

# BROKEN TOYS 20

*Broken Toys 20* is a personalzine by Taral Wayne. Other projects have been coming together slowly - notably, the scans of Allyn Cadogan's *Genre Plat* and Fred Hurter Jr.'s *Censored*, a one-shot called *Scanners Live in Vain* and the third reading of *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* before I begin writing my long-delayed piece on Francis Towner Laney - but the end of the month approaches, making it time to think about the next issue of the same old same-old. This is the 20th. issue of *Broken Toys*, however, giving me an excuse to do something a little special! I have a lot of fine material this time around ... and, oddly, a letter column shorter than eight pages. For 22 years, I've lived at the top of the world at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt, 2111, Toronto Ontario, M6K 1S6 Canada. Contact or loc me at [Taral@Teksavvy.com](mailto:Taral@Teksavvy.com). The date is **late August 2013** ... and it already begins to look as though Fall will soon be here. The Canadian National Exhibition will open shortly. This is ExtraTaraltorality/Kiddelidivee Books & Art 270, (c) Taral Wayne.

## A Good Idea & a Loonie

The other day, I was luxuriating in the final hours of a long, splendid nap, when I was suddenly struck over the noggin by the Muse. I actually got out of bed to think about it for a little while before finishing my snooze.

To tell the truth, I'd been through a week of hip pain that, when in bed, made a full night's sleep impossible. A sudden change in the weather and an end to my discomfort was the occasion for sleeping in. And with plenty of sleep also comes a fresh supply of dream material.

Normally, my dreams are of no use to anyone but me. Who wants to hear about my living with a Vietnamese boat family in the aftermath of a global rise in sea level? Or how nearly I was swept out the window into the muddy, malevolent, ten-story deep waters? I'm still trying to forget *that* one myself ...

But *this* dream ... *it* was a beaut. It was well worth working up into a lengthy story, perhaps even a book. There was pathos in it, beauty, irony, tragedy, song and inspiration.

It was the story of Debb, the only Fraggles in the Rock who cannot sing. All of her life, Debb had been unable to hold a tune, and spoiled songs for her friends when she joined in. She played no instrument. She flatly could not compose lyrics. And she drove Cantus - the

mystical *meistersinger* – to exasperation. "Every Fraggles has a song inside. You *must* have a song. Why the hell *don't* you have a song?" Debb doesn't know that she drank from the Spring of Dissonance while a babe. But neither Cantus nor the other Fraggles can help.

Debb was from a different corner of the Rock. Obviously, she wasn't at home with people who spontaneously break into song, and so she grew footloose. As a recent arrival at the Great Hall, she met people she would like to be her friends, only Debb didn't fit in there, either. If she hadn't anything in common with most Fraggles, however, she did share a passion with Gobo for poking her nose into new places.

One day she found a tunnel where a curious hole had opened high on the wall, and climbed up to take a look. On the other side was another, unknown cavern. Water had weakened the rock wall over eons until it collapsed, and Debb easily climbed through onto a gravelly slope. Most of the cavern is full of jumbled rock and pools of still water ... and I have to stop at this point, or give away the story. But what Debb discovered amidst the chaos was so mind-numbingly terrible that once it sunk in what had happened, she could only flee back to the Great Hall... where she wept hysterically. Several days went by before her friends could even draw from her what she had seen.

The story turns on that point.

So *now* what the hell do I do?

Oh, sure, I could spend a lot of time writing it up for the fanboys to read, and some will say, "this sure was swell" ... but I'm of the old school of writing. Samuel Johnson said nobody but a fool would write without pay.<sup>1</sup> Of course, he said this in the 18th. century, when he would have looked like a fool wearing knee-stockings and a wig. Still, you have to agree with him when you think about it. A good manuscript and a Loonie won't even buy a cup of coffee.

I've been writing for years without anyone paying me. I did it because I wanted to. But, let's face it, self-indulgence will only motivate me so far. Let Steven King write his next novel for free, and give *me* the two million dollars to write my Fraggles Rock novel instead. He'll never miss it, trust me. More money only puts him in a higher tax bracket.

Unfortunately, there's another obstacle. While Jim Henson could possibly have been flattered into permitting me to base a masterpiece of literature on his brainchild, the current owners are Disney. Disney would only be terrified if some unknown made better use of their property than they're able to, and an army of venomous, kung-fu lawyers would parachute into my neighborhood to hunt me down and kill me.

So, like I said... what the hell do I do *now*?

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." (1776)

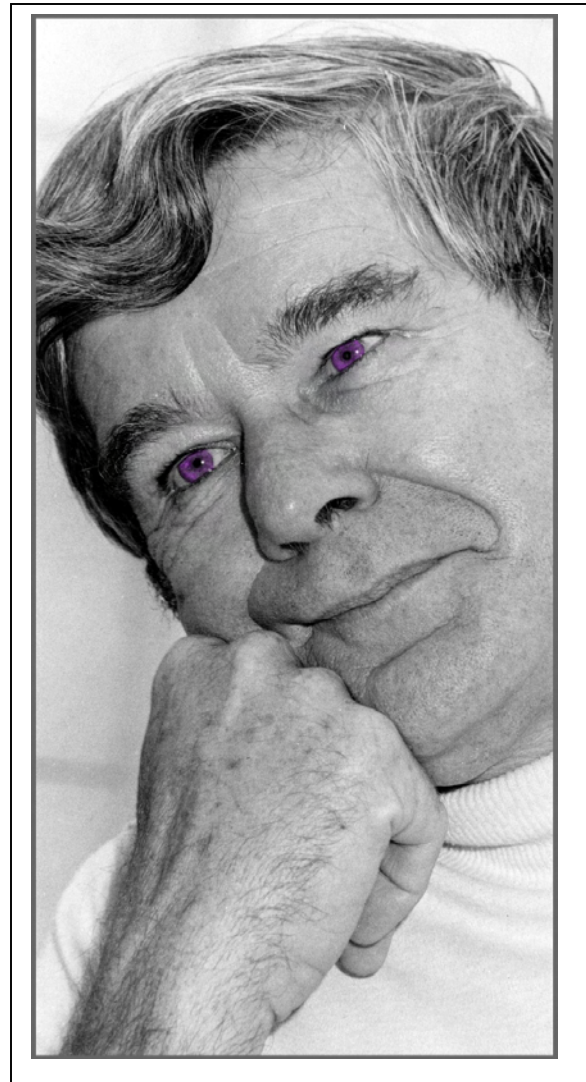
# THE MAN WITH ULTRA-VIOLET EYES!

How many fans were initiated into fandom by Bob Tucker, I wonder?

Oh, not in any *formal* sense, of course. Fans stumble into fandom by whatever path they happen upon – as often as not because they heard the news about something called a *convention*, and went. I myself answered a blurb in the back of a magazine that advertised the local science fiction club. But that is simply to *discover* fandom, and stand and watch as it happens around you. You don't truly *belong* to fandom until you have participated in some of its curious institutions.

One of the most curious of fandom's institutions is "The Smooth."

Wilson "Bob" Tucker didn't *invent* "The Smoooooth," of course. Lucille Ball preformed it on television in the 1950s. Before Lucy, Red Skelton took "The Smooth" on the Vaudeville circuit. Before that ... I suppose Plautus must have knocked them in the aisles with it in 200 BC. But, in fandom, "The Smooth" belonged to Bob Tucker.



The ritual began when a bottle of Beam's Choice Kentucky bourbon whiskey was opened and poured. Plastic or paper cups were passed around, each with sufficient to cover the bottom but no more than wet a whistle. On signal, cups went up, cups went down, and all those assembled chanted, "smmmoooooooothhhh!"

The original joke in the old stage routine was that the drink was cheap rotgut, and anything *but* smmmoooooooothhhh! Not so Beam's Choice, of course. Tucker loved his bourbon, as everyone knew, and would hardly drink a cheap brand that still tasted of the unwashed jug.

I can still remember my first time. It was a Midwestcon, sometime in the '70s. I was in the room when the plastic cups went around, bobbed up and down, then everyone in chorus crooned "smmmoooooooothhhh!" All but *me*, that is. Back then I didn't drink, you see. Not at all. I do now, since I've discovered sweet liqueurs, ports and sherry. But back then, I was the Fraggie in the Rock who couldn't keep a tune, and *felt* like it. Tucker must have noticed, because he came over to me a few minutes later, giving me the chance to explain that I hadn't meant to be rude, but just didn't like alcohol, and – worse – just felt congenitally out of place whenever others participated in rituals of group bonding such as "The Smooth." Tucker understood perfectly, and reassured me that I had nothing to feel

awkward about. And, for that moment, I very nearly didn't.

The 1970s were the only decade during which I traveled to conventions much, splitting my time between the East Coast and Midwest. Tucker must have stuck to his own backyard, the Midwest, since I only remember seeing him a few times in the next few years. Much to my surprise, he always remembered me, and knew my name. It shouldn't seem so odd to me now – but I was a pretty rough-hewn rock in my twenties, an unpolished chunk that was just as likely to turn out to be diamond, agate or worthless mudstone. I can't imagine what sort of an impression I made on Tucker. But he always remembered, and always found time to have a few words with me.

If only more of our conversations had stuck in my memory! Fortunately, two of them were unusual enough that there was no danger of my forgetting them. As a younger man, Tucker had variously worn his hair in a brush cut or combed back in a wave, but every time I saw him his hair was combed forward and swept slightly to one side. As it happened, I wore my own hair in a somewhat similar way, longer in back but hanging over my forehead. Tucker may have been the one who drew the comparison before confiding a secret – when I got older and *my* hair began to thin, don't let it hang *straight* down, like Moe Howard or Mr. Spock. Comb it just a bit to one side ... as he did. It would cover the thin spots better.

Now I'll confide a secret to *you*. 40 years later, I've discovered that Tucker was right.

On another occasion, Tucker made the unexpected statement that he saw in black light. He had suffered from cataracts and had the natural lenses of his eyes replaced by plastic ones that were transparent to more of the spectrum than ordinary people could see. Whereas ultra-violet light was blocked by your lenses or mine, Tucker's let the short-wave radiation right through to the retina. He could see in a black-lit room that was pitch dark to you or me!

