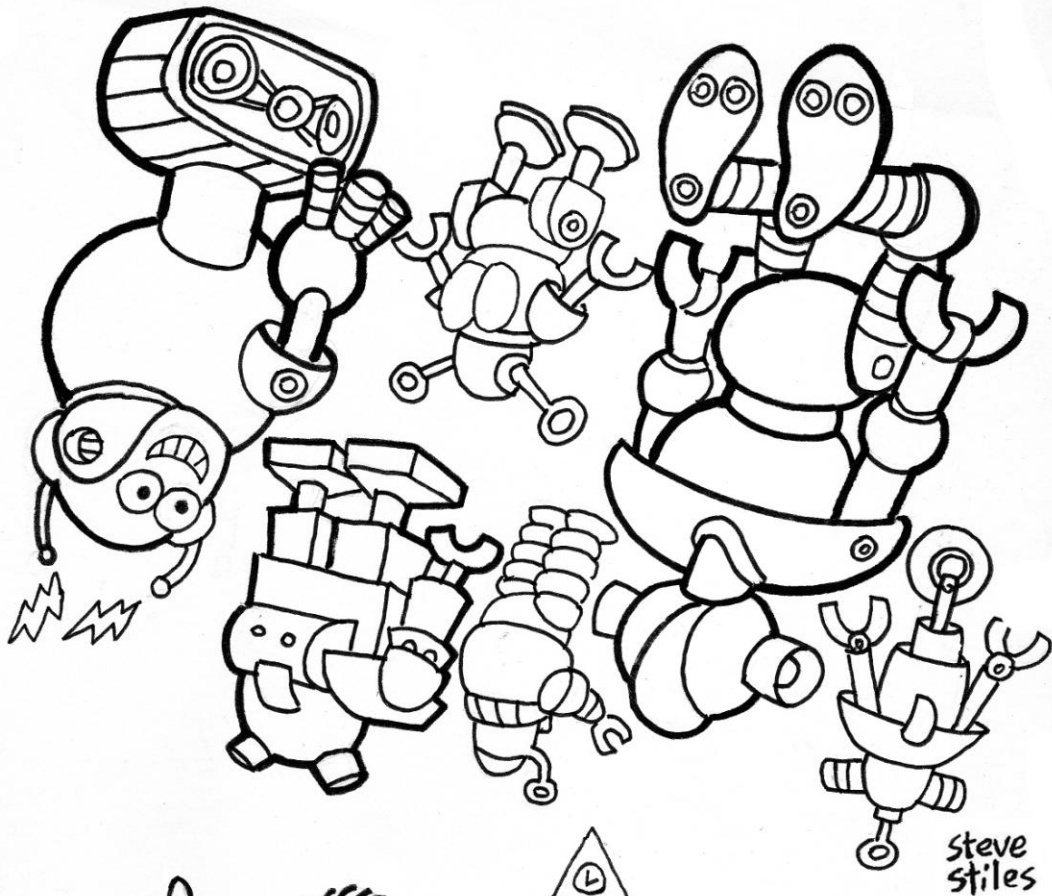


One Swell Foop #9



Steve
Stiles



Oh No! It's raining robots!

Colophon

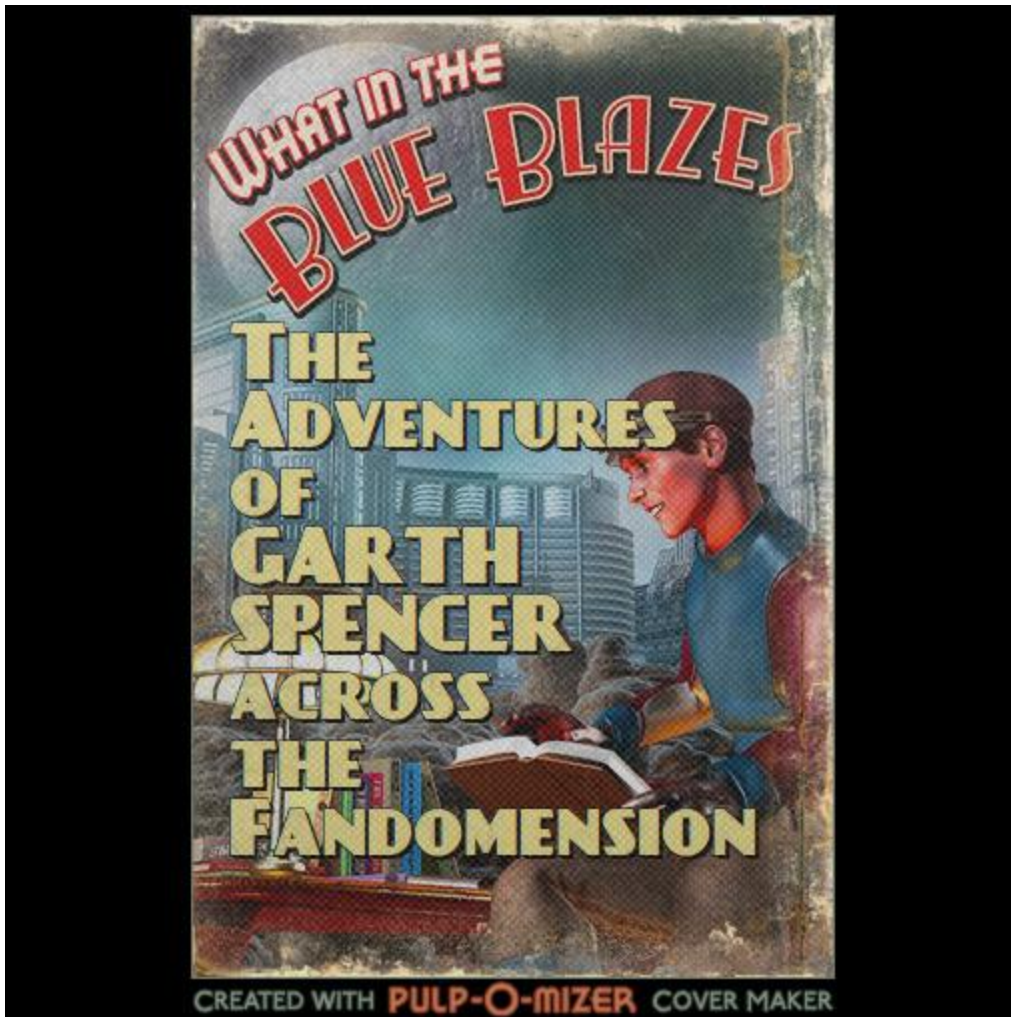
Welcome to *One Swell Foop* #9 (May 2013), the irregular journal of recreational insanity by Garth Spencer,
now coming to you from
7250 Gladstone Street
Vancouver, BC
CANADA V5P 4G6
Available upon request from
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Art credits

