

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette

#15

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R.J. Bartrop 2007

Welcome to *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* #15, April 2008, the much-delayed successor to RSNG #14. Your editor tonight will be Garth Spencer, **now at** P.O. Box 74122, Hillcrest Park, 4101 Main St., Vancouver, BC, Canada V5V 3P0, the man who teaches cats to say "Woof." Our specialties this issue include fannish news, original views, and reality reviews.

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Garth: The Continuing Adventures

Since Our Last Thrilling Episode:

Guess what I found out? I found out that your energy declines as you get older; so does your disposable time; and if your income increases, your expenses increase more. Of course I knew this already – that’s the basis of my joke that the Golden Age of Fandom is 23 – but now I appreciate a lot more what it means. So it was lack of disposable income, or more importantly, not having enough leftover energy, that delayed RSNG since 2005.

If any amount of time passes, I tend to over-plan what I’m doing, and that’s another reason.

As a cost-saving measure I have bowed to necessity and will only publish RSNG online now. I finally sent out notices to that effect. Well, I can send paper copies to a few friends who don’t have Internet access.

*

One of the curious adventures I had, in 2006, was discovering RSNG on the Aurora Awards ballot, followed by receiving the 2006 fanzine category Aurora. I’m trying to figure out how *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* rated as the year’s best Canadian fanzine.

I guess I was nonplussed because I really feel I put a sub-par effort into RSNG #14. Just threw text and graphics together, kept the layout really simple, didn’t challenge myself or the readers. There are a lot of layout options I haven’t explored, technical envelopes I haven’t pushed.

But I do appreciate the recognition.

Now contrast this with a recent review of *BCSFazine* in *Broken Pencil*, Canada’s answer to *Factsheet Five* (of fond memory). I have spent a lot of my spare time on *BCSFazine*, without apparently much interesting or stimulating the BCSFA members. About the time BCSFA had shrunk by attrition to a standard newsletter, without feature articles or interesting illos or experimental layout, a reviewer in BP panned the newsletter, mainly for being a mere newsletter without what he valued in contemporary zines. I felt he was quite right in his putdowns, albeit the reviewer didn’t get why BCSFA is charging for its newsletter, or indeed what it was about.

My last paragraph sums up the March 2008 editorial I wrote for *BCSFazine*. Oh, but I left out one thing: I commented that I didn’t get BCSFA, either ...

And I probably never got fanzine fandom, in the first place. I recalled how out of step I was, when I went to Potlatch in Seattle.

*

On a more personal note, I've done some growing up in the last couple of years. Minor epiphanies. Detaching from old resentments, a little bit.

Most of you have heard exhaustively about a problem of communication and comprehension, both on my part and on the part of others; and my latest conclusion that I must have been a high-functioning autistic, struggling all these years to uncover the unvoiced information that goes with words. It finally got through my thick head that most of us *can't* articulate the things we take for granted.



Letters

R'ykandar Korra'ti < darako@murkworks.net >, 24 Feb 2006

Taral wrote:

Most were using computers like Commodore 64's, Co-Cos, Ataris and XT's to create a print out that was Xeroxed to actually publish the zine. One variation that I experimented with myself was to use my 128's printer to cut a wax stencil. As the 90's dawned, more and more people acquired more and more computing power and could edit entire zines in virtual reality before printing out a word. Logically, this should have resulted in very elaborately designed zines. But oddly, it didn't. The necessary interest in and skills at graphic design weren't there.

Um.

There were several of us producing 'zines that were very, very ambitious and graphically complex in this era; we were pushing the limits of the technologies we had available to us, for sure. However, the graphic complexity was often an *_active_* cause of rejection, at least amongst American fanzine fans - particularly the baby boomers who made up the bulk of it in the Midwest. I would have fanzine readers tell me outright that they wouldn't even *_look at_* a fanzine as "slick" as mine, because it clearly meant I wasn't paying any attention to the writing and was instead solely interested in the fanzine's appearance. While this wasn't universally the case - I had between a few hundred and a couple of thousand readers at various points with various 'zines - it was a major impediment to acceptance.

I never had many fanzine-fandom readers, tho' I did manage a few. Much later, I had one person in this category tell me later that when they did finally look at some of my old 'zines, they were quite surprised to find out that they were actually pretty good. They'd always expected them to be bad, just because they were pretty - and were rather surprised when they weren't crudzines after all.

I have a few copies of some other fanzines which made similar efforts and met similar fates. One called PULSAR, in particular, stands out in my mind. I think they were publishing out of Indiana.

(I don't intend to, as they say, toot my own horn here; there are other reasons not to have liked my 'zines. But given that my fanzine was specifically criticized by fanzine fans for looking *_too good_*, I think it's fair and relevant to bring it up here. Personally, I always thought it could have looked better; I was continually frustrated by the technology available to me. Go fig!)

Taral also mentioned:

If the possibilities of the computer revolution are nigh endless, I'd have to say that fanzine fandom has used it mainly as a convenience, and let possibilities go largely unrealized.

I'm still running into the phenomenon I describe above, actually. I do the Norwescon daily newsletter every year and I've done a pretty solid amount of heavy, heavy design there - and I *_can_* do it there, because I don't run into the automatic-rejection issue. The Norwescon crowd skews young and towards the neofan, and there's almost no fanzine fan presence - and they're actively attracted to an aggressive, graphic daily 'zine. It gets their attention.

But if I take that kind of work *_out_* of that kind of environment, it doesn't fly. I have to pull back. The newsletter I did last year for CascadiaCon (NASFiC Seattle), *_FaxCascadia_*, was restrained in several ways because I've learned to gauge what audiences will and won't take, and the Worldcon fan community *_would not have accepted_* something as dense as heavily-designed as, say, my personal favourite of the 'zines I've done, INEVITABILITY.

This isn't just speculation; I know this because I've shown fanzine fans copies of INEVITABILITY, and, once again, some of them wouldn't even read it *_because of_* its graphic complexity. It would have been a failure as a Worldcon, NASFiC, or Westercon newsletter on that basis.

On the other hand, it's the only daily 'zine I've ever done that got mentioned in a fanzine review column; it was described as "very silly." Which it was, of course. I was pleased. ^_^

PS: Oh, back on the Seattle/Vancouver thing? We also have the nekkid bicyclers. CASCADIA NOW! ^_^

leelavell@comcast.net, 25 Feb 2006

I recently just came out of a thirty-year gafiation and discovered your fanzine on line. I was especially interested in the article "The Fanzine Tool-Kit," which in some part harkens back to my so-called area expertise. I refer to the mimeographed fanzine.

I first became active in the early fifties and at that time got my first mimeo, an absolutely terrible machine from Sears, which had a defective roller. (When I tried to return it or get it fixed I was rudely rebuffed, a decision which has probably cost Sears

thousands of dollars over the years, since I have bought almost nothing from them since. I hold grudges.) This was used to publish our local club's newsletter. As soon as I could afford it I replaced it with an A.B. Dick (I think it was), which did a somewhat better job. The kind of machine was an important factor in publishing. Back in those days most (if not all) mimeos, at least affordable ones, were hand crank, messy and apt to have paper feeds that would drive one up a wall. Despite this things could be done with them if proper care were taken. The article mentioned tools and they were certainly very important.

Unmentioned was the lightscope, a kind of easel for stencils that aided immeasurably in the tracing of illos and lettering. A wide wide wide variety of shading plates were needed if one really hoped to reproduce an illo accurately. Subtle shading could be done if one took the care and time. Another important factor was the type of stencil. Stencils came in many degrees of hardness. Best for typing was a nice hard stencil, as it kept letters like "o" and "p" from having their centres fall out. Illustrations were another matter. For them a very soft stencil was needed in order to pick up the delicate nuances of some illos. With careful scratching even limited areas of solids could be achieved.

Things stood pretty much this way through the fifties and much of the sixties. Approaching the seventies things were beginning to change. The age of the supermimeo was in full flower (although few could afford one everyone faunched for one). The electrostencil had now reached a stage of sophistication where it would pick up even the lightest of lines. I once had an illo submitted on lightly blue-lined paper and after I had it electro stencilled I had to corflu out those lines. Some fans were photo-offsetting, but most could not afford to do that.

