

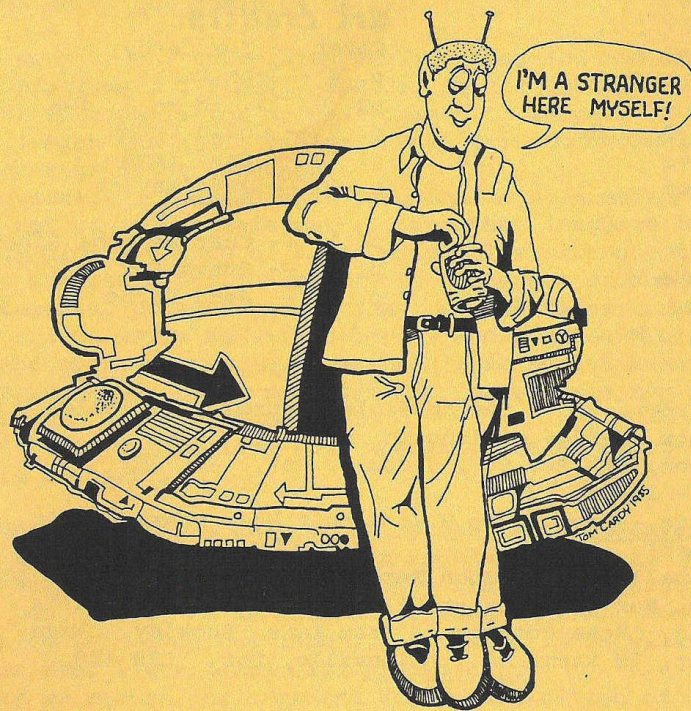
AURORAN LIGHTS

The Fannish E-zine of the Canadian Science Fiction & Fantasy Association
Dedicated to Promoting the Prix Aurora Awards and the history of Canadian Fandom

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The World According To Garth



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FALLACIOUS FANNISH HISTORY ARTICLES

GARTH SPENCER: A FENAISSANCE FAN

By The Graeme

BCSFazine #429 (February 2009) was Garth Spencer's last issue as editor. He stepped down, handing BCSFazine over to the new editor, Felicity. Let me tell you about Garth's fanac BEFORE he became editor of BCSFazine.

Born in 1957 (which may or may not have been an early example of fanac), he entered fandom circa late 1970s through joining SFAV, the Science Fiction Association of Victoria which was founded in 1975 and lasted till the mid-eighties. Club publications began with two issues of UP THE TUBES edited by Stan G. Hyde in 1978, followed by two zines, PHOENIX and FROM THE ASHES under various editors, which were combined under the title PHOENIX & FTA in February 1982. Garth became editor in June of 1982. He remained editor when the name changed again to FTA/PHOENIX in December 1982, and hung on till the last issue in December 1983.

However, it should be noted that Garth's first publication was his personal zine SCUTTLEBUTT which ran for 8 issues in 1981 and possibly longer. Occasional subtitles included 'THE BLACK MARXIST LESBIAN QUARTERLY', 'THE PERFECT PAPER', 'THE RUMOUR RAG', 'THE FILTHY RAG', & such. Described as an "exterior to frame of reference humourzine".

Bernie Klassen, writing in 1985, commented: SCUTTLE BUTT "ran news & views mostly of interest to Discordians & conspiracy freaks. Not a bad fanzine, just one that was rather opaque to non-Discordian/conspiracy freaks. SCUTTLE BUTT was simply & cleanly laid out, & for lack of art, Garth discovered the copy-right free illustration books at the local library. It became interesting to see 18th century woodcuts surrounded by bizarro text or titles."

In the first issue Garth commented "SCUTTLEBUTT is published irregularly in Victoria by a small group of Pythonists for their own amusement and that of their friends." The key word is 'Pythonist'. Garth seems to have been inspired by the Monty Python comedy TV series.

However, in a series of articles Garth made it clear his primary influence was Discordianism, "a philosophy or religion which is also an elaborate joke" founded in 1966/67 by author Robert Anton Wilson and Kerry Thornley, the latter editor of 'THE NEW LIBERTARIAN' magazine. The idea was that the Discordians were an eons-old secret society locked in eternal war with the Bavarian Illuminati. "This was intended to be so silly as to restore a sense of proportion to the readers." For a time Discordianism spread like wildfire through the underground press. Trouble is, though appreciated as satire by many, others preferred to believe wholeheartedly. So much for the restoration of 'proportion'.

Wilson and Bob Shea were then inspired to write the Illuminatus trilogy in which, quoting Wilson, "We made the Discordians the Good guys and the Illuminati the Bad Guys in an epic of convoluted treachery that satirized all conspiracy theories of left and right." In my opinion this backfired. Far too many readers assumed the trilogy was the literal truth. I remember avoiding the books like the plague because everyone I knew who had read them burred on about how they were documentary revelations disguised as fiction which blew the lid of the falseness of official history. Even some critical reviews took this stance. Consequently I assumed Wilson was the crank king of crackpots writing for other crackpots, or at best a shameless charlatan raking in the bucks. Only now, on perusing issues of SCUTTLEBUTT in the BCSFA/WCSFA archive do I 'get' what the Illuminati trilogy was all about. Only now am I interested in reading the Illuminati Trilogy.

I devote this much space to Discordianism because its style of satiric humour was not only the underlying basis of SCUTTLEBUTT, it forms the core of Garth's sense of humour and permeates almost everything he has ever written and indeed, much of his conversation. But to appreciate this sort of humour one has to be 'in' on the joke, and if you're not, the concept of forming secret societies in order to combat secret conspiracies is somewhat unsettling.

In his editorial in issue four Garth wrote: "SCUTTLEBUTT was conceived as a way of getting stuff out of my head, giving me a space to write in, and giving others a reason to laugh... Please note the constant themes: odd and obscure news; sinister and criminal events; absurd, paranoid conspiracy theories; slices of life in Victoria; active interest in science

fiction, social issues, and the free flow of information. SCUTTLEBUTT is about all of these things. SCUTTLEBUTT is about what I am about. This is the definition of a perzine."

Typically every issue carried brief notes on assorted hoaxes (for instance King Wisukitsak of a kingdom between Alberta & B.C.), Discordian style activities (stealing Black shoeshine boy lawn ornaments – remember them?), genuine conspiracy theories (meteorological warfare), actual news (Nixon administration cutting back on the US Space Program), and outright silliness (Pierre Trudeau works for the legion of Dynamic Discord).

Garth himself later wrote: *"SCUTTLEBUTT was conceived as a zine devoted to analyzing the news my way, or pointing out vital sources of information. Then I drifted into obscure and bizarre types of jokes. Robert Runte pointed out that I didn't particularly have a theme, which was one reason to cease... Cost, both in time and money, was another reason why I killed SCUTTLEBUTT..."*

Another early zine Garth edited, or rather shared editing duties with Paula Johanson, Bernie B. Klassen and David Gordon-McDonald, was **THE CENTRAL GANGLION**. It was conceived as an interclub newsletter in the spring of 1982 *"in an attempt to open communications between Victoria's 4 or 5 warring clubs/factions. It was one of Canada's better club newsletters, especially considering it didn't actually have its own club,"* wrote Robert Runte.

Garth once commented: *"Bernie Klassen and I perceived a need for an inter-club newsletter, so the clubs (less communicative than I had expected) would know what each other was doing. THE CENTRAL GANGLION lasted barely a year, though, and didn't get much input or response. (We also started a confederal group, with Bev Cooke; The Vancouver Island SF Con Steering Committee was to oversee local cons and hand on successful guidelines. Again, no participation, interest, or response. Guess it was too organized.)"* THE CENTRAL GANGLION ran for some 11 issues, the last in November of 1983.

Amusingly, the four editors called themselves 'The Ganglion of Four,' an allusion to 'The Edmonton Gang of Four' which consisted of the four Faneds of THE MONTHLY MONTHLY in the early 1980s. They were: David Vereschagin, Michael S. Hall, Bob Weir & Robert Runte. This in turn was a takeoff of 'The Gang Of Four', four prominent Chinese officials including Mao's wife who were tried for treason after the death of Mao. This implied the two sets of faneds were in some way dangerous outcasts. And I suppose they were.