Cover:.....	Steve Stiles
p. 1:.....	The Pulp-O-Mizer
p. 2: "Sun Bather"	Taral Wayne
p. 3:.....	Brad Foster
p. 14.....	Roy Pounds
pp. 19, 20, 22	Taral Wayne
Various unclassifiabls here and there:	the Internet



This fanzine has taken entirely too long to produce. I am going to cut to the chase and send it out, and do the fanzine reviews I owe to people in the next issue. Within a month, if all goes according to plan.

Wanderings and Maunderings

(from e-APA 105, January 2013)

It's been a year of changes, for my friends in Vancouver and for me. Bear with me if I'm repeating old news:

My friends Ryan and Jennifer have had a child, so they were somewhat out of the social loop for a while. I have seen Evelyn, who is still learning to operate a body and establish a regular sleep rhythm. She hasn't much to say yet. (Now I've agreed to babysit ... I'm turning into a grandpa ...)

My friend Kirsten had her apartment renovated, even while we were working in her home office. This was a logistical challenge, as you might expect. Her cat Lucca took a dim view of the proceedings.

Some of my friends came down with life-threatening illnesses, and one longstanding member of the SF club departed this mortal coil. Ed Hutchings might not have been a prominent member, but he was a gentleman and he will be missed by his friends. The club president, Graeme Cameron, went to hospital with a breathing complaint and immediately found himself ordered to the ER. As he describes it, he was the last to know that the staff expected him to die on the spot. All ended well, as it turned out that he was reacting to some of the wounded animals his wife shelters, which was a problem simply solved; but Graeme's story has to be the most entertaining account of a harrowing ordeal that I have seen in writing. I have to pay tribute to his example, he knows how to make light of such an experience.

Moving this fall was a matter of "renoviction" (the word some friends used for it in August): the landlady wanted to renovate the house thoroughly, and to tell the truth my housemates and I were about ready to leave. This was a lady who was unsatisfied with anything we did, however much we did. My new place is further away, smaller, and costs more – but it's still more congenial.

Perhaps the most important thing about the last year was re-evaluation ... My own experiences this year have been thoroughly mixed. For some years I have been earning a living as a secretary, or general office clerk, or receptionist-typist-filing-mailing-and-deposits guy. This work has apparently dried up, or somehow I do not ace an interview very often, and the temp agencies offered less and less frequent assignments, often as outside of my comfort zone as answering the help desk phone at Shaw Cable. I'm beginning to think I have to seek a new line of work.

Maybe Vancouver is not the best place to seek my fortune? Or maybe I'm going about this all wrong?



(Just another day on Wreck Beach)

Random Thots

Hope everyone had a happy April Fool's Day!

* * *

Since the monitor on my desktop computer wasn't working for a while, I started reconstructing this issue of my personalzine on my laptop, and to do that I began reviewing the last several issues. This was a sobering, if not frightening experience, because **I find that I have been repeating some stories over and over.**

Now, I *promised* myself I wouldn't do that, at this age. I'm used to disappointing and embarrassing myself, but must I do so repeatedly?

Oh well. Maybe the universe is having an April Fool's Day joke at my expense. Call it experimental results: there are some questions about life skills, or being a fully qualified person, or about fan behaviour that I have been asking people for a long, long time; and as the repetitive articles in my personalzine have shown, I just won't get answers I can use.

* * *

One idea that *doesn't* seem to be a retread is that you could, maybe, quantify something vital – how many people an environment could actually support, that is; specifically, how many for a given mode of subsistence. Basically our species has gone through three major modes of subsistence (foraging/ hunting, versus cultivating plants and herds or flocks, versus some form of industrialism); and there are just a few kinds of environment on our planet, each with its absolute limitations.

I seem to be working up a formula like

$$P_n = R_n(M_n) / A_n$$

where P is population, R is resources (such as accessible/affordable food, water, clothing, housing, transportation, communication, employment and other opportunities), M is the mode of subsistence, A is the area, and "n" stands for the particular community under consideration.



The point, and I do have one, is that tribal chiefs probably spent a lot of time thinking about the carrying capacity of their range, and the number of mouths to feed in their tribe. But I don't think any level of government, anywhere today, sets a limit on how many people should live in their territory. Which is maybe not a plan for success, if you look at places like Haiti, or the Sahel region of Africa. Come to think of it, modern megacities with tens of millions of people in them may be a recipe for disaster, and not just in SF disaster novels.

The argument for placing restrictions is this. Marvin Harris – the guy who wrote *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*, arguing that a lot of anthropological puzzles have understandable, material reasons – pointed out that many plant and animal species are actually adapted to *minimal*, not optimal conditions; consider only the “sacred cows” of India, which are actually not herd cattle but scavengers, functionally like goats, which can at least survive droughts; at the best of times, traditional East Indians can get some milk out of them. By contrast, a good deal of public planning seems to take optimal conditions as the norm, and droughts or floods or epidemics or recessions as rare aberrations.

I see Dan Brown's latest novel, *Inferno*, capitalizes on the proposition that we must reduce the world population, radically. You can see how someone would come to that conclusion.

Of course, you can draw another conclusion – that we are not going to reduce our population, so we simply have to expand our resource base. We may be described as the first species which, effectively, multiplied the resources (R) we can get out of an environment. For a few decades now, proponents of orbital industrialization have been saying we could expand our mineral and energy resource base if we just look up.

