the world that even if no one else will, *Canada* will stand behind Netanyahu's efforts at ethnic cleansing. What's embarrassing about it is that, of course, by far the majority of Canadians *don't* support such shameless ass-kissing. The world will *think* we do, though.

I used to wake up every morning eager to see what new wonders would be revealed today by the Mars Rovers, or discovered by Cassini in its orbit of Saturn. My fascination with keeping tabs on NASA has grown less and less, though.

It isn't that the flow of information from the various probes operating in the solar system has stopped, but the novelty has diminished. Short of crashing Cassini itself into Saturn, there is little more it can photograph. No missions to fly more closely to any of the moons have been announced – in fact, I doubt they would be productive, as too close an approach would likely mean too quick a flyby to obtain useful images. Instead, Cassini has been put into a polar orbit of Saturn for the next few years. The rest of the probe's mission will be to study the rings ... which, in close-up photos, resemble so many abstract paintings in black, white and grey. In fact, plans *are* to crash Cassini into Saturn in 2017. So we may well have already seen everything of note that we're ever going to see from that probe.

The news from Mars has been mixed. On the one hand, there is the triumph of Curiosity landing safely in Gale Crater. The colour photos have been numerous and spectacular! I wish I could say the same for Curiosity's elder sibling, Opportunity. Unfortunately, this smaller veteran of the Martian plains seems to have lost the capacity for colour photos, and has returned only black and white images for months. The last colour vista photographed by Opportunity – one that I waited weeks for – was not even in the real colours of Mars, but *false colour images*. The enhancement made it easier for geologists to spot olivine and hematite ... but also falsified the view entirely. Equally disappointing, after waiting more than a year for Opportunity to cross a barren, stony, sand-swept plain to arrive at Endeavor Crater, it turns out that the giant crater is *too* big for the virtual tourist's own good. It is so immense that every feature that is not right under the rover's nose is too

far away to be much more than a silhouette on the horizon. And, for whatever reason, the first feature that Curiosity has been sent to investigate at close quarters is a hummocky slope that is only slightly more impressive than a few brick piles on a beach. Where are the twenty-story-tall, layered cliffs I had been looking forward to? Unfortunately, about a mile away on the horizon ... well, one can only hope that's where Curiosity will be headed *next* year.

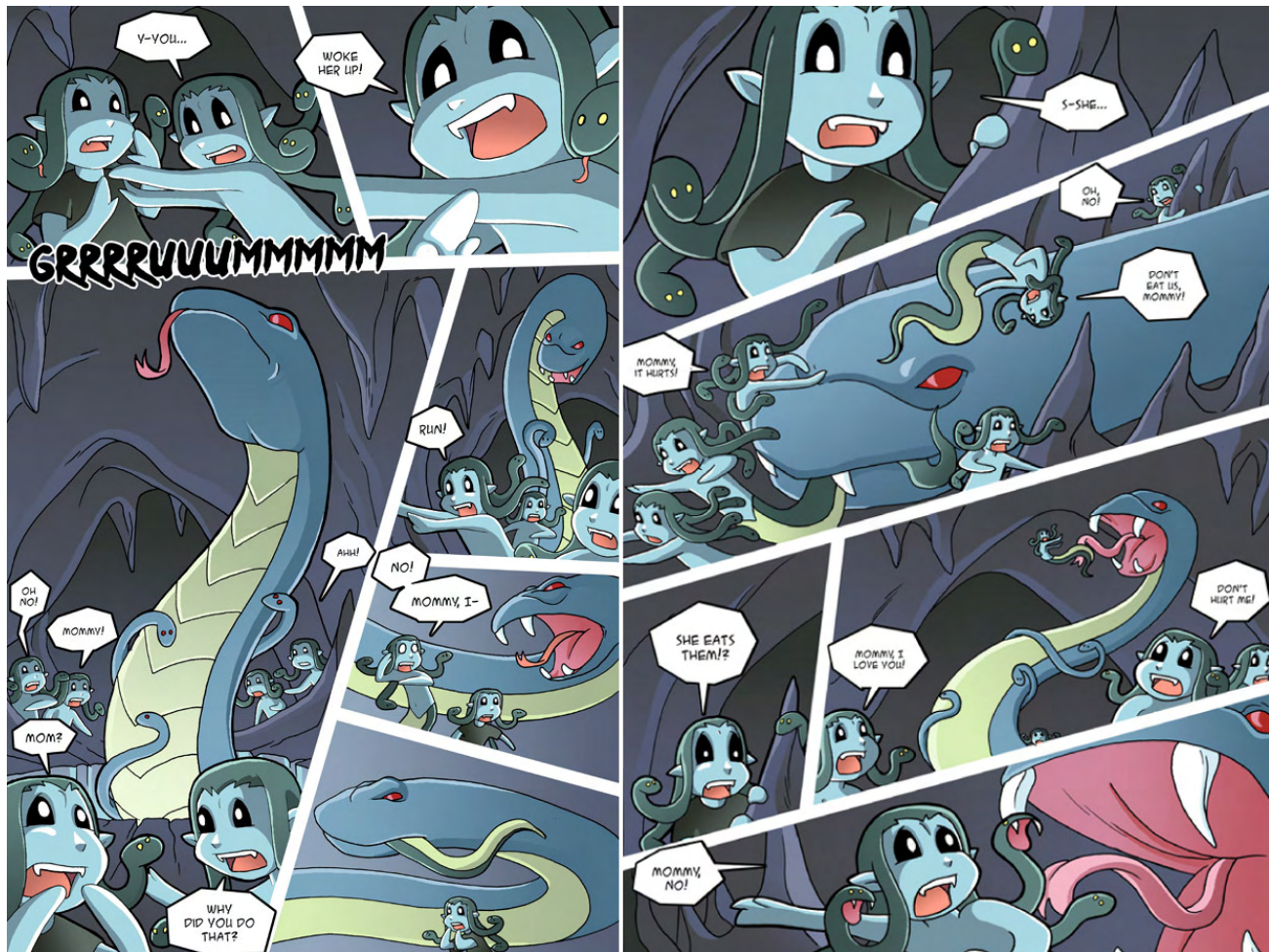
The asteroid probe, Dawn, finished its first mission, and set out for its second target early this Fall. It was fantastic seeing Vesta at such close quarters for the first time, but it must be said that, after a while, one crater with slumped walls began to look like any other. While what we saw was intriguing, so far very little analysis has been forthcoming. It will be a two-year wait before Dawn arrives at the dwarf planet Ceres in February of 2015. Ho, hum.