Getting back to **FTA/PHOENIX**, in Garth's first issue (Vol3/No3/June1982) as editor he wrote: *"Phoenix is a pot; it contains what you put into it. Therefore, if you want to see something here – or if you don't – you must tell me. Better yet, contribute. (You will notice that I wrote more than half this issue. I will both solicit and hand out story ideas at upcoming meetings.)"*

"Editing a perzine taught me that it can be wearying to support a whole fanzine with little input. Managing the library (we have a fanzine library, did you know that?) taught me that lots of clubzines have news, reviews, letters (unlike Phoenix, hint, hint). Grafix, announcements – but few or no articles or stories. Do you guys want some meat? Then you'll write it, won't you?"

"Now I'll sit back and watch what you do."

What Garth did was contribute editorials (titled 'Raking the Coals'), fanzine reviews, a regular column called 'Spencer's Planetological Review' describing various fictional planets to be found in SF, and movie reviews, as well as numerous essays with titles like: 'This is the Way We Write Books', and 'Political Science Fiction'. I note that minutes of SFAV meetings were printed under the title 'Déjà vu'. I like that.

In fact other members did respond to Garth's call for meat, even unto short stories, art and poetry! S. Fox became a regular contributor of magnificent sensawonda cover art. FTA/PHOENIX had turned into a very classy production indeed.

In Vol4/No2/April 1983 Garth employs his editorial to both describe himself and plea for help: *"I am not a Secret Master of Fandom."*

"I do not hold the pulsing heart of Victoria's fandom in my hands. I do not control or influence the major lines of communication within and out of town. I neither can nor would manipulate opinions and behavior in our various clubs."

"It is a matter of the purest coincidence that I simultaneously act as Information officer, clubzine editor, and representative of SFAV to the Vancouver Island SF Con Steering Committee, and edit THE CENTRAL GANGLION to boot."

There is no sinister significance to the fact that I know principal members of each of Victoria's clubs, and might be considered a member of a fictitious inner circle (as if there were one)."

"I just happened to think up the name for Concept, too. Honest!"

"And I categorically deny any connection with the Ancient Illuminated Seers of Bavaria. I just set up the Bavarian Illuminati at UVic as a joke; but it flopped, it fell down, it died, went down the tubes."

"So I am not a Secret Master of Fandom. Just thought I'd settle that right now. So there."

"Seriously, I guess it's a bad precedent for one man to wear so many hats. Someone could start smoffing in that position."

"Towards the end of the year, I will be giving up most or all of the functions I hold. I trust I've been doing a good enough job that each of my various successors (you volunteer types are out there, aren't you? You will step forward for these positions in fall, won't you?) will have some idea of what I've been doing and what they should be doing. You will also get a set of notes apiece, including stuff I've learned, or what I think you should have."

"...Yes, I guess I'm doing the work of several people. I wonder when they'll show up. (hint, hint!)"

In Vol4/No3/ June1983 Garth began a series of 'Sort of Famous Fans' bios beginning with himself, described thusly: *"Garth Spencer joined the SF Association of Victoria around 1976, not long after SFAV was formed and not long after he entered UVic. Since then he has been involved with the Langham Court Theatre, the Martlet (the student paper at UVic), the New Democratic Party and the Bavarian Illuminati. Today he is the editor of FTA/PHOENIX, THE CENTRAL GANGLION, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH, and ENTER THE LISTS. Garth is also SFAV Information Officer, SFAV representative on the Vancouver Island SF Con Steering Committee, an active jogger and contributor to several SFAV trades, and otherwise a fannish glutton for punishment. Ongoing projects include a nearly-complete Victoria Fandom Guide, a collection of fanwriting from Victoria, a fan editor's guide and an admittedly incomplete listing of fanzines."*

"Garth Spencer is white, male, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and left-handed. His eyes are blue, his hair is too long and his clothes are indescribable. He is unmarried and currently unemployed. Garth rides Sarah the Putrid Bicycle and talks to animals."

In the same issue Garth describes the current status of the SFAV clubzine: *"FTA/PHOENIX, as you must know if you're reading this, is a bimonthly combined newsletter and clubzine, produced by ditto. When I became editor, the frequency was irregular, the size was irregular, and the publication policies weren't set down anywhere. Now FTA/PHOENIX is produced as regularly as I can make it; the size hovers around 20 pages, plus ad sheets and covers; I have made our trading and other policies explicit..."*

"SFAV has at present a mailing list of up to 23 addresses. We have about six out-of-town members and contributors, three in Canada, two in the U.S. and two abroad, plus about 17 trades, 8 in Canada, 7 in the U.S. and two abroad..."

*"This year I have paid to put photocopied covers on FTA/PHOENIX, featuring illustrations by ** Steve Fox **. This is a well-known fanartist we are privileged to feature. Just thought I'd let you know."*

"It may be that FTA/PHOENIX, despite what I have done to reduce costs, is costing too much for our absence of a budget. In that case, you will see the zine much reduced. I would have appreciated some more feedback, direction and input from the club."

In Garth's penultimate issue (Vol4/No5/October1983) his editorial deals with the difficulty of running SFAV based on assumptions rather than rules: *"I think we are obliged to check our assumptions once in a while, to find out what the facts are or what the rules and customs around us are. (For one thing, enough people just assume these things go without saying that a whole lot of uninformed people – like me – end up walking around wondering who's going to get mad at us next, or why.) Some people we know got into bad trouble financially because, among other things, they didn't do the necessary research into conventions. There ought to be a word for this kind of thing..."*

And in his last issue of FTA/PHOENIX (Vol4/No6/December1983.) Garth does not comment on his leaving at all, but instead lets Stephanie Ann Lightbody, SFAV President, speak her own thoughts and, in a sense, perhaps echo some of Garth's thoughts as well. It's worth reprinting here, because it reflects problems common to many clubs:

"When I first started going to SFAV meetings, I was thrilled to find so many other people interested in Science Fiction and Fantasy. It's these memories of my early days in SFAV that prompted me to accept the SFAV presidency. I thought, however presumptuous of me, that I could create for new members and old, that same feeling I got when I first joined. This is close to an impossible feat. If I continue to try to turn this club into something it doesn't want to be, I shall destroy the club and myself. My time, and yours, is being wasted."

"My suggestion to you as a club is to throw out your executive and any rules you think you may have. Stop printing the PHOENIX except maybe by donations, or charge for the magazine (not membership). Call your meetings a gathering of friends or a C&C (coffee and conversation)."

"This is my resignation as President of the Science Fiction Association of Victoria, Stephanie Ann Lightbody."

Evidently SFAV took her advice to heart, in that no one replaced Garth as editor and as a consequence FTA/PHOENIX ceased to exist (except for 2 or 3 revival attempts circa 1985). Garth edited 12 issues in all over a period of roughly a year and a half. He brought order to the zine, inspired regular contributors, and acquired an admirable list of contributing loc writers, but apparently – and this is not uncommon with clubzine editors – felt increasingly at odds, or at least apart, from his fellow club member's comparatively passive approach to fandom. Thus, in his last year, Garth turned to a more personal form of fanac.

In March of 1983 Garth began experimenting with an irregular zine titled **ENTER THE LISTS**, lasting 4 issues, which listed fanzines, clubs, small fiction markets, fanartists and other fannish info, each subsequent issue correcting and adding to the lists. One M. Slater complained of issue #3: *"Enter the lists was very difficult to read. Is the thermofax acting up?"* And Garth replied: *"I was experimenting again... it seems that you cannot thermofax a page with liquid-paper corrections, different inks, or markings on the back..."*

However what Garth started earlier in February of 1983 was of greater significance than ENTER THE LISTS, namely a long-lived Letter/diary/perzine titled **THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH** which ran for at least 16 issues to the year 1989, thus carrying his fanac well beyond the demise of FTA/PHOENIX.

Said Robert Runte: *"For a while there, Canadian fanzines could be divided into two groups: those put out by Garth Spencer and those not put out by Garth Spencer. Bernie Klassen once called Garth 'a one-man assault on our forests'. Fortunately, Garth is reasonably entertaining."*

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH consisted of editorials, a loccol, and occasional fanzine reviews.