It was at that point I bought my final mimeo, a Roneo. The Roneo could be electrically operated at varying speeds including single sheet. One could get multiple drums, which could be inked for different colours and popped in and out of the machine with a fair amount of ease and cleanliness. It also had a great paper feed and excellent registration. Add in a Selectric typewriter and I was really ready to try out what a mimeographed fanzine could do.

I'll just mention a few. I think that I was among the first to figure out that stencils could be reversed. Actually, I didn't know any better. I just figured that holes in stencils are holes in wax and it didn't make any difference which way they were placed, so I was rather surprised when some fans started squeaking when they saw mirror-image illos.

Another thing I tried was having a quarter-page free form solid area electrostencilled which I ran in colour (red) on a page, then laid a black illo on top of it. It worked beautifully, but it certainly was a pain in the wazoo! When laying on the solid colour the paper stuck to the inkpad and had to be peeled off and laid out to dry. Slow going there.

One more thing about turning out a good-looking mimeographed fanzine: the paper. A hard surface white paper might look very professional but it was lousy for mimeographing. A cheap, soft paper like Twilltone worked best since it absorbed the ink in a much more efficient way.

So, if one were willing and able, an attractive fanzine could be published. Now we're into the on-line fanzine. I wonder how they will evolve....

((Glad to hear from you. Yours is the second loc I received, and both have been about Taral's fanzine article. Just a couple of data points, but I wonder if I see a trend shaping up.

((Before 1987 I had more experience with spirit duplicators than mimeo, before turning entirely to photocopy. It was rather interesting to see the introduction of desktop publishing programs, and then the Internet, but it has been a bit disturbing to see some of the impact of the Internet on copyright practice. Probably there is still a lot of confusion as to what faneditors and fanpublishers can and cannot print.

((I produce both a monthly clubzine and my irregular personalzine, and in each case I send out both postal and email versions. Well before efanzines.com started up, I was aware of a change coming over fanzine production; and now, I expect to see fanzines designed specifically for online publication. Sure thing. Any day now.

((Over the last few years I have probably missed a lot of discussion on this issue, on newsgroups and bulletin boards and trufen.net. Fans like Victor Gonzalez do a number of fanzine reviews on trufen.net. I should look up the site regularly. Real Soon Now.))

John Purcell <jpurcell54@earthlink.net>, 11 Mar 2006

In the same spirit that you put the November, 2005 issue of TSNG #14 out in February, 2006, here's a loc I've been meaning to write for a couple weeks, and just now am getting around to it.

How the heck are you? It is really good to see you're still pubbing, and I'm thankful for the kind words you say about my zine. I had no idea that I write "existential comedy routines." So that's what it's called, huh? And all this time I thought that it was fannish writing. Who knew?

When you say that you discovered that most club fans don't know that the clubzine is a participatory activity, this is something that most clubzine editors have fought with since the days of proto-fandom. Most sf club members tend to think of it as only a social outlet, a convenient place to party, and so don't do even a quarter of all that an sf club can be. It's easy to get maudlin over this situation; sounds like you've been there now. With the exception of what's going on out in Las Vegas and BASFA, I can't think of many really active fannish activity hotbeds in the USofA right now. A club thrives as much as its members want it to. Somehow, those lazy schmohunks in BCSFA need to be shown exactly what is "fannish" and why it's so much fun. (So send me a copy of their clubzine, and I'll see if I can breathe some life into their collective body.)

((It isn't that they're lazy, it's that they weren't exposed to the concept. Apparently all I accomplished by going on about fannish, or fanzine fandom was to annoy the members, and make them feel vaguely insulted. What we had here was a failure to communicate.))

I liked your "Why this is fandom, nor am I out of it" piece. The one section that says it all is where Jophan tells Neo "There's no 'way to', just fanac!" So completely true. Just like the old saying, you only get out of something what you put into it, fandom gives back oodles when you put effort into it. Some times it takes a bit of time for things to get on a roll, but once it does, there is much fun to be had.

(Re "You know you're in Vancouver when ...") Didn't Starbucks start just a hop, skip, and a fart away in Seattle? Yes, predictable Internet humour, but these things are usually good for a sociocultural chuckle.

"The Theory of WAP" is appropriately fannish. THIS is good, and has practical applications. I can envision NASA conducting studies on shuttle missions and on the

International Space Station (ISS) to see if zero gravity has either a slowing or deadening effect on WAP speed. WAP theory also, it seems, explains ESP or the feeling of déjà vu. No scientific evidence to support the theory, just tantalizing bits and pieces here and there, like Bigfoot sightings, SETI results, or coherence and meaning in the Bush Administration. These are things that are debatable.

Reading your musings Canadian fanhistory reminds me that I have an old article of yours in an issue of This House from the late 80s. If it's all right with you, would you mind if I scanned that article, "On Writing Fanhistory," and run it again in a future issue of *In A Prior Lifetime*? It would fit right in with the fanhistorical bent of my zine. Let me know if it's okay to do so.

((For sure. Just let me see if it requires editing.))

Otherwise, I think the major problem with Canadian fandom is the sheer distances involved up there. Canada is one muthafuckin' HUGE country, and so it is going to take some major effort for one fan group to evolve from their localized base - say, Vancouver, for example - to make connections with fan groups in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, or Quebec. Only the last three cities are relatively close to each other. Heck, Winnipeg has relative proximity to Minneapolis Fandom, but it's still something like a ten-hour drive from city to city. Yeah, Canada has too much physical distance to conquer; maybe the Internet will help things out.

((I've written about just this point in Dale Speirs' fanzine Opuntia, and talked about this on fanzine panels. Once I even had the privilege of meeting Greg Benford, at a VikingCon, and he observed just what I was about to say: the demographic parallel to Canada is not the U.S., but Australia. That is, population in each country is pretty much concentrated on the periphery of a less-habitable area - central desert in their country, and high-latitude prairie/forest/tundra/taiga in ours.

((The Internet hasn't made as much difference to the fragmentation of fandom as you might expect, and I think I know why. What geographic distance did to Canadian fan groups from the outset, the sheer population growth of fandom has done to fandom, throughout the industrialized world. Fans meet their need for other fans far more easily now, there's much less impetus to reach people outside your immediate group. Even within a city, fans are pretty content within a local anime or comics or gaming or Harry Potter group.

((The subject came up yet again in an issue of Warp, a clubzine from Montreal.))

Taral's piece is well-researched and a nice bit of fan publishing history, and his comments about the future of fanzines are well taken. Up until now, a fanzine could well be considered "a set piece," as Taral says. If an e-zine reader prints out a hard copy of the zine, the contents are static; but if it's a webzine, the contents do take on a fluid quality, flowing from issue to issue, like the way the Rainy River connects the lakes up in the Boundary Waters Area along the Minnesota-Canada border. You can stop to fish in one lake, take your fill there, then move along a short distance to the next lake and do it all over again, probably pulling in the same [kind of] fish, but some will be bigger while others will be smaller. Either way, it's still an enjoyable experience, one that you will do again given half the chance.

And finally, thank you for giving an insight into your frame of mind of late. I do hope your efforts to reclaim your life work. I have always enjoyed your writing and look forward to more. By doing a bit of clean up, reorganization, and prioritizing, you should start feeling better about yourself. Steady income does wonders for a person's feeling of self-worth, too. I'm pulling for you, Garth, and it sounds like you're on the

right track. Don't derail yourself. Like establishing a sense of fan-community, it takes time and effort. (You like the way I tied that in with the beginning of this loc? Damn fine bit of loc-writing, there...)

WAP! Back to reality. Thanks for the zine. A good one with lots of comment hooks. I'll keep my eyes out for more from you.

Eric Mayer, March 17, 2006

Didn't take me quite as long to reply as it would take the RSN to launch a ship, I suppose.

((One of these days I really must get serious about inventing the all-weather balloon-suspended pedal-powered jet-assisted hot tub, and entering it in the Nanaimo Bathtub Race. This is, I promise, a real event.))