There is also Messenger, on an extended mission in orbit of Mercury. But ... well ... apart from the discovery of "hollows" – large-scale volcanic vents of some sort, apparently – Mercury turns out to be just a ball of rock with holes in it. Its charms were quickly exhausted.

If the news on Earth hasn't been great, and the flow of photographs coming from space not altogether inspiring, I've at least had a few favourite web comics to fall back on. Three of them are by a single artist who calls himself Bleedman. The trouble with doing three comics at once, however, is that they all progress at a snail's pace. One of them, *Sugar Bits*, appears to be drawing to a close, but never succeeded in interesting me much anyway, compared to the other two. Giant monsters with hypertrophied muscles that suspiciously resemble samurai armour have never appealed to me. *Powerpuff Girls: The Forgotten* is the second strip. It, too, has somewhat baffled me of late – it seems that I lost the thread of the plot some time ago, but wasn't aware of it. But, who can *not* love the *Powerpuff Girls* ... even if they seem to have grown up a little? The third strip I love not only for the art, but for the story as well. Oddly, I'm not entirely sure of the plot of *this* strip, either. The story involves Satan's little girl, but I've grown increasingly unsure of some of the finer points of *Grim Tales: What About Mimi*. Oh well, the digital art is gorgeous.

Another web comic I followed was inactive for all of last year. *The Watch* re-appeared in 2012, with a new artist, and a new adventure written by the old author, but it remains to be seen whether or not the ten-year-old series has begun to take itself too seriously, and whether the old silly spirit of gender-swapping and odd transformations remains intact.

I was disappointed when a third web site I had been following underwent a fatal sea change. Almost as though to compensate, I discovered a delightful neo-fantasy called *Modest Medusa*, by Jake Richmond. The Medusa is essentially a precocious six-year-old girl with a snake's lower body who appears in Jake's toilet. She had swum through a tunnel from a fantasy kingdom in some other dimension. After a run-in with chain-saw unicorn, Jake follows Modest back to her home world to confront her mother – who, incidentally, *eats* her children. They don't like it, either. Little poignant touches like "Mommy, it hurts," is one of the finer moments I've seen in an online cartoon in a long while, and puts a bit of stiffener in what would otherwise be merely a lightweight story. Although Modest does have snakes for hair, they seem to have a life of their own. They love "Chocodiles," for instance. Where the digested confection goes is a question posed in one strip, but never adequately answered. Modest never turns anyone to stone, but her snakes do on one occasion, when they bite a mermaid. Best of all, there's a new strip almost every day! Otherwise I'd have to say that I had been on the brink of losing interest in web comics.



I used to have a small pile of e-mail to answer every time I booted up. Lately, however, the amount seems to have gradually shrunk away to almost nothing. Perhaps it didn't help when one of my favorite correspondents up and died. Another has been busy on a novel he wants to self-publish. Having little else to make up for the lack of real mail, I've been drawn deeper into FaceBoob. Unfortunately, substituting FaceBoob for genuine correspondence is like replacing your social life with heroin ... bad heroin, too, cut with baking soda or horse tranquilizer. It can be fun for a while, but inevitably you realize how shallow your come-backs and punch lines really are, and discover how little you actually care about the scores of lolcats that people post every day. Not all the posts are as superficial as that – there are good, serious, political cartoons as well. But after 75 or 80 of those, you begin to feel that there isn't much likelihood that any of your "friends" will disagree with you that Dick Cheney is an evil putz, or that supporters of the Tea Party probably couldn't think their way out of a tea bag. Then, too, there is a group I belong to that seems mainly to exist as a place to post old photographs of fans from decades upon decades ago. Most of the fans in the photographs I don't know well *today*, much less in 1952 or 1966, when they were young. FaceBoob is not the answer. But, we all knew that anyway ...

So I am bored with writing for the moment. Very bored. Even bored enough that I began drawing again. You'll be among the first to know if I finish anything.

# \*Left-Over Pieces\*

*Ned Brooks* – [nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

Thanks Taral! I didn't realize Bill Burns was one of those without power - I just e-mailed him that my annual zine had been uploaded to fanac.org. You have a paper copy in the mail.