Sample comments give a good idea of contents:

Steve George - *"My overall impression was of a hodge-podge of unrelated, sometimes interesting, generally interesting tidbits. Most interesting for me were your own personal recollections, comments, whatever."*

Lloyd Penney - *"As I see more of TWATG, a good eclectic mix, with news, rantings, raving, locs, etc. Very enjoyable..."*

Alex Stewart - *"I haven't seen any other Canadian zines yet, so I'm not sure how you fit into the whole scene over there; are you a fairly central figure, conforming to the mainstream of fanzine ideology, or some lone maverick tearing around upsetting all the BNF's who like to pontificate about what fanzines ought to be?... the reason I ask is that TWATG would fit quite snugly into British fanzine fandom with nary a ripple, getting a pat on the head for a strong editorial personality, and probably attracting a fair number of loccers. But then again, personal voice is highly regarded over here..."*

Robert Runte - *"I really liked your last issue (#11)...I read excerpts out to my class from your description of Canada (you know, where you compare it to Tinkerbell in PETER PAN) as part of the lesson on multiculturalism & Canadian identity, and it went down pretty well.."*

Steve George - *"Chock full of letters about any subject you can name. Garth reprints a couple of tongue in cheek articles from Texas about Canadian Cultural Imperialism, and those alone make this issue worth getting. Otherwise, a typical Garth Spencer mishmash in which everybody can find something of interest if they did deep enough."*

In THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH #1 (February 1983) Garth talks about himself as a fanzine editor: *"Yours truly has loaded himself down with a number of projects of a fannish nature... Well, it keeps me out of trouble... I have to use a Ditto machine... SFAV did not think to ask for an instruction book, and they used the friggin' thing for two years*

before I was put in charge. I still can't depend on it... Still, I'm pleased with the way FTA is turning out; after Bernie (Klassen) tightened the impression control, the print came out a lot sharper and clearer.... I know enough, now, not to try to ditto pages on both sides. (At least until I can control the fade-outs and blend-throughs.)... I like putting out a fanzine, but I don't like the feeling that no-one else is participating. I do prefer to handle layout and production myself... So why do I feel like I'm trying to lift the sea with a fork?"

And now I will segue into a more detailed examination of an issue of THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH, after which I will take up the story of Garth's fannish career once again.

RETRO CANADIAN FANZINES: THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH #14

Faned: Garth Spencer

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH #14, April 1986:

I quite like the cover by Tom Cardy, reproduced on the cover this. It reflects Garth's view on life. In some ways Garth is a classic fan, namely highly intelligent, very imaginative, but a little uncomfortable (depending on circumstances) in dealing with others. For example, in commenting on a loc by Gerin-LaJoie, Garth writes:

*"First, I thought you humans had a rule book for how you behave in most everything, including, um, matters of the heart... and yet I didn't get my obligatory standard briefing. *Mutter*grumble*"*

"Then, I thought mainstream culture had broken down, and there were several different subcultures or vague modes of behaviour on the market, and I had to learn about them... And figure out who was using which."

"Now it looks like you humans come from umpteen different species, psychologically; and I do not know if I can cope with random variable behaviour like yours."

"Like I was telling some rather close friends of mine recently, maybe I'll just make my own rules and demand that EVERYBODY ELSE observe them when dealing with me!"

It can be said Garth is on a life-long quest to understand the true nature of individualism, relationships, behaviour and communication. This sets him apart a trifle, but also makes him a perceptive observer. In a sense, he is an instinctive, natural philosopher given to devoting his intellect to studying what it means to be human, be it folly or achievement. What others take for granted, or simply ignore, he studies and analyses. Hell of a hobby actually. The result is a body of written commentary (on us humans) which sometimes irritates, sometimes annoys, but often illuminates and makes the reader ponder in unexpected arenas of concept. Garth is an original, and always worth reading, even (or especially) when you don't agree with him. Gets you thinking, he does.

In his editorial Garth reflects on his university training: *"When I went to the University of Victoria, and had to register for a degree programme, I finally decided on linguistics. It took three or four more years for my real reason to emerge. I thought The Problem (which was still taking shape) was communication foul-ups, and I thought that meant language."*

"In Linguistics I learned that language is systematic, and patterned, but not rigidly consistent... and that language structure tends to work from a clutch of basic principles or concepts. In fact, any language structure has to satisfy the same set of human needs – express statements, commands, questions, exhortations; name things and events, relate words to each other – and you see the same functions over and over. Later on, I learned that social behaviour is the same: structured, patterned, dynamic; based on a few principles that organize the whole shebang."

"Now, a lot of behaviour – individual and social, political and familial, etc., etc. – is like language: complex, often irrational, changing, but patterned. Only the grammar seems to have broken down around here."

“I’ve been thinking of you humans more and more as having minds built on a few basic concepts apiece; only the inputs are fairly random. Or something. At any rate, with the inconsistent patterns and programmed behaviour we exhibit, it’s a wonder we can communicate at all.”

Later in the issue Garth hits upon a particular pattern as a possible definition of fannish behaviour, namely THE BELL CURVE: *“When I started being an active fan, just after reading through SFAV’s fanzine library, I had an idea that all fans were actifans. Well, hell, those were the fans I read about. I became more and more frustrated by the relatively inactive group of People I had joined...”*

“I now think that, all along, I have been ramming my head against a reality principle: the bell curve. At one end, some fans aren’t happy unless they’re doing something, making a visible product or event, making their own entertainment. I am one. But these days, a vast majority of fans – the middle of the bell curve – are of a more passive, less workative species. Most SFAVians are party animals rather than cranks who turn mimeo machines.”

“I see the Star Warts and Trekkies and the lunatic fringe of fandom as the opposite end of the bell curve. Not only are the most passive fans in this extreme, but the most asinine – the ones who will not find out the practical necessities in conrunning, clubrunning, or fanpubbing, make up what they don’t know, and try to take over other fans or their activities, rather than starting their own.”

While the bulk of Garth’s contribution is editorial in nature, more than half of the zine consists of locs from such as John Purcell, Harry Warner Jr., Lucy Zinkiewicz, Lloyd Penney (of course), Lyn McConchie, & John Durno. Two Americans, two Canadians, an Australian and a New Zealander. Not a bad spread.

John Purcell writes: *“I understand why you are wailing over the long-lost “consensus” you mention, but fragmentation is a normal development. Fandom nowadays is a huge muthah and embraces many subgroups. Which doesn’t surprise me. I guess over the years I’ve become accustomed to the changes. Also, quite a few ‘medioids’ (as they’ve been called) have become active club-, fanzine- and confans – and good ones too. I welcome them for the help they give in running regional and world ones.”*

(My own theory is that the number of fanzine fans active worldwide has been consistently about the same from the 1930s on, namely about 100 individuals....)

Harry Warner has an extremely interesting comment: *“Your summary of the Canadian awards project is enlightening. It makes me feel somehow better about the demise of the FAAn awards, because all the troubles with CSFFA are similar to those the FAAn project suffered, seeming to prove that fan-created awards are doomed to turmoil, instead of it being a case of mismanagement by FAAn supporters.”*

Wow! This is news to me. The FAAn awards began in fits and starts? At one point dead? Fascinating. Glad to say it’s still going strong.

Lucy Zinkiewicz comments: *“Fandom is my means of meeting people... virtually everyone I’ve been involved with, from romance to the more physical side, has been in fandom, media, mainstream or the weird indescribable overlap. I’ve never considered settling down with anyone but a fan, someone who can share the major interest of my life and not patronize, resent or ignore it...”*

Well said! My wife Alyx and I are mutually compatible (sort of), I like sci-fi lit and she likes fantasy lit, I love sci-fi films and she loves horror films, I’m fascinated by military history and she by crime history, we both like weird animals and the other-worldliness of ancient cultures... we share and compliment each other... I wonder what sort of ‘significant other’ Lucy may have chosen? ... not an accountant I hope...