Another thought, which may be relevant at this point, is that you might describe our species as the first to expand into a new kind of niche; we specialize in processing new information, and in developing new forms of behaviour, from agriculture to gene splicing. Only, are we up to the challenge of managing really complex systems – managing societies, or managing economies, or managing ecosystems? The historical evidence is not encouraging.

Yet another thought: Do we merely consume habitats, or are we habitat *creators*? Between the deserts where ancient civilizations existed, and the temperate countries that people have cultivated for centuries, the record is ambiguous. Already, though, we're contemplating the challenge of creating orbital habitats. Is this yet another new ecological niche we're creating?

Letters

Jinnie Cracknell
[cyberdestiny_40@hotmail.com],
August 4, 2012

Just wanted to start by saying that I loved *One Swell Foop* no. 8. You said early on "Of course not everybody gets my sense of humour, which is why nobody seems to have responded to my ideas for more whacked-out organizations. I just can't seem to motivate people. I feel so alone here." This got me thinking, and I have come up with Jinnie's First Law of Fanzines (Or should that be Cracknell's First Law?) Anyway, it states "No-one will ever send a loc responding to the bits

of the fanzine you most wanted a response to." Anything a fanzine writer dashes off in two seconds flat will get bags of response, and the lovingly-crafted articles or hilariously funny parodies or whatever will bring nary a response. I would also like to invite you to join SAMM, the Society Against Mysterious Meat, started by my best friend and I (who this year have known each other for twenty years - eep!) when we were both at boarding school together. Interestingly, both of us are now vegetarians and switched while at school, which says a lot about the food...

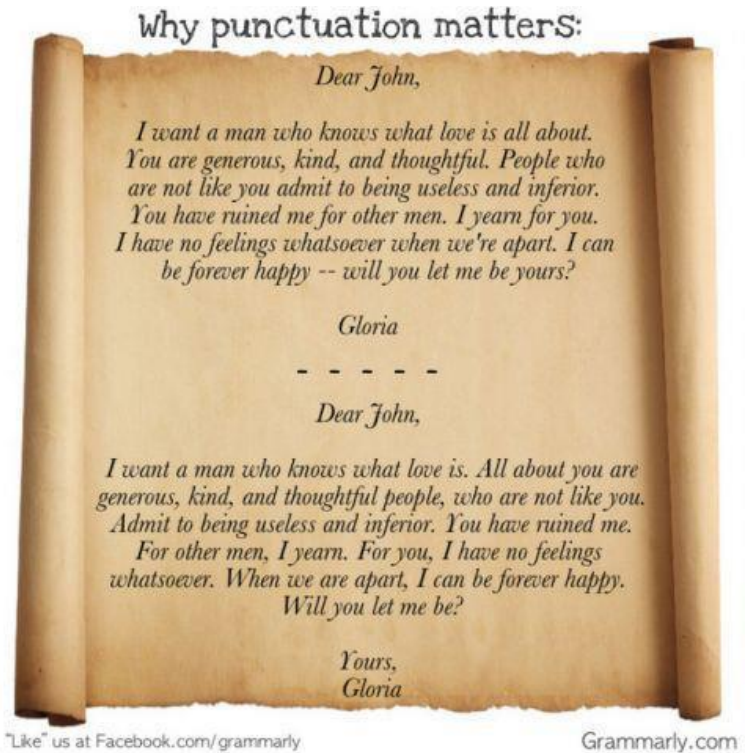
I, too, have great problems in understanding other people. I can generally do it if I'm concentrating very hard and not drunk or tired, but I have a tendency to get over-excited and talk over people if I'm not careful. I find that being around science-fiction fans and role playing geeks helps for some reason, maybe the stereotype is true and none of us are very good at social interaction?

I'm trying to keep the torch of fanzine fandom going (an appropriate metaphor given the current Olympic games - we went and saw the Olympic Flame when it travelled near us) but as always, things change and grow and mutate and that is, I think, a good thing.

Loved the article on crank theories. I have a crank theory of my own which will appear in the next QB, which I am writing right now (it's open in another window and I'm switching between that and LOCing several fanzines, some dating back a few months...oops)

PS: The higher, the fewer ;)

((So you're a perky Goth? I like it. Vancouver needs more perky Goths.



((But you're in England? Waaah. Shucky darn.

((You are the first person to answer the question "Why is a mouse when it spins"!))

((We used to have a list of "Basic Truths of Fandom" circulating around Pacific Northwest conventions. Cracknell's First Law should be included, if and when another such list is ever generated.

((I am glad to join the Society Against Mysterious Meat. So far I have formed a fixed habit of avoiding fast-food chains, and generally I cook for myself, unless I want to give myself a treat and eat out. So I generally have a good idea of what I'm eating.

((How many versions of English are going around, do you think? Inability to understand others is as often as not a problem with how they express themselves, or what they think words mean, or suggest. I think these are the first signs that English is starting to become several different languages, but the closest you can get to examples are the different expressions - or different connotations - in different regions.

((At one of my renovation sales my friends and I were talking about fanzine fandom. I've pretty much accepted that people reinvent fanzines periodically, without much reference to what fanzines have been until they came upon the idea, and they are being reinvented now in terms of current media, and conceptions of fanzines.))

Dave Haren, tyrbolo@comcast.net, Aug 5 2012

Having indulged in Surrealist Anarchist politics now and then it is a hard won victory to even get a mention in the stick in the mud backwater of fans.

If we could just herd them into a pen long enough to deliver a few rousing speeches I'm sure they would be on the barricades in no time at all.

However according to post mortemist philosophy trying to raise ideology fervour these days will require at least a clothes- pin for the nose or possibly a plague nose cone

Keep up the good work.

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2, August 21, 2012

I've got a paper printout of *One Swell Foop* 8, and while the computer works properly for the moment (no guarantee how long that will last), here are some comments.

I have a lot of boxed projects, binders or records, old reference books, boxes of unidentified stuff and other bits and pieces, and I have to clean it up. We have a list of projects to get done in our apartment, and the shelving unit that holds up all that stuff is a project in itself. In a fit of madness, I'd told Graeme Cameron that I'd thought to give away my fanzine collection...some days, that madness doesn't seem so mad.

((Great mad-scientist/inventor material! Maybe we should start a craigslist / meetup / Facebook group for swapping stuff like this?))