Interesting about you and Victoria Wayne and Dave Locke (who was active on some of the Yahoo-groups until his death). I knew nothing about that at the time.

I stared at the astronaut images for a while, trying to see what the doubling was for - was it a stereo pair (which wouldn't work for me)? But then I read your explanation. I can see that whoever edited it goofed on the little triangular space that didn't get shaded - though I doubt that even 1% of the viewers noticed that. But I could also see why the shading was thought necessary - on the backpack, and across the bottom of the left-hand original image, there are broad streaks of white-on-white. I am no artist, but to me they look like the white-out that I have seen on pre-cyber originals, used to cover some unwanted mark on the paper. ... I'm not sure that the gray shading was really necessary, but then I don't have the original image to deal with. The white streaks are very faint - if I had the image in my graphics software I would expect to be able to eliminate them by twiddling the Brightness control a little.

There was no white-out used on the original art. Nor do any discrepancies show in the Word Doc I used as master, or the PDF I mailed out. I suspect the faint differences in the white that you see are a product of your viewing software ... or possibly you need to wipe your glasses.

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*Dada Dada (Akumetakai)* – [akumeitakai@yahoo.com](mailto:akumeitakai@yahoo.com)

I want to say that Disney buying up the Lucas IP is about as bland a thing as one could say. The only thought on my mind was, 'Hmmm, guess this is how things are going to be from now on.' As the MOUSE continues to own every damned thing under the sun, I suppose it's fair to say that at least they can't do much worse than 'short stuff.'

I'm-a tell you a story I heard from one of my teachers at the Art Institute of Portland's Diploma Mill: One of my teachers who I shall call 'Suze' once worked a gig at Lucas Arts. The work had something to do with 3D renders and procedural stuff in Maya, kind of her Forte. One day for lunch, she went to the cafe on Skywalker Ranch. As usual, there was a huge line for grub and she, along with a couple of the Render Farm guys, were queuing to order. Along behind them comes a stubby little man who is demanding people in front of him get out of the way so he can order. The line is several people long at this point and, after Suze and crew got out of the way, the project lead for her group is being tapped upon by this person. The project lead looks back, sees the top of this dude's head and says, "I don't think so, Shorty."

Well, "Shorty" gets pretty damn angry and winds his way around the guy anyway, giving the lead just enough time to see that it was George Lucas himself pushing his way through the line. Obviously, the project had a new lead by the following morning.

It's a story I keep with me when I hear that tired old, 'Man with a Vision' slice in regard to Lucas. Whether in jest, testament or irony; he will always be that little s\*\*t of a man trying to beat the lunch rush at the cafe and nothing more in my mind.

I suppose he may be a little "short" of a man, at that. Certainly he had short patience for waiting in line.

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## Brad Foster – [bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)

Seems like just about every zine I get these days has Taral in it, most of the comments on the *File 770* web are from this Taral person, and he also keeps popping up in my Facebook feed. Now here's another zine full of, good grief, still more Taral! If he keeps using up all the words like this, what are the rest of us going to communicate with?

"I ended up with a cupboard full of beans for nothing!" Hmmm, good to know for future reference, don't buy beans canned in Canada. For some reason, they are only good for three days. Thanks for the tip!

I'm with Eric about finding a wider audience for your writing if you want to. Can't offer any solid advice on **where** to go, but I think I mentioned in a loc somewhere before that so many of your pieces read like fine, general-interest articles that anyone could get into, not just fans.

Rapidiographs do take a lot of looking after, but I put up with that since they are the only tools that give me the consistent line control I need. Also, the big secret to keeping the things in shape is to clean them out with Formula 409 cleaner. None of the special cleaning solutions or vibrating baths made specifically for the pens do all that well. But, whatever the "formula" in Formula 409 is, it cuts through ink like nobody's business! Cindy had a set while she was studying design in school. When we got together they had been dried up solid and stored in a box for about a decade. I soaked them in F409, worked 'em over a little, and now am able to use them just fine.

Regarding not being able to finally attend Worldcon, being just down the road, as it were, from us. Afraid the art festival requires the artists themselves to be there with their work, part of the contract. Now, I hadn't thought about the fact that worldcons normally run a few days longer than the usual weekend-only conventions! I popped over to their website to check out the dates.... damn. Five days, but only one of them, the very first, would not be one we need for the festival, and even that one day is needed to hit the road for the show. Sigh.

I'm not as bothered as Eric is about, as he puts it, "Facebook exists essentially to sell your identity to advertisers." I not only have pretty minimal info in my profile, but I can't recall the last time I even noticed what was in any of those ads they run on the side of the page. Not what the advertisers want to hear, of course, and bless them for giving Facebook money so I can keep using it for free. But I'm not really paying any attention to them at all.

I find I'm not all that bothered by Disney buying up the Lucas properties. Like the other big names they've acquired, it doesn't seem to me that they stuck in their fingers in any way creatively to any of those. This is just a big corporation that is buying things that make money so that they themselves can now have some of that cash, and evidently know well enough to leave the creative to do what they do, and just cash their stock dividends. (As well, quite a flood of funny Disney/*Star Wars* mashup art came out in the week or so after the announcement that was a lot of fun to see.)