Nice article by Taral about the history of fanzines. I just wrote a squib in which I concluded, as he did, that one of the main features of a fanzine as opposed to a website, for instance, is that a fanzine is a finished entity. In my opinion, that characteristic is so important that an entity which is not a completed object cannot be a fanzine. An ever-changing website may be a better way, or at least a new way, to conduct fanac, and it may succeed the fanzine as the preferred means of fanac, but it can never be a fanzine. It is too significantly different.

*((***Everybody*** comments on Taral's article this issue!))*

But I really can't see any reason though for him to identify small fanzines with Ted White and his friends. Small personalzines were all over the place when I got into fandom in the early seventies. (And Taral notes they've always been around.) Well, I guess it sounds more like history to attribute them to people who are well known. History, even in the real world, probably tends to accrete around well-known figures, and people attribute to them much more than they are really responsible for.

((Everybody has a different experience. "YMMV."))

Re that Nude Day stuff -- years ago, when I lived in Rochester, NY, some women were protesting for the right to go topless, disputing some local ordinance about public indecency, and I seem to recall a magistrate ruled the ordinance unconstitutional. The authorities didn't appeal, at the time, not wanting to possibly end up with an unfavourable ruling that might apply all over the state, so, for awhile, and maybe to this day, if you're a woman who really wants to go topless in public, it's legal in Rochester, NY. Damn cold there most of the time though.

((Guess it was busting out all over around that time.

((Jeez, I just realized I wrote that!))

I've commiserated with you about employment elsewhere. [*in e-APA - GS*] Don't beat yourself up over it. No one can know even a couple years in advance, let alone half a lifetime, what a **good** choice of career might be. Things change. The only constant is that all employment is converging toward **sucks**. Employment skill merely measures whether you can immediately put money in someone else's pocket. Social utility, whether you could do something useful for humanity, doesn't come into employment skills. Never mind intelligence, creativity, all that. Look at just an issue of your fanzine. What real skills, writing, reasoning ability etc does that entail? It isn't

your fault if no one wants to make use of such skills. (I'm speaking from my own knowledge here)

((Maybe I just have to apply at some publishers and papers and magazines; I haven't tried before. Another veteran of fanzine fandom suggested that to me today.))

Get hold of some corporate memos written by guys that are paid six figures and make out like they're geniuses. I used to read those things all the time where I worked. And half these guys are revealed in their memos as semi-literate morons. And it wasn't just lack of writing skills, but total lack of thinking skills. I'm far from brilliant but I try to use what little brain I have. Could we use some people who'd at least make an effort to think things through clearly? Of course.

((I've made the same observation in my own mind, at a few of my places of employment.))

But since the only aim of practically all jobs is to line some pockets, it is irrelevant. (You get the impression this whole employment thing is a sore point with me too?) What I'm trying to say is, we all need to make a living. And it is a big problem for those of us without the right so-called skills, but don't blame yourself.

((When I got your loc I was reading a quote from Cory Doctorow about how global warming is doubted mainly by sociopathic morons who don't want to lose any money. This has no direct connection to your experience, but I think there's some reason I'm put in mind of the quotation.

((Thanks for the moral support!))

Lloyd&Yvonne Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2
<penneys@allstream.net>, March 19, 2006

Being a loner is no fun. I have been there, and was there a long time. I believe that fannish involvement helped me get out of my loner mindset, and Yvonne helped a lot, too. I am a loner in my work, mostly because I work in the evening, and when I get there, most people are gone. I do know a few people there, but usually, I get there, boot the computer, wait for the work to come from the server, get it done, and go home. There's not much social life for me there, and I miss it somewhat.

((I'm used to being a loner, I'm just tired of fandom turning out not to be my community. as advertised.))

The virtues of fandom should be known by most. Do good, participate, and get as much wonder as you can out of life. Unfortunately, not all do these good things. I am finding so many people who simply go to cons not for the networking but for the autographs, demand that the world revolve around them by demanding that they be entertained, and their attitudes are largely pessimistic toward their fellow fan. I have known too many people who would rather stamp on others to justify their march towards some kind of power in fannish circles. The participation should be an end to a means.

((Greg Slade and I have been arguing about this mildly in BCSFAzine.))

"You Know You're From Vancouver"...2 and 3 also apply to Toronto, and so does 16, 19, 20, 22 and 24. Let's see...Pacific National Exhibition, Vancouver Public Library, Greater Vancouver Regional District, and YVR is the code for the airport. Co-

ka-holla. Let's see... Amor de Cosmos? Freddy Flintstone in the BC Legislature? Arbutus? Ickybicky? BCRIC or Brick shares? CIRCB, or the Brick Backwards? Seeing I lived for portions of several years in Victoria and got my fannish start there, I do have some kind of advantage, being able to speak a little BCese. (I mentioned a lot of this in my loc in this issue.)

When you lived in Victoria, you weren't in touch with the United Federation of Canadian Star Trekkers, were you? Cat Middlemiss, Dan Cawsey and crew? That was my first fannish contact group.

((I did know these people. Dan Cawsey produced some of the funniest fanart in local fanzines, when he wasn't trying to draw the MARVEL™ way. Cat Middlemiss, unfortunately, acted like one of those big-fish-little-pond egos; on one occasion he took credit for others' charity fundraising work.))

Politics federally and provincially, and the parties that play in those particular dung heaps, cannot be described by a simple name. There are huge differences in those parties nationally, and provincially in BC, Ontario and Quebec, that call themselves the Liberal Party. While I might vote Liberal nationally, provincially, I might not, and in BC, I certainly would not. Usually, with every election, I joke that it's a good thing there's no None of the Above or No Award as there are on some of the Hugo, Aurora or Worldcon site selection ballots we might fill out.

((After some discussion, local friends and I have decided to propose another nonsense party, on the order of the Parti Rhinoceros. My latest title for it is the Anarcho-Fascist Party.))

By the way, did you ever find the stack of CUFF trip reports I sent to you? *((Not as I recall...))* I think I sent you a package of 15. I wondered because I had to mail one to Taral just the other day. (To confirm one of the facts in his essay, it cost me \$1.90 to mail this fanzine to him.)

One of the usual contributors to rassf has a great signature line..."I love the United States. I never miss an episode." The Bush regime has been a real sitcom, or they would be if their actions weren't so often unfunny. I don't think the Bushites are on drugs; instead, I think they've read too many comic books, and are close to putting big symbols on their chests, and wrapping capes around their necks. Or maybe they are on drugs, drugs that are letting them trip out and enjoy delusions of grandeur and power.

((Great minds think alike - I have occasionally had the same sarcasms in mind. Actually I guess they suffer from "Versailles syndrome", which is my term for what happens when people live in an informationally sealed environment.))

I have gone through one of those periods where I have to eliminate a lot of crap from my life and my home, and once they are assembled and sorted into boxes, I will buy a dealers' table at Ad Astra, and make a few bucks off it. We've done this twice now, and in a few years, I expect we'll do it again. There's too many things on the shelf right now that are nice to look at, but take up valuable space, and need dusting every so often anyway.

((Shortly before I got serious about getting this damn issue out, I got serious about getting the crap out of my room. Boxes and boxes of loose papers, redundant office organizational kipple, and three times more books than I have room for.))

Joseph Major mentions *Dilbert*, which I think would be a very funny [comic] strip if it wasn't so damned true to life. Every so often, I read it and see something that Yvonne referred to recently, or described as happening. Dilbert is supposed to be exaggerated, but I'm sure Scott Adams has been told by many people that what he may think is exaggerated is everyday [behaviour] in their work lives.

I remember when Michael Wallis decided to put together a guide on how to run Ad Astra, and that was called the Ad Astra Bible. It came out in 1988, I believe. I tried to get others interested in it, and there was no interest. I am sure I've told you that Yvonne and I are retiring from conrunning at the end of the Worldcon this year after 25 years of attending committee meetings and the like. We have promised the Ad Astra committee to be consultants and to find people willing to do the last things we're doing for the committee (Yvonne - Space and Science programming, me - info desk, badges, flyers), but I doubt we'll get the call. Few seek out those who have done before to see how it's done; perhaps they feel they'll learn better from their own mistakes. Mistakes make the con look bad; if they could find out how to do it beforehand without the mistakes, the con would benefit, and it would look that much more professional.