Lloyd Penney tackles a subject not often met in Canadian fanzines: *“Garth, I wouldn’t call Canada a racist society... Negro slaves were able to escape to Canada via the underground railroad, which smuggled blacks across the border into Ontario.... No country has a perfect record, but I think ours is pretty good...”*

Garth responds: *“You have so far to go, so much to learn!! Check out Canada’s immigration policies in the 1920’s. Check out Canada’s memberships of MLAs and B.C. Hansard for the same period – lots of self-declared KKK backbenchers. Check out the police- and crime-related clippings in the files of the TO public library, and see whether blacks and East Indians don’t end up DYING under mysterious circumstances. Find out the links between the recently-rejuvenated Ku Klux Klan and the Western Guard Party, as of 1980-1981...”*

To which I would add, get a hold of the book 'The Swastika and The Maple Leaf' by Lita-Rose Betcherman which describes the "Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties", such as the Blueshirts of the National Unity Party (Toronto), "Arcand's Legion" (Montreal) & the Khaki-clad members of the "British Empire Union of Fascists" (Winnipeg). These individuals, who numbered in the hundreds, were all imprisoned for the duration of the war.... I personally remember a self-declared Fuehrer of the Canadian Nazi Party who repeatedly attempted an annual rally in Toronto circa late 1960's and the only people who showed were there to beat him up and send him to hospital yet again. Progress I'd say...

GARTH SPENCER: A FENAISSANCE FAN (CONTINUED)

Garth was (and is) very much interested in the ongoing evolution of the CSFFA Awards (Canadian Science Fiction & Fantasy Awards, formerly known as the 'Caspers' and – as of 1990 – the Auroras). In May of 1985 he published a zine titled **CAUSE CELEBRE** which dealt with the status and likely future of the awards. As Garth explained: *"So much verbiage has reached me about the CSFFA awards that, to clear my workspace, I am putting it all in this one-shot"*

In the zine Robert Runte writes about problems associated with Convention 3 (NonCon 5) in 1982, & Sansoucy Kathenor Walker does the same for Convention 4 (Maplecon) in 1983. David A. Slater & Alan D. Burrows contribute proposals on how the CSFFA awards should be run, the need for reform, etc.

Robert Runte reviewed CAUSE CELEBRE as follows: *"In this one-shot MLR supplement, Garth makes a valiant attempt to trace the short history of the Canadian Science Fiction & Fantasy Award (CSFFA). This task is complicated by the fact that that no two accounts seem to agree on what actually happened and most of those involved seem to have had only a foggy notion of who else was involved and what was going on. (It's amazing that anything ever actually gets done in fandom, since we seem to operate on this chaotic basis a lot.) Garth manages to be reasonably objective and thorough in his reporting, and so I think that anyone who was interested now has sufficient information to form their own opinions on the remaining issues."*

And Steve George commented: *"A collection of proposals and opinions about the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy awards. I'm glad somebody cares so much about this. Actually, the issues are interesting, and relatively simple. But if anybody admitted to that then what would 80% of Canadian fandom have to write about? I wish Garth success in his efforts to sort out this self-made mess, and hope he can be instrumental in coming up with a solution so we can just get on with it."*

Garth has always crusaded on behalf of Canadian fandom, in part to spur it on to greater heights, but also – out of sheer necessity – in order to keep it alive as it often seems on the verge of collapse. For this reason (and others) he began the zine which earned him the very first Fannish CSFFA Award. He titled the zine **THE MAPLE LEAF RAG** and it ran for 30 issues from November 1983 to June 1987. It was *the* newszine for Canadian fandom in the 1980s.

"This week I went mad and invented another fanzine: THE MAPLE LEAF RAG..." – Garth Spencer.

A typical issue contained news, conreports, coverage of Cdn SF clubs, Cdn con listings, Cdn fanzine reviews & the latest controversy re: the CSFFA awards, and often professional & small-press writers market news. Garth kept to a six week schedule remarkably well. Robert Runte tongue-in-cheek referred to his NEW CANADIAN FANDOM as *"the annual genzine supplement to Canada's national newszine MAPLE LEAF RAG"*.

In his first issue editorial Garth argues that, while NEW CANADIAN FANDOM covers Canadian fandom in depth, *"there is a need for a regular, more frequent zine..."* (covering) *"...a broad range of clubs, zines, cons and events as they happen..."* He goes on to say: *"Part of the reason for a National Canadian zine of any kind is to let you know there are other clubs out there... there are serious issues and even juicy fanfeuds going on in the Great White North. If FILE 770 can cover this sort of thing in the states on a fairly frequent basis, why not someone in Canada?"*

Garth also contributes an essay about the then current controversy over the Canadian SF & Fantasy Awards (now called Auroras). The eligibility rules had recently been changed to exclude all but actual citizens. This left writers resident in Canada but not yet citizens out of the running (as per example: Spider Robinson). This in turn begged the question, what is a Canadian? Garth commented: *"I am one of those sick-and-sorry Canadians who feels that Canada isn't a country yet. We won't be for a century or two. In publishing and 'culture' especially, the U.S. is an overbearing presence -- which isn't their fault, it just happens that Canada as a whole is, so far, too spineless to create a presence and identity of its own... Runte may believe there is a Canadian culture and a Canadian style of SF in the making; I'm afraid I don't see it yet."*

It should be added that this kind of introspective withering is in itself a superb example of what makes Canadians distinctive & unique. It's a national trait to worry over whether or not we actually exist. Even Lenin thought it impossible. Perhaps we are simply an incredibly successful hoax?

A lengthy listing of Canadian Clubs and zines rounds out the issue which was distributed free "to any Canadian zines, clubs, fans & concons known to me." Subsequent issues would be available for 'The Usual' or for 50¢ each.

About halfway through the run of THE MAPLE LEAF RAG Steve George commented: "Garth's newszine covers primarily Canadian fannish news. A noble effort, but the coverage is a bit spotty, and the tone gives the impression that we Canadian fans take ourselves very seriously, at least those who correspond with Garth. The zine fills a niche. Check it out."

Garth attended VCON 14/Convention 6 in 1986 to receive the very first Aurora award given to a fan, in his case for "editing MAPLE LEAF RAG and dedication to Canadian Fandom." Evidently he was impressed by the amount of fannish activity in Vancouver – the British Columbia Science Fiction Association numbering well over 100 members and obviously capable of putting on a major convention like VCON – and so in 1987 he decided to move from Victoria to Vancouver and has dwelt here ever since.

Now a member of the BCSFA, he ceased publication of THE MAPLE LEAF RAG, perhaps because he found BCSFAzine (the BCSFA newsletter) a suitable alternative venue for submitting his views to Canadian fandom at large through articles and locs. This had the advantage of being much less work than carrying on a Newszine, thus freeing him up for club and VCON activity, as well as the occasional contribution to the local Apazine BCAPA. Thus the 'torch' then passed to Michael Skeet's MLR, which Garth authorized to carry on the Canada-wide newszine tradition. MLR was published out of Toronto from Aug 1987 to April 1990 with at least 14 issues. Like Garth's THE MAPLE LEAF RAG it intentionally courted controversy and was a worthy successor.

Meanwhile Garth carried on with his perzine, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARTH, until 1989. Then he ceased publishing zines of his own for a while, but churned out a steady stream of locs (often in the form of mini-essays on this or that hot fannish topic) for BCSFAzine, for other Canadian zines, and many an American zine. He had become, and earned, an 'elder statesman' status in fandom. There be few in active fanzine fandom who are not familiar with Garth's views then and now.

More importantly perhaps, Garth spent much of the late 1980s and early 1990s researching and writing articles on Canadian Fannish history, a significant contribution to the understanding of such. (And, I may add, inspiring me to turn myself into a fannish historian, carrying on his work as it were.)

His original versions of these articles were first serialized in the pages of his own THE MAPLE LEAF RAG, in BCAPA, and in the pages of Dale Speirs' OPUNTIA.

