

# BROKEN TOYS 22

## THE HALLOWEEN ISSUE

**Broken Toys 22** is a personalzine by Taral Wayne. Despite the best of intentions, I've made little progress on backlogged projects since last month. The usual excuses apply ... as well as others that will become evident in the issue. Without intending to, I have almost too much material, as well as a letter column that just won't quit... But that's okay; bring it on! As I have for the last 22 years, I live with a view to die for at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6. If you can't drop by to share the view, contact or loc me at [Taral@Teksavvy.com](mailto:Taral@Teksavvy.com). The date is **October 2013 ... Halloween!** This is ExtraTaratoriality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) 272, © 2013 Taral Wayne, the *Parkdale Phantom!*

## The October Country

*"Nothing really matters, Anyone can see.  
Nothing really matters, Nothing really matters to me."*

If you're old enough to recognize those lines from Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," you may be old enough to be feeling a bit like I have lately.

The month began a bit on the down side, with a Fall cold and the usual inconveniences. As well as the stuffy nose, cough and general lassitude, colds in my 60s seem to be accompanied with several days of insomnia, which aggravates everything. How do you get better if you don't rest? Amazingly, I do ... and finally sleep returns.

My birthday was on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and I was lucky to be over the cold so that I could enjoy dinner one night with my sister, Christine, and on another night with my friends, Bob, Sharry and Hope. I gloated over a new office chair, a present from my sister. I *bought myself* a present also; the complete *Star Trek: The New Generation*. Having that has been one of my pipe dreams for a long time, and, when I saw the entire shebang at Costco in a boxed set of DVDs at a reasonable price, I couldn't resist. I wonder if I will ever watch through all 49 disks and 176 episodes more than once? It's hard to imagine.

The best birthday present of all, though, was unquestionably the letters from the Province of Ontario. One informed me that my benefits from the Ontario Disability Support Program would begin at the end of October, and that I would be paid retroactively to when the decision was made to approve my application. That would be back to January of this year. Ten months of back pay in a lump sum, in other words. The second letter I opened was the check itself!

You'll forgive me if I don't reveal the sum. Suffice to say that I cashed it as soon as possible, and squirreled it away immediately afterward. There are so many things broken around the apartment that the money is more than just a windfall; it's a godsend. Next summer I should have a pair of functioning air conditioners – one for the bedroom and one for the living room – and not suffer the heat and humidity that I have sweltered through over the last few summers. I also need a better digital camera, one that will take close-up shots, so that I can sell my old crap on eBay. The biggest expense I'm looking at, though, is the possible investment in an electric scooter. There was a time when looking at 300-pound fans in those motorized chairs made me think how lucky I was. But there seems little doubt that I must now count myself in their number. A scooter would substantially improve my lifestyle, giving me back my mobility. Maybe I can apply for government assistance toward the purchase, but it's just as well I have some money in hand in case that assistance is not forthcoming.

That was the good news. The bad news developed more or less in parallel with the good. The unaccustomed exercise seems to have done something to my back and legs. Fortunately, I had a doctor's appointment a few days after my birthday. Dr. Fung reviewed my latest blood test and confirmed my blood sugar was a little high, but that I was definitely *not* diabetic. Also, my blood pressure was spot on normal ... a pleasant surprise. Then I brought up the matter of the increased pain in my back and legs. I wanted to know if the medications for my neuropathic condition could be adjusted. Instead, he showed me some stretching exercises I could do in bed. This was not what I wanted to hear, but – with some skepticism – I agreed to try them. My back was so sore from the walk to and from the doctor's office that I tried them later *that night*.

It was a bad idea. The exercises hurt badly, bringing any thought of continuing them to a dead stop. A little while later I got out of bed ... and was immediately doubled up in agony. It was as though some main sinew controlling my lower body had torn loose. For a few minutes I debated with myself whether to call for an ambulance. But I realized that the pain was gradually ebbing away, and stuck it out. About half an hour later, I was finally able to get out of bed, but I was in infinitely worse shape than I had been before the attack. If I was on my feet for very long, a pins-and-needles sensation enveloped my lower quarters. Sitting down soon resulted in a sore, bruised feeling in my buttocks. For a while, I feared my bowel wasn't moving, and another bodily function – too indelicate to mention – was alarmingly *hors de combat*. It would take days of gradual improvement before I could move around remotely normally, let alone feel up to leaving the apartment again. In fact, it has been over a week since the attack, and I am still having trouble trying to sleep. The sore, bruised feeling in my hips and legs becomes intolerable when I lie in one position for more than a short while, making it nearly impossible to drop off. Maddeningly, nor am I responding to naughty thoughts. It's dead, Jim.

For the last week, I've mainly read in bed, fed myself when it was obvious I had to eat, watched DVDs or mucked about on the computer whenever I gave up any hope of sleep. I've done little else. No work of consequence. My affairs, minimal as they may be, are badly disordered. I simply don't feel up to looking after business.

*Sigh.* I haven't written much all month. Only one real article, a couple of very short locs and some filler. As the end of the month looms, I have to start thinking about the Halloween issue of *Broken Toys*. I have two unfinished drawings marked "urgent" – one is past deadline. The column it was to illustrate had to be delayed while a substitute went to press. The other drawing is a commission. Now that I think of it, payment hasn't arrived yet, so maybe there's no rush to finish that drawing anyway. Still, there's a mountain of other drawings that I really *ought* to make some effort to complete. I just don't seem to be able to summon the will. What do they matter? What does fanwriting matter, or even the next issue of *Broken Toys*? Does *anything* matter? At the moment, I just can't answer that.

I suppose being out of sorts for any length of time will have that effect on you. I hope I start feeling more than *comparatively* better soon. Even with increased benefits from ODSP, this is no way to live.



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Speaking of “The October Country... “

## The Undigitalized Man

*“A computer does not smell ... if a book is new, it smells great. If a book is old, it smells better ... and it stays with you forever. But the computer doesn’t do that for you. I’m sorry.” Ray Bradbury, recently quoted on Mike Glycer’s File 770 Blog.*

That new book smell... I think I know the one Bradbury means. I smell it myself whenever I have a new book in my hands ... even if I can’t afford it and put the thing back on the bookstore shelf. It ain’t the sensawonder you smell, though, it’s just ink. I don’t know how much I ever really got off on the smell of ink. It might be kinda exciting, at that, if you associate it with the excitement of a new book. But it also smells carcinogenic. As a kid I liked the smell of gasoline, and have pleasant memories of sitting in the car while my father filled up the tank. I very much doubt the smell of gas was good for me, however. We still drive cars, though, and I suspect we will still read novels even though the paper book might become an anachronism ... and even though digitalized text has no smell.

As books get older, do they smell “even better?” Not that I’ve noticed. Old books don’t seem to have much smell at all, other than mustiness perhaps. Abandoned warehouses and hot attics smell rather the same, so I assume most of the smell Bradbury refers to as “even better” than ink is actually dust. One speculates whether a bookshelf that was frequently dusted would evoke as many pleasant memories for the author.

As for computers, it *is* hard to be romantic about them. If we think back to our first computers, *most of us* curse under our breath – because they were feeble, cranky, undependable contraptions that smacked more of Goldberg than Turing, and were usually far more trouble to use than a simple pad and pencil. Probably only born-programmers feel pangs of nostalgia for their Commodore 64 or Tandy. Computers have clearly increased their usefulness since then. Still, one box looks much like another box — the improvements inside are out of sight and out of mind.

But does a computer enhance creativity? Yes. Certainly. I don’t know about Ray Bradbury – who may have been so accustomed to using a quill pen and parchment that he could envision no better way to

write than to scratch things out and make changes below the line – but in my experience the computer gave me an order of magnitude greater power to express myself through the written word. When I had to write with a typewriter, my manuscripts looked like graffiti on a wall. Moreover, one revision is all they would likely ever receive, as I vainly attempted to type a “clean” copy. Once I learned to write with a word processor, I could make as many changes as I wanted, even lift whole portions of the text from one place and drop it into another in mere seconds. It was helpful, too, that a spellchecker could catch my worst mistakes in spelling for me. My writing soared from at most a few thousand words per year, to somewhere between 50 and 100 thousand. Nor was this just an increase in verbosity. Clearly, with so much practice, I’ve grown greatly more skilled. At least so a few close friends tell me. Sure, I’m no Ray Bradbury – my friends take pains to tell me *that* as well – but I know I would not be better off if I were still struggling to press my first few thousand words into wet clay with a stick.