Wow, that's an old letter of mine. I am still working on trade shows for a few \$ \$s, and the folks at the Ontario Transportation Expo have decided to do without me this year. We've had more computer problems, and now, it's because our computer is too old. The virusware, adware and spyware take up so much computing power, there's little power left to actually run programs. Ad Astra 2006 is coming up in less than two weeks, and I am still at the Globe and Mail.

To John Herbert...great to see more UTOHs. When are more coming? Yes, we're very greedy.

WAHF:

- Randy Byers (of the *Chunga* Triumvirate)
- Colin Hinz, who updated the Corflu 23 Web page
- Karl Johanson, who nominated *BCSFazine* for an Aurora Award
- David "Murdock" Malinski, who also recommends that I do blogging
- Colin Newell
- "Purple", who declines Adobe products

Two Years Before This 'Cast

October 2007 was a pretty quiet month at Fort Dead Parrot. Thanksgiving in Victoria with the remaining parental unit, and my brothers, and their wives - specifically to see my brother Paul before he moves to New Zealand again. Ignoring Talk Like a Pirate Day and the newly-established BC Renfest, because I can't get out to the far-flung eastern communities and have to work overtime anyway. Looking after people's cats. (I like cats.) Moonlighting on weekends with a trademark agent. Going to VCon. Missing the Aurora Awards, and the Convention Business Meeting, and the Elrons at VCon. Getting ill at VCon. Getting really depressed after VCon. Bouncing back in time for another Royal Swiss Navy Disorganizational Meeting, which is a small quiet monthly gathering at my house.

Now for a bit of explanation ... I've talked a little before about our local SF convention, the national SF awards, and stuff. I'll just run quickly over the highlights.

VCon 32: This year, as I heard very belatedly, a departed committee member put VCon in a bit of a bind, somehow committing the con to a hotel 'way out in the suburb of Richmond. (Not a good contract.) Granted that it was a pretty high-class hotel, and we've been out in Richmond before, still this was not such a great venue. Also, at the last minute, we discovered that the hotel was not (officially) allowing room parties. (Also, there was something Very Wrong with the air conditioning. But I digress.)

I think membership ran around 400 to 500 members; say 430 and I don't think I'll be far wrong. Not the greatest attendance we've ever had. I could have done more flyer and poster distribution.

I honestly felt so ill by Sunday afternoon - from lack of oxygen, lack of sleep, or just poor stamina - that I really was feeling near-suicidal at one point. Unwisely I admitted it online, and of course everybody overreacted. I'm used to contemplating suicide at least once a month, but mainly from self-contempt, not from feeling physically awful.

Well, I got better. Well enough to host another adequate RSN gathering. Originally they were conceived as Kaffeeklatsches, intended to raise the intellectual tone of discourse in local fandom, but that didn't work. Now I try to get people interested in **doing** fun stuff by way of RSN projects, and that doesn't work much. Maybe I'm resisting a lesson here.

2007 Aurora Awards: The Aurora Awards, as I said before, are hosted by a different Canadian convention each year, and this year was our turn again.

2007 Aurora award Winners (in order of presentation)
at Convention 27 / VCON 32 - Oct 21st, 2007

Unofficial results as recorded by audience member R. Graeme Cameron.

Overall MC - Nine time Aurora-winner Robert J. Sawyer.

1) Artistic Achievement / Accomplissement Artistique, presented by Vixy & Tony:
Winner -- Martin Springett.

2) Meilleure Nouvelle en Francais / Best Short Form Work in French, presented by Jean-Louis Trudel: Winner -- 'Le Regard du trilobite', Mario Tessier (*Solaris* #159).

3) Fan Achievement (Other) / Accomplissement fanique (autre), presented by Fran Skene: Winner 'Fractale-Frambois', Eric Gauthier, Christian Sauve, Laurine Spehner (blogue/blog) fractale-Framboise.

4) Best Work In English (Other) / Meilleur ouvrage en anglais (autre), Presented by Matthew Hughes: Winner - *Neo-opsis Science Fiction Magazine*, Karl Johanson, editor Neo-opsis (sf magazine).

5) Fan Achievement (Publication) / Accomplissement fanique (Publication), presented by Jean-Louis Trudel: Winner - *Brins d'Eternite*, red., Guillaume Voisine.

6) Meilleur ouvrage en francais (autre) / Best Work In French (Other), presented by Christian Sauve: Winner - 'Aux origins des petits hommes vertes', Jean-Louis Trudel (*Solaris* #160).

7) Fan Achievement (Organizational) / Accomplissement fanique (Organization), presented by Randy McCharles: Winner - Cathy Palmer-Lister (Con*Cept).

8) Best Short-Form Work In English / Meilleure Nouvelle en anglais, presented by Martin Springett: Winner - 'Biding Time', Robert J. Sawyer, (*Slipstreams*, DAW).

9) Meilleur livre en francais / Best Long-Form Work in French, presented by Christian Sauve: Winner - *Reine de Memoire 4. La Princesse de Vengeance*, Elisabeth Vonarburg (Alire).

10) Best Long-Form Work in English / Meilleur livre en anglais, presented by Peter S. Beagle: Winner - *Children of Chaos*, Dave Duncan (Tor Books).

Mark, if you will, the number of names and publications you've never heard of. There's a story behind that.

The Convention Business Meeting at Convention 27 / VCON 32 - Oct 21st, 2007
Unofficial version as recorded by audience member R. Graeme Cameron.

Present at meeting: Non-voting: Michael Walsh - Chair, Fiona ??? - Acting Secretary;
Voting: Robert J. Sawyer, Clint Budd, Peter Jarvis, Murray Moore, Jean-Louis Trudel, Fran Skene, David Strang, Christian Sauve, R. Graeme Cameron, Randy McCharles, & at least 2 or 3 others whose names I didn't catch.

New Business: Steps toward improving the Aurora procedures (procedural, rather than constitutional motions) do not require two years to take effect.

1) Amended motion to adopt the domain name <prixaurorawards.ca> for the Convention website. (Motion passed)

2) Amended motion to enlarge the permanent standing committee (of 3 people) to include up to 5 new members from coast to coast, and to appoint the webmaster of the Prix Aurora Awards web site as Chair of the Convention committee. (Motion passed unanimously)

3) Motion to include on-line nominations & voting, and on-site voting, in addition to the mail-in ballot (on a trial basis). (Motion passed)

4) Motion to adopt the following list as the Committee's duties:

a) managing the CSFFA website; keeping notices up to date; setting the dates for the beginning and end of nominations, of the voting period, and posting reports in a timely manner; coordinating the creation of an eligibility list for the awards.

b) widely publicizing the available means of nominating and voting so as to reach the widest membership possible.

c) keeping all documents and items of information relevant to the new Convention Coordinator available on the website and being readily available for advice.

d) in the event that that a bid is not available for that year's business meeting, the CSFFA administrator shall strike a committee of interested members (taken from that year and other year's business meetings attendance and volunteers) who will hold 'meetings' by email and/or chatroom to choose a bid.

(Motion passed)

5) Motion to accept Keycon 25 as host convention for Convention 28 / Aurora awards, as presented by Keycon 25 Co-chair David Strang, to take place May 16-19, 2008.
(Motion passed unanimously)

Note: Convention business meeting was informed that the 2009 Worldcon convention committee has declared their intent to put forward at Convention 28 a bid to host Convention 29 / Aurora awards at Anticipation, the 67th annual World Science Fiction Convention in Montreal in 2009.

Meeting adjourned.

What you've probably noticed is more unknown names, and unexplained issues.

The 2008 Convention (#28) will be Keycon 25, held May 2008 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

2007 Elron Awards (written and presented at the closing ceremonies of VCON 32 by R. Graeme Cameron, with 'help' from 'Roving Reporter' Michael Walsh).

"The Elron Awards are Fandom's longest running spoof awards, predating the HOGUS by one year and the BLACKHOLES by two. First presented in 1971 at VCON 1 in Vancouver, B.C., the awards are presented annually by The British Columbia Science Fiction Association. The actual award is usually a plastic lemon painted bronze, but often with an addition to help illustrate the theme. As per example the Elron awarded Mr. Science, which had a foot-wide model space station atop the lemon.