Here is an incomplete list of these histories in order of stand alone publication of 'final' version:

- **IF YOU'RE NOT ENJOYING YOURSELF, IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM: EDMONTON FANHISTORY** (1991) -- Serialized in BCAPA & OPUNTIA. Covers 1970s to 1990.
- **ON THE BONNY, BONNY BANKS OF THE FRASER** (1993) -- A history of British Columbia fandom in general and the British Columbia science Fiction Association in particular. Covers 1930s to early 1990s. Previous versions serialized in BCAPA & OPUNTIA.
- **A CHRONOLOGY OF CANADIAN FANDOM** (1994) -- Mostly a listing of Conventions but with mention of significant events, fanzines and fans. Covers 1930s to early 1990s.
- **TOWARDS A CALGARY FANHISTORY** (1994) -- Previous version serialized in BCAPA & OPUNTIA. Covers 1970s to 1994.
- **TORONTO FANHISTORY** (1995) -- Covers early 1940s to 1994 with emphasis on the Derelicts and OSFiC. At least a portion serialized in OPUNTIA.
- **MARCHING TO VICTORIA** (1996) -- A history of Vancouver Island fandom with emphasis on Victoria and Nanaimo. Previous versions serialized in MAPLE LEAF RAG & OPUNTIA. Covers 1970s to early 1990s.

- **NOTES TOWARDS MARITIME FANHISTORY** (1996) -- Serialized in OPUNTIA. Covers 1980s to 1990s.
- **NOTES TOWARDS A QUEBEC FANHISTORY** (1996) -- Covers 1980s to 1990s.
- **OTTAWA FANDOM (MAINLY THE OTTAWA SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY)** (1996) -- Covers 1940s to 1990s.

I found these essays quite valuable as resource material for my CANADIAN FANCYCLOPEDIA project. And like my Fancyc they were composed in the spirit of an ongoing research project based on available information and subject to correction depending on input from other fans. A number of critics complained of errors, but all mistakes lay within the source material. Garth could only reflect what he had to work with, and positively begged for additional information and any and all corrections. Ultimately he became a bit frustrated due to the lack of useful response and more or less gave up the effort, feeling it was impossible to determine absolute 'truth' in history. Granted these essays are flawed and incomplete (like ANY historical research), but they remain an outstanding compilation of source material and are certainly extremely useful in grasping the evolution of Canadian fanhistory on a regional basis. Frankly, this effort was worthy of a second Aurora in my opinion, but alas, this did not happen, at least for this particular fannish activity..

True to the Canadian tradition of 'Mimeo Ink in my Veins' (as legendary Canadian fan Leslie Croutch once put it) Garth could not resist the siren call of self-publication forever. In the spring of 1992 he began irregular publication of the delightfully titled perzine **SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG** (one of my favourite fanzine titles of all time). The title says it all, it allowed him to focus on just about any aspect of fandom as social phenomena. A venue for personal essays.

Digest-sized, and number of pages limited by cost (printing and postage expenses soaring in the 1990s ultimately to today's ludicrous levels), SPLF was published more or less as an annual, but then the pace picked up with issue #5 in August 1995. Carried on for at least another three issues through 1996. (Interesting to note that #5 to #8 were ezines, possibly the first such Garth attempted.)

In his first issue Garth says: *"That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange eons even Garth may pub his own ish... I learned about fandom mainly through fanzines. Participating initially with my own zines... has shaped a lot of my attitudes. So did my coming from a college environment, and associating with fans from that background.... Those of you who know all this must be wondering where the hell I went, after about 1987. Basically, I decided to get a life.... I attended meetings and weekly pub gatherings, I joined BCAPA, and I entered the VCON 16, 17 & 18 committees. I was also corresponding with fans out of town, and overseas, and contributing articles both to BCSFAzine and to other fanzines...I gave what I could give, of myself, to the activities I saw going on. They were my way to relate to these people, to have friends."*

Spoken like a trufan. Garth has always maintained the only proper way to be a fan is to *do* something, the more fanac the better. In a way, Garth is very much like a member of First Fandom, using the written word as the fundamental basis of communication. After all, that's how fandom began, fans spotting each other in the letter columns of prozines and reaching out to each other with letters and fanzines. Even now, though circumstances proscribe limited fanac, Garth continues to correspond and pub his ish, continues to remain true to the origins of fandom.

The second issue of SPLF is mostly locs, including ones from U.S. fan Harry Warner Jr. and Cdn fan Chester D. Cuthbert thanking Garth for sending 'enlarged' versions to make it easier to read the (point 8?) type face. This was very thoughtful of him. Cuthbert cheerfully confirms he NEVER attends conventions, but he *"enjoys reading convention reports, and even books with convention backgrounds, like those of Richard Purtill, Anthony Boucher, Gene Deweese, and Robert Coulson."*

It is a fact that the loc column is always one of the principle strengths of a Garth publication. There's something about his love of tossing novel ideas about and exploring their implications that attracts numerous comments. SPLF received locs on a regular basis from Canadian fans such as Taral Wayne, Lloyd Penney, Dale Speirs, Colin Upton, John Mansfield, Chester D. Cuthbert, David Malinski, Scott Patri, Michael Hall, Michael Mckenny, and Rodney Leighton, plus U.S. fans like Harry Warner Jr., Brad Foster, Harry Andruschak, Joseph T. Major, R'ykandar Korra'ti, Rich Brown, and Teddy Harvia, with a sprinkling of fans from Europe and New Zealand. At least five of these fanzine fans have passed away since then, but most of the remainder are still active in fanzine fandom as publishers, or writers, or artists. All of their locs make fascinating reading.

I note that in issue #7 Chester D. Cuthbert stated to Garth: *"Surely you know that few Canadian fans are better known than yourself; for years you have been enlightening us about history and events in Canadian Fandom, either through your own publications or through outlets like OPUNTIA."* Well said!

Lloyd Penney wrote in the same issue: *"I suspect it will be a long time before I ever get online. I would need to buy another computer (I have a clunky 286), another monitor (mine's monochrome), a new OS (I have DOS 5.0 I think), a new modem (someone recently took pity on me, and gave me an old 2400 baud modem card), a dedicated phone line and an internet software package in order to get access on a freenet. I don't have \$5,000 to blow."*

Hence the value of perusing old fanzines. They encapsulate a moment in time. In this case, the primitive technology revolving around the early internet and the hideous cost of acquiring it, circa 1996. (Heck, I bought my first computer in 1981, and it cost me \$3,000! Believe it or not, computer prices have come down considerably, and what you get for your money has skyrocketed.) This is why reading old loc columns can be even more fascinating now than they were perceived at the time they were published; a glimpse of esoteric details now largely slipped out of memory.

Garth can be quite innovative. SPLF #1 contained a full page ad for a proposed revival of the MAPLE LEAF RAG, though this incarnation is *"to be a fiction magazine – entirely consisting of stories about fans of science fiction and fantasy. I am soliciting short stories, novelettes, serials, and illustrations based loosely on real incidents, in clubs or at conventions, involving characters more or less resembling real fans."* And then he quotes Canadian Faned Michael Hall (describing his own zine LAID): *"All lies, as long as they were close to the truth."*

A bold proposal, but one that (at the time) struck me as stillborn. Fans willing to write Faanfiction are very rare. And given that Garth ends the ad with *"DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?"* I suspected he was not serious. Further evidence: *"Prize-winning critical correspondence will be printed in the new MAPLE LEAF RAG."* A subtle dig at loc writers methinks.

In 2001 Garth proved that he serious about publishing 'faanfiction: fiction about fans, by fans,' as he had managed to get around the problem of inspiring fans to write something new by the simple expedient of getting permission to reprint examples of faanfiction from previous publications such as NEW CANADIAN FANDOM, I'M NOT BORING YOU AM I?, BCSFAzine, NEOLOGY, VCON program books and other sources. The title of this oneshot 44 page publication was **CONFABULATION**.

Contributors include Canadian fans Robert Runte, Randy Barnhart, Steve George, Don H. DeBrandt, Steve Barclay, John Constantine, Wendi Vadd, Dave Panchyk and Adam Charlesworth, plus US fans Eric Mayer and Andy Hooper. Article titles included 'The Ecology of Fandom' (Runte), 'Sensawonda' (Barnhart), 'Cider: Our Friend and Yours' (DeBrandt) among others, with no less than two titled 'The Secret Life of Robert Runte' (Panchyk/Charlesworth). All of the contributions are off the wall and frequently quite humorous.