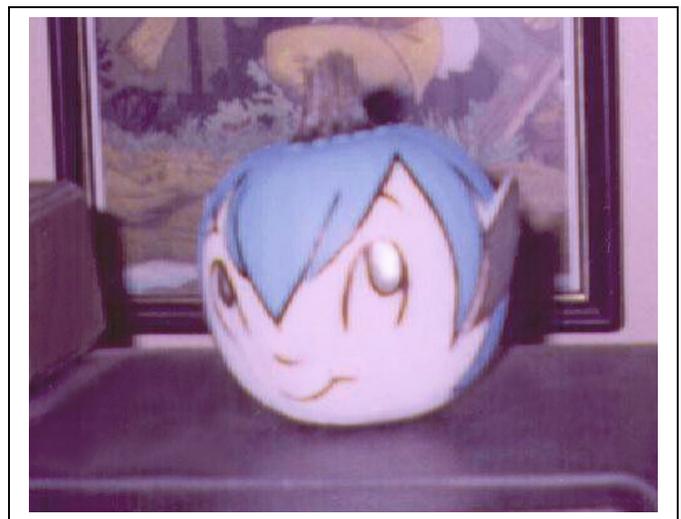
According to Ray Bradbury, the computer has had little effect on his writing career, and does not enhance creativity in any way. His statement comes as no surprise, as most of his seven-decades-long career was *over* by the time competent word processors were on the market. It is also the common judgment that most of his creativity had been used up well before the new century. So, you have to grant him his own limited perspective. But Bradbury goes too far in his claim that the computer has been equally irrelevant to everyone. The computer is but a tool, after all, and no different in that respect than paint brushes, pianos and slide rulers. Each aids the artist in his effort by extending his reach, improving his accuracy or streamlining the creative process. Had Ray Bradbury been born 50 years earlier, one wonders if he would have been just as unimpressed with the typewriter. Would he have protested that he had no trouble at all writing all his novels and short stories in longhand, and saw no reason why other writers shouldn’t still work that way? Go back 4,000 years earlier still, might he have turned up his nose at the invention of the alphabet? Probably. He is, after all, the only science fiction writer to take his stories to Mars in order to rhapsodize about turn-of-the-century, Small-Town America.

Ah well, Bradbury is what Bradbury was and will always be. The future will arrive as scheduled.

## *Walking With Spirits*

I have a deep, abiding love of Halloween, which is why I was saddened when it came around every year and I did absolutely nothing to celebrate it.

When I was a kid, there was nothing to it. Your parents made you a costume, or bought one from the local K-Mart. It was never any good – a sheet with two eye-holes cut in it was par for the course for the home-made ones, and the plastic bags the “store-bought” ones came in were more substantial than the shoddy crepe paper outfits inside. No child was ever so young as to be taken in by an orange-and-yellow “Zorro” or a purple-and day-glow-green “Witch.” What made grown-ups think such cheesy “costumes” ever fooled anyone – much less threw a fright into them – was unfathomable to me when I was five, and is no clearer to me today. But Halloween wasn’t about the costume, it was about the *candy* ... and the feeling of doing something joyfully naughty because you were out late at night.



Halloween is about atmosphere, too. It's about autumn leaves rustling in the dark, a chill wind, clouds racing the moon, and the never-too-far-away fear – or hope – that someone or *something* else may be walking the streets with the living.

I remember one year, when I was so young I'm not even sure where we were living at the time, that I couldn't go out trick-or-treating because of pouring rain. I lay forlorn in my bed, and even over the rain I could hear through the window the merry racket of other kids having fun, and my heart sank even lower.

Up until about the age of 11 or 12, Halloween made it acceptable for kids to wander around the neighborhood long after dark, ringing the doorbells of people you had never met and demanding they give you candy. Who could resist the audacity of the act ... not to mention a whole shopping bag full of free candy? Next day, the kids would gloat over their loot, spilling it out on the floor, sorting and dividing it into "eat now" and "eat later," and phoning each other to boast about their takings. I only reluctantly gave up the practice at 15, when I noticed that I was six inches taller than the assorted ghouls, pirates and fairy princesses standing on doorsteps around me with their bags open. Also, being out after dark had long ago become a commonplace that had lost its thrill. I no longer sensed the half-believed-in presence of the supernatural lurking in the dark.

You didn't have to go out trick-or-treating when you grew too big for it. Halloween parties were an alternative. But those were for little kids also, and offered little but inane games such as bobbing for apples and pinning the tail on cardboard donkeys. And the refreshments that were offered at such parties were poor compensation for a bag full of candy ... unless you had a taste for bruised apples and Rice Krispie squares, which I, for one, have never been able to choke down.

Halloween simply wasn't much fun anymore. It was self-evidently created for little kids, not big strapping louts in their teens. Halloween parties for adults were unheard of in the 1960s, as far as I knew. When did they become fashionable, and how? They might have existed for years without my knowledge, in fact ... but, if so, no one ever mentioned the possibility to me, or invited me to one.

To this day, I don't think I've been to an adult Halloween party, and often wonder if they would live up to my expectations. Of course, my expectations are probably quite wrong-headed. No 24-year-old fashion models in skimpy demoness costumes are going to sit in my lap to feed me Hungarian salami and Oka cheese on crackers. The best I could expect at my age and in my circles is a woman in late-middle age and as overweight as I am, overflowing a kitchen chair as she explains to me why men must be banned from holding office for at least 50 years, to make up for the lack of women in government. A frightening picture, certainly, but not the sort of fright *my* Halloween nightmares are made of...

At one point, Victoria Vayne and I decided to hold a Halloween party of our own. She was



living in Willowdale at the time, a relatively short distance from where I lived. I used to go to her place about three times a week, making a brisk 20-minute walk of it. One Halloween, we invited the Gang over, but stipulated that they must dress up. Bob Hadji came costumed as a very convincing Dickensian corpse in authentic winding sheet, his face painted in nauseating realism with glue and lamp black. Bob Wilson came as a bottle of Perrier Water, demonstrating originality if no great boldness. Janet Wilson came as a mother, a disguise made easy by the fact that she had just become a mother, and could claim the newborn Paul as part of her costume. I think Phil Paine appeared to be dressed up as Steven Black ... but since he was imitating Steven in just about everything at the time, this could be discounted as another cheat. No one else who attended paid any attention to the costume rule, either. Not even Victoria herself would unbend, though I had tried to talk her into wearing an honest-to-goodness dress. As the photo shows, only the three of us – Bob, Hadji, and myself – were foolish enough to expose ourselves to ridicule.

I had spent nearly half the night in the other room with Victoria, her using the paint sprayer and me trying not to drip on the bedroom rug or furniture.

For a number of years after moving to Parkdale, I simply went out for long walks on Halloween, to watch a much younger generation have all the fun. My immediate neighbors were poor, and having immigrated recently from Syria, The Sudan or Sri Lanka, seemed to have little grasp of the occasion. It wasn't a very long walk to an older, more settled part of the neighborhood, though. The Poles and Germans knew Halloween, and festooned their porches with cobwebs, severed limbs, dangling skeletons and fluttering bats. Some filled the front yard with tombstones and gallows. Others had fog machines in constant use. The kids trooped to their front doors in phalanxes of 10 or 12, each accepting their tribute and hurrying on barely before the next contingent arrived.

One year, I happened to be in Bahama Key with Victoria and Simon on Halloween night. "Bahama Key" is not the real name of their suburb, of course – Victoria wishes the real name to be a deep, dark secret, so that's about as close to the actual name as I'll go. Simon had borrowed a fog generator from somewhere, and set it up next to a bowl of the usual mix of Halloween treats – lollipops, miniature Tootsie-Rolls, one-bite chocolate bars, generic sugar pills in plastic wrappers that look like knuckle-dusters for the nursery. I thought it would be fun to sit outside with Simon and watch the bowl empty ... not to mention following Simon's example by helping my sweet tooth to whatever it wanted. Even Victoria came out and sat now and then, despite her self-avowed hatred of children from age 21 on down.

But for many years I simply let Halloween go ...

It got to be too much trouble to walk up to the livelier part of Parkdale, a good half-mile away. Nobody ever came to the doors in my rent-controlled building. Even looking out from my 21<sup>st</sup> floor balcony, there was not a ghost of anything happening in the streets below.

My rediscovery of Halloween began with a fuzzy, plush Jack-o-lantern that I found at the Salvation Army. It only cost fifty cents, and I thought it would add a little atmosphere to my apartment the next time October 31<sup>st</sup> rolled around. A couple of years later, I remembered to dig it out of storage and put it on top of the TV ... but frankly, when I did, I saw right away that a plush Jack-o-lantern was way too cute to do much to spook up the atmos.

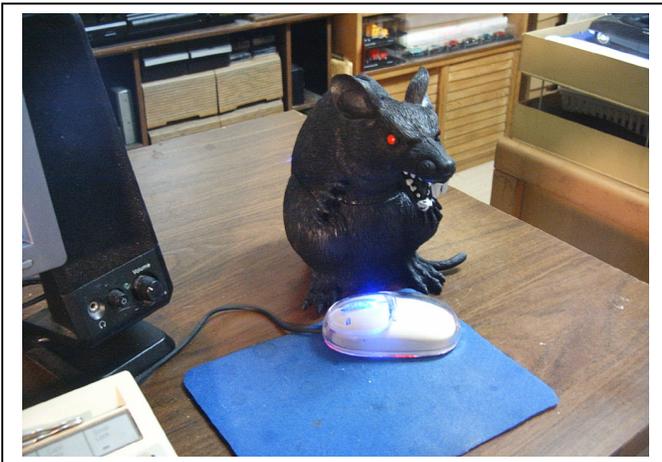
Another year passed, and a few weeks before the 31<sup>st</sup>, I saw some plastic skulls on batons at the Dollarama store. It was only a dollar – hence “Dollarama” – and didn’t look as bad as you might think. So I bought one. The plastic baton came out easily, and turned out to be handy to beat my cat with.

(The baton didn’t do the cat any harm, but you should see what she did to *it!*)

The year after *that*, I found myself looking at Jack-o-lanterns made from some kind of fiberglass or epoxy foam. They cost a little more than the plush one had, but had openings for mouth, nose and eyes – not just patches of black felt glued on – and there was a battery-operated light inside. Now I knew I was serious – I *had* to have one. Once I got it home, I hastily stuck a battery inside ... and when *it* lit up, *I* lit up with it.