I liked your thought that, when it comes to a buffet with tons of choices, we should have a shot at “next day seconds.” When our foodie friends get together to talk about food and restaurants, my only contribution to the question of “what is the best place to eat?” is “Any buffet!”

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Bill Patterson, [bpral22169@aol.com](mailto:bpral22169@aol.com)

Taking things somewhat out of order, in "In a Corporate Board Room, Far, Far Away" you complain, "Does Disney have to own *everything*?" Well, why not? Having bought the U.S. Congress (for the purpose of destroying the concept of intellectual property as it has evolved over the last few hundred years) the outlay to acquire everything else of interest was a minor consideration, surely? And what, exactly, did you mean by the later episodes of the *Star Wars* franchise "skirted perilously close to racist clichés"? The racist clichés were boldly and disgustingly placed front and center in some of the films, no skirting involved, IMO.

The contradiction you seem to find in Lucas doubting he could sell the *Star Wars* concept at all and having planned nine episodes from the start I don't find all that unbelievable. Filmmaking – or, more precisely, getting someone to greenlight your project -- is, like politics, the art of the possible, and it really does not tax credibility that Lucas might have fronted what he viewed as the strongest self-contained storyline in order to get a foot in the door. When it took off, he then was prepared for sequels, which is the way this is usually thought of in the industry – and why most sequels are so weak (i.e., they weren't part of an extended plan *ab initio*. Consider in this regard the *Back to the Future* sequelae, which collapsed completely in the third installment).

I'm afraid I had to stifle a guffaw at the idea that Disney now "seeks a guarantee of profits that no longer have to be earned by originality or taking risks." It was the "now" that got me. With all due respect, are you speaking of some other Hollywood other than the one I live half a mile south of? The idea that Disney or the film industry in general *ever* valued originality or risk-taking makes me quite faint.

I did quite a lot of editorial work on Robert James's highly entertaining *Alternate Oscars* book (the first volume of which was just published this month as *WHO won? An Irreverent Look at the Oscars 1927-1943*) and so got better acquainted with the industry's standards and practices as far back as the twenties. I assure you, the watchword has *always* been more-of-the-same-please-only-more-so. It's hard to think of any industry that has historically been so consistently risk-averse as the film industry.

Before I move away from the subject, let me give *WHO Won?* a shameless plug. It's (as I said) highly entertaining. James's writing zips right along (and we worked hard to make it so) and carries you lightly and humorously through decades' worth of idiocies and insanities. I can't recommend it enough – and at a mere \$19.95 on Amazon it's a bargain. Two more volumes planned; the next is in the editorial stage now, and the third is being written. I imagine there will be a fourth in twenty years or so ...

With reference to Lloyd Penney's plaintive question "Why don't people write a loc to the zines they enjoy?" I would add that it is simply courteous to loc a zine you have received – simply to acknowledge it even if you don't have a lot of comment to make (as sometimes happens to everyone). But the real answer – more fundamental, I think, than the answer Lloyd proposes ("simply lack of time and impetus and . . . coherency") – which are, after all, mere rationalizations – is that fandom, too, shares in the general malaise of passivity, self-involvement, self-absorption, that characterizes this dying society all around us.

Bill Patterson unexpectedly wrote back about his excellent Heinlein biography, despite a busy schedule, adding:

Yes, the second volume. For a nerve-wracking time this year, Hartwell wanted to break it into two volumes, so there would have been **three** – but ultimately he didn't do any of the necessary negotiations with the agent that would have been necessary to make that happen (the contract specified 2, so he would have had to renegotiate the contract against the agent's opposition) -- and in fact never offered me any consideration whatsoever to sweeten the distressing possibility that this would keep going on for another two or three years. It's already taken over my life since 2000, and won't be finished until probably the 2014 worldcon. But he had me add about 400 pages to the second volume, probably in anticipation of a third volume, and now I have to trim it back to where it was before. I've got a self-imposed turn-in deadline of Thanksgiving (which in the US is next week). I should make it – but it does require constant work.

As it turns out, the main attraction in the first volume seems to have been a mass of information about a person who was largely invisible to the readership, shaped by his later works. I can't tell you how many people have remarked on how startling it was that he ever had a struggle. That element is not so available for the period after he became better known. But there are other things that were interesting to me as he continued to shape himself as a human being. There is a touch more commentary about the stories because although some of them are quite popular, people don't seem to have any real grasp of the complex things that are going on in them.

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## Eric Mayer – [groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com)

The title's pretty cool. At first I couldn't read it at all, but squinting a bit, I can make the letters come into focus.

Busy week here. The car went for its annual inspection and I went for my semi-annual inspection. (i.e. Doctor visit) The car did better. Didn't even need so much as a windshield wiper or tire, whereas I was advised to start taking anti-cholesterol medication. And I don't even get a sticker to say I'm okay for another year. Well, I'm 62 and my car is 12. What can you expect?

I'm still totally bummed out about Dave Locke. Yeah, I knew he was very, very ill for years but nevertheless death is always something one thinks about as being in the future, maybe soon, perhaps real soon, but just not right now. Also he never said very much about his problems.

I admit I was surprised when upon my return to fandom I found out you and he were corresponding. It's good when people can make up their differences. Some fans are never willing to let go of hard feelings.