Fannish fandom is dwindling, and because the youngest amongst us is in his or her 40s or 50s (with a few exceptions), it will continue to dwindle. Not much we can do, except to hold it close while we have it, and see what other interests catch your eye. We've become connected with two groups, steampunk and fans of the series *Murdoch Mysteries*. The first has given us new friends about 25 to 35 years our junior, and the second has given us new friends our own age and a little older. If SF fandom isn't doing it for you, at least the fandom we know, we have to reach out to find new activities and new interests. We don't want to be stuck at home with nothing to do or no one to do anything with.

((I have tried to do outreach, or at least to expose local fans to the concept. Haven't hit the right note yet.))

My loc...believe it or not, I am still looking for daytime work. I have had some great interviews, and one of them went to a second interview, but still, nothing. Hurray for the *Globe and Mail* in the evenings.

Various religious groups have had their lowest attendance in decades, and it is mostly because the human factor comes in and spoils everything. The religious ideas are holy; it's the way they are practiced that is all too human. It is one thing to forgive a poor human decision, but to do things in the name of Christ/Allah/deity of your choice that are close to evil...it makes that religion look like a sham. Both Yvonne and I have been victims of religion as practiced by humans, and that's why we sleep in on Sundays.

It's one thing to complain about .pdfed zines, ezines, and how they aren't REAL zines, according to some, yet we wouldn't have the community we have now if paperzines were all we had. .Pdf technology allows us to communicate and participate with much less expense, and that can't be bad.

I have tried to promote fanzine fandom, and get others involved, and none of them have, and I have to say that's fine, they have their own fannish interests that may not coincide with mine, that's what fandom's all about. I will also not denigrate their interests because they are not mine. We don't find the fanzine fandom we want to see because fanzine fandom, over the decades, has done a great job of building itself up to be the great place with the amazing history it probably never was, but dreamed it could be. We may be victims of florid writing and big hopes for a great community, and we want what never was.

When Target sets up its stores in Canada, Mr. Samsel's example would be a good one to follow. Chaos, panic and disorder, your work here is done...

Trying to explain human behaviour these days is an exercise in illogical thinking, which may just hurt your gray matter. Trying to lay down anything resembling logic onto human behavioural patterns just doesn't work, in my opinion. I have some familiarity with the Myers-Briggs system, which may be as concise as we can stand without phasing out trying to understand it and anything more. Ah, yes, logic no, probability yes. There are ways we should react, but some individuals will either react the completely opposite way, or will not react at all. I fear for our future sometimes because I think a large percentage of us are mentally ill to one

degree or another. There are times I'd like to change species because I am not much pleased with the one I'm in now.

A page and a half is not bad. Off to the doctor's this afternoon, so off this goes to you now. Take care, see you with the next issue.

*((I guess you're unaware of what logic really is, like a lot of people. Guess I have some more explaining to do. *Sigh**

((My mistake was really in trying to live up to something nobody would define, which was an Evil Spell and something my family didn't even know they laid on me. I have decided that All Is Lost and I might as well merely please myself, until I expire.))

David "Murdock" Malinski, Murdock @ axion.net, August 31, 2012

um different.

Garth, perhaps you are spending too much time 'figuring out' what people are feeling or doing. Skip the analysis - just go on doing what makes you happy.

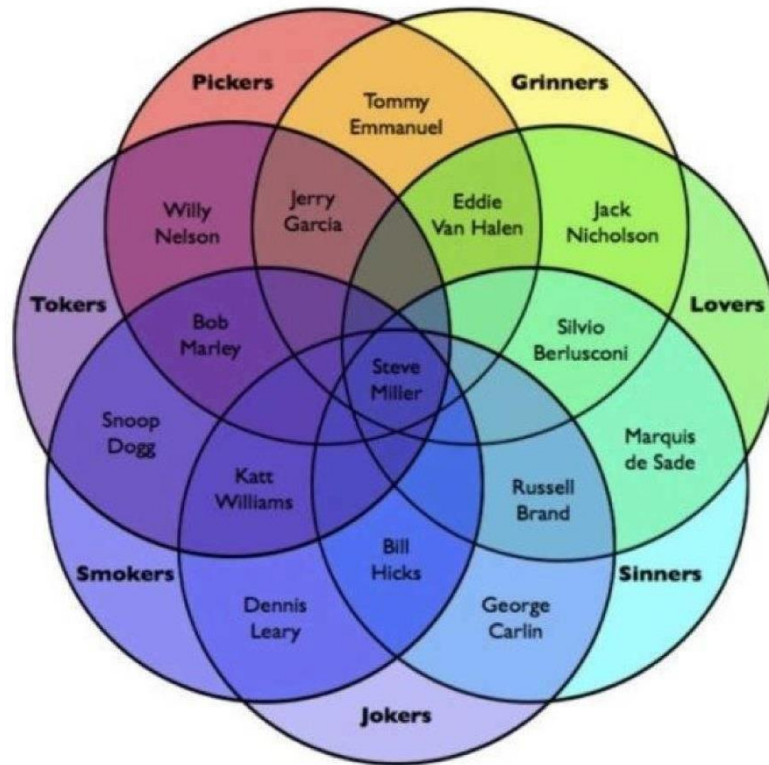
So long as the writing makes you happy, then keep on writing.

((see above.))

*

Guys: The main thing about *One Swell Foop* #8 was, I let my sense of humour loose. Among other things this meant I took a recently made-up language for the Kingdom of Talossa, and put all my responses to letters of comment into Talossan. Don't suppose it's as funny in practice as it is to write about it. (You may remember a passage in *The Magic Christian* – or the scene, in the movie someone made from Terry Southern's novel – in which an apology in a newspaper, for one of Guy Grand's practical jokes, was itself a practical joke, because it was printed in Polish.)

Of course not everybody gets my sense of humour, which is why nobody seems to have responded to my ideas for more whacked-out organizations. I just can't seem to motivate people. I am so alone here.



The Critique of Impure Conventions

What kind of SF convention do you want to attend, or what kind of convention do you want to hold? I'm not convinced we stop and ask what we assume, and that can be critical. When I stopped to ask myself what kind of convention I wanted to attend, I became less interested in going to those available. And I started wondering where the *fannish* conventions were.