For year four, I bought a Styrofoam tombstone from the Dollarama! You cannot beat a tombstone for atmosphere! I had quite a grouping of macabre Halloween accouterments by then, and was beginning to hear the spirits stir again.

I already knew, then, what I wanted to add for this year, and waited anxiously for the months to peel off the calendar and Fall to roll around again. Admittedly, I wasn’t expecting Dollarama to stock up for Halloween so *soon*. September isn’t even over yet, but a whole aisle has been given over to masks, make-up, wigs, fake blood, chains, bats, skulls, witch’s hats, magic wands, helmets and shields, amputated arms, leg bones, eyeballs floating in goo, pirates’ hooks, rusty lanterns, and everything else considered vital for a proper celebration of All Hallow’s Eve. Strangely ... no Jack-o-Lanterns did I see. But I already had one of those, thank you. It was a *rubber rat* I was looking for this year.



Meet Oscar Wild. He’s my new rat. He isn’t rubber, just some cheap sort of plastic, and the painted teeth and eyes are pretty sloppy. But to my camera the eyes glow in a most sinister way, somehow. I introduced Oscar to Sailor, my cat. I don’t know how cats know these things aren’t real, but Sailor knew instantly and wasn’t impressed. Nevertheless, I *like* Oscar. He looks evil, vicious, without fear or scruple, like a dentist seeing a new plasma-screen TV in his patient’s mouth. Oscar will fit in well with the rest of the Halloween ensemble.

Whatever will I do for next year, though? I don’t want a severed rubber hand or an 18-inch skeleton in a fake metal gibbet. Who ever heard of an 18-inch-tall pirate or highwayman? Nor is a skull with a bloodshot eyeball hanging from one socket in the sort of style I wish to celebrate Halloween. What I’m looking for will be more macabre or occult than morbid: ghostly rather than ghastly.

I might get a plastic raven, I suppose ... and ask it why it is like a plastic writing desk. But quoth the raven, never mind. When the time comes, I’ll know what’s next – the spirits will guide me to it.

# LEFT-OVER PIECES

**WAHF:** Carl Kemp, “thanks for sending me 21. Looks good. I thoroughly enjoyed your comments about marijuana and Steve Stiles. I'll toke to both. Carry on.” **Walt Wentz** who wants to know “In Ken Fletcher's letter, I noted the occasional "8 )" in red. But they are still there. Is this some sort of arcane fancode?” The answer, of course, is “Yes, it is.” In separate e-mail, Walt notes “Also, Dr. Suess is spelled with two s's... unless this is a deliberate play on sous. Let's say it is.” Well, of course it was! What fan worth his salted potato chips would miss a pun that obvious. **Ron Kasman** wrote three little snippets in which he describes the comedy routine of Chris Rock, who first proposed the \$5 bullet. Ron is also concerned that liberalizing the drug laws will result in greater use, but concedes that this may be better than the problems created by current attempts to suppress drug use.

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

*“... my proofreader, Walt Wentz, is in Japan for a short while and is not able to proofread the assembled issue. However, he did give the individual articles and letters his full attention, so any mistakes you find ought to be entirely my fault.” [From the text of my mailing of Broken Toys 21.]*

What is Walt doing Japan?

What *isn't* he doing I Japan, I wonder? What would you be doing in Japan? Sipping noodles in a garishly lit café on the Ginza at 3 a.m., served by gay kids in Mr. Kitty costumes, of course, wondering where all the fabulous geisha houses you heard about were... Actually, they do exist, but they probably have to be booked for the evening long in advance, and cost half-a-million yen for a party of four. So what is Walt doing in Japan? His letters describe it as a city sponsored trip – I think Forest Grove is twin city to some burg in Japan and this is a civic project of some kind.

“This issue is a bit political -- fan and otherwise. Maybe I can get back to more humourous stuff next time.”

Well, if we didn't laugh at politics we would have to weep.... Or howl....

“Other recent work of mine should appear in Graeham Cameron's Space Cadet (“So You Want to be Canaj'an, Eh?”)

That's Graeme Cameron - but how is "Graeme" pronounced? Gram? Graham? Greem?

It's pronounced “Cracker.” In French, *il est “Bicuit.”*

The local paper runs a truthiness column and some pundit had opined that there are more guns than people in the US. The best data shows that it's close - but the best data is not very good. They have a pretty good idea that there are about 307 million people, but no one has a

good handle on how many guns there are. And it's not very important - I have three, but it's very unlikely anyone will ever be shot with one here. Guns are easy to get - so are knives and autos. The question is how many of us have murderous intent and poor impulse control. Or, like the guy at the Navy Yard, are quite insane - he had what is apparently a common schizoid delusion that thoughts were being put in his head electronically.

I think some fancy bullets do now cost \$5, but the guy at the Navy Yard was using a shotgun loaded with buckshot shells - very common supplies for hunters. I have no idea what a box of them goes for these days. I never owned a shotgun, and only used one once, in south Georgia with the cousins, to shoot dove.

Probably right. The more I thought about a practical but high price, the more troublesome it got. Ordinary AR-15 rounds are a couple of bucks each already, aren't they? \$25 each would plainly be unacceptable, but adding a dollar more to the cost might do nothing at all ... except drive more people to home loading. Steve Galacci was able to home load. You don't need much. Something like a workshop vice to hold the cartridge while you pack it with cap, powder and ball, then cinch it. The extra advantage is that you can also re-use the brass cartridges. Better still, buy steel ones that can be re-used more than two or three times.

I agree that most Americans will never shoot anyone with a firearm, any more than they will stab someone with the steak knife with fake carved horn handle that they got as a set of four from Walmart for only \$11.95. What's different about Americans is that people have steak knives in Italy, South Korea, Argentina, Spain and Cuba too. Also, you might be surprised how many people actually *are* stabbed with ornamental steak knives. But among modern industrial nations, only American's have so many firearms, and -- worse -- only in America do so many people per 100,000 shoot each other. There are about 10 times as many deaths due to firearms in the US *per capita* as there are in Canada. On average, the difference in how many firearms are possessed by Canadians and Americans is probably also quite large.

There's no question about it, Americans want to be armed and don't give a fuck what anyone else thinks about it, and they don't seem likely to ask themselves anytime soon what the basis for this compulsion is. Instead, you'll be given fantasies about rising against a "tyrannical" government, defending yourself against kids in suspicious sports gear, or stopping a bank robbery in progress. Is *that* it? Is that the great American secret? They all see themselves as Batman? For others, there's a clear racial message -- other countries didn't have slavery or Indian Wars. At least not in the last few hundred years. The nearest thing to it is the Eastern Front in WWII, and look what a mess *that* place is!

We tend to forget -- and the media is no help -- that most deaths due to gunshot have nothing to do with gang wars, bank robberies, serial killers, binge killers, or terrorism. That's only the stuff that makes the news. Most of America's 11,000-plus firearms deaths are husbands shooting wives, girlfriends shooting boyfriends, friends shooting each other, and so on. In other words, commonplace crimes motivated by anger and poor temper management. Another huge number are caused by accidental discharges while cleaning or hunting, or because the finger on the trigger belongs to a four-year-old. After all that, you get to actual criminals -- gang shootings do add up to a lot, but unless you belong to a gang, or hang out with people who do, you aren't likely to get caught in the crossfire. In a way, *they* don't matter to most of us ... just add to the general sense of anxiety.

So, the problem isn't really crime *per se*, but the ease with which angry, irresponsible, or crazy people can get a gun and use it. Everybody could own and carry a gun if we were all sane, and it would be 100% safe. but we aren't all sane, and the ease with which a crazy person can get a gun at the wrong moment is probably the key factor, and the only basis on which gun control makes any sense. But we've all seen how difficult it is to really control access to guns. Now that there are over 300 million of them in the US, I think we have to concede that the public has lost, and the NRA has imposed its vision on the majority. The US will be a nation of ordinary people packing heat "just in case," and because of the sheer ease of access to firearms, "just in case" will happen far more often in the US than it would anywhere else.

It will probably not last forever. A generation unborn may just not give a damn. "Mom! Nobody's going to shoot me, okay? The odds are 100 to 1 against *anyone* being shot anywhere in town on this particular

day, so it's not likely going to be me. I'm not spoiling the lines of my new polyimaj fabric bolero jacket with the bulge of a shoulder holster!" As soon as Americans no longer feel better owning a gun, few will.

The marijuana ban seems quite as silly as the 1930s attempt to ban alcohol - but things have changed. These days, it keeps the beds in the contract prisons full, and they have a powerful lobby.

I'm told that someone on eBay is offering a "new" copy of the BOGEY BEASTS that I published in 1975 for close to \$100 - while it's still on my website at \$10. I don't know if any of my fanzines are offered for sale anywhere. In general, I don't buy or sell fanzines - I did buy a set of Willis' "Slant" for \$7 from a clueless dealer.

I always liked Ken Fletcher's art, had no idea he was still around!

Oh, yes, ye of little faith! But he's an older and even tired fanartist than I am, and most of his effort seems to go into running his Spontoon Island website -- a sort of imaginary 1930s seaplane utopia in the South Pacific.  
<http://spontoon.rootoon.com/>

Kelly Freas' UV laser pistol was not a toy (or a weapon - the power was too low). It was a one-off made by a hobbyist, and I'm not sure Kelly even got to keep it. It was beautifully made, and in the shape of the old "pirate pistol" (for which I'm sure there is some arcane technical term). Some birds could see the flash and would fly up.