You say "That was more than 30 years ago, when I was almost another fan than I am today." Isn't that the truth? How many of us are the same people we were thirty years ago? And yet there are fans who want to freeze others in time. The fan they knew as a neo thirty years ago is still, to them, essentially a neo. You see too many oldpharts locked into the scheme of things that they were comfortable with decades ago, unwilling, or maybe unable, to re-evaluate others, to acknowledge growth and change, personally and creatively. In some instances they continue to attack people who no longer actually exist.

Dave had a clearer perspective on fandom than many, I think, and he was not afraid to tell unpleasant

truths. Is that why he never got the recognition he deserved? Heck, he was already writing great stuff when I first got in fandom back in the early Seventies. But I never recall his name mentioned much when it came to awards or lists of great fanwriters. Luckily, he didn't give a shit.

It was great corresponding with him the past several years. He could be a lot more blunt than I am and was no doubt more hard-headed. It was not only fun but beneficial to me to be able to go back and forth with him about various issues. He didn't countenance bullshit, that's for sure. Man, I still feel like I owe him a letter or he owes me one.

At this point you're the only fan I have any kind of correspondence with, apart from my sending out locs and a handful of fans sending locs to me. With Dave gone, I'm a lot less enthused about fanning. I may just gradually ramp down my efforts. It's getting to be too much "when I were a lad" and memorial issues.

Like you, we got a scare as Sandy approached but aside from moderate wind and a little rain it turned out to be much ado about nothing for us. However, 20% of households in the county lost power, some for days, so we were just lucky.

Hey, they did a hatchet job on that black and white drawing. What were they thinking? Even if they had added a tone correctly it would have lessened the impact of a bright, clean black and white composition. Oh well, they colorize movies, don't they?

Buffets are cool. And I can sympathize with your limited diet at home. In my case, neither Mary nor I like to cook, as in we **hate** to cook. And having sampled each other's cooking, we decided if there's anything we like less than cooking it is eating the other's attempts at same. So we eat a lot of pre-cooked and prepared foods, which are surely unhealthy but hey, I don't smoke or drink. Let me eat!

I see we're talking in the loccol again about our lack of love from fandom, and as you say, you haven't done badly. Actually, aside from winning the Hugo, is there any honor you haven't had? Other awards, GoH at Worldcon, multiple Hugo nominations ... everything but the actual award. Kind of like the Buffalo Bills who went to the Superbowl – was it five times in a row? – and never won. I am afraid that the days of fans who represent what we think of as fandom winning any Hugo category are numbered ... if not already passed.

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## Andrew Hooper – [fanmailaph@aol.com](mailto:fanmailaph@aol.com)

With nine issues over the cyber-transom, *Broken Toys* certainly deserves another LoC before the year runs down. I'm pretty dismal at keeping up with a fast publishing schedule like yours. Earlier this year, I printed out issues two through six, with the intention of writing a fairly large letter. But I couldn't read and react in the one-month window, and now I'm even farther behind. It takes me longer to compose a letter than it once did, because fan editors don't edit letters any more – as far as I can tell, they don't even proofread them. Do they actually read them? I know Arnie Katz read my letter in the last issue of his *Fanstuff* because he took time out to call it condescending, but he didn't have time to correct the typos that Spellcheck had inserted into my work, like replacing a mistyped "better" with "biter." I fear a majority of editors are guilty of publishing at least something without reading it fully, something no one ever did when they had to retype everything to stencil.

You're one up on me ... no, several up on me, as I have no printed copies of *Broken Toys* at all.

I'm coming to think of you as fandom's "Hater-of-Record," in that your output is as regular as the dawn, and one can generally depend on you to hold a jaundiced opinion of whatever crosses your path. You and D. West should get a red velvet theater box to sit in together, like Statler and Waldorf on *The Muppet Show*. Yes, that's a fine vision of Hell. How many people have offered to punch you in the snoot following your comments on the "disappointing" follow-through of Hurricane Sandy? I bet you may have made even Bill Burns mad, and he's a literal *saint*.

And you pick such low-hanging fruit, like Disney and *Star Wars*. When *Star Wars* appeared, it was at the end of a Golden Age of dramatic, introspective, realist movies, films like *Klute*, *The Graduate*, and *The Conversation*. Whiz-bang Saturday serial adventure had pretty much disappeared from the art form, except in Italy and Hong Kong. When *Star Wars* appeared, it cut through the absolutely glacial weight of introspective SF cinema (*2001*, *THX-1138*, *Silent Running*), and seemed to return the entire world's love of stupid fun. How else to explain Ronald Reagan? But like any drug you've been whacking into your vein for more than 30 years, the space opera adventure fix has lost most of its effectiveness. To put it mildly, we've had an awful lot of escapism since Lucas began his franchise; I'm ready for some introspective downers again. Alas, where is Tom Disch now that we need him?

I think I have a good handle on your feelings on editorial interference now – but of course, I'm still hopeless at reproducing reasonably complex art properly, another point where you and West would surely find common ground. (The more I think about it, the more I think the two of you need to have a weekly comedy-drama where you solve crimes on the USA Network.)

But never let it be said that candor doesn't have its uses. For example, yours is the first reaction to Dave Locke's death that comes somewhere near my own. I had the misfortune of first encountering Dave Locke through the TAFF "candidacy" of Martha Beck, which he and Jackie Causgrove championed so ardently. When you know someone only from the noise and anguish they inspire from a great distance, it's hard to perceive the good and faithful qualities their friends can observe. I frankly tried to steer clear of Dave Locke for my entire career in fandom, but that didn't keep him from taking a few pokes at me anyway. On the other hand, many of the people he fought with most bitterly forgave their differences years ago. I would wish him a peaceful repose, but he would probably come back to life to argue over the definition of "peace."