Ever since I started going to conventions, I have been hearing convention stories. Ever since I started gathering stories of my own, I have seen a need for someone to put together materials about running conventions, that anyone could reference. Of course, I conceived this about twenty-five years after various local conrunning groups, and the floating Worldcon committee, were already doing something of the sort. And, despite my vow to boil down an accumulation of various people's conrunning guides, it was just too big a job.

You may think that there are different ways to run conventions, for different kinds of fandom; maybe that's right. You may think that conrunning has to be different in different countries, or regions; maybe that's right too. You may think that conrunning has to be different now than it was in previous decades, which would make my mid-80s collection pretty much outdated; there is some reason to think so, insofar as the hospitality industry has changed.

The real issue, though, is that anyone who gets into conrunning probably wants to do *their own thing, their own way*. That hasn't changed. Either people learn the ropes from older hands; or they learn that their "new" ideas have been tried before and didn't work; or they actually learn how to do something different; or (and this happens at least once or twice a decade) they create a fiasco, and refuse to learn from it. (People who were involved in a major fiasco in Victoria in the early 1980s have just reappeared in fandom as I know it, and at least one of them has learned nothing, so I can attest that this happens.)

The point I'm getting at is we just don't drag out into the open and critically examine *how* to do what we want to call conventions, or *what* we want to do, or *why* we do things as we have done.

Have you even *noticed* that some people jump into convention-running with high hopes and a hatful of ignorance? Granted, others learn the ropes by participating, being an understudy, heading separate departments and finally chairing a convention; but ultimately, there is no central body of standard knowledge. I'm not saying there *should* be, only that we are accepting the cost of being an anarchistic meritocracy – which, in some cases, means that conventions founder, or people lose their personal credit rating.

I'm not convinced that the art of running conventions has advanced much, overall. Yes, there are surely some people doing it for the love of it, purely on an amateur basis, who have a pretty professional level of skill, knowledge and experience. Yes, there is room for classic something-for-everyone local or regional conventions, and for special-interest conventions, and for media-franchise-profit-driven conventions.

But at no point, as far as I am informed, has anyone bothered to ask *why* we're doing this. I have never heard of a convention having a mission statement, or for that matter a business plan. Have any of you? (That isn't a rhetorical question, I am inviting feedback.)

Personally, I got into fandom to find fannish fandom; and that includes fannish conventions, and where the hell are they? Some of my correspondents on Facebook had a discussion about this in January 2013, and the consensus seems to be that Corflu or Potlatch – small, locally-circulating, print-oriented conventions – is the real deal.

Taral Wayne went so far as to say that if I or Graeme Cameron wanted to revive Ditto in Vancouver, we'd have his blessing. Now, if either of us had a nest egg ... (Or if I had the leadership ability of a potted petunia ...)

WELL-KNOWN EDITING SYMBOLS

- = DELETE
- = INSERT
- = CLOSE SPACE
- = START NEW PARAGRAPH
- = UPPER CASE
- = ADD SPACE
- = TRANSPOSE LETTERS
- = CHECK SPELLING

LESSER-KNOWN EDITING SYMBOLS

- = INSERT UNDER SHORT LEG OF TABLE
- = EXCESSIVE EXCLAMATION POINTS
- = ADD ADVENTURE
- = CHARACTERS SHOULD FIGHT
- = OOPS! ... COFFEE SPILL (MY BAD)
- = MOST EDITORS SAY "DON'T USE ADVERBS" BUT THIS IS A DAMN GOOD ADVERB
- = NEEDS MORE BOW-CHICKA-BOW-BOW
- = OH THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, I'M STEALING THAT!

Lesser-Known Editing and Proofreading Marks

- zz-zz delete~no one cares
- mixed metaphor, eh?
- insert 4-letter word for emphasis
- remove permanently from your lexicon
- too long
- too silly
- you wish
- pls revisit your politics
- pls cut the crap
- pls paraphrase~obviously stolen from Web
- pls don't eat Pringles while you work

The Society for the Perpetuation of Fannish Fandom

About the newest news here is that I seem to have stumbled into creating the Society for the Perpetuation of Fannish Fandom. No shit, that's what it's called, a new Facebook group. This arose out of a conversation thread started by Catherine Crockett, but now it's taken on some life of its own; more life than similar attempts to start my own gang.

I know what fannish means ... to me, at least ... and contemporary fandom needs more of it. More creativity, more originality, more sense of humour, more prankishness, more DIY aesthetic ... oh, what the hell; either you get it, or you don't.

I suppose I must confess my Ulterior Motive. This didn't come entirely into focus in my mind, until I saw a comment from Kat Templeton via the FAANEDS group on Facebook. Like Kat, I have repeatedly felt out of place and uncertain where I fit into fandom. This is part of my pattern of assuming there is a social structure I am supposed to fit into. It has taken until my 50s to realize, at least intellectually, that this is BS. I know who sold me on this BS, but that's history, the real issue is the habit of trying to find a community of active minds, of people I could talk to ... that wasn't necessarily there, to be found.

In his novel *The Folk of the Air*, Peter S. Beagle had a striking comment. One of the members of his thinly-disguised Society for Creative Anachronism commented that the viewpoint character was what used to be called a "witness", meaning someone who testified with their lives to the reality of something they had never seen – presumably, such things as courtly love or the Grail quest – and it struck me that I have been living like such a witness, only I was testifying with my life to the reality of fannish fandom.

In fact I had embarked on a search for My True Community in the late 1970s, searching in a number of leisure interest groups, and spent the longest time searching in fandom because that was where my kind of community was – apparently – promised. But I found myself in times

and places where “fannish” is meaningful to fewer and fewer fans, so of course my search object was meaningless to most of the fans I met.

Well, I applied myself to fanpublishing, participated in the local convention, went to the local club’s weekly pub nights, edited the newsletter for a while ... still didn’t quite work.