"A point concerning the evolution of the Elrons: the founding concept (revealed by David George at VCON 3) was "If we honour the best, should we not also recognize the least?" Consequently the Elrons were originally simply awarded to the 'worst' of anything, be it the worst novel, worst editor, ktp.

"For example, Robert A. Heinlein won WORST NOVEL ELRON in 1971 for his *I Will Fear No Evil*, selected excerpts being read out "to hilarious advantage". But as time went on the mandate of the Elrons expanded to include gentle japes, with less and less emphasis on outright condemnation and more and more emphasis on satirical analysis of the bizarre tendency of reality to be far weirder than Sci-Fi.

And finally, if you were a local fan, it was eventually considered a great honour to win an Elron.

The 2007 Elron winners are:

1) THE SIGMA GROUP, a collection of Sci-Fi writers (including Greg Bear, Jerry Pournelle & Larry Niven) who recently delivered a day-long seminar on the topic of "How to Combat Terrorism" to the (American) Homeland Security Department, because I think the common sense and the practicality of these writers can be relied on to

bring the wild and paranoid imaginings of Homeland security back down to Earth and the real world.

To THE SIGMA GROUP goes 'The Special "Keeping Homeland Security Sane" Elron Award' (a plastic ray gun painted bronze).

2) THE US AIRFORCE WRIGHT LABORATORY, which in 1994, as revealed in recently declassified documents, proposed to develop "chemicals that affect human behaviour so that discipline and morale in enemy units is adversely affected... One distasteful but completely non-lethal example would be strong aphrodisiacs... Especially if the chemical also caused homosexual behaviour..." The so-called "Gay Bomb" (as dubbed by the Press).

To THE US AIRFORCE WRIGHT LABORATORY goes 'The Special "Kiss Me Now And I Mean Now!" Elron Award' (plastic lemon painted pink).

3) THE RUSSIAN MILITARY LAB that invented the so-called 'Green Bomb', an environmentally sensitive bomb which "does not contaminate the environment, in contrast to a nuclear one... it merely evaporates every living thing..."

To THE RUSSIAN MILITARY LAB goes 'The Special "Not Only Green But Tidy Too!" Elron Award' (plastic lemon painted green).

4) THE BROOKS AGNEW ARCTIC EXPEDITION to search for the "Arctic Hole" leading into the hollow Earth, the entrance evidently located within 400 kilometres of Canada's Ellesmere Island. This expedition, to sail next year on a Russian icebreaker out of Murmansk, will include experts in "meditation, mythology and UFOlogy" to establish credibility with the world scientific community and public.

To THE BROOKS AGNEW ARCTIC EXPEDITION goes 'The Special "Why Don't You Sail Into The Hollow Earth And Stay There" Elron Award' (plastic lemon painted blue and green (like a globe of the Earth) with white (ice) surrounding the missing cap (arctic hole) on top).

5) FRANK MILLER'S FILM *300* and its curious inversion of historical reality with 'manly' skimpy briefs (as opposed to the 'unmanly' armour they wore in battle?), 'straight' Spartan Warriors (yeah, right, Spartan brides wore false beards on their wedding night to make their hubbies feel comfortable), 'evil Persians' (whose regime was far more liberal and prosperous than Athens ever was, never mind the Spartans), and worst of all, 'democratically-minded' Spartans (who ran an absolute totalitarian state perpetually crushing the Helots - the majority of the population -- with terror and violence).

To FRANK MILLER'S FILM *300* goes 'The Special "Persian War Rhino For Historical Accuracy" Elron Award' (a plastic Triceratops, the accuracy of the award in keeping with the accuracy of the film).

6) THE ETERNAL IMAGE 'FUNERAL ACCESSORIES' COMPANY for introducing a line of *Star Trek* urns, caskets, monuments and vaults for the discerning dead Trekker.

To THE ETERNAL IMAGE 'FUNERAL ACCESSORIES' COMPANY goes 'The Special "Fascinating, The Exploitation Continues" Elron Award' (painted porcelain liquor bust of Spock which makes a damn sight better urn than the shiny bowling ball Eternal Image is offering).

7) THE BRITISH PR COMPANY PROMOTING 'THE SIMPSONS' MOVIE for painting a giant white outline figure of Homer holding a doughnut on a hillside next to the centuries old chalk figure called 'The Cerne Abbas Giant', thus reducing an ancient historical religious symbol and monument, still of spiritual significance to many moderns, to the level of an advertising gimmick. (But at least they used biodegradable water-based paint the first rain will wash away.)

To THE BRITISH PR COMPANY PROMOTING *THE SIMPSONS MOVIE* goes 'The Special "Anything For A Cheap Laugh Ain't Necessarily Funny" Elron Award' (standard bronze-painted plastic lemon).

8) AUSTRALIAN CONCEPT ARTIST STELARC who had a human ear grafted on to his forearm on the grounds that "augmentation of the body's form is the purest, most personal form of art". He plans to implant a mini-microphone in the ear so that patrons of his modern concept art can listen to what his ear 'hears'.

To THE AUSTRALIAN CONCEPT ARTIST STELARC goes 'The Special "I Have Three Ears And No Brain" Elron Award' (bronze-painted plastic lemon with tiny hand emerging from the cap - representing Stelarc's eternal grasping for publicity).

9) DARK HORSE COMICS for 'secretly' reprinting all 26 of John Norman's infamous *Gor* novel series in cheap omnibus editions without any mention in their press releases or 'upcoming books' list on their website.

To DARK HORSE COMICS goes 'The Special "John Norman, We're So Proud Of You We're Keeping You In The Dark" Elron Award' (not shown to audience, since Dark Horse doesn't want anyone to see it).

How to Write a Garth Spencer Editorial
May 2007 *BCSFazine* editorial, draft #1:

1. Pick a topic, any topic. It doesn't even have to be about science fiction, or fantasy, or horror, or movies, or books, or comics, or conventions in the Northwest; sooner or later, through one or more links, you should gradually end up talking about the way fandom isn't fandom anymore. POINTS ARE WON by making the links seem plausible and reasonable, taking in isolation.
2. Preface statements with phrases like "Correct me if I'm wrong" and "As far as I know" when you have no doubt you're right, and no-one is going to contradict you. POINTS ARE WON when nobody writes back to respond.
3. After someone writes in to contradict you, if they don't use exactly the same terms you used, complain that they don't seem to read what you wrote, or to understand plain English.
4. If someone does actually refute you, concede the point and then carry on as if you hadn't. POINTS ARE WON if you convince any readers that you just taught them something about reason and discourse and logic.
5. Periodically pull a Monty Python, e.g. editorials arguing that the romantic tradition was a subversive Moorish plot, or that a nonexistent SF franchise threatens us with creeping Danish cultural imperialism. Then be disappointed when only one or two other people pick up on the joke, and elaborate on it.
6. Ask members periodically what, if anything, they are interested in. DO NOT go to meetings or gatherings regularly, to get responses in person; instead, expect written and email responses.

7. Question the value of conventions in general, and VCon in particular. DO NOT mention hot tub parties. EVER.
8. Challenge the members to do fun stuff for a change (as if they haven't done; YOU just haven't been there). Suggest stuff like April Fool's Day pranks, or Silly Walk marches downtown, or mounting a new Rhino Party in time for the next election. Then, disguise your planning sessions as dull intellectual conversation parties at your place; make them sound anything but creative and Pythonesque. Finally, affect surprise when only your personality cult shows up.

ca. January 2008:

With a little prompting I recently resumed a project I have attempted before: a digest of things I observed, things I read, advice I found about running conventions. This time, though, I am avowedly writing a polemic. Chuck Connor won't be surprised I am arguing that SF conventions, even small local ones, are just a bit more than us amateurs should take on. I've said this before. It's little wonder if there seem to be more and more limited-scope, special-interest conventions.

So-Called Reality

Pagans to use 'rain magic' on Homer
Last Updated: 3:46am BST 17/07/2007

Pagans have pledged to perform "rain magic" to wash away Homer Simpson, the cartoon character, who was painted next to their famous fertility symbol, the [180 ft.] Cerne Abbas giant, yesterday. ... brandishing a doughnut ...
[http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?
xml=/news/2007/07/17/nhomer117.xml](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/07/17/nhomer117.xml)

Forwarded by Taras Wolansky on 17 July 2007

More and more the allegedly real world looks to me like a put-on. Or like mediocre television. Time, perhaps, for some critical review, like Harlan Ellison's early-70s television criticism in the L.A. *Free Press*.