Naturally, I wanted to know what ultra-violet light looked like to him. It would settle a philosophical point my friends and I had argued over in the past. It looked very deep purple, he said, but just purple all the same ... vindicating the position I had taken with my friends. Although the shorter wavelengths of light now passed through his plastic lenses to his retinas, they were the same retinas as before, and his brain had no means to register their stimulation in a novel colour. Tucker's colour vision was exactly what it had been before the operations.

Much as I like being right, it was disappointing to hear this from Tucker. Still, I'll always think of him as the Man With Ultra-Violet Eyes.

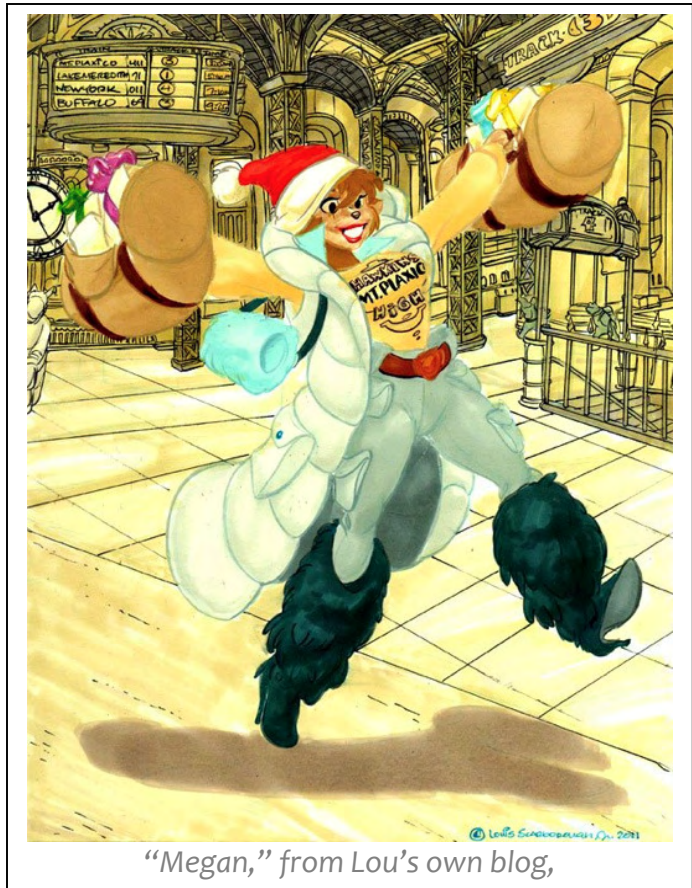
I still don't like bourbon, though.





## Lou Scarborough

Animator: 1953-2013



Upon returning home to LA from a business trip to New York, Louis Scarborough Jr. learned that he had cancer. It had not even been suspected when he left the West Coast, but had metastasized to a very advanced state in an appallingly short period of time. Lou was hospitalized for surgery to remove a tumour that was causing an immediately life-threatening blockage of his colon. The surgery was a success, but ... as a result of it, Lou was far too weak to withstand the necessary chemotherapy. He could only wait and hope to get stronger.

Unfortunately, Lou died on August 5, 2013. He was a too-young 60.

Lou worked in the animation business all his life. He did storyboards as well as actual animation, and hoped one day to direct a property of his own.

Lou was born in North Carolina, but his father moved the family to New York City, where he became a successful businessman and raised Lou, a brother, Cecil, and three sisters. Lou didn't like New York much, and one of his earliest jobs in animation helped him escape to Toronto, where he worked on *Rock & Rule* for Nelvana. From Toronto he went to Los Angeles, spent some time in Seattle next, and finally settled down in "Hollywood" for good. Even a partial list of Lou's credits is impressive. Among the television cartoons and animated features he worked on were *Bravestar*, *Quest for Camelot*, *Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Smurfs*, *Camp Candy*, *Taz-Mania*, *Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas*, *Tiny Toons – How I Spent My Summer Vacation*, *Batman*, *Rock & Rule*, *Muppet Babies*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks* and others. He worked for Filmation, Hanna-Barbera, Bagdasarian, Warner Bros. and Disney Merchandising.

In recent years, however, Lou had fallen on harder times. Work in animation had been more difficult to find since CGI swept most other forms of animation from the field, and Lou was often unemployed during the last few years. For the last few months of his life, he had been compelled to share living space with a friend while dealing with intense family issues.

Lou was a fairly private man, but one with a number of good friends that anyone could be proud of. He counted among his closest associates Marc Schirmeister, Mike Kazaleh, Wendell Washer, Robert Guthrie and others whom he grew to know and respect through his career. Marc seemed to be his especial friend, however. Not only did Lou and Marc spend good times together, Lou turned to Marc in hard times as well, even sharing cramped quarters for almost a year. He trusted Marc to give good advice, and to be the custodian of his worldly goods. Marc was at Lou's side in his last moments, and it is currently Marc who looks after the art and other personal belongings that Lou left behind.

Some years ago, when he was a member of *Rowrbrazzle* and dabbling in the "indies," Lou announced a new comic book, *Dance of the Radio Men*, to be published by MU Press. Advance glimpses revealed a tribute to the luscious curves, elegant shapes and freedom of space of the classic 1940s cartoons. Alas, the project failed in the face of Lou's own unremitting perfectionism. He simply could not satisfy himself that the pages were absolutely as good as they possibly could be ... and withdrew the book from the publisher, much to the dismay of waiting readers and MU Press owner Edd Vick.

Perhaps that's as good a note as any to end an obituary. Not on sad memories of unhappy times, but of a time when the world was a little younger and Lou's art gave everyone the hope that there was something marvelous like *Radio Men* waiting for us all, just around the corner.





*Taral Wayne & Jim Mowatt at Catherine & Colin's Party*

# TAFF Touch- Down!

Jim Mowatt's whirlwind tour of North America as the TAFF winner began Thursday, when he touched down at Pearson International airport in Toronto and was whisked away to The Only Café to meet a contingent of fans. I was unable to attend, but Jim e-mailed me this: "The 'pub' was really nice although didn't feel like a pub in any way. It was what I think of as a bar. Interesting design in that it is half coffee house and half bar with the two halves being separated by a black curtain. Of course we didn't follow direction and sat in the coffee bit and drank beer."

I met Jim on Sunday, however, at the party organized at Catherine Crockett's and Colin Hinz's place – a bit of a tight squeeze, what with the Mechano Ferris wheel, and the drum kit and stacks of old player piano rolls – but everyone made it in.

Catherine prides herself on providing good quality party foods ... consequently, there were plenty of carrot sticks, mushrooms, green pepper slices and other veggies on the table. As a conciliatory gesture to slobbs like me, there was a bowl of pretzels in the dining room and a bowl of some sort of corn chips in the sitting room. I had no complaints about the cherries, soft cheese or the sliced sausages, though. There was an abundance of beverage choices as well, from dry wine to raspberry Chambord, soft drinks and beer. Of course. A British visitor and all...

I thought I may have come on a little strong at first, aggressively describing the English part of my coin collection, without ever taking stock of whether Jim's eyes were glazing over. But after a bit, I relaxed and thoroughly enjoyed the conversations over the course of the evening. They were surprisingly fanzine-oriented. But then, apart from Jim and myself, Keith Soltys and his wife were present. Keith published a fanzine named *Torus* in the 1980s, and apparently still remembers how it was done. Both Penneys were here as well. It should be pointed out that the evening's hosts, Catherine and Colin, had also published at one time or another. The only conspicuous omission from the local fanzine clan was Murray Moore.

At one point Jim asked if he could take a photo. If I had been more vain, I would have said "no," because the naked filaments in the overhead chandelier were beginning to bother my eyes, and the left one had begun an alarming droop. I took my pills, but it would be a while before the effect hauled the delinquent eye open again. Jim roped in a third party to take a picture of both of us – the grumpy

looking one is me and the reasonable-looking bloke on the right is Jim. I really must get out more, because I think I've forgotten how to smile again. Also, my right eye looked almost entirely closed. Fortunately, when Jim e-mailed me the shot this morning, I was able to fix the eye with Photoshop. Nobody will *ever* know ... oh, wait ... I just told everyone. What I need now is a distraction ... As you can see, Hope Leibowitz and Catherine were photographed unknowingly as well, caught in the background.

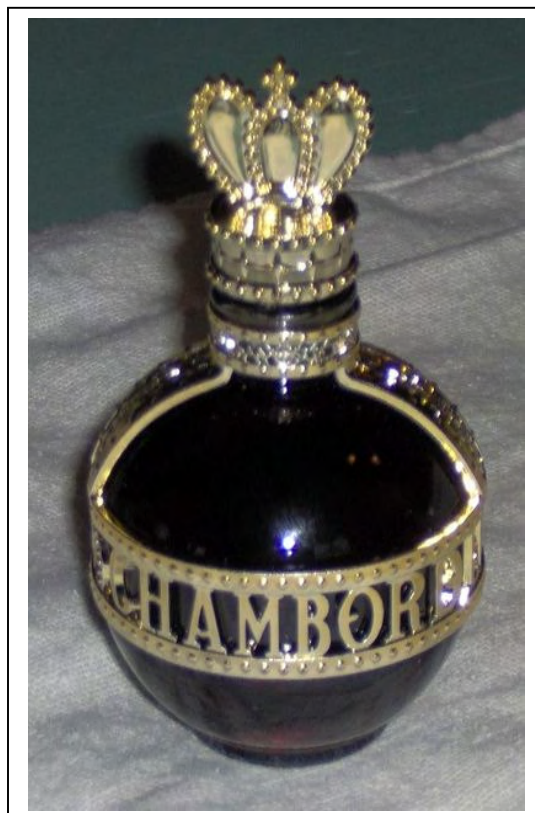
By this time, Shirley Meier was feeling her drinks and holding forth in one corner. We had a nice talk about mutual hopeless acquaintances. The SFContario people – Alex von Thorn, Marah Searle-Kovacevic, Diane Lacy – seemed to prefer to sit in the front room where, perhaps, they laid schemes for their next con in November.