So of course I tried to recreate fannish fandom, and then a curious thing happened. I failed repeatedly even to convey the concept. At university I tried to start a local branch of the Bavarian Illuminati, and later, the Christian Anarchist Party. Major flops. In Vancouver I tried to start an alternative fan group: first, the Royal Swiss Navy; then the Anarcho-Surrealist Party, or the Liberal Secular Rational Humanist Cult. Apparently these either strike people with a dull thud – no matter what program I suggested, or what language I couched it in – or I just amused people, without really communicating anything, let alone inspiring any action.

The fact that I was a loner until then, and now I was trying to start a little society of my own, must have seemed an obvious irony to anyone else.

All this convinced me I have no charisma points and no leadership potential. In his fanzine (I think it was then titled *The Diagonal Relationship*, or perhaps *The Dillinger Relic*), Arthur Hlavaty talked about literary critics being like eunuchs in a harem: they knew what was done and how to do it, they saw it done all the time, they just couldn’t do it themselves. I decided I was a eunuch in a harem, but instead of being a critic who couldn’t actually write himself, I can’t actually lead a fan group myself.

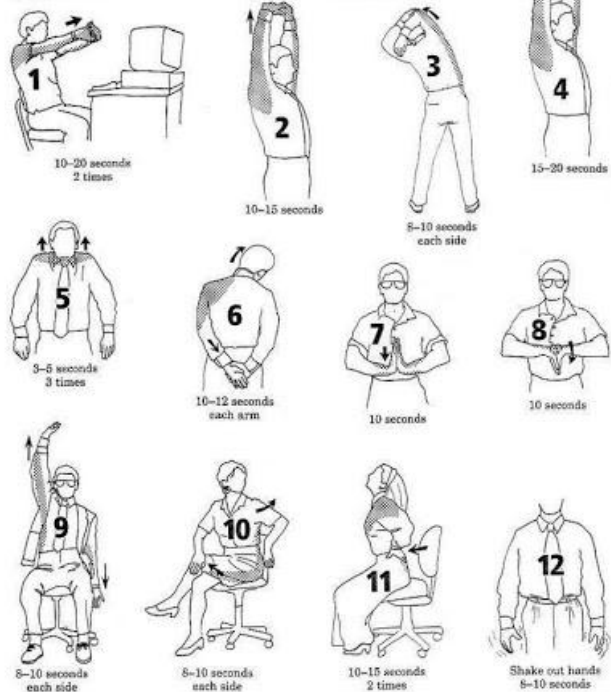
By the same token, I can’t run a convention, myself. Like anyone else, I see and comment on convention-running issues, but unlike some people I can’t run the things. This is what I have to say to people who ask why I write stuff about conventions, why don’t I run a damn convention myself for once: I would if I could but I’m a eunuch in a harem. Some people think I’m making excuses.

Of course, sooner or later a challenge arose to the Society’s concept. Gary Farber asked to join, and immediately questioned the object of the group. Gary has a habit of misconstruing what I mean by basic terms, such as “fannish”, and I’m not sure I have the patience to keep correcting his misconceptions. It took me a while to see that Gary was offering something the group needed – forcing people to define their terms and examine their assumptions (by

Computer & Desk Stretches

Approximately 4 Minutes

Sitting at a computer for long periods often causes neck and shoulder stiffness and occasionally lower back pain. Do these stretches every hour or so throughout the day, or whenever you feel stiff. Photocopy this and keep it in a drawer. Also, be sure to get up and walk around the office whenever you think of it. You’ll feel better!



Stretching ©2000 by Bob and Jean Anderson, Shelter Publications, Inc.

imposing my own eccentric definitions) is my gig, I thought, but the fact is that I never had an exclusive right to the role.

I see I have a lot more explaining to make clear my idea of “fannish”. This is not particularly a perpetuation of the past. Fannish fandom was new, when the members were inventing stuff like their fanzines and in-jokes and pranks; it can be renewed, by inventing new publications and new in-jokes and new pranks.



(A projected world map of 2100, showing new beachfront properties)

Fannish Things to Do

One of the several non-starter ideas I had last summer was to publish a sort of directory of Greater Vancouver’s various local fan groups. Like the 1980s idea of an annual Pacific Northwest calendar of upcoming conventions, this turns out to be an idea whose time is past. There are websites and links for practically all interest groups and subfandoms, and not much visible motivation for them to look outside very specific interests.

Another was to pick the best-known vocabulary and simplest grammar from English, Cantonese and Punjabi – the three largest speech communities in Vancouver – and deliberately create the kind of pidgin speech that we might generate anyway, in a span of two or three generations. Something like this happened before in the Pacific Northwest, called Chinook Jargon, combining terms from Chinook and Salish and French and English. Again, I seemed to be the only one interested.

So then I was daydreaming about working up my own incomprehensible language for private journaling. Adolescent of me, I know, but it isn’t like I graduated from a manhood ritual in the woods, or a secret society initiation, or something like that.

My latest delusion is that I should start my own APA just to stay in contact with family and friends; or maybe start a fanzine about mundania, its non-issues and its real crises – as if about half the people in the world with a computer didn't *already* have blogs and websites and podcasts dedicated to alternative news.

Sometimes I got the uncomfortable sense of being Vancouver fandom's "crap artist", à la Philip K. Dick. Or the local version of the "Jeremy Hilary Boob" character, in *Yellow Submarine*. (Not that I expect anyone to know the references.) Then I think "oh what the hell, I can please myself, it isn't as if there's anything more important to do."

)*(



Who Wants to Be a Mad Scientist?

(previously appearing in I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays #96, in e-APA 109, May 2013)

Garth Spencer

Recently I picked up a new SF book, the anthology *The Mad Scientist's Guide to World Domination*, and it dawned on me that this was my unconscious secret ambition. Not to achieve world domination, but just to be a mad scientist.

Fran Skene once told me that she thought the natural life cycle of SF fans was to end up as science fiction writers, or at least to try to write. I didn't buy it, partly because I was still on my quest to find fannish fandom. Now, it occurs to me that part of what I wanted to find in fannish fandom, I might have found in a society of mad scientists.

Now: what do you think constitutes a mad scientist? Evil, benign, or surrealist? I have a few notions I'd like to advance.