I hope you derive some Gatsby-like insights from your encounter with Chris Garcia. He won't *let you* have a bad exchange with him in person, so that should be okay. I find that my own impression of him has been irretrievably soured by the act of trying to submit to his fanzine. I wrote a vast piece about Mexican pilots in World War II that dropped into the abyss of *TDT #300* without a sound; then I composed a fairly personal memoir about *Blade Runner's* 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary that he actually *lost*. I ended up sending it to Graeme Cameron, which, let's face it, was about as effective as publishing it in an apa. I don't submit 2 dozen articles to fanzines a year like some writers, so it hit me fairly hard. Chris, of course, has long forgotten it, and James is chasing a squeaky toy and barking at pigeons.

Eric Mayer has the best advice for you – to find some professional outlet for your writing. Your output is such that you could easily write a weekly column for any number of paper or electric venues. Yes, it's tedious to write to specification, and even more so to make the connections necessary to establish such a niche. But that's what agents are for, and you know one or two of those, right? Honestly, quit wasting your output on the likes of Chris Garcia, and reach out to a wider audience. 61 years is long enough to make the world wait to enjoy your genius.

I'll vouch for that.

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## Keith Soltys – [keith@soltys.ca](mailto:keith@soltys.ca)

Thanks for sending me *Broken Toys 9*, which I finally found some time to read. I enjoyed it and look forward to more.

I have mixed feelings about *SF Signal* winning a Hugo. While it's a very good site, and I read it daily, I'm not sure that I'd call it a periodical. Perhaps it's time for yet another category, or a formal acknowledgment in the definition of "fanzine" that the category includes blogs. On second thought, that's probably the better course, as I think the days of printed (or even electronically published) zines are past.

Good article on Disney and *Star Wars*. I gave up on both a long time ago. I doubt whether Disney could make a *Star Wars* movie worse than any of the Episodes 1 to 3, but honestly, I don't care. I'll spend my movie money on quality films like *Inception* and *Cloud Atlas*.

SFContario was fun, but I was really surprised at how small the attendance seemed to be. We will probably go again next year, especially since the downtown location is convenient, but we didn't buy advance memberships. It's too close to Christmas to make plans that far ahead, considering we don't know what Nancy's work situation will be.

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## Alan D. Burrows – [dotter8@gmail.com](mailto:dotter8@gmail.com)

Personally, I believe that Disney really only wanted Lucasfilm's important subsidiaries; LucasArts, Skywalker Sound and of course Industrial Light and Magic. Damfino why they're even bothering with *SW7-9*. Still, could they do worse than Lucas himself did with *SW1-3*? I agree with you that *A New Hope* was pretty much the entire story; Lucas wrote it that way in case there were no more. Again, though, I remember saving my dimes to go see *Return of the Jedi*, and standing with the rest of the crowd when Darth Vader saved Luke from the Emperor. I can't deny that I was happy in the end that there was a trilogy. (I nearly tossed my cookies at the original closing theme, though. I'm glad Lucas changed it later.)

You did the least that you should have done regarding the unauthorized changes made to your program book illo. You have copyright of that, their changes could bring it into the public domain if not challenged somehow. Pity a lawsuit would cost so much, you could've used the extra chunk of cash from a settlement.

I've been avoiding SFContario. Besides travel to the con being a problem, (two bus fares both ways), the staff seem to be largely composed of OSFiC alumni who never really liked me. Far be it from me to deliberately go where I'm not wanted... but mostly it's been a matter of affording travel and meals. That's been a problem for me lately. (Pity, there was a party I'd have really liked to attend this year; it celebrated three important birthdays!)

*I think you may be a bit too sensitive about attending SFC, if for no other reason that not much of the concom were members of OSFiC back when you thought the club didn't like you.*

I no longer attend the two other local SF cons either. They've moved to a hotel far to the north-east of

Toronto in a neighboring city, beyond range of the TTC. It's as if they want to exclude fans who can't afford a car to get there and a two-night stay. Oddly enough, they both have huge dealer's rooms...

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## WAHF

**Terry Whittier**, who observes, "That's the worst you've gotten? 'I want Wilma Flintstone and Judy Jetson doing cunnilingus in a swimming pool full of Spaghetti-O's, and Yogi Bear is making a video while Boo Boo porks him from behind.' Amateurs." *Well, I had to keep in mind who was reading, and tone the matter down a little. Also, I'm known for my exquisite taste and sensitivity as an artist in furry fandom.*

**Bruce Gillespie**, "Thanks very much ... and apologies, again, for lack of letter of comment. The current paying job is taking all my time, and I'm way behind on anything fannish, including *Science Fiction Commentary*, which is all waiting to be put together. Early December ... "

**We Would Like to Hear From:** James Bacon, who needs egging-on.

## *Baring Mishap*

It is legal for women to go topless in Ontario.