Several names are possible. Generically it's a pistol, but some users might prefer the more Spanish-sounding "pistola." Technically, the name for it depends on the "lock" -- the assembly of ratchets, springs and levers that makes it all work and is fitted into the wooden "stock." Matchlocks worked by holding a smouldering rope "match" against the powder, for instance. Wheel locks spun a wheel against a flint to create a cascade of sparks to set the powder off. Most common from the 16th century on, though, were flintlocks, that struck a piece of flint against a metal spoon to create a spark that fell into an enclosed pan for the powder. All of these were clumsy and prone to failure, but until someone could machine identical brass cartridges in large numbers, there wasn't much to be done about it. Even the cap-and-ball system of the early 19th. century was still essentially a flintlock except that a mercury fulminate cap replaced the powder pan and a hammer fell on the cap. Later, the lock was moved inside the body of the firearm, but it was still the same system.

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

Eric Mayer: I started my life as a coffee drinker alternating between '60's percolators (for that was when it was) and the new freeze-dried coffee, which we always had around because my father was somewhat fond of it.

I got a real eye-opening education in what coffee could be in San Francisco during the 1980s, for SF went through its coffee revival about a decade ahead of the rest of the country, and since then I have been deeply suspicious of percolators or of any coffee-making system that recirculates made coffee through the grounds, because they necessarily over-extract, which means you're getting more of the bitter oils and such than is really good, and they often burn the coffee by re-exposure to the heat source.

The "Mister Coffee" system with a filter basket has many of the same liabilities as the percolator: the flat bottom seems to promote over-extraction all on its own, so I won't buy anything but a cone filter system any longer.

If you're good with the effort of boiling water, the best you can really do is the Chemex system, which has many sensual pleasures in addition to making simply the best cafe filter that it is possible to make.

But in about 1992 or so I was given as a housewarming gift, a Braun Aromatic electric coffee maker, which if kept clean comes darned close to what you can get from a Chemex. An appliance timer turned it into an automatic, and since I've had to move my coffee set-up into my bedroom for the last five years or so, I wake to coffee dripping from filter into carafe, much superior to radio or alarm clock.

They stopped making the Braun Aromatic some time ago, but there is a thriving market for them on the internet – the cost has gone from about \$15 to about \$60, but since most of the makers-of-bad-coffee on the market now are around \$100, you come out ahead no matter what. Awhile ago I noticed, while watching a current “America's Test Kitchen” cooking show, that their counter coffeemaker was one of these antique Braun Aromatics. Since the ATK “mission” is to get the best possible results from anything they set their gaze upon, I consider that an adequate endorsement.

The only real drawback to the Braun Aromatic is that the glass carafes are somewhat fragile and have to be replaced every couple of years. Fortunately the carafes are not terribly expensive and are easily replaced. Bed, Bath & Beyond carries them still.

Curiously enough, at about the same time in the 90s, Krups came out with a coffee maker of the same general type, but over-engineered like many Krups products. It had too many unnecessary parts that have to be fit fussily together just-so or it wouldn't work at all. *A bas Krups.* I find as a general rule if Braun makes a comparable product, it will not only be less expensive, but the engineering will be more practical for ergonomic purposes. My Braun Multipractic food processor was purchased for \$25 at a time when most food processors were multiple hundreds of dollars; it has a place-and-twist lid for the processing workbowl, instead of the Cuisinart multi-part irritation, and its little workhorse motor has stood up to years' worth of use. Braun makes good, practical engineering.

Weeeelll... I like to do the thing right, but I don't know that the coffee from a conical basket is better than coffee from a flat basket. I have to hope that there is no difference, or that the difference is slight, because the flat bottom kind is the kind the last two or three machines I've owned have been. I will keep you advice in mind, though, next time I go shopping. I also use a plastic re-usable plastic filter rather than paper. I *can* imagine that making a small difference – as paper throw-aways may absorb unwanted bitter oils more effectively -- but I dislike running out of filters, so will stick to reusable for the time being.

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**Bob Jennings, [FabFicBks@aol.com](mailto:FabFicBks@aol.com)**

Received your e-mail with the attached file for *Broken Toys #21*. By an odd circumstance I decided to download it, read it, and comment on it right away. As I have mentioned before, I generally try to LOC print fanzines, but generally don't bother with most e-zines.

However, it's been a bizarre and hectic middle of the year for me. I've been running behind, trying to catch up on things since late May, and definitely not succeeding. I'm trying to turn a warehouse of stuff into money thru a much wider variety of venues than before and it has taken a lot more time than I originally figured, plus I managed to acquire even more inventory thru a series of circumstances I will not bore you with.

I just finished mailing out the latest issue of my fanzine *Fadeaway* this morning (you should get your copy early next week), and I have decided to rip the top sheets off the legal pad, as it were, and start over, right now. Rather than try to play catch-up on months worth of fanac, I'm going to begin right this day dealing with whatever new things arrive or arise and not worry about five+ months of things I haven't managed to get around to yet.

And one of the first things I encountered was your e-zine, so I figured I'd shoot off an LOC. This issue seems to be a letterzine with little else. However, from your editorial comments; gee, I hate to sound like a bumper sticker, but truth is truth – when you outlaw guns (or bullets, the option you propose), only outlaws will have guns and bullets; only there will be millions of outlaws, because people want their guns and they want the ammo to use in their firearms.

Because all the scare tactics over the Newtown CT school massacre, ripples of fear went through the gun-owning community and the price of ammunition in the US took an immediate exponential jump as people rushed to stores buying up every bullet they could find.

.22 cal ammo suitable for target shooting is now selling for lots more than it used to, and boxes (let alone blocks) are being rationed by sporting good stores everywhere. You have to sign up in advance, sometimes even leaving a deposit, and you are advised how much you will be able to buy, which is probably going to be less than what you might have wanted. The makers of shells are working their factories around the clock to meet the demand and there seems to be no catching up with the expanded demand.

What this has done, tho, is reinvigorated the re-loading segment of the firearms hobby. Reloading kits are selling like wildfire, and people are buying and hand tooling their own variations so they can make their own shells of every variety.

If I can find it, I'll include a political cartoon I ran across recently which sums this situation up pretty well. Enacting laws restricting gun use and ownership is not really working. The lunatics and the political fanatics will always be able to get the firearms they want. Back in the heart of the Great Depression in the early 1930s for example, the notorious mobile flash robbery Barrows Gang, better known by their media name of Bonnie & Clyde, broke into federal armories so they could acquire Browning automatic rifles and the ammo to fill them. Those BARs gave them firepower and range far in excess of anything law enforcement could muster against them. In a running battle with lawmen armed with Thompson sub-machine guns the BARs cut a swath of destruction, while the law enforcement tommy guns never even pinged the intended targets.

People who want to kill other people are not going to be worried about the cost. Black market street prices for weapons is already astronomical, and yet convicted felons and career criminals have no trouble purchasing those weapons and do so regularly.

I certainly favor better background checks and efforts to keep weapons out of the hands of people with serious mental health issues. This might be helpful in some cases, but, again, some jerk that wants to kill people is not going to be deterred by mere laws. Finding ways to detect loons and fanatics early on might be useful, but I'm not sure anything is really going to cure this problem. Meanwhile, millions of responsible gun owners, like myself, have to listen to ongoing hysterical screaming. More bumper sticker stuff – guns don't kill people, people kill people. Credit cards do not max-out themselves, automobiles do not run down innocent

school children, iPhones don't run up thousands of dollars worth of hourly charge by themselves. It takes human beings to use or to misuse any of these items, and unless and until some way can be found to effectively deal with irresponsible/amoral/crazy/fanatical individuals, the problem will never go away.

On your other editorial comment regarding marijuana, I have no opinions here. I don't smoke weed, I don't smoke anything, and I have no desire to. Cigarette smoking caused my father to develop lung cancer which killed him, so the whole concept of smoking anything seems utterly stupid to me. Many studies indicate that smoking dope is more damaging than smoking regular tobacco, which means the potential health cost issues are going to be at least the same and possibly higher with weed users.

If you are going to legalize marijuana, then I think users should be required to register with their state governments and be forced to buy health insurance policies that would specifically cover them when they developed health-related problems caused by smoking the stuff. Come to think of it, that would be a pretty good policy to adopt with people who insist on smoking or using tobacco products as well. That would sure take a lot of expensive health care costs out of the government budgets in the coming years.

I agree with your comments about the Hugo awards this year. I believe this will be the last year that the Hugo Awards have any kind of relevance to the world of SF fandom. I discuss this more thoroughly in my comments to Steve Stiles' letter in the latest *Fadeaway* issue, so I won't repeat myself here.

I will note that despite the rules application which clearly stated that the Hugo award for best fanzine was specifically limited to the print medium, electronic publications were allowed to be nominated, and a semi-professional electronic internet-only effort won the Best Fanzine Hugo. To me that pretty much closes the argument. The 'fan' Hugos no longer have even a remote connection with the traditional world of science fiction fandom, and I don't think inventing three or four or even ten brand new categories is going to change that.

So far as your old fanzines – nothing is stopping you from selling back copies of your old zines on eBay or whatever and reaping the inflated prices yourself. If you've got the stamina and the stomach for it, you could also list a lot of material from your accumulation of fanzines received over the past few decades (assuming you still have some of those, of course) and turn those into money as well. It's a lot like work and there's no guarantee anybody will actually buy anything, but what the hell, you might be able to turn dead stuff you never even considered ever reading again into pizza money.