The party began relatively late – around 9 p.m. – and people were already leaving relatively early. It was midnight before I knew it. Hope was squirming in her seat because she didn't want to leave, but neither did she want to miss the last subway train north to get home. She left rather too late, but was fortunate enough to get a ride to the subway station with someone. I was lucky myself, and hitched a ride with Alex and Marah down to Queen Street. The streetcar runs 24hours, and I avoided making two other connections. Nevertheless, I still wasn't home until well past two.

The party must have ground on, however, and on and on. Jim had a very early flight on Monday, so the plan was to stay up all night and see him off to the airport next morning.

Where is our intrepid TAFF winner now? It's probably best that Jim tells us ... when he next touches down.

All that glistens on this  
Bottle is merely plastic ...  
The "gold" is inside,  
and raspberry.



# Entropy

For years, I watched my physical environment degrade. The empire of modern-day conveniences that I had carefully built up in the 1980s included a colour television, an electric typewriter, a stereo system with a few, somewhat impressive components, an amp that also brought in radio, a videocassette player, even a Commodore 128 computer! But where is the glory of Babylon today? Of Rome? Of the Empire on which the sun never set? Gone, where all lost pinnacles of human achievement go, to the rubbish bin or the Sally Anne.

When my stereo amplifier began to malfunction, I almost didn't notice. But now and then it would be apparent that I was hearing no sound from either the left or right channel. The speaker appeared dead. Yet it would function normally when I switched the cables. Then it was the *other* speaker that was dead. Having determined the source of the problem with a rigorous application of the scientific method, I turned my attention to the amp and fixed the problem with a good thump. Unfortunately, over time, the channel cut out more and more often. A good thump fixed the problem *less and less* often. Eventually, I learned that jiggling or wrenching the volume knob slightly did the trick. Sometimes. Other times it was the balance knob that worked. The amount of force necessary to wrench the knobs grew progressively, until, at last, it was no use. Whether or not there had been method to this manipulative madness before, the amp entirely ceased to work.

The fancy Mirage speakers weren't long in following. They had held up remarkably, but, finally, one of the pair abruptly stopped producing sound. I could no longer get anything at all from it, even after switching cables. They were classic speakers, and I *did* manage to get \$50 for them from a man who reconditioned stereo equipment for resale ... but then I had no way to amplify the sound from my television set. The set's own speakers were fatally underpowered and nearly useless, apparently having adapted their technology from talking Barbie Dolls.

Without amplification, it is nearly impossible for me to follow the dialog in many movies. One of my friends had a coupon for an electronics store that he said "he didn't need," and passed on to me. With the \$100 credit, I managed to buy a pair of \$200 demo speakers. Entropy hadn't been defeated, but at least it would be held at bay for a little longer.

By this time, the Commodore was long gone – one with Ur, Machu Picchu and Detroit. The "new" system had undergone many piecemeal upgrades. Whenever one of my friends upgraded *his* system, I caught what fell from the table. In general, my computer was a case of the whole being less than the sum of the parts, which were old and tired and not always compatible. My system was pretty much a jury-rigged Frankenstein's monster until I obtained a fairly modern Athlon processor and a decent motherboard from one philanthropist, spent some of my own money on RAM, bought a copy of Windows XP through an Microsoft employee I knew, and then begged a larger hard drive from someone with a spare from work. At last, I felt I had a distant view of the cutting edge. *That* may have been as long as ten years ago. Since *then*, there's been another and larger hard drive, but the system is as close to the limit of its capabilities as piss is to Coors. I've been waiting for a fatal malfunction ever since.

In many ways, TV was my life. TV provided my friends – Dr. Venture, Robert Petrie, Dick Loudon,

Batman, Johnny Fever, Judge Stone, Homer Simpson and many, many others. I couldn't spend all my time socializing with them, of course, but while they partied on-screen, I'd turn my eyes down to the drawing I was working on and only half-listen. When the jokes or gossip grew tiresome, I turned to another channel, and listened to the 24 hour news channel instead – often catching the news about some new war or horrible disaster long before everyone else woke up to it next morning. My world hung from a cord ... more accurately, it hung from a coaxial cable.

Three or four years ago, I had to face up to an unpleasant reality. I was missing payments to the cable company more and more often ... and it was no easier to make *two* payments the month after. I was soon permanently behind, and finally my service was cut. I could no longer afford my world, so it was "mine" no longer. As it always had, it belonged to Rogers Cable, and the unprintable so-and-sos had left me homeless.

I was reduced to watching three or four local channels that could be barely discerned from the static on a good day ... one of which was owned by an Evangelist church, and broadcast nothing but vacuously sincere propaganda and unctuous appeals for widow's pension checks. The reception was astonishingly bad, considering that the signal is transmitted from the CN Tower, an 1806-foot-tall communications tower that serves all of Southern Ontario and is not much more than a mile away. It was just plain bad luck that I'm on the west side of my building, facing away from the transmitter. Between me and a clean signal is a gridwork of steel beams, electrical cables, plumbing pipes and who knows what that turns the picture on the tube into a snow squall just as effectively as paper-shredder turns office documents into confetti.

It was about then that I discovered that whatever had been shorting out the stereo amp had probably also damaged the audio output from the TV, and burned out the tiny portable CD player I owned as well, because one day I discovered *neither* of them were working. I was able to play music on my computer through a pair of desktop speakers, but that was all.

To make matters worse, my audio tape deck died. During the autopsy, I discovered that every one of the drive belts inside had melted and become something midway between a rubbery solid and a sticky goo. As well, the cassette tray was snagging on something and would not open. There was no reason to bother even putting the junk back together before throwing it down the garbage chute with a clatter of metal and plastic parts falling 21 stories to the bin below.

I was reduced to watching movies. With the audio output from the TV fried, I couldn't have wired the videotape player to the stereo amp, even if the amp *had* been working. All I could do was strain to hear the tinny output of the TV speakers. Since I was now dependent on it, naturally the VCR died next. I bought a new one for just under \$100. It was much less nice than the one that had stopped working, but it was getting hard to find VCR players of any kind, and I didn't have the money for a superior model. Cheap as it was, the new one worked well enough. Gradually, too, I build up a larger and larger collection of movies and programs on DVD. As it turned out, I was lucky to have the VHS to fall back on ... because now it was the turn of my primitive DVD player to give out. But I received a new one that also played Blu-Ray as a Christmas gift a few months later, so that was actually a step forward rather than back.

But then, naturally, the time had come for the TV's image to degrade. It began to create ghosts on one side of everything in the picture. It was almost unnoticeable with filmed movies and sitcoms, whose natural hues are usually subdued, but animation's already hugely-saturated, prismatic colours were ideal

for producing a bright band of red, orange, green or blue that dogged Shrek or Mr. Impossible like the taint of corruption around “The Ford Nation.”

( ...Otherwise known as the following of Hizzoner, the Mayor of Toronto, Rob Ford. Sorry. That was a cheap shot, but I couldn't resist a target that broad.)

My computer scanner slid into senescence somewhere along the line. The battery cover on my camera broke so that I can only take pictures by holding everything together with rubber bands. My electric shaver stopped working, as did the other one I kept as back-up. I inherited a rechargeable shaver from my uncle, and it died almost immediately ... as though it were following its original owner to the hereafter! My bread maker kicked the bucket, so I had to scrape up the dough for a replacement if I was to have bread to eat. I used to warm buns and grill wienies in a toaster oven. It too became toast. The coil on my electric Hibachi burned through, putting a stop to grilling hot dogs except by heating up the entire kitchen oven. I don't know *how* many coffee-makers I've gone through. Usually they just seize, in mid-pot if they can. In one case, however, the push-buttons pushed right through and fell inside the coffee maker, where nothing could reach them. The one thing that has continued to function as it should is the faithful little whirly-gig that grinds my coffee beans. I have no doubt that it's just waiting for the right moment ...

Life as I knew it was gradually being reduced to a round of regular replacement of all the electronic gadgets that make life meaningful ... and I was slowly falling behind. According to the Laws of Thermodynamics, it was inevitable.

Fortunately, the path toward maximum disorder is not a straight one. I've recently experienced local reversals of the flow of entropy from the broken-down state to the brand new.

Through the generosity of Bob Wilson, my stereo amplifier and CD player have been replaced. The amp had been dead for ages ... astonishingly, I didn't even *know* that the CD player was a write-off, until Bob began playing with the audio from the TV while installing the amp. When he was done, we went up the street to an Indian restaurant for dinner. Along the way we passed a Cash Converter, a sort of one-stop pawn-shop and check cashing service that bilks the desperate, but can be a source of bargains if you have money. Bob had bought the amp from a Cash Converter in his neighborhood, and was surprised to find another within a couple of blocks of where I lived. We went in, and first thing we saw was a display of CD players! Bob selected one, slapped down the money and we walked out with it! Just like that, I could play music, CDs or vinyl, with the stereo amp and the big speakers! It was like 2002 all over again! Just as important, I could now amplify the soundtrack of movies, and not have to resort to the subtitles to follow the maddening *sotto voce* dialog.

But that was only the start!

I let it be known to Simon and Victoria that my television was ailing. As mentioned earlier, it was producing bright red, yellow or blue “ghosts,” particularly while watching animated films. I watch a *lot* of animated films. The last thing I expected, though, was e-mail from Victoria a few days ago, in which she offered me a brand-new 50” plasma-screen TV. It's worth repeating. *Brand-new*. She and Simon had a friend who sold electronics, and apparently this was the tag-end of a model line he couldn't sell. Newer models with higher pixel resolution had superseded it. Simon and Victoria didn't need another TV, but since they knew my old CRT was headed for Silicon Heaven, they decided to pass it along to me.

Simon and Victoria came by early last Sunday with the new TV, wheeling it up with a dolly. I was no use, so just did my best to keep out of the way and watch. There were no important hitches. They connected the DVD/Blu-Ray player to the appropriate inputs, added the VCR next, then connected all to the stereo amp. Tests followed, and all seemed in order. Suddenly, I was watching *The Hobbit* on a 50-inch screen. Damned if the Hobbits weren't almost life-sized, in my very own tiny apartment! Just to explore other possibilities, Simon connected a digital aerial to the system, and found we could get three local stations crystal-clear – they were the same ones I had been able to get before, with rabbit ears and an analog-to-digital box, but now without the overwhelming static. They were still pretty lame, though, and I couldn't open the door to the balcony with an aerial and cable stretched across it.