I've been thinking about a sort of fanzine about mundania, and I've said this before. My working title is *Fool's Paradise*, because a key element of whatever's wrong with mundania is our tendency to live entirely in our favourite fantasies, I mean worldviews. That is how I explain people like our various disconnected ethnic communities, and our city hall, and our local police forces, and some members of my family.

If I suggest that is also what has happened to the current American federal administration, am I going to be put on a blacklist? Or just written off as another liberal pinko comedian wannabe?

Here's another demented Royal Swiss Navy theory, which may easily play into the liberal pinko stereotype.

Resolved: Fundamentalism everywhere, and particularly the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States, is a longstanding plot against popular democracy.

Do you think that explains anything? Like, the Bush and Reagan administrations?

Not the American Century?

by Taral Wayne

Nonsense. We just need a little clear thinking and planning, and the American dream need never end!

Seriously. Why don't the American's just stop pretending? If they finance their nation with foreign debt, and export only their jobs, why pretend that Americans work for a living? Why expect them to hold down increasingly meaningless and low paying jobs, when the real work is being done in Malaysia, Taiwan, or India? As long as the U.S. has pretty much advertised its intention to finance the American economy in future by running the presses 24 hours a day printing \$100 bills*, why not just print a few more? Put everyone in the country on welfare!

Like the citizens of Kuwait or Dubai, Americans can just live off the largesse provided by Allah. While Indonesians and Chinese labour in sweatshops making soccer balls and Blue-Ray players, Americans will exchange their worthless bills at Wal-Mart for the fruit of Asian productivity. Who will serve the fries, and greet you at the big-box store? Guest workers. It solved the problem of labour shortage in Germany; it can solve the problem of labour avoidance in America.

Universal welfare in the U.S. will end politics as we know it as well. Who will be discontented, what issues will there be, as long as everyone gets their check at the first of the month?

The rich will still be the rich, of course. They may choose to tip their waiter with this month's welfare check, or just light their crack pipe with it. (What does it matter? It's only American money, and therefore imaginary.) The rich will own the remaining assets in the nation, and have a monopoly of all the power, just as they do now. But under the universal welfare scheme, no one will care anymore. The Democrats and Republicans can fold together into one party, the Republicrats, and issue the interactive "elections" every year on CD-Rom for the general entertainment. Nothing of importance will change, only the deception that ordinary Americans need to work for a living, and the resentment caused by it.

As long as the Almighty Dollar is backed, not by gold or exports or international confidence in the American economy, but by the fear inspired by American arms, anyone with citizenship born or a green card can be guaranteed a middle-class standard of living for doing absolutely nothing. There is no point to pretending otherwise, and forcing single black mothers in Cleveland or young men in Austin to take pointless service jobs; often two of them, both part-time, paying minimum wage and offering no benefits.

That's why God made foreigners -- to fulfill the New American Dream.

-- Taral Wayne

* In March, the U.S. Federal Reserve Board announced it was no longer publishing the *M3 Report* that reveals the amount of American paper money in circulation abroad,

thus releasing the government from any restraint on printing speciously valued dollars.

Caring For Your Introvert

The habits and needs of a little-understood group

by Jonathan Rauch

(Internet Humour forwarded by "Wabisabi Girl")

Do you know someone who needs hours alone every day? Who loves quiet conversations about feelings or ideas, and can give a dynamite presentation to a big audience, but seems awkward in groups and maladroit at small talk? Who has to be dragged to parties and then needs the rest of the day to recuperate? Who growls or scowls or grunts or winces when accosted with pleasantries by people who are just trying to be nice?

If so, do you tell this person he is "too serious," or ask if he is okay? Regard him as aloof, arrogant, rude? Redouble your efforts to draw him out?

If you answered yes to these questions, chances are that you have an introvert on your hands - and that you aren't caring for him properly. Science has learned a good deal in recent years about the habits and requirements of introverts. It has even learned, by means of brain scans, that introverts process information differently from other people (I am not making this up). If you are behind the curve on this important matter, be reassured that you are not alone. Introverts may be common, but they are also among the most misunderstood and aggrieved groups in America, possibly the world.

I know. My name is Jonathan, and I am an introvert.

Oh, for years I denied it. After all, I have good social skills. I am not morose or misanthropic. Usually. I am far from shy. I love long conversations that explore intimate thoughts or passionate interests. But at last I have self-identified and come out to my friends and colleagues. In doing so, I have found myself liberated from any number of damaging misconceptions and stereotypes. Now I am here to tell you what you need to know in order to respond sensitively and supportively to your own introverted family members, friends, and colleagues. Remember, someone you know, respect, and interact with every day is an introvert, and you are probably driving this person nuts. It pays to learn the warning signs.

What is introversion? In its modern sense, the concept goes back to the 1920s and the psychologist Carl Jung. Today it is a mainstay of personality tests, including the widely used Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Introverts are not necessarily shy. Shy people are anxious or frightened or self-excoriating in social settings; introverts generally are not. Introverts are also not misanthropic, though some of us do go along with Sartre as far as to say "Hell is other people at breakfast." Rather, introverts are people who find other people tiring.

Extroverts are energized by people, and wilt or fade when alone. They often seem bored by themselves, in both senses of the expression. Leave an extrovert alone for two minutes and he will reach for his cell phone. In contrast, after an hour or two of being socially "on," we introverts need to turn off and recharge. My own formula is roughly two hours alone for every hour of socializing. This isn't antisocial. It isn't a sign of depression. It does not call for medication. For introverts, to be alone with our

thoughts is as restorative as sleeping, as nourishing as eating. Our motto: "I'm okay, you're okay - in small doses."

How many people are introverts? I performed exhaustive research on this question, in the form of a quick Google search. The answer: About 25 percent. Or: Just under half. Or - my favourite - "a minority in the regular population but a majority in the gifted population."

Are introverts misunderstood? Wildly. That, it appears, is our lot in life. "It is very difficult for an extrovert to understand an introvert," write the education experts Jill D. Burruss and Lisa Kaenzig. (They are also the source of the quotation in the previous paragraph.) Extroverts are easy for introverts to understand, because extroverts spend so much of their time working out who they are in voluble, and frequently inescapable, interaction with other people. They are as inscrutable as puppy dogs. But the street does not run both ways. Extroverts have little or no grasp of introversion. They assume that company, especially their own, is always welcome. They cannot imagine why someone would need to be alone; indeed, they often take umbrage at the suggestion. As often as I have tried to explain the matter to extroverts, I have never sensed that any of them really understood. They listen for a moment and then go back to barking and yipping.

Are introverts oppressed? I would have to say so. For one thing, extroverts are overrepresented in politics, a profession in which only the garrulous are really comfortable. Look at George W. Bush. Look at Bill Clinton. They seem to come fully to life only around other people. To think of the few introverts who did rise to the top in politics - Calvin Coolidge, Richard Nixon - is merely to drive home the point. With the possible exception of Ronald Reagan, whose fabled aloofness and privateness were probably signs of a deep introverted streak (many actors, I've read, are introverts, and many introverts, when socializing, feel like actors), introverts are not considered "naturals" in politics.

Extroverts therefore dominate public life. This is a pity. If we introverts ran the world, it would no doubt be a calmer, saner, more peaceful sort of place. As Coolidge is supposed to have said, "Don't you know that four fifths of all our troubles in this life would disappear if we would just sit down and keep still?" (He is also supposed to have said, "If you don't say anything, you won't be called on to repeat it." The only thing a true introvert dislikes more than talking about himself is repeating himself.)

With their endless appetite for talk and attention, extroverts also dominate social life, so they tend to set expectations. In our extrovertist society, being outgoing is considered normal and therefore desirable, a mark of happiness, confidence, leadership. Extroverts are seen as bighearted, vibrant, warm, empathic. "People person" is a compliment. Introverts are described with words like "guarded," "loner," "reserved," "taciturn," "self-contained," "private" - narrow, ungenerous words, words that suggest emotional parsimony and smallness of personality. Female introverts, I suspect, must suffer especially. In certain circles, particularly in the Midwest, a man can still sometimes get away with being what they used to call a strong and silent type; introverted women, lacking that alternative, are even more likely than men to be perceived as timid, withdrawn, haughty.