Your remarks about digging out ancient fossils from a nearby stream in your childhood reminds me that I had piles of those things when I was a youngster, mainly when I was in the age category of nine to eleven. Tennessee, where I grew up, had lots of creek gravel beds everywhere, and among the creek gravel (rounded stones of small and medium size), were always calcified shells and stem pieces and fluorites of things from millions of years ago. It was interesting for awhile, but the world was full of other things I found more intriguing, including science fiction, and soon enough, girls. It was hard to get involved with fossils again after those revelations.

Enjoyed the issue. I won't promise to LOC any future issues, but I am determined to stay on top of things from now on so it could happen.

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## Dave Harren, [tyrbolo@comcast.net](mailto:tyrbolo@comcast.net)

First USA has a carefully crafted legal document which was hammered out as a compromise between various groups who had suffered injustices under Euro governments.

It is not written in stone but actually has provisions in it for changing it.

Yes the world fears the armed American populace, and rightly so. Without it, the American government would be a lot freer to visit death and destruction on the rest of the world.

Military calibers (5.56MM is another typo) are the only calibers protected in the second amendment.

The Class divide is already far too wide, so raising the price just disarms only the poor and they are the one class who needs to have some power even if it is only imaginary. If you think before shooting, it becomes a premeditated offense.

Every recent shooter has been tagged as psychiatrically unstable, seen some professional who knew they were so and in some cases were taking anti-psychotic drugs. In other words, they needed to be locked up in a mental hospital, not be running loose in the streets. The one exception I can think of who shot a Nevada Judge, was being divorced and the Judge in his case was his wife's lover. That was where someone needed to be shot badly in my opinion.

Worldwide War on Drugs: IT was started by Nixon, you remember Nixon, he and G. Gordon Liddy cooked it up as a scheme to divert tax money into another Federal bureaucracy. Like any monster that lives in the dark, it grew into the current horror that has corrupted and stained everything it touches. It was a bad idea, started by bad men and promoted by the greedy and the ignorant.

In the USA it is used as a way to lock brown people up to use as slave labor for the corporations. The fact that slavery is against the law means nothing when the economic interests of capitalists are involved. It was a dead issue in western civilization until they needed cheap labor for the sugar plantations.

That's just history which most people are blithely ignorant of due to their time in schools.

Look at the arguments about the planetary surveillance. "I have nothing to hide!" If that's true, remove your clothes and walk down the street, if you won't do that you must be covering up some innate terrorist sympathies or are lusting after children.

Lloyd has the right plan; he has so much coverage for his opinions and voice he might as well be writing zines at the same rate as you and Garcia combined. Garcia may be dead but his zombie lurches on, spraying his pubs across the Net. Katz on the other hand seems to be resting up, but assures me he is fine.

You need to hear Feynman on the subject of awards. I'd like to see more people who deserve them get them. When Barrack Obama got the Nobel Peace Prize because he only had *two*

wars going on it confirmed my suspicions. Graeme has the right idea, make your own prestigious award and pass it out to those who deserve one.

My wish all along has been to do just that, except it would come with a \$1,000 check instead of a trophy, certificate or handshake.

I like foreign comics but have no illusions about access in USA or Canada. I'm not sure how the censorship works but I do know the free flow of information is quite restricted. The Net has loosened some of it up, but you have to dig pretty hard to locate obscure material from anywhere.

Good letterCol, you must be doing something right.

Like any good garden, a letter column is best cultivated with a luxurious application of bull shit in the previous issue.

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## Rich Chandler, [mauser@kendra.com](mailto:mauser@kendra.com)

The \$5000 bullet comedian was Chris Rock, IIRC. The biggest unconsidered downside of the scheme is that when it finally IS time to shoot somebody, the shooter is likely to be a lousy shot and might hit someone else.

The obvious solution is to sell practice rounds a lot cheaper. Ten for a dollar, but you have to cross your heart and pinky-swear to only use the bullets on a shooting range.

Also, some criminals might target cops, since they'd be carrying a fortune in bullets.

Insure the bullets ... maybe the cop, too, if he has a strong union.

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## HotRod-302, [Ogre302@aol.com](mailto:Ogre302@aol.com)

I'm quite sure it's far too late for any gun control amendments to do any good. It really is a case of the good law abiding citizens would give their guns up in hopes of the world becoming a better place, but the bad guys would still get their hands on them and use them to take control of the weaker people. Even if they kicked down the door of every single house in the country we still get so many weapons from Mexico and China that it would only make sure the wrong people are equipped. Even if we strip-searched every single person who comes in and out of the country, we still have the smugglers. Even if we put up a *huge* wall that kept everyone out of the country, there is still the case of people making guns. My grandpa was a gunsmith and made guns from *pens*. He could even make a gut gun from a telescopic antenna from a car. Then in San Quentin there is its own little museum that exhibits a silenced semi-automatic handgun made under the guards' noses from plumbing equipment. The biker gang culture is another example... why use guns when you can decimate a crowd with explosives made out of fire extinguishers?

For gun control to really work it would have to be a powerful and decisive global effort where every single person's home is strip-searched, anything and everything that could potentially create the powders be put way out of reach, and we'd have to push for very extremely harsh

punishments for anyone who breaks that rule. But the sane wouldn't go that far. It would be the nut jobs who invent ways. Most individuals could control themselves. But humanity isn't capable of avoiding this sort of thing. I live just a few miles from the theater in Aurora that James Holmes shot up. Just a few blocks away we had a shootout happen because the police were serving a sex offender orders to move because he was a convicted pedophile nearly across the street from a school. (That coward took his own life).

Until recently there were 15 guns in this house per person... *Now* we have three guns per person (not including the collectible antiques like black powder and such)

As for bullets... I have a particular blunderbuss that fires rolls of dimes. Bullets are made from lead, but can be made from many different metals. If it can move fast it can be used as ammo. All we would do is revert back a century in firearm technology. Then we'd have to worry about Bloods and Crips blotting out the sky with bows and arrows, like in 300 AD.

You're spot on about the pot thing. It's just a hot button topic. It really is no more dangerous than alcohol in terms of intoxicating affects. (Or is it effects? I always get mixed up on that) and there are strains that don't make you very drunk at all. For medicinal use they can isolate the "feel-good" parts from the medicinal chemicals. I actually got to see how some of it worked... though I don't know a whole lot about it exactly. There's far more serious drugs out there. Ever look up crocodil? Pot is just something politicians use to make it look like they care.

Where I am it's legal. For me, since I suffer from pain, not only is it legal, it's tax free. But it can be bought legally by anyone. It's just going to be taxed to hell.

It doesn't make people stupid, either, which I *know* people will take issue with me about. But several of *the* smartest people I have ever known smoke it daily. People who run casinos, invent machinery, and crunch numbers for small businesses. It doesn't make people lazy. Those people are hard workers. Co-workers of mine bust their *asses*. The Canadian politicians need to look at Colorado for guidance. Sure, we had the Aurora Theater Shooting... but if James Holmes was being treated for his psychosis with pot... I have no doubt the shooting would not have happened.

I used to have a fossil... that has vanished... that was amazing. I don't even know what it was. It looked like tightly woven coral. It almost resembled those squiggly little cracks like a skull has. It held itself together but I had rubber bands just in case. It was the size of a softball and was like a solid puzzle.

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

Hot dog! Another *Broken Toys!* (Okay, couldn't resist. Nice logo even if it is different)

More and more I avoid writing about politics, faanish or mundane. I'm never on the winning side, and nothing ever changes anyway, except for the worse, from my point of view. So it is an unpleasant topic. Here in the United States the country is being dragged down by a gang of right-wing lunatics who are far crazier and meaner than the John Birchers, who were considered fringe nutjobs unworthy of attention back when I was growing up.

The majority has no say in governing. Basically the corporations and the wealthy run things to funnel more and more money away from everyone else and to themselves. Obviously, this can't go on forever because eventually nobody but the wealthy will have any money to spend and the wealthy can't possibly, and never do, spend much of the money they accumulate. It piles up. They have to invent bizarre gambling games on Wall Street just to give themselves something to do with all their cash.

And then there are the guns. How many people in the USA actually want to own military-style weapons whose only purpose is to kill other human beings? A very small number indeed. Hunters don't even want weapons designed to kill large numbers of people. Yet, we can't regulate such armaments. If classrooms full of grade-schoolers have to die so the nuts can have their guns and the gun manufacturers their profits, so be it. The rights of violent lunatics to play games trump the rights of children to live. What a sick society we now live in.

With regards to the Hugos, I hadn't considered the fact that that jewelry is a commercial proposition. Oh well. I thought "fan" had some connotation of amateur but I guess the rules aren't written that way. So let's see, the best fan artist will soon be awarded for the commercial work of someone who is not an sf pro and the best fan writer will be given to an sf pro's non-commercial work. Supposedly non-commercial. Maintaining an Internet presence is a vital part of professional book marketing today even if it doesn't produce income directly. It's part of the job. So no blog by a pro writer is, in truth, amateur.

On the other hand, things always change and different generations have their own ideas and why shouldn't they? There isn't any particular reason why fans who grew up with computers and the Internet should have an affection for old-fashioned fanzines. The new "fandom" isn't of any interest to me, but that's my problem.

What is galling is that the Hugo fan awards no longer represent what they were originally intended to represent, and yet they maintain the name, and their lineage can be traced back. It is misleading. In a way it demeans the earlier awards which were honoring excellent amateur work rather than forms of professional work. Maybe if they can't be discontinued they could be renamed to make it clear that they are not the same as the original fan Hugos.