I will just have to get cable ... if I can ever afford it again.

Of course, fitting a 50-inch screen TV into my already very crowded apartment was going to be no mean feat. A bit more crowding was still achievable, but something had to give. I needed to remove the cases for my collection of CDs, and find somewhere *new* for them. But there *was* nowhere new. "New" space could only be created by getting rid of something old. I groaned. I'd have to sort my old videotapes again – I still had several banker's boxes full, many of them commercially taped classic cartoons, others taped from TV. I had sorted through them on previous occasions, and eliminated all I could. Well, perhaps I could be more ruthless still. I never watched those old Bugs Bunny, MGM or Disney cartoons anymore – why keep them? *Sigh*. I'll also learn to live without the *Davie & Goliath*, *Thunderbirds*, *Crusader Rabbit* and who knows what else, if I must ... and it seems I must.

But that's a small price to have life-sized Hobbits! I can't wait to play *The Incredibles*, *Ratatouille*, *Harry Potter*, *Gettysburg*, *Monsters Inc*, *Shrek*, *Spiderman*, *Watchmen*, *Gladiator*, and any number of my favourite movies again on this wonderful new toy!

Yes. Life *will* become meaningful again! Take *that*, Entropy!



# Left-Over Parts From BT 19

(Sometimes, "Left-Over Pieces" ... That's How it Goes)

**WAHF Dan Skunk** (No, that's not *exactly* his real name). **R. Graeme Cameron**, who has just discovered that *Broken Toys 14* on eFanzines is actually a duplicate of number 15. Now how could Bill have uploaded the next issue a month before it was published? And what does it tell us if nobody noticed for *five months*? **Ron Kasman**, who tells me that British aviators in WWII often used Infra-Red flares to mark landing strips, and it was discovered that many who were blonde & blue-eyed could see the flares without special goggles! **Bill Patterson** says he was amused by John Nielson Hall's "oh-so-very-reasonable sort of socialism" in last issue's letter column. Also **Kenoscope & HotRod-302**.

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ANDREW HOOPER, [fanmailaph@aol.com](mailto:fanmailaph@aol.com)

I'm trying to be the first writer to respond to *Broken Toys 19*. You struggle with the desire for more response to your fanac in almost everything you publish. Perhaps if I send a letter of comment within an hour of receiving your fanzine, you'll gain some sense of accomplishment in getting me to drop the rest of the business in front of me.

You were very close to first, but I received a few words from a local furry a few hours earlier. I don't know, maybe he's psychic ... he must have read the file within minutes of getting it. It's also the first time I can recall him responding. But, you can be assured that he'll be WAHFed and not even quoted, so I think that makes you **officially** first.

Actually, I've pretty much done to death the call for locs. With the letter col running to 50% of the issue, I had better stop before either a) it overruns the zine, or b) people start laughing.

Your emotorial was interesting, and strikes me as another case of fanac as free therapy. Stating specifically what you want to get from fandom is unusual, but I hardly think you want anything unreasonable. I feel very lucky that I have real friends in fandom, as well as a wide circle of correspondents, but only a few of them are the same people. Real friendship can seldom be created through distant fanac alone; some kind of face-to-face interaction is necessary to start all but the rarest relationships. So I hope you are getting at least some feedback from the people you really regard as your friends; and if not, I'd think you'd try to create material that they would reply to.

Therapeutic it might be, but I really must move on. Part of what keeps me in that rut is that I'm trying to be topical, and I just can't think of much to say about fandom other than my relations from afar. How do I think the Worldcon should be run? I dunno. What is the solution to aging fandom? I doubt there is one. Who should run for TAFF? I won't have any preference. Where should the next Corflu be? None of my business since I

won't be going. It's not anything I can say will make any more difference than a Democrat in the current Congress.

Introspection? Yes, well ... I work with what I have.

I've just about given up worrying about *quantity* in my own correspondence, and trying instead to concentrate on *quality*. The response that I have received to the 7 issues of FLAG published so far this year has been gratifying in both regards. I can't publish it all, and I get replies from a number of people who are certainly not constant letterhacks: Steve Bieler, Grant Canfield, Jay Kinney, Yvonne Rousseau and Howard Waldrop all come quickly to mind. Of course, they write to me because I send them a paper copy of the fanzine through the mail. But there are other ways of targeting specific correspondence in your fanac. Most of them work well, once you get the subject to actually open the fanzine. That's still the biggest obstacle facing the online publisher.

I usually only write a loc if I have something to say. True, sometimes I write them because I think I should, but never if I have nothing to say. I try to put myself in the reader's place and imagine that I've come to a loc written just to pass pleasantries, and ask myself if what I intend to write is worth anyone's time to read.

One thing that I think has been of help to me at *Flag* is that I mention other people a lot. Sometimes I express reservations or disappointment or ill-concealed hatred, but mostly, I tend to talk about people I like and the things that they do and have done in the past. Like the second section of your Canada Day piece, about visiting Bob and Sharry with Alan and Jeanne. But at times, when you talk about other people, you have a tendency to indict them for some shortcoming without giving their names, such as the nameless acquaintance you describe as blowing you off for the past 35 years in #19. I had the same kind of relationship with Patrick Nielsen Haden in the 1990s: He had a tendency to approach me with fond halloos as I was actually carrying my bag out to *leave* the Worldcon, knowing that he was safe from entering the sort of tortuous conversation that I am notorious for. (I flatter myself by imagining that when Patrick gets to Hell, he will be locked in an eternal conversation about numbered fandoms with me, Gary Farber and rich brown).

That is a good technique, and I do try to write about other people in fandom. But I don't meet them very often, so that most of what I know about other fans is what I read about them in other fanzines. Then too, I sometimes write about people who I *don't want* to name. There are all sorts of good reasons not to ... they may have friends who will beat me up. Or at least drop me from their mailing list. Frankly, anyone who knows the score probably knows who I'm writing about anyway.

Sometimes naming people does more harm than good. The fan you called "the nameless acquaintance" is a case in point. I had hopes the breach would repair itself, eventually. In fact, it has – although not without a tragedy to a mutual acquaintance for a catalyst. It would make for an interesting article to talk about it ... but why push my luck, eh? But ... if I can insult anyone with impunity, why *clear the deck!*

Now what I have done there is specifically tweak Patrick in a way that will seem sympathetic to any professional who has been in the Worldcon maelstrom. And maybe that will lead to an extended conversation in London next year, or at least an apology for typoing his name (again)

in *Flag #6*. In contrast, the observation of yours which I mentioned above will probably cause vague unease in several of your readers, but it is hard to imagine them writing to acknowledge their omission and promising to seek your company out in the future. Not that you actually want that, but you make all these observations in the context of stimulating response to your fanac. Prolific and wide-ranging as you are, your style tends to be critical and introspective, and only a certain sort of reader is likely to embrace it. It is a proud and lonely thing having standards, Meyer.

I think what actually got me to begin this letter was John Nielsen Hall's whining about the bad reputation that capitalism has had across his lifetime. I, on the other hand, live in a world where the word "socialism" has about the same positive association as "necrophilia."

Yeah... it's disgustipatin' I would never in a million years describe myself as sympathetic to socialism, but the rabid reaction so many people have to anything remotely like concern in principle for your fellow human being makes me want to tattoo a portrait of Marx on my forehead ... or at least Tommy Douglas. Of course, in Canada we can still call ourselves *Liberals*, and not mean "wimpy, hypocritical bureaucrat," as it seems to mean to many in the US. We can even undertake the role of Social Democrats and no one will be under the illusion that we're an ex-Iron Curtain state. Fandom itself has tended to be Liberal, if not outright Socialist. Yet, to my astonishment, I'm discovering that even many fans are, in fact, prepared to step over starving, cholera-ridden street people to get into their cars in the morning *if it would mean cutting taxes!*

Yet, every day, we are confronted with stories of further legal thievery by banks – yesterday, The Daily Show's John Oliver covered the manipulation of aluminum commodity trading by Goldman-Sachs, who pay their workers to drive huge stocks of metal between different warehouses in order to create bottlenecks and delays that drive up the cost of aluminum canning of beverages, which in turn enhances the value of the aluminum futures that Goldman-Sachs now holds. It isn't commerce, it's a fraudulent shell-game that means you have to pay more for every can of soda or juice or beer that you buy. The banks have made the very concept of a "free market" a complete fiction, and John Nielsen Hall should be prepared to be rewarded for his faith in the system with the theft of every penny he has ever invested. I feel like I and my wife Carrie, who has paid into pension funds for nearly thirty years, need to hurry up and die before they can do it to us.

Your consideration of Fred Hurter Jr., Beak Taylor and *Censored* was also engrossing, but left a number of tantalizing questions unanswered. Is it possible that the gap between issues 4 and 5 were partly due to Hurter's service in His Majesty's forces? The war seems to have interrupted the majority of fannish careers in the 1940s, so it seems like even money at worst. If so, service records might be a step toward determining Fred's ultimate fate, assuming that is of any interest to you. Even if the Canadian equivalent of a "college deferment" was open to him, he may still have wanted to do his part. The simple fact that *Censored* was among the earliest fanzines produced in Canada would make its digital preservation worth the effort.

The problem with saying more about Fred Hurter was that I *couldn't* find out anything more! I scoured *All Our Yesterdays* and quoted practically every word Harry Warner said. Hurter wrote nothing much about himself in *Censored*, either. One con report about his drive to Torcon I was just about the only fannish writing I found in the issues I owned, and in it Hurter really didn't say anything about himself that I overlooked. All I recall is that by 1948 he was living in

Montreal and drank Molson's beer. Nor do I think he could have been in the armed forces. He was probably not old enough. St. Andrews was a prep school for boys as young as ten, and while I doubt Hurter was *that* young when he published *Censored*, he could not have been any older than 17 in 1942, because classes only went up to grade 12. More light might be cast on the enigmatic Fred Hurter Jr. in missing issues of *Censored* ... but I wouldn't hold my breath.