In his editorial Garth writes: *"Science Fiction fans have been inventing a mythology about their subculture since it began, often making up stories about specific individuals, right from the outset. Faanfiction, as a mythology, offered an explanation and a perspective on what fandom is, and has been, perhaps more coherent than actual fanhistory. It also offered a picture of what fans valued at different times, in science fiction and in themselves."*

Another 2001 oneshot project by Garth was the **BCSFA MEMBERS' HANDBOOK**, *"A completely unauthorized production"* which is a model of its kind. In 24 digest-sized pages he concisely explains the following topics: BCSFA, membership rates, current executive, club activities, BCSFAzine, VCONs, the ELRON Awards, turkey readings, club bylaws, fanzines, trade zines, zine repositories, Mr. Science, writer's workshops, Fictions, Writer's resources, the V-Con Society, other local clubs, clubs elsewhere, upcoming conventions, Canadian SF awards, Congoing, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund & *"interesting online stuff"*. In short, an excellent guide not only to the B.C. SF Association, but to Canadian fandom in general. It was distributed free to all club members. Alas, quickly dated, but a great snapshot of the club at the time.

An earlier oneshot was Garth's 1999 CUFF (Canadian Unity Fan Fund) trip report titled **WHAT I DID ON MY OCTOBER VACATION**. He was quite intrigued about attending inCONsequential II/Convention 19 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, writing: *"I have some outspoken opinions about regional fandoms like the Maritimes... It was curiously difficult to get word on Maritimes fanactivity, or indeed to get word to them, for years at a go...I still perceive them as low-profile, barely visible...In short, there are hurdles to overcome and not a little work to do."* Not least is the fact he can only get a flight to Halifax and must bus for six hours to get to Fredericton. GoH was Tanya Huff, MC Robert J. Sawyer, and Artist GoH Donna Barr of 'Desert Peach' fame.

"Evening events were pretty much limited to the consuite...there were no room parties...It is of interest to note that inCONsequential's consuite is a 'dry' consuite. Apparently, this is a general policy for Maritime conventions, ever since Halcon 10. (The story I got is that Maritime Fandom experienced a phase when university students discovered their cons, and perceived them as a cheap place to get drunk and weird. Also, Maritime fans are generally concerned to present their

fandom as a safe place to bring kids.) I commented that other cons in North America have similarly found reason not to serve alcohol."

Of the actual Buffet Dinner/Aurora Awards Presentation Garth wrote: *"Robert Sawyer served as MC; Jean-Louis Trudel, Paul Valcour, Donna Barr and I took turns presenting the awards; I had agreed to present two of the fan awards, so to my dismay I was up first. I pray I didn't butcher the French translation too badly."*

The fan awards in 1999 went to:

- Fan Achievement (Other): Janet L. Hetherington, co-curator of the 60 Years of Superman exhibit at the Nepean Museum.
- Fan Achievement (Organizational): Ann Methe of Montreal, for chairing Con*cept 98.
- Fan Achievement (Fanzine): Lynda Pelley for editing WARP on behalf of MonSSFA.

At Noon Sunday the CSFFA Business Meeting began. Garth had an interesting reaction: *"A number of items were raised, discussed and settled at this meeting, with Paul Valcour chairing the meeting and Dennis Mullin serving as secretary. Two hours were budgeted for this business meeting, but it actually went on for three. Things kind of dragged after thirty to forty-five minutes, or maybe the panel room was a little close and crowded for the number of people there. Robert Sawyer said it was a good, productive meeting; but I got fed up after nearly two hours and left, because I thought it was getting bogged down."*

Garth had brought numerous chapbooks on CUFF, Maritime fanhistory, the Auroras & Convention, to hand out in an effort to stimulate interest in fannish history and communication. By the time he gave a CUFF presentation on Sunday he found *"to my dismay all the historical chapbooks had gone, so I extemporized on fannish fanzine fandom, fan funds, the history of the Canadian Fan Fund, and the topic of Getting the Word Out."* It's a good sign of interest that all his chapbook freebies had been snapped up, and that a dozen people showed up for his 10:00 AM presentation. Not bad for a convention of only about 80 attendees. Especially considering that no one showed up for the Saturday slave auction, or the Kingcon SF Society presentation. So kudos to Garth for stirring things up and getting people interested.

The trip report is rounded out with a preliminary financial statement of his CUFF expenses, and an alphabetical glossary *"intended to fill in some context, if you are unfamiliar with the fans or writers at inCONsequential, or with Canadian fandom, or with this fan fund. Anything I haven't explained here has yet to be explained to me."*

At the closing ceremonies Garth notes: *"I was asked to say a few words, stood up and said "A few words" and sat down to equal applause. (Hey, it worked for Robert Runte when he was in Victoria.)"*

Getting back to the subject of Garth perzines, in SPLF #1 he refers to his intention to establish a Royal Swiss Navy on-line entity, i.e. a Discordian style discussion group. He did this *"in order to gain permission to set up a web page at the Vancouver CommunityNet."* This encouraged him to revamp SERCON POPCULT LITCRIT FANMAG into **THE ROYAL SWISS NAVY GAZETTE**, which ran 21 issues from September 1997 to June of 2010, roughly an average of 2 issues a year.

In the first issue Garth tells his readers *"You are all hereby designated members of the Royal Swiss Navy, which is not royal, not Swiss, and does not float. Maybe we can enter the Nanaimo-Vancouver Bathtub Race... I'd like to enter a pedal-powered jet-assisted paddle-wheeled dirigible bathtub..."*

This is not as crazy as it sounds. The annual Nanaimo-Vancouver Bathtub race across the Georgia Strait was world renowned for many years till killjoys put an end to it merely because it was potentially dangerous. It used to be fun to go down to the beach to watch the bathtubs roar ashore and the drivers stagger/sprint out of the tubs to ring the official gong. Imagine kneeling in a bathtub slapping through choppy waves for hours on end. It's no wonder many needed help to get out of their tub. But those days are gone. Sigh.

A typical issue of THE ROYAL SWISS NAVY GAZETTE would consist of essays by Garth, other items downloaded from the net with titles like 'Mathematics for Real Life' and 'Obligatory Crank Theory of the Year: Holodynamics,' guest essays like 'Cheng Ho Discovers America' by Taral Wayne, articles on inventing languages, how languages evolve & such, zine reviews, humorous articles on appropriate etiquette for members of the RSN, or on not-so-useful 'hoax' proposals like establishing an International Turnip Tossing Contests or an official 'Goat Marriage Month', and of course, the usual multi-page loc column which Garth publications always attract.

In the last issue (#21) Lloyd Penney writes: *“I have also noticed there are few parties at conventions. I think they are going away because more and more, people are not going to conventions of any kind to meet with friends, but to go there and come away with the experience they want. I used to see this only at media conventions, but I now see this at literary conventions, too. Are we less social?”*

This is a worrisome conundrum indeed. Sometimes it is because certain hotels actively discourage room parties, but often it appears to be a case of no one willing to host one. Long time fans used to attend conventions primarily to attend the room parties. Is this tradition truly waning?

And Lyn McConchie writes : *“My generation (in my early 60s) is probably the last generation to have grown up and spent a good half of our life with handwriting. As a small child I even used a pen dipped in an inkwell. In my lifetime pens have gone from dip pens, to fountain pens, to the ubiquitous ballpoint, but parallel to that has been the progression of manual typewriter, electric typewriter, word processor and finally the computer.”*

“And from now on it is likely to be the computer - in ever improving formats - that is king. But where does this leave old fan group records: the minutes of innumerable meetings, the records of groups that started in the war years or even further back, to the years between wars? It leaves them increasingly unreadable. It takes practice to read handwriting.”

Indeed, I can't read my own, for instance. I remember working for the parts department of the American Can Company of Canada circa 1971. Their records were entirely handwritten! Those from the turn of the century were exquisitely precise and beautifully 'drawn', very easy to read, but starting just after the Second World War the quality of penmanship deteriorated rapidly down to my own uncomfortable, crabbed style. I don't know if schools even bother to teach penmanship any more.