This may come as a bit of a shock to anyone who has lived in Ontario since the 1996 Court of Appeals decision that the defendant, Gwen Jacob, did "*nothing degrading or dehumanizing*," in removing her shirt and bra. "*The scope of her activity was limited and was entirely non-commercial. No one who was offended was forced to continue looking at her.*" The decision did not address whether the woman had a constitutional right to bear arms ... shoulders and breasts. Nevertheless, women have technically had the right to beat the heat in the same manner as men in this province for more than 15 years.

Oddly, I have almost never seen a case where a woman has exercised that right. For the most part, you find young mothers seeking the seclusion of the darkest corner of the food court or a well-screened part of a neighborhood park to breastfeed. But the blouse is unbuttoned discreetly and the infant squeezed in so tightly it is practically smothered. For a certainty, any low-cut dress will show more.

The one exception in my own experience was a young woman in my neighborhood. By day she was merely a nuisance, who bummed people for cigarettes and spare change. But after midnight she was a changed woman. She wandered down the empty streets, screaming to herself at the top of her lungs, while swinging her blouse over her head. Everyone knew she was mentally disturbed, and kept their distance. There is nothing less sexy than insanity ... except perhaps Bronies.

At some point, we didn't see or hear from the Parkdale Lady Godiva again. Perhaps all it took to get her off the streets was a change in her prescription medications. Then again, considering recent decisions from Ottawa, perhaps she was appointed Minister of Native Affairs ... or even Minister of Defense.

Although I haven't had the pleasure of witnessing the event for myself, bared breasts in Ontario are officially celebrated at least once a year. Since 2008, Go Topless Day has been observed in many major

cities in late August, and in Ontario since 2011. According to a spokeswoman (barely heard over the parade's scratchy recording of The Beatles' "Revolution" playing in the background), "*This is not a beauty contest. It is about freedom. We have support; there are many men who come to our events too.*" Yes, I'll just bet they do.

There's also Gay Pride Day, which brings out gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, the transgendered and, of course, lesbians. The trouble is that the parade brings out altogether too much human anatomy ... far more of it than I'm even remotely interested in.

Fortunately, the bared female breast is not entirely about respect, dignity, and freedom. It is also about having a good laugh when least expected. There was a curious incident down by the Toronto lakeshore ...

I live a few minutes' walk from the lakeshore, and have often strolled along the stretch where the bicycle path follows the boardwalk. It can be a bit crowded, in fact, with bikes, skateboarders, joggers, tourists feeding the ducks and rubberneckerers like me, all sharing a right-of-way that is barely five feet wide. But the expressway crowds the lakeshore at that point, and nobody wants to see the narrow strip of grass between road and water torn up to widen the right-of-way.

Shortly after the Ontario Court of Appeals handed down its decision on baring a woman's breasts, a young biker took his customary route down by the lakeshore. Sure enough, as he entered the bottleneck in the path, he passed a young jogger who was also exercising – her newly won rights to bare her ample feminine endowment. The biker's head obeyed the Law of Depravity ... swiveling around to follow her as jogged (and jiggled) past. Predictably, he rode right into a sign post a couple of seconds later. I bet that smarted.

Serious people, earnest people, *enlightened* people insist that women's breasts can only be handled with profound care and respect ... to which I whole-heartedly concur. But, whatever else this story says about male prurience *or* female liberation, it proves that some stereotypes are the unvarnished truth – and that sometimes the best political correctness is good humour.

## Trading Spaces

Who remembers Outer Space? And why did we have to call it that, anyway? Was there ever an Inner Space, or a Middle Space? But, never mind that for now; who remembers Outer Space?

It was a black and white vastness beyond our atmosphere, where all colour and movement died. Planets were upside down and the moon backwards.

The Outer Space of my youth was an impression formed in my mind by black and white photographs in books that were mostly published before I was born. The caption on one paramecium-like blur read, "M-31, the Great Nebula in Andromeda," and the one that looked like an blurry olive with two toothpicks in it was, "The Planet Pluto, discovered by Clyde W. Tombaugh in 1930." They were places that we could never know anything about, and looked as much like real places as a medieval diagram of the Celestial Spheres.

Since planets, stars and galaxies were not real places as we knew them, to depict them as we'd show a map of Europe, say, was without meaning. Astronomical objects appeared in telescopes reversed and inverted by the laws of optics, so that's how they appeared in books as well. *That* was the reality to astronomers.

While we no longer measure astronomical distances in Parsecs, it was once a unit of distance devised by astronomers who had no way to measure distances directly. A "Parallax Second" was an indirect measure of distance based on the number of seconds-of-degrees of arc separating two sightings of an object projected against the stellar backdrop while at opposite points along the Earth's orbit. What could be more natural, eh? For convenience, you may think of a Parsec as 3.26 lightyears ... The astronomers of the Black and White Age of Outer Space were never troubled by this unintuitive way of expressing a distance. Distance in interstellar terms were never meaningful to them to begin with. Like the stars and galaxies themselves, distance in Space was an abstraction best expressed in a way that lent itself to their calculations.

Not only was Outer Space entirely black and white, frozen, and motionless, as captured by the giant telescopes of Yerkes, Palomar and Mt. Wilson, it was so deadly to life we were not to even *think* of traveling to other planets.

Few remember the Van Allen Radiation Belts that ringed the earth with lethally charged particles. The illustrations in books showed them like orange slices, bulging over the equator. It was death to cross them. It was almost as though the fool of an astronaut who *dared* travel to the moon tempted the Divine Wrath as surely as though he thrust himself into the Burning Bush. Launching a spaceship from one of the poles – where the Belts' radiation density was weakest – held out a faint hope of success, but only at the greatest peril. Better not to think of manned travel in Space at all.