I also enjoy studying your titles, trying to figure out what the images they are composed of originally portrayed.

I plan to publish a key ... perhaps in *this* very issue! Or maybe issue 25.

I'm just so sad to read about the great difficulties you have with mobility now, knowing how much you loved walking and wandering the streets of the city. I'm sure you feel some reluctance toward the subject, but have you thought about getting a contemporary "walker?" The nice thing about the ones they make now is that they serve as a kind of mobile chair you can rest on when your legs give out. It seems like we could use something that combines the features of a skateboard and a wheelchair, without being quite as challenging to use as a Segway.

I had a walker, or rollator, for a while. It wasn't useful for reasons I wrote about in a previous issue. In brief, I don't need support, I simply get too sore and tired after just a few hundred feet to continue, then have to stop and rest. When I've caught my breath and stop sweating, and my legs have strength again, I continue. I experimented with a cane for a while, but it wasn't useful either. My hope is that I can acquire an electric scooter next year, so that, even if I don't get any exercise, I can still get around.

Every issue of *Broken Toys* has interesting writing, and I have a strong impulse to respond to each one I read. It's a challenge to contribute to all the quite frequent fanzines whizzing through the aether at the moment, but your efforts are always well-deserving. I look forward to seeing what you devise for issue #20.

A WAHF from Graeme Cameron just arrived ten minutes ago. Apparently he tried to download *Broken Toys 14* from Bill Burn's eFanzines site, and discovered that it was a duplicate copy of 15. Graeme was the first to notice... First of all, how did Bill post an issue of **Broken Toys** a month before it was published? And what does that tell us, if no one noticed *for five months*?

Ooo .... Oooo ... and something just in this moment from *Dave Harren* ...

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DAVE HARREN, [tyrbolo@comcast.net](mailto:tyrbolo@comcast.net)

Excellent issue. My guess is an Airfix Spitfire kit.

If it's a Spit, it could only be a Mk.II or Mk. IV, the only common marks with three-bladed propellers. But the Hurricane had very similar horizontal stabilizers, so maybe it was a Hurry.

You'll have to admit Ayn Rand has made a lot of people read some of her work. The truRand is usually a pain, but that is true of those with BS (Belief System).

I felt a lot better about my SF collection when I went to the county library and had more than they did. Here they have a nasty habit of tossing out books instead of building more space for them.

The local library here seems to exist mainly to service Parkdale's burgeoning immigrant population. It has a core of old stand-bys like Dickens, Gibbon, Twain, Hemingway, etc, but seems to be mostly shelves and shelves of Black Pride, Middle-Eastern history, the Hindu religion, etc. What there is mostly is space. There's enough wide-open space to create a refugee camp. To make sure all that lovely emptiness is never cluttered up, the library perversely refuses to accept donated books!

Since I was trained to fight on battlefields using fusion weapons, I have no illusions about the world remaining intact. I just wish our damned government had paid attention when they saw the Nuremburg trials hang people for doing things that were "legal."

That's a nice looking analog firebottle amp, probably has an exceptional sound compared to anything except a custom digital recording using more storage than most people want to pay for.

I have a nice analog system myself, and a moderately large collection of vinyl that I almost never play because popping a CD into my computer is so convenient. But my system is like a grape freezer pop compared to Bob's Napoleon Brandy!

You can find a lot of music on archive.org, a pretty big selection of live performance recordings, and it's all free. Bands have figured out that if people don't know they exist, they don't buy concert tickets and they don't buy CDs or MP3s.

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RON KASMAN, [ron.kasman@gmail.com](mailto:ron.kasman@gmail.com)

Things have been busy recently to the point of my not feeling well. I went in for a check-up yesterday, got a fairly clean bill of health, tests pending, and decided to slow down a bit. That is a way of saying that I finally read *Broken Toys 18*.

I enjoyed your reflection on fandom. Mine would be quite different but we are similar in a certain way. SF and comics fandom have been a reoccurring theme in my life. However much I love them I am more distant from them now. My involvement with SF has slowed to a crawl and I really don't know if I will attend another convention. I don't read the stuff anymore. On my 50th birthday I was given a big thick SF book to read. It took me four years. I am 59 now and that is the last one I read. It was called *Evolution* and I don't remember who wrote it. Maybe I'll be given another when I turn 60 in a few months. If so, I won't read it this time.

My own favourite old TV show is *Sgt. Bilko*. I have all the episodes, purchased on ebay for about \$70 from a person in England who recorded them off a nostalgia TV station. It is legal. In England the laws about such things are different than they are here. I really enjoyed the show.

Phil Silvers himself holds up as the creator of one of the very strongest characters in the history of television. Some of the writing holds up, not all of it. I think, though, that a lot of my love for it is nostalgic and people today wouldn't take to it-- not like they did in the mid '50's anyway when it was the most popular show on television.

I am impressed that people want to pay you for your art, and people with really strange names. I can't even get people named Smith to pay me for mine.

Good luck to Steve Stiles. As I said though, I don't expect to attend World Con this year. If I did I would vote for him.

Ayn Rand was just too tough on the stupid, the ugly and those who are not well connected. Go here to watch L.Ron screw Ayn Rand and not in the way he screwed most people. Wade though the American Express ad, first. [http://www.cracked.com/video\\_18426\\_ayn-rand-5Bplaceholder5D.html](http://www.cracked.com/video_18426_ayn-rand-5Bplaceholder5D.html)

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ERIC MAYER, [groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com)

Impressive view and scary storm photos. That was a monster of a storm, which I never read anything about. Probably wasn't covered in the US media. Man I hate power outages. We at least can eat hot food and brew coffee because we have a gas stove but that's it. In the winter, we have to worry about all the plumbing under the house freezing when the heat tapes go off. I vaguely recall Hurricane Hazel, or rather the effects, which consisted of my grandparents' yard being buried under fallen trees and limbs.

I think there was a little coverage, but I'm used to how the world ends at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel according to US television stations, newspaper and websites. I suppose Mexicans are used to how everything – demographics, disease vectors, geology, weather or cell phone use ... *everything* ... ends at the border.

Liked your debunking of the moving statue. Pretty lame mystery I'd say. While I have never seen my dishes moving, your explanation for why yours do sounds more logical than poltergeists.

Turns out they were spirits trying to communicate with me after all, to reveal the location of the Holy Grail in my bedroom closet, and tell me it had to be filled with Orange Crush *immediately*.

In the Loccol, Bob Jennings says that he "...could no more stop writing things than I could stop breathing." I've heard this sort of thing said quite often and I've never been able to understand it. I've had people say to me, "You're a writer. A writer writes. You couldn't stop." But that's just not so. I have always written because I enjoy it, not because it is in some strange way at the core of my being.

Part of the reason I enjoy writing is because it is one of the few things at which I am competent. If I suddenly found I was as good at orienteering as I am at writing I would henceforth do very little writing, I assure you. I'd be roaming the woods instead. Orienteering is a lot less frustrating than writing! For that matter, I can easily see myself one day, soon, giving up writing to have more time to read some of the endless list of to-be-read books I will never have time to read. I've always thought of myself as someone who writes, rather than a "writer."

I do call myself an artist, but I actually don't believe I could ever stop altogether. Even if I never finished or published another drawing, I would still doodle sometimes. But, while I have earned a living as an artist, I have never earned much by writing – in all my years, I've sold only two or three articles to one small magazine – so I feel like an ass calling myself a writer. A fanwriter, maybe.

As soon as you mentioned taking the subway, with your condition, I knew what was coming. Many years ago I spent some time negotiating New York City subway stations and at some, just to transfer from one train to the next, it was the kind of walk where you'd like to have a few elves and a magic sword. Mazes of corridors, climbing up and down stairways, and a lot of the time with no one in sight, particularly not the potential muggers who would have been hiding around corners. Well, they did have strategically placed mirrors so you could see before rounding corners, which was helpful but not reassuring. You need a disabled sticker to put on your...uh...I dunno...windshield?

I was not, however, prepared for the even worse return journey. I don't want to sound rude, but everything considered, how long would it have taken to drive you all the way home? It's dangerous to be struggling around a city late at night in a state of almost total collapse.

Toronto is actually very safe, especially downtown on the main drags in summer, when the nights are busy! There are a few places I'd be wary of if I were alone at night, even with my full faculties. The hi-rise jungles in the city's northeast and northwest are notorious for gangs. Bad city planning built lengthy tracts of apartment hi-rises and zoned into non-existence everything else – there are no stores and no jobs. So nobody wanted to live there. Rents fell and attracted poor immigrant families, whose cute little kids often grew up to be surly, unemployed thugs, who spend their time selling drugs and shooting each other. This is probably what comes of thinking about city planning as though *The Jetsons* were the model for the future. The other places I'd avoid are the clubs downtown and along certain strips. That's where surly, unemployed young thugs go to amuse themselves, and there is occasionally violence. Given recent news of Toronto cops gunning down a guy with a tiny knife who was nowhere near them, one might also conclude it wise to avoid cops, too...

*Censored* does not sound enticing but from a historical point of view it is good that you scanned it.

I guess I wouldn't be too quick to put covers on *Broken Toys*. You know how zines evolve, usually growing into something they were never intended to be in the first place.

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KEITH SOLTYS, [keith@soltys.ca](mailto:keith@soltys.ca)

I enjoyed talking with you last night at Catherine and Colin's party (for TAFF winner, Jim Mowatt), and as promised, I'm sending a LOC for *Broken Toys* 17 and 18.

In 17, I enjoyed your article "You Can Take It With You." You seem to have more of a collector bent than I do. I've tended to accumulate books and music, more because I just hate throwing things away than because I've tried to collect an author or (except in a few cases), first editions and the like. Now I'm finding it hard to divest myself of all this stuff, not because I don't want to, but because there just isn't much of a market for it anymore. I was never much into Asimov, although I read most of his SF when I was a teenager, my gateway drug was Heinlein, and I still find myself occasionally rereading one of his novels.