I guess the Hugos can go to hell in their own way. I just wish one was going to hell *my way* ... and maybe Steve Stile's way, too, and Marc Schirmeister, who deserves one as well. After that, they can give the damn thing to tattoo artists for all I care.

Re your comment in the loccol that percolators may not make the best coffee. Look, I am a caffeine addict, not a connoisseur!

Great article on your fossil finds. Sometimes my family would search the local slag heaps for fossils. My dad once found a piece of fossilized bark a foot long. I have no idea what happened to it.

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rtWidner, [bugr@cvcca.com](mailto:bugr@cvcca.com)

I have decided to publish Art's letter in the vernacular. It is not often we are treated to the rich cultural traditions of Chaucerian English, as it takes someone nearly as old as Chaucer to employ it correctly.

As I read this with much interest but only have time to comment on one topic.

*“Ever at my back I hear  
Time’s winged chariot hurrying near.”*

So I too have been much disturbed by Newtown, & more, what seems to have become a weekly occurrence. Much as I hate to agree with the NRA about anything, I was brought up short by what one of them said not so long ago:

“Gun control isn’t going to solve the problem because it’s a material solution, & what we have is a spiritual problem.” I don’t think he used the word “spiritual,” but it’s the only word I can think of at the moment other than the weak “non-material.” But it got me thinking about the way the usual public response goes to cursing the gunman & bemoaning the innocent, especially children cut short before they have a chance to be anything. Then there was the New Yorker cartoon of 2 little Afro boys sitting on the stoop with the caption, “What do you wanna be *if* you grow up?” Maybe some of you speed readers need to go back & catch that little word “IF” in there.

So what would a non-material, or spiritual approach be? First, we’ve got to ask the right questions: not the FAQs, but the SAQs; seldom asked questions. 1. We need to go to Joseph Campbell & Carl Jung for help, & my crusty old New England grandma “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” 2. It wouldn’t hurt the social psychologists on the case(s) to read some stuff, as such a Big Time scholar as Lewis Mumford suggests (*The Myth of the Machine & The Pentagon of Power*), in particular, Theodore Sturgeon’s *And Now the News*, written way back in 1956.

1. 1. What are the new myths Campbell says we need in our culture? & especially what are some of the bad old ones we need to get rid of? Start with headline **LATEST NEWTOWN SPORTS RESULTS: Oddballs 28, Evenballs 1**

Way back in the 50s, a perceptive comedian asked this question: “If you were to go crazy, what kind of crazy would you go? Some of us, the best ones, do stand up comedy, or write for one. Some of us do poetry. Harmless, but we are looked down upon.”

The Newtown problem is not a material problem, but a spiritual problem; It needs poetry:

The Pie-eyed Piper strikes again. Heed the words of Old John Wayne: “Just shoot first, ask questions after.” This is the kind of crazy Mr. Lanza [[Adam Lanza, the shootist](#)] went.

No connection? Check James Thurber, George Orwell, CG Jung, or just yesterday, Michael Moore, who deals in images.

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**Andy Hooper, [fanmailaph@aol.com](mailto:fanmailaph@aol.com)**

I enjoyed reading *Broken Toys #21*. All of the material was interesting, but I feel the most grounded in reacting to your thoughts on the Hugo Awards. Those of us who concentrate much of our fanactive energies on communicating through fanzines have talked ourselves into believing that Hugo voters constitute some more representative summary or cross-section of fandom than we do. But this conclusion is apparently based solely on their larger numbers. Hugo voters are drawn from the Worldcon community, an equally-specialized subfandom, with

its own insular traditions and superstitions. The Hugos represent the tastes and priorities of people who buy Worldcon memberships. Why would it come as some surprise that this group would choose to nominate a jeweler – a well-known part of their community – as Best Fan Artist? What’s surprising is that an old school fan artist like Steve Stiles gets nominated at all – what percentage of San Antonio’s membership had ever seen any of Steve’s art before the convention? I don’t have that many friends among Worldcon attendees any more – so no matter how furiously I publish, I reach a tiny fraction of the eligible voters, and I doubt I’ll ever break through again.

As delightful as it is to be nominated, God help you if you win. Poor Galen Dara...there’s nothing an artist can do to redeem the sin of being popular. It’s so much easier to indict the winner than all the imbeciles that voted for them, isn’t it? Winning a Hugo can render a remarkable transformation – before receiving the award, a fanzine or other work may seem harmless or even amusing, but once it has been cursed with the adjective “best,” it becomes an act of utter villainy that threatens the foundation of human civilization.

Yet how few winners decide not to “chance it” and decline to be nominated...

My co-conspirator Randy Byers was incredibly fortunate to win a Best Fanzine Hugo for a work whose founding editor was deceased. And what could have more faanish credential than *Science Fiction Five-Yearly*? Of course, this should reasonably make us hate him slightly more, but he is such the clean-limbed youth that he skates away untrammelled by scorn. But the great majority of Best Fanzine Hugo awards that have been bestowed during my tenure as a fan publisher have been met with reactions ranging from diffidence to contempt. People will still complain when something “Faanish,” like *Plokta* or *SFFY* wins the award. I mean, we loved the histrionics of Chris Garcia and James Bacon, but frankly, you deserved quite a bit more credit for *The Drink Tank*’s popularity than James, and how many of those voting for it had ever actually read the zine? *TDT* was *nominated* on merit, but it probably *won* because Chris had been a gregarious and ubiquitous figure in fandom, including Worldcon, for at least three years leading up to his win. If he were a mousy little fanboy with prescription orthotics and an inhaler, rather than a ginger-haired man-beast that *just won’t stop*, he wouldn’t have sniffed the podium. I honestly don’t know how many fans have ever really *read* fanzines across the history of the hobby, but voting totals would seem to suggest that they have always been somewhat esoteric to the majority of Worldcon members.

It’s true that even when the Hugo winners are not outrageous they tend to be your second or third choice. Clearly *Drink Tank* wasn’t the best zine of the year, with or without my contributions. There were far too many superior choices including *F770*, *Banana Wings*, *Askance* and *Chunga*. But that year enough people decided to reward Chris for being an “awesome” guy, and did. James got to go along for the ride because he was technically co-editor ... not that he does anything around the zine, as far as I can tell, except an article every few issues.

A lack of familiarity with artists who primarily work in fanzines would seem to be an inevitable consequence of this situation. Even if you imposed some improbably narrow definition of fan art on the voters, they still wouldn’t pick anyone whose work primarily appears in fanzines. The Hugos have to reflect the interests of the people who vote on them – perhaps doing away with the fan artist, writer and fanzine awards is therefore long overdue. Worldcon members would probably prefer to give a Hugo for Best Bid Party, Best Hall Costume and Best Facebook Avatar. Who’s to say they would be wrong?

If you want to win an award for art and writing in fanzines, why don’t you put some effort into

lobbying readers to vote for you in the FAAn awards? Voting will open for the 2014 awards on January 1<sup>st</sup>, and you ought to get votes in at least four categories. Whatever you may think of it, it is the only award likely to be voted on by people that actually read and see your work.

The FAAns also have their cliques and politics, but I'm not well placed to take advantage of them. Toronto is not a fanzine town and there is no local support I can drum up. Regular voters from T.O. probably include me, Hope, Colin & Cathy, Lloyd and Murray Moore. I have a good idea how Hope votes, a glimmer of how C&C might vote, can only speculate about Lloyd and have a suspicion Murray is not in my camp. The 3 or 4 #1 votes and handful of seconds, thirds and fourths aren't enough to have much influence on the outcome. Still, I can't complain overly much about last year's results. I wouldn't even know how to campaign to improve the odds without coming across as a total a-hole.

The real reason I keep thrashing out the issues behind the Worldcon, fandom and the Hugos is that my own perceptions are changing as fast as the institutions are. I'm trying to reach an understand that will help me react appropriately ... I think I'm close, too. When I reach that point, I don't think I'll have anything more to say.

As for fanac, I often think I must be close to burn-out... but this time I wonder if it's true. I haven't faced a writing project in some while that I've been enthusiastic about ... except perhaps the one about fossils, and that was a matter of expanding on some notes I kept from Facebook. I also seem to start a lot of drawings, but finish few. The "hot dog" issue of *Broken Toys* was far from my favourite as well. If I were 40, I'd say I need a change of pace and a fresh start at something ... but at 62 (in a few days), there isn't time for any of that. Gotta find something to do that won't take more than 20 years...

Politicians are doing a great deal for the decriminalization of marijuana by NOT talking about it. No one is thumping the washtub and warning that Washington and Colorado are courting Federal punishment by changing their marijuana laws...in fact, so far, we seem to be "getting away with it" – the first Washington State Pot Emporium will be open before the end of next year. As ever, the people and their government generally get along fine – it's only politicians who can't shut up about how much we ought to hate government.

I really enjoyed the introduction to your fossil collection. Of course, the rocks at the bottom of Mimico Creek were not carried or worn away by "a few inches of water." Geologists and hydrologists have come to see erosion and deposition as more acute events – yes, the rocks wear away a little all the time, but most of the work is done by storms and floods that have far more power to alter the landscape. My desert-dwelling fossil=hound in-laws always like to hit their favorite sites after a big rainstorm, knowing new material will have been exposed.