Are introverts arrogant? Hardly. I suppose this common misconception has to do with our being more intelligent, more reflective, more independent, more level-headed, more refined, and more sensitive than extroverts. Also, it is probably due to our lack of small talk, a lack that extroverts often mistake for disdain. We tend to think before talking, whereas extroverts tend to think by talking, which is why their meetings never last less than six hours. "Introverts," writes a perceptive fellow named

Thomas P. Crouser, in an online review of a recent book called *Why Should Extroverts Make All the Money?*

[<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0809228165/theatlanticmonthA/>] (I'm not making that up, either), "are driven to distraction by the semi-internal dialogue extroverts tend to conduct. Introverts don't outwardly complain, instead roll their eyes and silently curse the darkness." Just so.

The worst of it is that extroverts have no idea of the torment they put us through. Sometimes, as we gasp for air amid the fog of their 98-percent-content-free talk, we wonder if extroverts even bother to listen to themselves. Still, we endure stoically, because the etiquette books - written, no doubt, by extroverts - regard declining to banter as rude and gaps in conversation as awkward. We can only dream that someday, when our condition is more widely understood, when perhaps an Introverts' Rights movement has blossomed and borne fruit, it will not be impolite to say "I'm an introvert. You are a wonderful person and I like you. But now please shush."

How can I let the introvert in my life know that I support him and respect his choice? First, recognize that it's not a choice. It's not a lifestyle. It's an orientation.

Second, when you see an introvert lost in thought, don't say "What's the matter?" or "Are you all right?"

Third, don't say anything else, either.

Redefining the World

I was sitting on the bus the other day, thinking about nothing in particular, when it occurred to me that I might set down some of my smartass opinions in the form of a dictionary. Of course John Ralston Saul and Brian Fawcett (two Canadian writers) did the same thing, about ten years ago; still, they were essentially repeating what Ambrose Bierce did, about a century earlier.

Ambition: As far as I can determine, the overwhelming desire to have more possessions/money than anyone else, or to push more people around than anyone else.

Anarcho-Fascist Party: I have decided to declare a non-existent political party, just to stretch the envelope of imaginable concepts, and send up a number of targets. Not just libertarians, either. I have started by posting a message to the Facebook group dedicated to Rick Mercer. (Mercer made a name for himself with segments on *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, titled "Talking to Americans." Like Steven Colbert, Mercer now does a comedy show thinly disguised as a news hour.)

APAs: I had the idea for some time that APAs were pretty much distinct from fanzines; or that they grew out of fanzine fandom, as a sort of cost-saving measure, for people who wanted a limited group to maintain contact with, or who wanted limit groups to focus on particular topics.

From time to time I have tried to compile materials for a fandom guide, specifically to Canadian fandom. What I noticed was how sharply the number of APAs diminished, at least APAs I could track down.

Art: (1) Pictorial art. (2) Anything people can get the Canada Council to pay for. (3) an expensive fraud.

Athletics: an Evil Sinister Mind Control Plot which turns otherwise healthy young people into brainless mouth-breathing illiterate brutes (“jocks”). We all know this in high school, so how come we still support organized team sports? Why aren’t there charitable organizations or rehab centres to help people recover from this debilitating social institution?

Awards: From fanzines and conventions, and passages in this APA, a newcomer can work out that there are a lot of annual awards for SF, and fantasy, and horror; that some are voted on by fans, and some are juried awards; and there are continuing quarrels about whether the awards go to the right recipients. By now you will have seen the news about the 2007 Hugos.

Which brings us to the recent history of The Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards - the Auroras, we call them nowadays. The 2007 awards were presented in October at VCon 32, here in Greater Vancouver. As I write, the next award presentation/Convention will be at Keycon, in May 2008 in Winnipeg.

The Auroras could be better promoted, and especially the books and stories and fanzines and fans that can be nominated. Which is ironic, since the Auroras were conceived to spotlight Canadian science fiction.

BCSFA: Another SF club, distinguished (if at all) by hanging onto existence perhaps longer than any current SF club in Canada. This is remarkable, since nothing else in Western Canada has a venerable history. Considering the minor westward movement of fans across Canada from the 1960s through the 1990s, and the general greying of fandom, I wonder when BCSFA will get a reputation as the place where old fans go to ossify. But like other such groups, there are irregular injections of newer, contemporary fans to sustain the club, its newsletter, and Vcon, the long-running local convention.

Bus: A jury-rigged contraption for shuttling people back and forth, often resembling a sardine can during rush hours. I am putting about a rumour that Vancouver bus drivers are hired from sardine-packing factories, and they get bonuses for packing in many more people than any rational safety limit will allow. See also “loser cruiser” and other unflattering equivalents.

Civilization: One of those words people say that don’t really mean anything.

Class: (1) in academic English, a population within a community which forms a smaller community, distinguished by its own occupations, income level, residential areas, dress and speech. (2) A practice of social division (see “Upper class”, “Middle class”, “Working/lower class”) that we think the English do, and other Anglophones don’t; meanwhile, the other Anglophones are devoted to designating and enforcing their division into *Winners* and *Losers*, from grade school onwards. (See “Jocks”.)

Coffee: A toxic, addictive, but legal substance which induces nervousness and the illusion of alert intelligence in the short term, and subliminal paranoia and heart disease after years of prolonged use. Considering the widespread coffee poisoning in North America, why aren’t there charitable organizations or rehab

centres to help people recover from this debilitating social institution? (See also “Tea” and “Chocolate”.)

Common Sense: One of those things people say that evidently don't mean anything.

Con: (1) the practice of deceit for gain. (2) In Fannish, a sort of combined frat party, county fair, Shriner's convention and merchant's row, thinly disguised as a conference so that we can hold these oversized house parties in hotels. (3) In Canadian French, the naughty bits of a lady.

I recently unearthed an old screed I wrote about conventions, the gist of which was that the way fans normally organize these clambakes (I nearly said, “conventionally”) is almost unworkable, and creates a lot of difficulties for them. I continue to be amazed that SF conventions carry on.

For a while, in the early 90s, I got the idea that the focus of attention and interest in fandom had shifted from fanzines to conventions. Actually the focus had shifted from fannish fandom to a whole variety of subfandoms, and the shift occurred twenty years earlier.

By now most of you have seen the news about the upcoming Worldcon, in Montreal in 2009. We've discussed this a bit already.

I'm not all that enthused about big cons, especially the size of Worldcons; less on their own account than because conrunning, and especially Really Big Cons, have attracted some badly crazy people. Personally I cope better with small numbers of people anyway. (Maybe this is partly why I don't support the upcoming Olympics in Vancouver in 2010, either.)

I have completely lost track of current and future Westercons. Okay to attend, for me; but the one I worked on - in Greater Vancouver, in 1991 - turned to complete hell. (We got a badly crazy person forcing her way into the chairmanship, and never faced her down.)

Some years ago a Pacific Northwest group started ConComCon, a specialized convention for regional conrunners. I have recently been invited into CanadianConrunners, an email list for people with experience, or at least opinions on the subject; they will be holding a conrunners' convention in Ontario in the near future.

Culture: In academic English, the sum of distinctive shared behaviours, values, and language shared by people in a community or region, over a given period of time. In colloquial English, for some reason, this term is exclusively applied to the arts. In practice, culture seems to mean why you don't serve pork to observant Jews or to Muslims, why southern Europeans and Asians are comfortable with a speaking distance that seems uncomfortably close to northern Europeans, why BCSFA members historically won't stand up to irresponsible treasurers or convention chairs, why Russians in North America won't stay politely in line-ups, and why some people on buses stay on the aisle seat, and don't move to the window seat when the bus starts to get crowded.

Democracy: Originally, a form of political community in which everyone participates in decisions affecting their community. Today, in representative democracies characterized by low voter turnout, one of those words people say that don't really mean anything.

Duty: An obsolete value.

Environment: (1) In academic English, the geological, biological and ecological context in which organisms and their species may or may not survive. (2) In colloquial English, a term without any meaning I can determine.