How to get rid of no-longer-precious treasures is definitely the problem. Ideally you want to sell them, and recoup some of the money spent, but just finding a good home would be enough. Unfortunately, the trash or the Salvation Army may be the only realistic alternatives.

I'll have to see if I can find a copy of *The Old Dick*. It sounds like it might be worth a read.

Re #18, I am afraid that I am one of those compulsive downloaders mentioned in Bob Osterberg's quote, at least when it comes to music. I would probably download less and listen more, if I had access to some of the larger music services that are available in the US but not in Canada. My buying patterns haven't changed much - I still buy CDs and DVDs from my favourite artists and musicians that I know personally.

I don't think I could sit through a season of *I Dream of Jeannie*, even if you paid me. I've sampled some old TV shows from the 60s and most of them don't hold up very well, with the exception of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, at least the first two seasons. I've heard the late 60s called the golden age of television (actually, I've heard several eras called that) but in fact, the golden age of television is now. The best drama being produced now is for television, not for film.

Different eras for different folks - it all depends on what you want. I was never big on dramas and gave *Hill Street Blues* and the later *90210* a pass. Under no circumstances would I ever hold up *I Dream of Jeannie* as one of the best of that era ... or any. It was a nostalgia thing. And I like comedy.

Interesting to see a letter from Bill Patterson. I very much enjoyed the first volume of the Heinlein biography (despite Jo Walton's low opinion) and I am chomping at the bit to read the rest. Actually, I may buy the (presumably revised) second edition of the first volume and reread it.

I wonder what Jo Walton had to say about it?

That's about it for now. Looking forward to the next issue.

# Loccers Hall of *Flame!*

Who wrote to me ... in order of appearance, up to the last issue

## #1 Letter Hack with 18 appearances, is ...

Eric Mayer 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	[18] Total
Brad Foster 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16	[10]
Dave Locke 2,4, 8	[3]
Jerry Kaufman 2	
Andrew Hooper 2, 10, 19	[3]
Greg Benford 2, 5, 18	
Robert Runte 2	
John Nielsen Hall 2, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 18	[7]
Kim Huett 2	
Chris Garcia 2, 3, 13, 16	
Ned Brooks 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18	[11]
R. Graeme Cameron 3, 13	
Lloyd Penney 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18	[12]
Steve Stiles 3, 13, 17	[3]
Greg Giacobe 3	
Ron Kasman 6, 8, 13	[3]
Graham Charnock 6	
John Purcell 6, 11, 17	[3]
Kent Pollard 7	
Hope Leibowitz 7	
Rich Lynch 8, 14	
E.T. Bryan 8, 16	
Garth Spencer 8	
Mark Plummer 9, 13	
Eric Lindsay 9	
Akumentakei 10	
Bill Patterson 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18	[7]
Keith Soltys 10, 14, 15, 18	[4]
Alan D. Burrows 10	
Alan Dorey 11,13	
Rebecca Jansen 12	
Ron Solomon 13, 15	
Richard Chandler 14	
Felicity Walker 14	
Robert Runte 14	
Steve Jeffrey 14, 15, 18	[3]
Johnathan McCalmont 14	
Bruce Gillespie 15	
Terry Whittier 15	
Janet Wilson 16	
Dave Haren 16, 19	
Walt Wentz 17	

Fred Patten 17  
Robert Lichtman 18  
Bob Jennings 18

## **We Also Heard From**

Andy Porter 2, 7, 16  
Lester Boutillier 2  
Akumentakei 2  
Dave Haren 2, 18  
Ron Kasman 2, 3, 15, 16, 17  
Garth Spencer 3  
Philip Morgan 3  
Carol de Priest 3  
Kjartan Arnorson 6, 17  
Ned Brooks 7, 9, 17  
E.T. Bryan 7, 15, 17  
Jim Mowatt 7  
Eric Mayer 8 (He wrote *twice* that issue)  
Leah Zeldes 8  
Terry Whittier 10  
Bruce Gillespie 10  
Tom Turritan 12  
Hope Liebowitz 12, 15  
Greg Benford 14  
Rebecca Jansen 15  
“Bruce” Patterson (aka Bill Patterson) 16  
Alan White 17  
Dave Morris 17  
Keith Soltys 17  
Robert Lichtman 17  
David Langford 17  
Peter Halasz 18

## **We Would Also Like to Hear From**

The purpose of listing someone’s name under this heading was to encourage those fans to write who hide behind their anonymity. As you can see, it was only a *partly* successful experiment.

Eric Lindsay 8, **successful**  
Christina Lake 9  
Steve Stiles 12 **successful**  
Leah Zeldes 14 **successful**  
Mike Meara 15  
Jacqueline Monahan 16,  
John Douglas 16  
Arnie Katz 16

## ***KEY TO BROKEN TOYS' LOGOS...***

Issue 1	Old toys from collector's catalog	Issue 11	Fireball XL5 online photo
Issue 2	Toy ray guns from book	Issue 12	Gold painted "Goldfinger" girl
Issue 3	6" Muppet figures from on top of my TV	Issue 13	Gimmicky rocket ship piggy bank
Issue 4	4 Batmobiles seen from above	Issue 14	Stock photo of Fraggle Rock cast
Issue 5	Spaceship models on my shelf	Issue 15	Hand-carved toy boat from catalog
Issue 6	Tin gas station toy from a catalog	Issue 16	Still photo of Three Stooges (all four)
Issue 7	Photo of my 6 <sup>th</sup> or 7 <sup>th</sup> Christmas	Issue 17	Exploded Colt .44 magnum revolver
Issue 8	Smurfs from a file found online	Issue 18	Fraggles grouped around desktop PC
Issue 9	1960s aircraft "coins" from potato chips	Issue 19	Parts tree for model RAF fighter
Issue 10	Modified photo found online	Issue 20	Willy Ley painting of space plane

## ***FANDOM NOW AND THEN***

Once upon a time, fans wanted fandom to grow.

To grow, they had to attract more people. To attract more people, they had to broaden the definition of fandom to include more things.

Now, most of the things fandom is about are not what the original fans were interested in. Some of those old-timers withdrew into themselves, others went with the flow.

Today, fandom is not about anything in particular. It is not really a hobby in the way that coin collecting or surfing are hobbies – it is not focused on a small number of closely related activities, but spread over a large number of loosely similar activities.

It is more accurate to call fandom a "format" rather than a hobby. Conventions are an event of no fixed character. They are like a country fair or block party, with a little of everything to draw the fans together.

Fandoms that are focused on a particular interest still exist, and they still have their own conventions. However, even they are succumbing to the logic of melding together into what will surely be merely one format to fit all. Go to a con; expect to see everything.

If you want a pure dose of science fiction, go read a book or watch a movie. If you want to publish a fanzine, just do it, and don't confuse your hobby with the party going on next door. If you knock on the door to complain about the noise, you'll be told in a nasty way to mind your own business ... as fandom is *their* party, that *you're* crashing.

# IN PRAISE OF FERENGI

Reprinted From Space R. Graeme  
Cameron's Space Cadet 22, April 2013

*(There are numerous articles I've had published here and there, but have never been satisfied that they reached a large enough audience. I base this suspicion on a belief that nobody actually reads more than a half-dozen of their favourite zines ... so nothing I have written for Drink Tank will be read by fans of Trap Door, and nothing I have had published in Fan Stuff will be seen by fans who stubbornly refuse to read digital publications, and so on. For whatever it's worth, then, I plan to re-run some of my favorite, possibly misplaced pieces in future, beginning with this one from a recent issue of a Canadian fanzine. As we all know, **nobody** reads Canadian fanzines... not even **Canadians** ... not even **this** fanzine.)*

Everyone has their favourite ethnic stereotype from *Star Trek*. For most viewers of the old series it was the Vulcans – those calm, supremely logical aliens with a touch of the Hippie guru resonated with the counterculture the 1960s. If Stephen Hawking could have been Maharishi Mahesh Yogi at the same time, he would have been Mr. Spock. With the triumphant return of the franchise in 1987, the alien race-to-be became the Klingons, who unexpectedly had developed a third, admirable dimension. No longer the swarthy, mustachioed archvillains of the original series, the warrior-race now had a well developed sense of ethics, honour and – even more intriguing – disgrace. An undercurrent in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was that Klingons had badly degenerated from their original warrior values by the time they came in contact with the Federation., having absorbed some of the treacherous and arrogant habits of the Romulans.

But even the Romulans developed a little depth over time, becoming conscious of their selfless duty to the Empire. In one rare episode we were even allowed to see how a defecting Romulan admiral was so devoted to his family that he divulged state secrets in order to protect them and serve the Greater Good.

By the end of *Deep Space Nine*, we had even learned to show a degree of compassion toward the Cardassians, who had not always been militarized, and who suffered *massive* loss of life when double-crossed by their “allies” in the Dominion War.

There is one race in *Star Trek* that almost nobody has any respect for, however. The Ferengi.

To begin with, the name itself is loaded. It is a Farsi word, from the language of the ancient Persians, meaning “stranger.” The Greek word for it is “barbarian.” Rush Limbaugh would probably call them “scrotum heads” or “warts for brains.”

Our first sight of the Ferengi is in a season-one episode of *The New Generation*, in which Picard’s “Away Team” beams down to a planet to investigate the ancient computer guardian of a vanished empire, then clashes with a similar scouting team of Ferengi. Before this incident, the Ferengi are supposedly known to the Federation only by rumour. Data describes their species as resembling ancient “Yankees” – implying they are highly commercial-minded, selfish, unprincipled and unrelenting in the pursuit of a profit. To say the least, it isn’t a very flattering comment on the society that nurtured *Star Trek*’s creator.

Curiously, in later seasons we’ve seen hints that if we hadn’t met the Ferengi before, *they* had met us. While commanding the U.S.S. Stargazer, earlier in his career, Picard destroyed an unknown vessel that later turned out to belong to a rogue Daimon of a Ferengi ship. Many seasons later we also discover that the aliens at the bottom of the Roswell UFO event were time-traveling Ferengi. They were also the villains in at least one episode of *Enterprise*, during events that supposedly took place in the 22<sup>nd</sup>

century.place in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.time-traveling Ferengi. They were also the villains in at least one episode of *Enterprise*, during events that supposedly took place in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century.