Mimico creek not only floods, but is sometimes subject to ice breaking up and jamming. I suspect that slabs of hard ice can do interesting things to the bed rock if they scrape bottom. When I was about 12, there was a terrible rain storm. Our kitchen window looked in the direction of the creek, and I happened to look out just at the right moment to see the 30-foot wooden suspension bridge I knew from about a quarter of a mile upstream of where I lived go floating by in the flood. During Hurricane Hazel, when I was three, apparently the flooding was so bad that Mimico Creek flooded over its banks, up the rise and then down again into the property where I would live a few years later. It was a three-story building and the bottom one was engulfed entirely. We lived in the top floor, a modest flat: the ground and basement were an animal hospital. Many of the animals were caged in the submerged basement level, and all drowned.

I never found a really good trilobite, either. I used to pull beautiful whole brachiopods out of the creek beds I played in between the ages of 5 and 7 in West Virginia, but trilobites always came up in fragments.

Your letter column has become quite impressive, too. I agree with Lloyd Penney, it's quite wonderful to see comments from Ken Fletcher again. You have replies from several people I am not familiar with here – I may ask some of them if they would be interested in the next *Flag*

or *Chunga*. You need to add two or three new names about every six months in this business, otherwise you fall behind the rate at which fans die or cut you off because they are feuding with you.

*Broken Toys* is really very good; thanks again for publishing it.

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Lloyd Penney, [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

I am finally getting myself back on my usual locking binge, and now I can get to *Broken Toys 21*. In spite of my creebing the other night on the phone, I will continue on with responding to fanzines to get more of them. Some habits die hard, I guess.

After the results of the Aurora Awards were released, I called Lloyd by phone to clear up one or two details about the winners in the fan categories – mainly, “who the heck *are* these guys?”

I think we've lost our franchise for the fan Hugos. It comes from the facts that time has passed us by, and that we've aged right out of contention. You and Steve should have at least one silvery rocket on your mantels, but instead unknown (to us) names are winning. It is not Galen Dara's fault, nor any other winner's fault, such as Tansy Rayner Roberts for Best Fan Writer (she is a professional fantasy writer), but the fact that a newer group of nominators and voters do not know of your good works, but the works of others, and whether or not we accept their credentials, they are the ones getting the nominations and votes to win.

Newer voters are not only unaware of past fanac, I believe they have an entirely different notion of what fanac is. If they had simply been unaware of who the usual suspects on the ballot were, or what they had done, newer voters might simply pass over the fan categories without a vote. The fact that they do vote suggests that they think they know what they're voting for. What's changed is that they apparently think that fanac is whatever is not published or produced by a corporation like Tor or Time Warner. So George R.R. Martin's blog (if he had one) is Fanwriting, and the covers of online, semipro, fiction sites are Fanart. The adjustment will be hard, but I think Old School Fans like me are just going to have to admit we aren't part of fandom unless we really do dote on the Science Fiction in the expression “Science Fiction Fandom.” Which I don't.

I saw a statistic online recently, saying that there was at least one mass killing with guns every month for something like the last 8 years. I have a problem with that stat, and there was nothing to back it up, but given the high incidence of such violent attacks, it wouldn't surprise me. There are too many guns out there, and too many opportunities and veiled reasons to whip a gun out and shoot someone. I see it as utter madness; they see it as culture and a God-given right. This argument will never be settled.

The dangers may be exaggerated, nevertheless, the determination many Americans have to own one or more firearms is peculiar among other modern, Western nations. I know several gun-owning Americans and they seem to regard it as a useful tool, the way any normal person would own a lawnmower, hedge trimmer or an electric turkey knife. Except that you could take their turkey knife away from them with a lot less trouble. It's only then that the gun begins to show its truly Sacred Nature. It's almost like a Muslim's head covering, even to the detail of some Muslims feeling no need for it.

Perhaps marijuana should be legalized, but there are already plenty of legal substances people have access to that they abuse regularly, and hurt themselves with its use. If there is any substance that is legal and addictive, it is caffeine. Something else legal and addictive and regularly abused, saw a documentary about it the other day...sugar.

Caffeine seems to affect some people more than others. I saved an interesting chart from FarceBook the other day, that seems worth reproducing. I recognize a couple of negative results, but don't show any sign of the usual complaints – addiction & withdrawal symptoms, inability to sleep afterward, that sort of thing. But my blood chemistry does show a mild depletion of vitamin B.

# PROS AND CONS OF COFFEE CONSUMPTION

**COFFEE CONTAINS ANTIOXIDANTS, VITAMINS AND MINERALS AND A FEW DIETARY PROTEINS.**

Research shows coffee consumption has reduced the risk of some diseases and ailments, including:

- Parkinson's
- Alzheimer's
- Type 2 diabetes
- Gallstones
- Cancer - oral, esophageal and pharyngeal
- Asthma attacks
- Heart rhythm problems
- Strokes
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Caffeine increases the effectiveness of certain types of painkillers; act as a stimulant

**GOOD FOR THE GARDEN:** Used coffee grounds benefit many plants, adding nitrogen to the soil.

**EVEN THOUGH CAFFEINE CAN HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS, OVERCONSUMPTION MAY CAUSE NEGATIVE RESULTS.**

Negative effects may include:

- Changes in sleep pattern
- May cause auditory hallucinations
- Hampers absorption of some minerals and vitamins, such as magnesium, zinc and iron
- Can raise blood pressure
- Mild diuretic could lead to dehydration and a loss of vitamins B and C as well as calcium, iron and zinc
- Can stain teeth
- Acids can aggravate heartburn

**ROASTING THE BEANS:** Coffee contains hundreds of compounds, some brought out during the roasting process; some of the carcinogens produced by the high heat of roasting include cresote, pyrimidine, tars and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

Coffee is among crops most heavily sprayed with pesticides.

**WOMEN** who drank at least 5 cups a day were 57% less likely to have estrogen receptor-negative cancers than those who drank less than a cup a day. Heavy coffee drinkers had 20% less risks of contracting any kind of breast cancer when age was taken into account.

**MEN** who drank at least 6 cups a day were 60% less likely than non-coffee drinkers to develop the most lethal form of prostate cancer. They were 20% less likely to develop any form of the disease. Men who drank 1-3 cups per day were 30% less likely to develop the deadliest form of prostate cancer.

AVERAGE CAFFEINE CONTENT PER CUP (IN MG):		POSSIBLE WEIGHT GAIN (CAL.):	
Drip coffee	115-175	Whipped cream (4 oz.)	77
Espresso	100	Mocha, caramel (per pump)	25
Brewed	80-135	Sugar packet	15
Instant	65-100	Flavored creamer (1 Tbsp.)	15-35
Decaf, brewed	3-4	Whole milk (2 Tbsp.)	18
Decaf, instant	2-3	Nonfat milk (2 Tbsp.)	11
		Soy milk (2 Tbsp.)	17

SOURCES: Harvard School of Public Health, e-importz.com, National Coffee Association, The Specialty Coffee Association of America, Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association. © 2012 PREFERRED CREDIT, INC. DESIGNED BY JASON THAM

Coffee percolators...I think Starbucks must still use them. I cannot drink Starbucks coffee, as I feel it's burnt. They have a lighter roast, which makes me wonder if they knew their coffee was burnt all along. Jason Burnett is right, walking away from fandom would free up a lot of time, and you'd have nothing to fill it with. There is always the temptation to walk away from it, but before I do (not saying I will), I would want a good replacement activity. Tough to find; I figure that's why so many have run away from our little asylum, only to return later on.

Some people think Starbucks is gold dust suspended in champagne, yet they do nothing special to make it as far as I can see. As for beans, you can get them fresh off the boat and as good as anything Starbucks can buy. Like you, I've heard that they were in fact deliberately over-roasted to create a false impression of the coffee being richer than it was. Of course, that gets us into semantics. If a thing seems one thing; isn't it that thing?

Ken Fletcher details my own high school socialization, which was nearly none. I'd say something about being one of the characters of *The Big Bang Theory*, but I don't watch that show. I was never invited to parties in high school, I never had a date, and the only school dance I ever went to, I covered for the school paper, and it gave me a massive headache. The theatre arts students were extremely insular, and made a point of harassing anyone else who wasn't a part of their own little clique.

We are continuing to look into getting a replacement for cable, but the temptation is to simply cut it off, and find other entertainments. But, like a replacement for fandom, it's tough to find it.

Time to go...it is late at night, and it is an effort to keep my eyes open. Yes, it's before 10 p.m., but still...I am finding I tire more easily at night. A function of age or lack of exercise? Not sure it matters much these days. Thank you for *Broken Toys 21*; hope I'm a little earlier this time.

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Steve Jeffery, [srjeffery@aol.com](mailto:srjeffery@aol.com)

Thanks for sending *Broken Toys 21*, and apologies the time I've taken to respond. Further to the the implied class distinction between the appreciation of and critical values awarded to arts and crafts, you might like to listen to the first of artist and potter Grayson Perry's Reith Lectures for 2013, currently available on BBC website iPlayer and also as a transcript. Perry is disarmingly and sometimes hilariously irreverent about what is considered art, particularly by its cultural validators and critics, and also by the public. Questions about what is art and whether something (whether a painting, a pot, a quilt, half a cow, or an unmade bed) is art because an artist has made it or declares it to be art go back to Warhol's soup cans and Duchamp's infamous urinal (and probably further than that; van Gogh couldn't sell his paintings in his own lifetime).

So whether the fanart category should be expanded to include sculpture, model making, jewelry or even video and performance art alongside painting and illustration is an other instance of fandom lagging half a century behind the times, a curious situation for subculture such as sf which prides itself of being a literature of the future. But perhaps hardly surprising when you look at other cultural references in sf, such as music, where you might think it was still being written in the 1970s and hip hop, rap, even punk or electronica, had never happened.