Failure: One of those words people say that don't really mean anything.

Fandom: One of those words people say that don't really mean anything. Equally applied to subcultures involving anime, comics, costuming, filking, gaming, film series, TV series, modelling, fantasy and science fiction enthusiasts.

I am beginning to wonder if we should use the word anymore, since what I was introduced to in the early 1980s no longer describes the hobby groups we now have; in fact there's such variety in the hobby groups that show up at conventions, even small ones, that I don't know if they have anything in common.

Your experience of fannish diversity may be different.

Fan Funds: In the past I was a delegate and then an administrator of the Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Consequently I received word when Brian Davis, in New Brunswick, was vastly delayed in his duties by illness; and again, when a previous delegate decided he had to step in to carry on the administrative duties.

We now have an appointed, rather than an elected, CUFF delegate coming to VCon 32. Go figure.

The Canadian Unity Fan Fund could also stand to be better promoted. Which again is ironic; CUFF was conceived (sometime in 1979 to 1980, like the Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards) to raise Canadian fans' awareness of other Canadian fan groups.

I am a member of the FanFundAdmin email list.

Fanhstory: From the foregoing you can tell I did some information-gathering, since the time I entered fandom. You can also tell I hold opinions, whether or not I had quite enough information on which to found them.

- We get ourselves into situations, and only then see the consequences.
- The unexpected always happens, no matter how you have tried to control outcomes.
- There are more kinds of people and motivations and agendas than any people can grasp.
- People cling grimly to convictions that may be illusions, even self-destructive ones.
- Some people won't listen to what they must hear, no matter how vital the advice is.

Fanzines: There have been a number of curious developments with fanzines over the last quarter-century, most of them well-known. There seem to be fewer fanzines published in Canada today than there were a quarter-century ago, even taking electronic zines into account. Or is that an illusion? The immediacy of email groups and blogs seems to have attracted many people away from fanzines and apas; is that merely the normal displacement we have seen whenever a new medium occurs?

What I find curious, in my own experience, is that I don't have time to read fanzines the way I once did. Going to the post office box used to be like having Christmas on a monthly or biweekly basis. Now I may receive zines by email, or notification from efanzines.com, but I have to rely on slow and untrustworthy releases of Acrobat. Maybe I just need to clean up my computer system.

Free Enterprise (obs.): A term without any meaning I can determine; apparently supplanted by capitalism in American English.

Glory (obs.): One of those words people used to say, that don't really mean anything.

Freedom: One of those words people say that don't really mean anything.

Honour (obs.): One of those words people used to say, that don't really mean anything.

Independence: An obsolete value.

Language: A means of getting and giving wrong impressions, trading misinformation, ignorance and prejudice, and generally failing to communicate. Comes in 57 flavours. Simple examples include the way drivers plead with people to move to the back of the bus, and the people standing two-deep in the aisle at the front don't move, probably because they don't understand English. (See "Multiculturalism.")

Loser: One of those words people say that don't really mean anything.

Modesty: an obsolete cultural value. (See any celebrity gossip rag.)

Multiculturalism: In theory, the gentle and ineffectual wish that everybody respect each other's culture of origin, instead of brainless mouth-breathing brutes (see "Jocks") going out fag-bashing and Paki-bashing on Saturday nights. In practice, a term without any meaning I can determine.

Olympics: In contemporary Vancouver, the 2010 Olympics are the reason we are driving the homeless out of visible parts of the city instead of providing affordable housing, or why the province – not the City, mind you – insists on costly rapid-transit projects for the last five years, instead of enough buses, or rational light rail systems. (See VANOC.)

The Foundation Trilogy, A Gnostic Allegory

Notes by Taral Wayne

Compiled circa 1980's perhaps, summarized April 2007

(first published in *Alexiad*)

Second Foundation = secret Church of St. John.

Hari Seldon = Christ

Mule = Arthur? (Both were at some odds with the Church/2nd Foundation in their attempt to create a secular state.) Also possibly the Roman emperor. But the Mule is also titled First Citizen, an allusion to Augustus Caesar.

Prime Radiant = The Holy Grail, that both Arthur, the Mule & Ebling Mis seek. Like Arthur, the Mule sends his servants (knights) to find the Grail. Instead of a vision of God, the Prime Radiant shows the future (as Seldon's Plan). The First Foundation stands in relation to the 2nd Foundation, the way the Roman Church (the common face of Christianity) stands in relation to the hidden Church of St. John. Both the 2nd Foundation and the Church of St. John teach a higher truth. (The seat of the 2nd Foundation is Trantor, which could equate with Rome rather than Britain, which doesn't fit the analogy well. On the other hand, if Trantor is Avalon, and Terminus is Rome, the analogy holds up.)

Gaal Dornick = St. Peter. Dornick founded Terminus, i.e.: Rome and by extension the Church of Rome.

Previous Galactic Empire = Possibly the Hellenistic world.

50 Psychohistorians (who founded the First Foundation with Seldon) = the disciples of Christ.

50 2nd. Foundationers (sacrificed to the Mule) = Christian martyrs.

Capt. Han Pritcher = Sir Lancelot, Arthur's most trusted knight, formerly his enemy. Hans Pritcher was formerly the Mule's enemy, but was "converted" by the Mule's power.

Ebling Mis = Sir Galahad, who is the only knight pure enough to actually find the Grail. Like Galahad, Mis is a pure scholar, not motivated by political power, and is the only one to discover where the 2nd Foundation actually is. (Like Galahad, he dies before he can reveal it.)

Salvor Hardin = St. Peter, (Hardin was the first of the Foundation's Mayors, i.e.: first Pope. Think about it. "Salvor"- Saint. Peter (the rock) - Hardin.)

Anselm Haut Rodric = Robert Anson Heinlein, a private joke.

* The Celtic church had associations with the legendary Church of St. John. Its monks and clergy wore a unique tonsure that was said to have been required by St. John himself. Unlike the Roman church, the Celtic stuck by the Julian calendar for calculating Easter. There were many other differences between the two churches that were the basis of friction between them until the Roman church finally imposed its sole order.

* Curiously, the "magician" and Gnostic heretic Simon Magnus also wore the Celtic tonsure, associating the Celtic church with Gnosticism.

* The Gnostics believed in an inner knowledge, a secret higher truth that behind orthodox Christianity taught to the masses. Those who mastered the Gnostic truth gained powers over their own spirit and in the world. Given Gnosticism's nature, it strayed easily into magical tradition.

* The Celtic church was heavily influence by ancient Celtic thought, including Druidism. It's characteristic "Otherworldliness" readily absorbed Gnostic ideas as well. At the time of Augustine's mission to Britain, the two churches were out of sympathy with one another. Inasmuch as the Roman church disapproved of Gnostic thought, the Celtic church was all the more receptive.

* The idea of the Church of St. John go back to the Bible, in which Christ gives St. Peter authority over his "flock". But John for some reason is exempted from Peter's authority, and cryptically told of an important role in Jesus' later plans. It was widely

believed in the Dark Ages that St. John would figure as the spiritual head of a non-militant and unworldly church when mankind was ready for further revelation. Until then, the church of St. John would remain an underground church within orthodox Christianity. The Celtic church was believed by some to have secret ties with the underground church. They were not, of course, expected to admit to this.

* The Holy Grail represented a higher sacrament than the mass in the Church of St. John. Of course, its exact nature was hidden from the uninitiated. No one in the Arthurian cycle had ever actually seen it, (except Galahad, after his quest, and even then the vision was whisked from his sight afterward.) The Grail legend seems to be associated strongly with Britain, through the Arthurian cycle, and therefore with the Celtic church.

The real question in all this speculation, though, is just how much a bookish, Jewish lad in his early 20's knew about mystic alternate Christianities and the Arthurian cycle. That the young Asimov would be familiar with Gibbon and Roman imperial history is a given. King Arthur is very plausible. Even some smattering of Gnosticism. But Celtic Christianity and the Church of St. John? Perhaps we should regard that idea as an "emergent property" of all the rest...

(For the next insightful part of my analysis of the Foundation Trilogy, I intend to demonstrate how it is also a cryptic rebuttal of Sam Moskowitz's *The Immortal Storm*.)