I just revealed the secret of Garth's knack for triggering readers to respond to his zines. Comment hooks. In the above quotes I responded to items that interested me with my own comments. Garth's publications usually contain so many interesting (even provocative) bits, either in his own writings or those of contributors, that it is almost impossible to read one of his zines and NOT be inspired to write back. Garth has always been successful, especially with his perzines, in establishing a DIALOGUE with his readers. He does this by writing what he thinks and wonders about, often posing difficult, even uncomfortable questions concerning contemporary trends in fandom, matters to be addressed, problems to be resolved, and everything imbedded in a matrix of dry, off the wall humour. No wonder people write back, if only to get even. (I'm being facetious.)

It should be noted that Garth won his second Aurora award in 1996, for 'Fan Achievement: Fanzine/Publication' because of the popularity of his ROYAL SWISS NAVY GAZETTE.

Incidentally, the latest incarnation of a Garthzine is **ONE SWELL FOOP**, the first issue of which appeared in November of 2010 (and which I reviewed in the first issue of AURORAN LIGHTS). This Garth intends to take in a different direction from his earlier perzines. Time will tell. I eagerly await the second issue.

Getting back to November 2000 when John C. Wong stepped down from editing **BCSFAzine**, Garth made the momentous decision to take on the task of replacing him, a decision which led to the longest editing run of his fan publishing career. As a former long-term editor of BCSFAzine myself, I fully comprehend the sheer amount of dedication, effort and sweat it takes to turn out a monthly newsletter. No simple task. And often seemingly a thankless one, (a problem common to ALL fanzine editors). Nevertheless Garth became the longest-serving BCSFAzine editor of all time (or at least to date). Full marks for guts and fortitude I say! I append the following two tables to put his achievement in context.

BCSFAzine FANEDS IN SEQUENCE:

- Faned: **Mike Bailey**. #1 (Aug 1973) to #24 (May 1975).
- Faned: **Fran Skene**. #25 (June 1975) to #37 (July 1976).
- Faned: **Allyn Cadogan**. #38 (Aug 1976) to #51 (Sept 1977).
- Faned: **Fran Skene**. #52 (Oct 1977).
- Faned: **Alan R. Betz**. #53 (Nov 1977).
- Faned: **Ed Beauregard**. #54 (Dec 1977).
- Faned: **Lona Elrod**. #55 (Jan 1978) to #56 (Feb 1978).
- Faned: **Helene Flanders**. #57 (Mar 1978) to #71 (May 1979).
- Faned: **Becky Bennett**. #72 (Jun 1979) to #83 (May 1980).
- Faned: **Fran Skene**. #84 (Jun 1980) to #89 (Nov 1980).
- Faned: **Vaughn Fraser**. #90 (Dec 1980) to #95 (May 1981).

- Faned: **Constantine Hiebner**. #96 (Jun 1981) to #99 (Sept 1981).
- Faned: **Gerald Boyko**. #100 (May 1982).
- Faned: **Constantine Hiebner**. #101 (Oct 1981) to #107 (Apr 1982).
- Faned: **Neil Williams**. #108 (May 1982) to #120 (May 1983).
- Faned: **Barbara Przeklasa**. #121 (Jun 1983) to #148 (Sept 1985).
- Faneds: **Jim Welch & Margaret Galbraith-Hamilton**. #149 (Oct 1985) to #150 (Nov 1985).
- Faned: **Fran Skene**. #151 (Dec 1985).
- Faneds: **Jim Welch & Margaret Galbraith-Hamilton**. #152 (Jan 1986) to #153 (Feb 1986).
- Faned: **Steve Forty**. #154 (Mar 1986) to #156 (May 1986).
- Faned: **Ed Kedzierski**. #157 (June 1986) to #160 (Sept 1986).
- Faned: **Steve Forty**. #161 (Oct 1986) to #192 (May 1989).
- Faned: **R. Graeme Cameron**. #193 (June 1989) to #199 (Dec 1989).
- Faned: **Gerald Boyko**. #200 (Jan 1990).
- Faned: **R. Graeme Cameron**. # 201 (Feb 1990) to #269 (Oct 1995).
- Faned: **John C. Wong**. #270 (Nov 1995) to #330 (Nov 2000).
- Faned: **Garth Spencer**. #331 (Dec 2000) to #429 (Feb 2009)
- Faned: **Felicity**. #430 (Mar 2009), and counting.

BCSFazine FANEDS RANKED BY NUMBER OF ISSUES

- Faned: **Garth Spencer** - 99
- Faned: **R. Graeme Cameron** - 76
- Faned: **John C. Wong** - 61
- Faned: **Steve Forty** - 35
- Faned: **Barbara Przeklasa** - 28
- Faned: **Mike Bailey** - 24
- Faned: **Felicity** - 23 (and counting)
- Faned: **Fran Skene** - 21
- Faned: **Helene Flanders** - 15
- Faned: **Allyn Cadogan** - 14
- Faned: **Neil Williams** - 13
- Faned: **Becky Bennett** - 12
- Faned: **Constantine Hiebner** - 11
- Faned: **Vaughn Fraser** - 6
- Faned: **Ed Kedzierski** - 4
- Faneds: **Jim Welch & Margaret Galbraith-Hamilton** - 4
- Faned: **Gerald Boyko** - 2
- Faned: **Lona Elrod** - 2
- Faned: **Ed Beauregard** - 1
- Faned: **Alan R. Betz** - 1

I will now examine three issues of BCSFAzine, and being somewhat anal retentive I picked issues #350, 375 & 400 rather than any three chosen in a genuinely random manner. Still, these evenly spaced issues (in terms of time frame) should offer a convincing glimpse of how Garth went about editing BCSFAzine.

I recall that Garth's general approach was to combine aspects of a newszine (as per example his former MAPLE LEAF RAG) with the natter of a typical clubzine dependent on contributions from club members, all with the intention of making the zine as useful and interesting as possible.

What caused him some difficulty was the natural tendency for his personality and personal interests to spill over the pages of BCSFAzine. For this he received some criticism, even a few accusations of converting a clubzine into a perzine. Thus he was constantly juggling to find a happy medium between what was of interest to club members and what was of interest to himself sufficient to keep the role of editor fun and exciting.

All I can say is, he would have found it easier to follow my lead when I adopted the persona of 'The God-Editor' during my stint as BCSFAzine Editor and steam-rolled over all opposition to produce a perzine wiggling out in all directions which at least some people found odd enough to make for interesting reading.

In BCSFAzine #350, dated July 2002, which consists of 10 full size sheets of paper, Garth has a poorly reproduced (Xerox copy) of a photo of himself on the cover. (A good God-Editor touch if you ask me.) Then comes an editorial in which he asks the question: "Am I Insane?" (Another good perzine touch.) The gist of the editorial was that there was a fine line between creative imaginary story universes and "*self-referential, endlessly elaborated fantasy.*" Garth wanted to know to which definition his Royal Swiss Navy musings belonged and what should he do about it? "...*buckle down and devote my imagination and sense of humour to professional writing? ... join an activist organization and dispense with the eccentric comedy routines entirely? ...go ahead and launch a war of comedy; start a successor group to the Rhino Party and wage publicity wars with our political Philistines?*" The important answer, in my opinion, was that he carry on using his imagination and sense of humour in EVERYTHING he chose to do.

Elsewhere in #350 Lloyd Penney contributes a lengthy loc, US fan Ted White several fanzine reviews, and local fan Stephen Samuel an article defending BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER as possessing "*excellent writing with word play, innuendo, character development and plot twists..*" and not just being a display of "*bouncing babes*". Four pages are taken up with news items regarding both Canada-wide matters like the Aurora awards and local events of interest to local fans.

BCSFAzine #375, dated August 2004, is digest sized, 40 pages long, smaller print, with a drawing of a female humanoid skunk on the cover by Taral, and in general, much meatier contents than #350. This was the standard format for most of Garth's BCSFAzines. Instead of an editorial, Garth describes the nature of the Society for Creative Anachronism. This is followed by a loc in which Taral explains the nature of his fan art contributions to BCSFAzine:

"When I ink a drawing the sketchiness of the lines disappears, as you might expect, and the solids are solid black as they should be. The art I do for money leaves me little time to meet that standard for everything. Of late, even art I've drawn specifically for the fan press has been penciled and not inked. It's not necessarily a bad thing. Some people like the more spontaneous look and textured quality of pencil. It does have a charm of its own. Inked work often looks lifeless in comparison. But it's not aesthetics that dictate the appearance of my drawings in BCSFAzine, but practicality." So now you know. Personally, I've always been delighted with Taral's 'pencilings'.