It was a great shock when the astronauts of Apollo 8 paid no attention whatever to the Van Allen Belts, and sailed serenely to the Moon and back. What the heck happened? What about the zones of death? Why didn't their testicles turn into charcoal briquettes? Why didn't their skin slough off like so much lunch meat gone bad? Far from the astronauts succumbing to every known form of cancer within weeks of their return, they were in the pink of health.

The Apollo flights were a revelation that Outer Space wasn't quite the frozen tableau of Divine Fire that astronomers, in their wisdom, had served up to us.

The next three or four decades brought thousands of unimaginably colourful photographs from the planets, the stars and the galaxies that completely changed our conception of Space. It became quaint, passé to speak of "Outer Space" any more. Space was no longer a stopped-clock stillness, hands never changing. Instead, the universe revealed to us seemed increasingly animated, energetic and even bizarre; with objects such as magnetars, plutinos, dark matter, cosmic strings, spinars and planets with diamond cores seemingly everywhere we turned.

In fact, I suspect we may have gone a little too far in how we imagine the universe. To watch *Star Trek* in its later incarnations, there was a giant four-colour nebula with plasma fires and coruscating dekyon fields every light-month or so. Compare an asteroid belt in some forgettable iteration of *Star Wars* with the real thing, and right away it's obvious that the giant boulders cartwheeling past each other, only yards apart, would only last a week before the whole damned belt was ground to beach sand. In our own, very real asteroid belt, it is actually difficult to view one asteroid from another. If

one is visible at all, the other asteroid is likely to be a dim point of light, crawling almost imperceptibly across the star field. I've gotten to miss the *Space of 2001: A Space Odyssey*, a Space that was mostly cold, empty, black and serene.

Regardless of what the Hubble Space Telescope and science fiction cinema have shown us, space *is* vast, empty and static to our own coarse senses and limited perception of time.

One of the most persistent misconceptions has been the view that solar systems are likely extremely rare. *Ours* was probably a fluke, in fact, that really shouldn't exist. If there *are* other solar systems, the astronomers' best guesses were that they would follow an orderly procession called Bode's Law, in which small rocky planets occurred near the sun, bigger gas giants in the middle, and then tiny snowballs at the outer edge. It was thought that multiple star systems were unlikely to have planets at all. The only reason they gave for this "law" is that *our* solar system is like that, and because *our* solar system has only one star. But our solar system is a sample of *one*, from which nothing at all can be extrapolated.

In October, it was announced that Alpha Centauri B had an Earth-size planet in close orbit. Although its 1.1 Earth Masses is just right, the planet orbits the Sun-like star far *too* closely, at a distance of only 4 million miles. It has a "year" of a mere three days and surface temperatures may exceed 1200°C, which is hot enough to turn the surface to magma. Okay, so Alpha Centauri Bb is not New Earth. But it has got me thinking.

Of late, new methods have been discovering planets around other stars at a rate nobody would have imagined only ten years ago. With at least 800 confirmed sightings of exoplanets, and potentially more than 2,000 other planets circling other stars, a pattern has emerged. It isn't Bode's Law, that's for sure. In fact, what has emerged from our discoveries is *chaos*. The astronomers had it all wrong *again*.

The exoplanets we've seen so far have included gas giants so close to their suns that we don't understand how they keep their gaseous envelopes, rocky planets that must have molten surfaces, planets that must be covered tens of miles deep with sulfur, planets that are several times more massive than Jupiter, planets with so much water they are all ocean and perhaps hundreds of miles deep, planets that may have diamond cores and planets that share the same orbits like pearls on a string. Not only do planets have wildly tilting orbits, but multiple star systems appear to be no obstacle either. Planets are known to revolve around one component of a binary star, or even around *both* components. Now, we know that even our nearest neighbor in interstellar space has at least one planet, and may yet have others that are more nearly Earth's twin.

The astronomers got it wrong; they got it *all* wrong! You know who got it right, though? Lowly pulp writers; the authors of science fiction who lacked scientific training or discipline, and just invented any old thing because it seemed interesting; and the genre readers who believed what they read because it seemed that's how things *should* be. Perhaps we shouldn't blame the professionals, who only had the facts to work with, and paltry few facts there were.

But we had imagination, and *we* got it right!

WHEN YOU GET RIGHT  
DOWN TO IT, IT'S ALL  
JUST A QUESTION OF...

# SEMANTICS

WINTER'S A'COMIN'...  
TIME TO DIG A DEN.

BY: SCHIRM

-and-  
Mel. White



PERFECT!  
JUST TH SPOT!

CHICKEENNN, YOU CAN GO UP INNA BALLOON...  
CHICKEENNN, YOU CAN  
HIDE BEHIND TH'  
MOON, DOGGONE  
YA NOW...



GANGWA...



HAH?

Plop!

WHICH WAY THEY COMIN', BUDDY?

XO! A!!! COMMIES, I  
KNEW THEY'D TRY TO  
SNEAK UP ON US  
SOMEDAY!  
GOOD THING I SAW  
YOU DIGGIN' THIS  
FOXHOLE...



!?!?



Profound thanks to Marc Schirmeister for the above observation of the human condition...