Origins of the Myth

How far back does our stereotype of the mad scientist go? Much further back than the invention of comic books or pulp adventure magazines, and further back even than Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The earliest figure who fits the mould, to my knowledge, is Sir Isaac Newton. Ike (as I will call him for short) was well-known, and disliked, for having strange, rather artificial mannerisms, a disregard or incomprehension of social norms, unusually sustained attention to detail ... and (of course) extraordinarily penetrating insights.

We could adduce a number of well-known scientists and technologists over the generations, including the famous Nikola Tesla. Tesla was also well-known for unique mannerisms, for incomprehension of what businessmen such as Edison were after, and perhaps for cognitive processes we still don't understand.

Of course the foregoing puts you in mind of autism, doesn't it? Specifically Asperger's Syndrome?



Explain Steampunk?

It's a psuedo-victorian melange of ideas, notions and possibilities intersecting a neo-apocalyptic dystopian future wherein the occupants reside within an quasi-utopian, retro-technological and Ideological society. Generally while fighting Cthulhu from airships, while wearing corsets and goggles.

Does this help clarify it for you?

No?

***sigh* Did you see "Wild, Wild West?"**

...Shit

Possibly a number of scientists, over the generations, have played up to a stereotype of the absent-minded professor. I seem to remember hearing that Oppenheimer adopted an academic image that was currently fashionable in his time – which got him into some trouble, as the military and security agencies he dealt with were not tolerant of a wide range of political opinions.

My point, and I do have one, is that we have built up stereotypes about geniuses and scientists, and (for pulp-adventure purposes) the stock character of the Evil Mad Scientist. That serves to warn us that we can easily fall into lazy thinking habits, and unexamined, false assumptions: that a scientist is so concentrated on the work as not to ask how it affects people; that genius is close to madness; that a technological enterprise has a scientist in charge, answerable to no one; and other kinds of nonsense.

In the real world, scientists are almost always salaried employees. Smart ones may have investments and managerial roles, but that tends to militate against working in the laboratory or in the field, doesn't it?

Back Story

If you still want to model yourself on popular culture, you might ask what kind of back story produces your temperament, and incidentally your drive and goals.

Your Drive

It is extraordinary how rarely people examine or question their drives, let alone their goals. You cannot afford to make this oversight, when you are a practicing mad scientist; you owe it to yourself to know both what you are doing and why you are doing it. Raging against the world for making you bald, or humiliating you in high school, just doesn't cut it when you're in your mid-50s and unearthing the lost technology of Atlantis; you have bigger fish to fry, or you should have at your age. Transgenic experiments that produce beavers the size of Mack trucks, or hyperintelligent slugs that occupy Parliament demanding Canada Council arts grants, may be entertaining - but they ultimately don't serve a purpose. What really moves you and what is your goal, your focus, the cause you serve?

Your Master Plan

If only to preserve artistic unity, you are well advised to have a Master Plan. As chaotic as life gets, you cannot tackle it with any amount of mad science if you don't have a Plan. Granted that the Plan will not survive contact with the enemy, I mean real events – let alone, contact with actual enemies (of which more later) – you have to *have* an ultimate goal or purpose to salvage, in order to accomplish anything.

Now, you're perfectly free to serve entirely personal, even selfish goals. Evil mad scientists are part of the club, too. If you have other-centred goals, such as untangling the gathering crises facing world civilization and resolving the problems of population, resource consumption and global warming without subtracting most of the human race, that's also fine. But you have to make your goals clear to yourself, in order to work out your Plan.

To continue the military analogy: if you manage to accomplish half as much of what you intend, half as well as you mean to, you're doing well.

Tactics vs. Strategy vs. Policy

Even if your Master Plan is conceived in political, or corporate terms, as much as in mad-science terms, you will find yourself thinking through matters of strategy and tactics. One of the lessons you may learn from military science fiction is that your strategies have to drive your tactics, but you can be solely tactical-minded, applying the same solutions (or kinds of solutions) to all problems. This started to crop up, for instance, in the early “green revolution” when well-meaning reformists tried to improve Third World agriculture. It was all very well to teach Indian farmers to run combine harvesters, but when their inherited fields were tiny patches not workable by combines – or, not economically – the effort was pointless. Compare that failure of large-scale tactics with the tactics of the Grameen Bank: they lend microloans to small-business operators who need them, rather than the mammoth loans that major international corporations deal with. If your ultimate goals included stimulating local independent business and employment, the microloan tactics are more successful.

Just as strategies should drive tactics, there are policies implicit in our strategies. Your Master Plan should dictate some policies; an Evil Mad Scientist presumably will seek to undermine independence and dominate markets, as by patenting seed stocks and forcing farmers to pay for your strains, and your strains only.

Your Crank Theory / Secret Weapon / Original Gadget That Actually Works

A mad scientist is sometimes expected to come up with unique, proprietary technology entirely on his own, working in a solitary lair with the fruits of his solitary genius. This is comic-book science. For one thing, it ignores the fact that real science is a collaborative effort, requiring constant communication between original minds, in the field and in the laboratory and, yes, in administrative offices, sweating over grant proposals.

For another thing, there are sound reasons why some crank theories and crank inventions are dismissed as pseudoscience. The theory that some agrarian societies, even high civilizations, may have existed before the last Ice Age ended and submerged continental shelves – or, the theory that we attained some high technologies in the distant past, of which traces may yet be recovered – is dismissed as pseudoscience for the simple reason that not enough evidence for them is recognized as evidence, to support a sound case. (Whether the evidence itself is more than sufficient, but is dismissed, is a subject for another time.)

Part of the reason for the misconception of a Lone Genius working in a basement or garage is the legacy of Nikola Tesla, whose reasoning process is still hard to figure, and the legacy of Steve Wozniak or Steve Jobs, computer developers who actually did produce their first prototypes working out of a garage. It takes sustained attention to work out that these were deceptive images.

Real Science vs. Mad Science vs. Evil Mad Science vs. Technology Development vs. Engineering

Another misconception – or another result of inattention and lazy thinking and bad comic books – is the mushy confusion between research science, technology development, and

engineering. A man or woman who does any one enterprise successfully may be hopeless at the other two; the steps from genetic research, developing gene-typing or gene-splicing technology, and manufacturing gene-splicing products and tools for laboratories everywhere, take very different minds.