In another lengthy loc Randy Barnhart comments "*But we should appreciate Garth more. It takes an unusual sort of person to do the dirty work of a science fiction club, year after year...*" He also describes conspiracy theories as "*the only genuine political discourse of our times.*" In his reply, Garth poses the question: "*I think conspiracy theories are intrinsically funny, like Pythonesque surrealism, but maybe I'm as out of touch with the normal definition of humour as, say, Andy Kaufman was.*" No. NOBODY was as far removed from the 'normal definition of humour' as Andy Kaufman. None of his 'stand-up' routines were even remotely funny. They struck me as colossal in-jokes designed to humiliate the unappreciative buffoons composing the audience, any audience. Whereas Garth, in my opinion, is consistently wry and amusing in his writings, or at his very worst, always interesting.

Even Garth's selection of 'Blast From The Past' articles is always intriguing. In this case, the infamous FANNISH PURITY TEST that had been all the rage back in the 1980s. It asks 100 'Have you ever?' questions to be answered 'yes' or 'no'. Questions like: "*Have you ever used position 69? ... used nipple clips? ...visited an orgy parlour?*" and the like. To calculate your score you add up the 'no' answers. You then, as Garth puts it, "*... use your score to compare relative experience with friends and partners, but you might not want to tell your mother.*" Hmm, my purity score is 81. Evidently I'm as pure as the driven snow. Oh well.

Ray Seredin contributes an article on the latest Dr. Who production news, Garth the first part of a short story titled CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE FAST-TALKING KIND in which a certain Hrothgar Weems TALKS alien invaders out of invading the earth by making it seem like more trouble than it was worth (quite funny I thought and rather well done), and of course there's a fair bit of news about fannish happenings and events.

But the most interesting article is perhaps the minutes of one of the regular Kaffeeklatsches Garth used to host on a monthly basis. People, in this case nine local fans, would take turns literally pulling debate topics out of a hat. This worked surprisingly well and fulfilled Garth's quest for an exchange of intellectually imaginative ideas and musings.

For example, the response to the question "*If dinosaurs had evolved into people and drove cars, would the cars be fueled by the compressed fossilized bodies of their ancestors?*" was: "*It was suggested that dinosaur clans would raid the territory of rival clans, to use their rival's ancestral remains. Another theory was that the petroleum of your rival's ancestors wouldn't be considered good enough; you would perhaps utter a prayer to YOUR ancestors when you fill up your tank.*"

And as for the question "*What is a society? What is a culture? What is a civilization? Do we have all of the above? What kind of civilization are we likely to get in the future?*" the response was: "*There was a lot of quibbling with Garth at*

this point, because everyone else felt these were vague and nebulous questions and he thought they were pretty simple and basic... Felicity suggested that if Heinlein saw what an individualist society evolved into in America he would apologize. Garth remarked that Heinlein was never able to write the great American socialist novel..."

This is a useful and invigorating exercise the club might well consider starting up again.

BCSFazine #400, dated September 2006, is a 'Special 400th Commemorative Issue, consisting of 44 full-sized pages plus covers (featuring a drawing by Taral of a shoe salesman fitting a horse shoe to one of the front hooves of a female centaur). Quite a few pages exhibit news items ranging from author Alyx J. Shaw's first 'appearance as a Writer Guest of Honour at a convention, in this case the first minicon to be held in Basel Switzerland: "*Actually it was a phone-in, with con-goers seated before a speaker-phone, and me thousands of miles away in Canada, sweating in my underwear and absolutely terrified. Turnout was smaller than expected; what with bomb threats and such slowing up traffic. Yet fans from England, France and Germany still managed to attend. They cheerfully grilled me for well over the originally scheduled time of a half hour...*" to an item describing how an automated garage parking robot "trapped hundreds of it wards for several days."

Don H. DeBrandt contributed two articles; the first titled 'FRED: A FANNISH LEGEND' which described the local fan gathering F.R.E.D. (Forget Reality, Everybody Drink) as an actual, extremely eccentric person, and the second titled 'CIDER: OUR FRIEND AND YOURS', giving credit to the VCON hospitality suites for increasing Cider consumption in British Columbia by an officially acknowledged surge of nearly one and a half million litres a year!

I contributed the article 'HONOURED BCSFANS GREATLY MISSED' briefly describing the fannish careers of members of BCSFA now deceased, namely Susan Wood (1948-1980), Helene 'Hen' Flanders (1944-1982), Paul Howard 'S'mokey' Simms (1942-1991), Sara 'Peregrin' Brearley (1969-1994), Evelyn Beheshti Hildebrandt (1962-1995) and Warren Oddsson (1958-2001).

The minutes of another 'Kaffeeklatsch' answered such questions as "*If you could bring one well-known person from the past to the present, who would he/she be, and why?*" (Answers included Canada's first Prime Minister Sir. John A. McDonald, Mark Twain and Jules Verne, for assorted reasons) and "*Do fans have lower self-esteem than mundanes?*" (which led to a discussion of rising 'Geek' consciousness and pride).

Andrew C. Murdoch describes the background and history of a ludicrous lawsuit by a corporation insisting it had trademarked the word 'fandom' and that no one else was allowed to use it. In truth their prolonged lawsuit against a website titled 'fandom.TV' was eventually declared 'without merit' by a judge because the US patent and trademark office had rejected the corporation's application on the grounds 'fandom' was a word that had been in common usage since at least 1903 if not before.

In short, there was something of interest for everyone, which is itself the 'trademark' of Garth's style of editing, and one of the secrets of his success as a fanzine publisher.

After stepping down from BCSFazine in early 2009 Garth kept up his ROYAL SWISS NAVY GAZETTE production, and devoted some of his newfound 'free time' to a pet project he had long been considering, as witness this on-line email he distributed to get it started:

"Dear Guys,

"You are cordially invited, one and all, to a gathering I hold once a month: a Vancouver Discordian Meetup Group, the first Sunday evening of each month, at 7 pm at The Grind Gallery and Cafe. This 24/7 cafe is on Main Street in Vancouver, just a few doors south of King Edward Avenue. (Note: This info is no longer valid.)

"On September 6th we have a special agenda: setting plans for the Royal Swiss Navy room party at VCon 34, which will be held October 2-4 in the Marriott Pinnacle hotel in downtown Vancouver. We can talk about presenting crank theories at the room party, or performing filksongs in the vein of "The Last Saskatchewan Pirate"; launching an Absurdist political party or a Rational Secular Humanist cult; forming a Royal Swiss Navy Corps of Engineers (all of whom are left-handed and dyslexic and use pretzels for straight edges), or launching a comic book starring local politicians and businesspeople as costumed superheroes. Or something. Please bring your pet ideas!

"I've been trying to get people to do creative original brainstorming like this, and other fannish stufh, for a while now; maybe the Discordian Meetup group is the right venue."

Yours, Garth”

Alas, though he attracted a number of like-minded acolytes, the meetup group slowly dissipated and disappeared. I suspect in part because the heyday of Discordianism was more than forty years ago and it may no longer strike contemporary fans as fresh and innovative as it seemed when it first appeared.

To put it another way, considering the current explosion of conspiracy theories and their ilk, like Jesse Ventura’s TV ‘documentary’ series, how do you parody something already so ludicrous and absurd, yet manage to stand out as something separate and apart? Not an easy task.

At any rate, Garth has in fact decided to lay his Royal Swiss Navy ‘movement’ to rest and refocus his energy on his new perzine and further research into fannish history. I would encourage him to emphasize the humour and fascination of fandom at its best in the hope that this will inspire new generations of fans to take up the torch of us old pharts. Certainly that is what I am trying to do with my numerous publications. Even if we don’t succeed, there is great fun to be had in the attempt.

Truth is, fandom is one king hell of a hobby, and as one of the legendary Canadian SMOFs (Secret Masters of Fandom), Garth Spencer is living proof!