Throughout the *Star Trek* franchise, there are signs that Earth and the Federation had by and large developed beyond a strictly pay-as-you-go economy, and had perhaps even become an outright social-democracy. It is a little hard to be dogmatic about what life is like on 24<sup>th</sup> century Earth, however, as we only see what life is like in *Starfleet*. If we judged the present day by how life is lived in the U.S. Army, could we be sure that early 21<sup>st</sup> century America isn't actually a socialist society? Also, as both *TNG* and *DS9* progressed, season by season, the concept of "money" seemed to creep slowly back into the picture, until we see Starfleet personnel actually using the technologically retro stuff in Quark's bar.

Incidentally, money returned to *Star Trek* at approximately the same rate that weapons grew bigger and more macho-looking, the political conduct of Starfleet grew more corrupt, and an unaccustomed reverence was shown to organized religion. This could be coincidence ... but I suspect not. Likely, these changes in attitudes represents the more conventional thinking of the heirs of Gene Roddenberry's creation, as applied to the posthumous production of the franchise.

The first glimpse we have of the Ferengi is rather appalling, I have to admit. Apart from their rodent-like facial features, they hunch over as though afflicted from early age by a degenerative spinal condition. Worse, they hiss... and rub their hands incessantly.

"Gold. Look, he wearssss gold!" says one no-name Ferengi, pointing at Commander Riker's communicator badge.

"Ahhh, he isss dessecrating it! He *wearssss* gold on his uniform!" says one of the others.

"And they let their women wear clothesssss too ... " titters a third, obviously undresssssing Tasha Yar in his mind. Ferengi are not just gold-crazy, they are dirty-minded perverts as well.

Never mind allusions to Yankees. What does this *really* remind you of?

If you guessed a particularly juicy passage from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, you're thinking just about what everybody else was thinking at the time – that Ferengi are a race of nasty little buggers who bear too great a resemblance to anti-Semitic stereotypes to be mere happenstance.

Wait a moment ... Isn't Gene Roddenberry Jewish?

Actually, no. I *thought* he was, but apparently he was born a Southern Baptist, and as an adult he professed humanism and agnosticism. All the same, I'm reluctant to accuse Roddenberry of intentional anti-Semitism because the general trend of the entire series, first to the last, has been free of malicious racism. Nor has it been hostile to religion in general.

Whether or not there was any conscious expression of anti-Jewish stereotypes in the creation of the Ferengi, it has blighted their existence ever since.

True, as a race they rapidly shed their worst attributes – the hand wringing and furtive mannerisms were first to go. Later, the lust for gold was given a more abstract form. They were hot for profits, measured in the fictitious medium of Gold Pressed Latinum.

What is Gold Pressed Latinum, anyway? From slender evidence, it appears to be a non-toxic liquid. In one episode, a small fortune of the stuff was drunk by one of Quark's customers. Normally, it is circulated in the form of a small gold wafer, in sizes of different value. Presumably, the Latinum itself is bound inside the wafer chemically, or simply fills the interior somewhat like the whiskey in a hip flask. Somehow, this arrangement makes it impossible to replicate Gold Pressed Latinum.

One wonders if anyone had tried replicating the Latinum separately, and then gold-pressing it later ... One thing for certain, anyone who solved the technical problem of replicating this stuff would be Ferengi Enemy Number One. They would also, no doubt, be overwhelmed with shady business offers by just about every Ferengi who could warp to his doorstep.

Regardless of smoothing off some of some of their rougher edges, the Ferengi remained a sort of cartoon Jew. It was only very slowly that they developed anything like a rounded character and more admirable qualities. In an early episode of *Deep Space Nine*, we see Quark and his brother Rom in a bout of deadly backstabbing to see which of them will succeed the late Grand Nagus. At the climax of their rivalry, Rom maneuvers Quark into an airlock and hits the button to evict his brother into the vacuum of space. The real Nagus, who had not died after all, prevents it in the nick of time. What is Quark's reaction to his near-murder at his brother's hands? A slap on the back, a cut in wages (of course), and a brotherly, "I didn't realize you had the lobes to do it!"

Whether or not this is brotherly affection among Ferengi is a moot point.

The Ferengi are also misogynists in grand style. Women *don't* have the lobes ... that is, they are not credited for having any instinct for business. They are baby machines, live-in maids and sex-toys who do not even have a legal right to wear clothes. Quark is deeply disgusted that his own mother is so sexually perverted as to wear clothing in private. Yet Ferengi family life cannot be entirely as selfish and cut-throat as their business life appears to be. Both Quark and Rom are as deeply attached to their mother, Ishka, as she is to them. Typically, she brought both boys up by masticating their food herself, before it was fed to them.

We also see that the Ferengi are not necessarily set in their ways, biologically. In one amusing scene at Quark's bar, he laments the influence that Hew-mons (as he calls us) have over his own kin. Quark tells an inattentive customer to be *especially* wary of *root beer* – "so bubbly, and cloying, and happy. Just like the Federation." That he protests too much reveals that Quark feels the attraction, too. DS9's barkeep has also had to accept that his employees can form a union, and that he might have to pay them a salary set by negotiation rather than fiat. He has learned to tolerate his brother's strange desire to follow his dream by working as a civilian engineer for Deep Space Nine, even if he cannot understand it. If that weren't enough to drive a decent, profit-seeking Ferengi to distraction, his nephew Nog actually wants to *join* Starfleet Academy! Quark is quite right, you see... we *are* corrupting his people!

Nor are Ferengi "fee-males" in any way inferior, it seems. As we see in the case of Quark's mother, the Ferengi attitude toward women is clearly cultural. Ishka is every bit as smart as her boys, and maybe more so. She not only wears the pants around the family home, she secretly engages in business – supposedly an all male preserve. She runs an illegal business empire and does extraordinarily well at it, making so much money that it becomes a matter of state security when her profiteering is discovered. When he discovers Ishka's "perversions," the Grand Nagus Zek is initially shocked – his cultural values have been turned upside-down. Once he has grown used to the idea of a woman as a business equal,

however, he finds he is strangely aroused. They become partners in business ... and in “monkey business” as well.

In another episode, a Ferengi woman named Pel disguises herself with false, larger ears to pass as a male and enter a business arrangement with Quark.

You have to hand it to poor Quark ... the guy had to deal with more culture shock and showed more resilience than I suspect most of us would in the same circumstances.

But the Ferengi are not merely a backward race, only capable of catching up with our own lofty civilization if given time and a good example. In some respects, they have shown themselves to be *superior* species.

There is one episode in which Quark is challenged to a duel by a Klingon. He cannot weasel out of, yet it is certain death to show up at the designated time and place – nevertheless, he summons the courage to do it. Defeated in moments, with the bat’leth poised over him, Quark stares death in the face with unexpected defiance. His enemy, completely victorious, prepares to deliver the death thrust ... and loses the duel. His fellow Klingons were so impressed by the example of a brave Ferengi that to strike him down appears cowardly. They turn their backs on the bewildered victor in a show of “discommendation,” suddenly rendering him *persona non grata*.

Dax, one of the members of Benjamin Sisko’s crew on Deep Space Nine, is a rather unconventional Starfleet officer – she actually likes Ferengi, and joins them in Dabo, Tongo and other forms of gambling. Unashamed of how she spends her time off, she explains that Ferengi are “fun-loving.”

It’s in serious matters that the Ferengi show their real moral fiber. Trapped by Jem’Hadar shock troops in a cave, Sisko and Quark quarrel over each other’s failings as species. Quark is incensed that the Federation commander regards his people as a race of greedy, unscrupulous shopkeepers, and reminds the Hew-mon that while Ferengi are fiercely acquisitive, they have had no world wars, and have never sold each other into slavery. Considering that Sisko is himself black, this is a cutting reminder of humanity’s dark side.

But perhaps the most interesting evidence of the Ferengi’s higher nature is found in the office of Grand Nagus. Zek is as greedy as the next Ferengi, but clearly regards his office as much more than an opportunity to enrich himself at everyone else’s expense. (That too is a “perk” of the position, but only if he has done his job well.) In one episode it appears likely that Brunt, an ambitious Ferengi from the Board of Commerce, may force Zek from office and succeed him. Quark and the other Ferengi on DS9 are concerned because Brunt is not merely acquisitive – as all his good Ferengi are – but actually selfish and without scruple. If he becomes Grand Nagus there is the danger that he will neglect his duties and enrich himself without limit ... and, more importantly, without regard for the well-being of the Ferengi Alliance as a whole.

Zek said it best: “A Grand Nagus has to think of more than just his own profit. He must act for the good of all Feringar and the profit of all Ferengi.” Now, isn’t that a standard of integrity that we, as Hew-mons, could wish for more often from *our* leaders? And rarely get?

As a species, I believe we have little right to look down our noses at the practical and principled Ferengi.

# NOTHING NEW UNDER THE RAINBOW



Guy Lillian III has joined the Movement and published a short personalzine. He cautions the reader not to conclude that *Spartacus* is really a personalzine, however. Guy regards it more as a safety valve in which he can blow off some steam. We shall see.

In the first issue, Guy talks about several related topics. The first is the fanzine's namesake, the original Spartacus, who led a slave revolt against Rome in the first century B.C. The revolt was made into a movie spectacle with Kirk Douglas as the gladiator run amok in the name of liberty. Or so Universal Studios would have us believe ...

Naming the zine *Spartacus* introduces the theme of "liberty." It's a moot point whether the original Spartacus was fighting for liberty in *any* abstract sense. Far more likely, he and his companions were fighting for *their own* liberty, and had no objection to depriving anyone else of theirs ... along with their property and very lives. Pirates on the Spanish Main exercises a limited sort of democracy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries ... but only among themselves. Otherwise, pirates were into piracy *for the loot*. I suspect that it was the same with the gladiators who followed Spartacus, as well. They rebelled against their masters because they were tired of the circus and no bread.

(I know all this smart stuff because Darrell Schweitzer taught me everything I know about history.)