But as to whether a piece of art is also 'fanart' - at least for the puposes of the Hugo - and presumably other - awards, has to depend on the context in which it is made and presented. Just because someone is an artist and also a fan doesn't, as you say, necessarily make them a fanartist unless their intended audience is fandom. And even then it might be questionable. What about jewelry made by a fan and sold to fans on a dealer's table at a convention? It ticks the boxes, but is it fanart, or does it suddenly become fanart if the same thing is taken off the table and exhibited (and perhaps put up for auction) in a convention art show? Personally, I think the distinction about whether something is given for free or put up for sale or auction is irrelevant. We don't make the same distinction between fanzines that are given away for free and those are might request a subscription, and outlaw the latter from the Best Fanzine category of the Hugo. (Though if the editors make a partial living from them, we might push them into the Prozine or Semiprozine category.)

As a Brit who has discharged nothing larger than a .22 air rifle back in my teens, I have a sympathy for your view about controlling the sale of ammunition - and particularly heavy ammunition - as one way of restricting, or at least discouraging, the use of weaponry by people who believe it a god-given right to own as many guns as fans have books. (Because they stopped reading at the justifying clause in the Constitution that says "for the purpose of raising a militia"). However, I once held author David Gemmel's replica Colt 45 (based on the one

used by his protagonist Jon Shannow in the Gunslinger novels) and can easily see just how dangerously attractive they can be.

I've collected toy guns and models since I was a kid, not in a serious way, but I have a wall full of plastic replicas I've assembled, and maybe two dozen better-than-usual toys. My experience with firearms isn't entirely limited to reading and glue-sniffing, though. I've used a Canadian model of the NATO 7.62mm FN once. Steve Gallacci took me into the mountains one time and allowed me to fire off a clip of AR-15 rounds, and a few rounds from a semi-auto Kalashnikov (which has a hell of a kick). On another occasion I was introduced to the joys of shotgunning small clay targets, and wasn't bad at it. But I'd be boasting to say that I ever had the chance to become familiar with any of these pieces ... and I've never used a pistol at all. Just handling Steve's AR-15, though, was sobering. It was a single-shot piece and the calibre only 5.56 (roughly 22 cal.), but it worried me that a single mistake could easily kill the man next to me ... or someone in the woods 100 yards away that we couldn't see. Firearms are scary ... and oh-so tempting. Like any sin. :)

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*Mill Stevens, [miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)*

I held off writing an LoC on *Broken Toys* #21 until I received some new software. The software is called JAWS, and it will read fanzines for me. It does pronounce words like prozine and Lonestarcon strangely, but you can get used to it. Now all I need is some software that will write LoCs for me, and I'll have this fanac thing knocked.

In the United States, it does appear that the number of massacres has increased in recent years. It's still not as bad as in the Arab world, where blowing yourself up is just something to do on a Friday night. In the U.S., the media isn't exactly to blame, but they have made the marginally suicidal aware of a spectacular alternative. However, areas in most major cities have been war zones for decades. The massacres don't do much to the overall numbers.

Back when I was still working, I read an essay titled "The Statistics of Deadly Quarrels." The man who wrote the essay had collected as much information as he could about people getting killed for the last 700 years. He may have found a relationship. As I recall, it was called a Lausanne Distribution. Basically, people kill people in either a few big incidents or a lot of small incidents. It's possible there doesn't have to be any reason for people killing people. It's just what we do.

If that were all there was to the problem, then there would be little difference in the murder statistics from decade to decade, or country to country. But clearly this isn't the case. Apart from spectacular mass killings, there has been a gradual decrease of violent crimes in the U.S. since its peak in the mid 1980s. There is also an order of magnitude difference in the murder rates of countries like Canada, The Netherlands, Japan and the U.S. Maybe it's what people do, but some people at some times do it more.

I agree that things would be better if there were fewer guns. Considering the number of men who were killed with bolt-action rifles in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I wouldn't think it was necessary to have automatic weapons in private hands. Trying to control bullets would never accomplish anything. Making bullets is cottage industry. Some reloaders produce bullets that have far more oomph than factory ammo. Unfortunately, it is also possible to create bullets that are poisonous or which promote infection.

And now there are plastic guns made by 3D printers, invented by guys who fervently believe the government wants to take our guns away and who were determined to create one that cannot be detected by present means, so that *everyone* could sneak around under the government's nose, armed to the teeth. Someday in the not too

distant future, 10-year-old kids might be able to hack their dad's computer to print out a firearm and take it to school. At present, printed guns are only one-shot deals – the complex mechanisms that load multiple rounds and barrels that can take the muzzle pressure from repeated shots cannot be made from the sort of plastics that can be printed. Also, there are no totally plastic bullets ... yet. But I don't see either of these limitations as obstacles to the goal of making invisible handguns universal ... *if that's what people want*. Let's hope they wise up before then.

Back before I retired, possession of minor amounts of marijuana had been reduced to being an infraction. In other words, it had been reduced to the level of a traffic citation. If you got several of them, you could be referred to drug counseling. Possession of 50 lbs. of marijuana was still a serious matter. Of course, driving under the influence is illegal no matter what the substance.

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## TIMOR MORTIS CONTURBAT ME

I've been emailing *Broken Toys* to one particular fanzine since the start. The editor has a fanzines-received column, but didn't seem to ever list mine. So I asked her about it, and *Broken Toys* was subsequently listed at least a couple of times. Recently, she reviewed issue *one*.

That's right: issue one. Not the most recent issue. Nor one of few issues before that. Issue *one*. I have to ask, why would anyone review a fanzine that was so out of date? Since the first issue there have been 20 more issues of *Broken Toys*, all of which were longer and better. Perhaps the editor has a verrrrrrrry slow internet connection?

I worry about these things. Heaven knows that it's hard enough to build a mailing list, so every review, every mention helps a little tiny bit to attract notice. Why should being noticed matter so much? I admit it ... I'm beginning to feel the cold, dry hand of old age taking my measure ... and, after all, I wish to leave a good impression.

While looking at the obituaries of the many fans who have died over the last couple of years, a morbid fear has buoyed to the surface of my thoughts. Those of us who survive from the old days will inevitably take our last bow sometime in the next 10, 20, or at most 30 years. We will be an invisible minority by then, a splinter group so small that most of fandom will likely be entirely unaware of us, assuming that fandom began with FaceBook or Amazon. We mourn the early passing of our peers. But who will mourn *our* passing? Who will still be running *eFanzines.com* or the *File 770* blog to publish our obituaries, pad out our accomplishments and lie about our character? I'm certain that some form of corporately-owned SF media will be around to commemorate the lives of John Scalzi or Robert J. Sawyer when their time comes ... but will they note the departure of a Mike Glycer, Brad Foster or Bruce Gillespie, who have had little influence on professional publishing, the Worldcon or a successful television mini-series? Not that I expect this to be foremost on my mind when *my* time comes... dying probably focuses the mind marvelously, even as it disintegrates.

Then again, fame is no substitute for living. Woody Allen said something like, "I don't want to achieve immortality through my works, I want to achieve immortality by not dying!" How true.

I could easily stand winning no Hugos, being GoH at no conventions and reading no favorable reviews of my fanzine for another hundred years. Just being able to read for the next 36,500 days that no one

had anything to say about me would be compensation enough. Give me a long life, good health and sufficient means, and think of me as you will when I'm dead.

On the other hand, if you can manage a little egoboo *while I'm alive*, it's greatly appreciated.

## Friday Fanzine – *Broken Toys* From Taral Wayne

Review by Steve Davidson, 11 Oct 2013, Amazing Stories

<http://amazingstoriesmag.com/2013/10/friday-fanzine-broken-toys-taral-wayne/>



Taral Wayne is a fannish institution. Joining Canadian Fandom in the early 70s, Taral quickly found a place for his artwork within the pages of numerous fanzines with a signature, instantly recognizable look. Nominated eleven times for the Best Fan Artist Hugo Award, Taral is the recipient of the 2008 William Rotsler Award for a lifetime of work by a fan artist, a former Fan Guest of Honor at the Anticipation Worldcon and has also received two nominations for the Canadian Aurora Award, including one for Best Fanzine – *Broken Toys*. The very same fanzine you will be reading today.

Taral has worked both as a fanzine artist and as a professional artist, creating works for comics (*Tales of Beatrix*, *Gremlin Trouble*), games (*The Fantasy Showcase Tarot Deck*, *Tank Vixens Card Game*) magazines, illustrations for Rudy Rucker's novel *Spaceland*, some restoration of Vaughn Bode's work and lots of furry art. You can read far more about Taral in his autobiographical contribution to this 2005 issue of the fanzine [\*Challenger – I, Fanartist\*](#). Taral's forays into fanzine publication have included contributions to APAs and several of his own individual titles – *Red Shift*, *Synapse*, *New Toy* and *Broken Toys*, *To Walk The Moon*, *Old Toy*, *Transfur* and [\*The Incomplete Taral Wayne Cover Gallery\*](#) which includes illustrations for convention guides and fanzines that run the gamut from *Banana Wings* to *Askance*, *DNQ*, *The Drink Tank*, *File 770* and many more. Taral's artwork can be found all over the web, though some of it (particularly furry subjects) may not be appropriate for all audiences. (Query: are naked breasts covered with fur really naked?). You can peruse his many galleries on these websites:

[FurAffinity](#)  
[Deviant Art](#)