For much of Guy's zine, he talks about gender issues at conventions. He's not the only one. Lately, *everybody* seems to want to talk about homosexuality. By "lately," I mean almost as long as I can remember. Gayness is the hot topic in comedy clubs, in politics and in serious, sensitive movies about cowboys ... of all things. What would John Wayne have made of it? What *should* a cowboy – whose actual name was *Marion* – make of it? Fandom has been no exception in tackling this touchy, downright poke-you-in-the-eye subject. If younger fans are talking about the subject now, older fans talked about it incessantly in the past, starting with Francis Towner Laney and "Tendrils Towers," and by no means finishing with Richard Bergeron and "Topic A." No matter when, there has always been a buzz in the background of *someone* discussing gay issues in fandom. And, to tell the truth, I'm not too comfortable with it.

I've always conceded any well-reasoned argument for Fair Play, Justice, Equal Rights and All That. For instance: gay marriage. I wasn't really sure what I thought about it. There were numerous legal and

financial benefits, such as pensions, inheritance, spousal benefits, and tax deductions. As a life-long loner without a cushy job of any sort, I get squat ... I somewhat resented two grown men who, like me, were capable of looking after themselves, treating each other as dependents. But, in the long run, I decided it just wasn't any of my business. If two guys (or gals) want to get married and benefit from it, why should *I* resent their good luck? Or their *right*, if you want to put it that way.

But I still don't really like listening to all this stuff about what people do in their bedrooms.

I can tell you *why*, I think. It's as I told some guys who I once knew, at a gay party that I attended years ago. Just as it did in furry fandom as a whole, furry fandom in Toronto got very gay before the inevitable comeback by the straights. But I knew the people, and went to the party, because it was ostensibly open to *anyone* in the local furry community. Unfortunately, the party was entirely gay except for me. I was the only straight person there, and must have looked visibly out of place while I watched one couple after another leave the main room and disappear for a while into one of the darkened bedrooms. I think almost everyone did this, sooner or later. Eventually, the host came over to me and said he sensed my discomfort. Did I have a problem with the other people in the room being gay?

Just to be sure that I didn't give a flip answer that he wouldn't believe anyway, I actually thought about it for a minute. Of course I was uncomfortable, I told him. I'd be a fool to deny it. However, I added that I was certain that I'd be just as uncomfortable if I had been at a party in which everyone disappeared into the back rooms for *straight sex* ... except me. Because I was the only person present who *wasn't* there to get lucky, I was naturally in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Then the folding wooden chair I was sitting on broke, dumping me on the floor. A round of embarrassed apologies were exchanged, after which I left. Nothing like a bit of physical humour to lighten an awkward situation, eh?

It's just my luck ... I got a sore bum and didn't even get laid.

However, the general principle is valid. I regard people's sexual activity as their personal business, and for the most part I don't want to hear about it. I regard gay activism in much the same light. On principle, I don't oppose anyone's rights, but would rather leave the finicky details to others.

Guy also talked about sexual harassment at cons, another topic that had lately pushed a lot of buttons. I feel just as disinclined to dwell on this subject as the other. However, I may be able to use metaphor to good advantage. Suppose that I'm wearing a t-shirt with sexy art on it. Someone says it "harasses" them if I wear it in their presence, and insists I take it off or leave. Now let's try to imagine the issue being "black" instead of "gender." Or "fat." Is whatever it is that you're doing "harassment" if its about "fatness?" Is it a form of harassment if you continue to make fat-jokes around fat fans when they ask you to stop? It seems that it must be. Unfortunately, I'm still unsure about the t-shirt. A t-shirt that makes fun of fat people might be in really bad taste, but is it grounds to evict someone from a room party ... or even from a con? What about those sexy t-shirts? I used to *sell* those at cons as well as wear them. If someone walked by my table and said they didn't like my shirts, do they have the right to stop me from displaying them? What if the complaining party wore an Evangelical pin that offended *my* sensitive secular beliefs?

This is getting too heavy. I'd better stop before I break another chair.

# A Loonie in Change



Not exactly continued from page one... but unquestionably returning to an *idée fixe*

## *“Only Once a Year*

*“It all happened because it was Kiki’s birthday.*

*“All of it – the bungled race, the gift of donuts, the shrinking king and of course the song. But, to start at the beginning, it has to be said that of all the Fraggles, only Darl could not, or would not sing. There was a reason for this that we’ll get to, by and by.”*

Yes, that’s the start of a work of fiction. My condition has grown dire, you see. Not only have I still a strong urge to write a lengthy story about Fraggles Rock, but the idea has grown in my imagination into something even more grandiose and baroque than at first. Don’t get me wrong. I still love the story of Debb and the tragedy that changed her life. But ... That’s a simple little tale with little scope for development, and suffers badly in comparison to the new scheme I have for “Only Once a Year.”

The story has everything you could want of a Fraggles Rock tale. It has a funny thing happen with Gorgs, all because of a donut, and which can only be resolved with the usual enigmatic advice from Marjorie, the Trash Heap, and with the help of Junior Gorg. It has the discovery of gold by Doozers, who have little use for the soft metal. The story has a pointless foot race that goes wrong, and precipitates Darl into the spotlight instead of Gobo, the *usual* Fraggles to stumble into an adventure. It has songs, although none by Darl – who can’t sing. It has Cantus, who is reduced to apoplexy by the puzzle of a songless Fraggles. It may even have Debb, in the form of a cautionary tale told by the Storyteller. There are new caves and new wonders. New Fraggles and an unexpected relationship between them and us Silly Creatures. Finally, “Only Once a Year” has a deeply-seated personal problem between Darl and Kiki that is finally worked out only because of everything that happened between the beginning and the end. If you want anything more than that in a Fraggles Rock story, get J.J. Abrams to direct it, and the hell with you.

Unfortunately, J.J. Abrams has one thing I will never have: Official Permission from Our Corporate Masters that he may do what he pleases – even destroy the integrity of the franchise. Not only that, but the Masters will put tens of millions of dollars behind his efforts, to see that the entire world has the opportunity to appreciate his pip-squeak genius. In my case, a couple of hundred bucks will see that a cease-and-desist letter is sent to me by the flunky who assists the most-junior attorney at Disney’s gigantic legal division.

It wasn't always this way. Once upon a time, stories belonged to everyone. Had anyone interrupted a skilled bard or troubadour in the middle of his performance, he'd have been lucky to escape a good beating by the audience. Stories about Heracles, Odin or Robin Hood never "belonged" to anyone, as such. Of course, there were distinctive *tellings* of these stories, and should anyone claim the style or manner of a well-known performer as one's own, it was only a matter of time before someone called you a liar and poor imitator. You'd lose face ... but not a \$2,000,000 judgment. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the stuff that our culture is made from was largely in the public domain. Paul Bunyan and Santa Claus were created, to one degree or another, by individuals we can still name, yet in the wider sense they belonged to everyone. Joel Chandler Harris wrote stories about B'rer Rabbit and B'rer Fox that American Blacks had told for generations, and was never called on it. Disney even adapted Harris's stories to animation. Ironically, the studio was scrupulous about paying for the copyrights ... because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, prosperous authors and their publishers began to assert a moral claim. Dickens, Mark Twain, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and others campaigned at home and abroad for legislation that gave the creator protection for his valuable intellectual property – and thus created the modern paradigm. Now, because those rights were *transferable*, our culture effectively belongs to no human being. It belongs to Time-Warner, Paramount or Sony.

Had the modern legal protection existed far in the past, you probably couldn't have sung nursery rhymes or made a quick prayer to Jesus™ without paying the appropriate fee ... assuming you were in Zone 1 and not Zone 2 ... then it would have to be a prayer to Allah™.

All of this made sense at one time. Authors, composers, artists and all manner of creative people were constantly stolen from, and rarely saw one penny in a hundred that their efforts earned. Unfortunately, it is now more than 150 years later and the law still doesn't protect most creative people, whose property is worth little because it cannot be heard over the din of massive promotional campaigns and international distribution that only corporations can afford. Corporate property is *very well* protected, however. So what have we gained? Pay-as-you-watch downloads, of questionable benefit? What we have *lost* is clear enough: Oz, Barsoom, Sherlock Holmes, Peter Pan, 007, Zorro, The Saint, Ebenezer Scrooge, L'il Abner, Superman, Dracula, and hundreds of other examples. The actual creators are all long dead, so are not protected in any meaningful way by the existing laws ... while the common birthright of our culture is in the hands of corporations that have acquired the rights virtually in perpetuity.

Well ... I'm just letting my thoughts wander. I don't have the answer. Would it be better if copyright protection had not guaranteed successful creators a living, but had been ripped off from the start by the Disneys and Turners and Viacoms of the world? If I were in the shoes of Charles Shultz or Dr. Seuss, how would I feel if some fanboy took *my* work, turned it into a mindless action-adventure film or pornographic internet comic strip and made money from it, while there was nothing *I* could do about it? Oh... come to think of it, in practical terms there *is* nothing I can do about it *now* ... not without plenty of money for a lawyer. The arguments just go 'round and 'round, in ever-diminishing circles.

So, why do these copyright-protected, unpublishable inspirations happen to *me*, I wonder? I could have completely original ideas, with new characters and situations that owe nothing to anyone. In fact, I *do* have them. Plenty of them. Yet, the ideas that I know I can turn into actual stories, the ideas that excite me enough to (perhaps) undertake the effort, are so often ideas that belong to somecorp else. Do I have a screw loose, somewhere?

What if I *were* to write “Only Once a Year?” I could post it online for the fanboys to read. There’s a small Fraggles Rock fandom, and while many may be too purist to read fan fiction, others would no doubt be delighted. For many writers, that would be enough. I’m going to turn 62 in a short while, though, and have been trying to entertain people with little thought to compensation for most of that time. I’m beginning to think, “what’s in this for *me*?” What’s in “Only Once a Year” for me? A tiny bit of egoboo is way too little.

I wish you were here to see the shifty look in my eye ... There *is* something that *could* work. For now, that’s all that I’ll say. *I might have to take some time off from fandom, though ...*