Equally, there are rather large and unsubtle distinctions between real science, mad science, and Evil Mad Science. Remember that science is a learning process, not a body of knowledge. Mad science is not a matter of *presuming* there are morphogenetic fields or psychic gene complexes, and then building a transmogrifying infundibulator to manipulate them, but establishing whether there are such phenomena, and if so, how they can be used to further your Master Plan. Pure Mad Science is presumably a matter of marketing X-ray glasses that work just because it's funny. Evil Mad Science is presumably a matter of using your powers to achieve world domination, and taking revenge on used car salesmen who used to be the high school jocks who gave you wedgies.

Opponents vs. Enemies vs. Arch-Nemeses

If this were a comic book universe, mad scientists would automatically generate leagues of sane scientists trying to bring them back into the fold, or at least into insane asylums; and evil mad scientists would automatically generate virtuous caped crusaders to foil their nefarious plans.

In the real world, a mad scientist has to do battle with public and private sources for grants, and with public utilities, and with the cost of real estate (have you *tried* to find a place for a hidden laboratory lately?), and with equipment suppliers, and then there's the problem of getting qualified, imaginative, but compliant assistants. The vested interests and political fronts and competing conspiratorial groups (never mind the criminal organizations) who want to capitalize on mad science for their gain are almost superfluous; mundane considerations are enough to make you throw in the towel.

Triumph and Disaster

If truth be told, pursuing mad science is like writing or art – you don't do it to get rich. You can't give up your day job. You do it for love, or nothing.

A Meditation on Genius (or the lack of it)

Part of the mushy, indistinct thinking that goes to our image of the Mad Scientist is the notion that he, or she, must be a Mad Genius.

There is a cliché in our culture that genius must lie close to madness; that a genius scientist will do mad things for the hell of it, like stitching dead bodies together, or transferring genes between species, without rhyme or reason. I've never been convinced of this and found the cliché sort of fatuous. Crazy people do crazy things because they're crazy. Geniuses perceive things that we don't because they're geniuses, not because they're particularly crazy. If we have a stereotype of a Mad Genius, that means they're a vanishingly small minority, like the stereotype of the loser geek fanboy, or the corporate president Bond villain.

So much for stereotypes.



Lockheedless

Taral Wayne

Everyone knows what Boeing is, right? It's a giant conglomerate corporation that makes civilian airliners such as the 747, and the new "Dreamliner." But Boeing has long wanted to get back into the business of not just transporting people to exotic destinations *through* the air, but *killing* them in exotic locations *from* the air with exciting aircraft such as the B-17 and B-51! So, when the Pentagon issued a requirement for a new, budget-minded, stealthy Joint Strike Fighter, to be developed in collaboration with British and other air arms, Boeing was quick to submit a prototype.

It was a disaster from the start. Boeing's entry looked like a bathtub draped in the Batcape, with its air inlet at the extreme front of the nose, just below the canopy. In almost any other aircraft, the lower lip of the inlet would be further back than the upper lip. In the case of Boeing's X-32, it was the upper lip that was behind the lower one. It swept backward, so that the plane looked like a guppy gulping fish flakes in a bowl. More serious problems included a

centre of gravity that was perilously far to the rear, giving rise to concern that adding underwing stores might cause the airframe to tip backwards and sit on its tail.

Lockheed-Martin's competing prototype was no prize either, but it looked much more conventional. It was more or less an inelegant, pared-down version of the F-22 Raptor, with a single engine. In flight, it showed no undesirable characteristics and was the hands-down winner of the competition.



Ah ... but what no one knew at the time was that Lockheed was cheating! Their two prototypes of the X-35 were literally hand-made. No thought had been given to how they were to be mass-produced. Each part was a one-off, and no plans for automated assembly existed. Consequently, when Lockheed was awarded the contract to build a number of airframes for advanced flight tests, they had to start from scratch. It was as if the two X-35s had never existed ... and from that simple fact grew a jungle of thorny problems.

Not the least of which was that every branch of the American armed forces wanted their own version of the plane. The Air Force's requirements were fairly straightforward – the jet had to take off, fly well, and land. The Navy's requirements were a little less straightforward: they required *their* version to take off from a short, moving platform in the middle of the sea, fly well, and land on the same short, moving platform that had meanwhile moved somewhere else in the middle of the sea. The Marines demanded the impossible ... and much of the difficulty of eliminating all the bugs from the F-35 stem from trying to make an aircraft with superior performance also take off and land vertically. The old Harrier "Jump-Jet" had done that superbly. But no one in their right mind would ever describe the British Harrier, or the Marine's jumped-up AV-8 version of it, as an "air superiority weapon." It was a ground-attack platform, pure and simple.

The last time the Pentagon had tried to satisfy all three services was with a single airframe had been the ill-fated F-111 in the 1960s. The result was an oversize, overweight, flying tank that nobody liked and saw no service in any of its intended roles. It did, however, nearly destroy the career of then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

Unfortunately, the Marine's are known to be keen about doing the impossible. Just as they had demanded the insanely expensive and dangerous Osprey tilting-rotor-wing aircraft, they also demanded the F-35b be fully capable of Vertical Take-Off and Landing. Having no more

sense than a young, male grocery store bagger buying a Mustang for his first car, Congress approved.

Not surprisingly, Lockheed-Martin had trouble meeting all three specifications in one aircraft. They gave it the old college try, but for once it seems as though they bit off more than they could chew. The *wunderkinder* at the legendary Skunk Works, who had given the U.S. Air Force the P-38 Lightning twin-boom fighter in WWII, the U2 spy plane in the Cold War, the SR-71 Blackbird, Mach 3 reconnaissance craft, the first stealth fighter, and the advanced F-22 Raptor, had come to believe they could deliver anything the military could ask from them, however fantastical and costly ... and finally fell flat on their faces.

It would take an article in itself to enumerate the failings of the F-35. Chief among them is an advanced design of pilot interface that nobody even dreamed of on *Star Trek*. All the information the pilot needed was to be projected onto his helmet visor, giving him 360 degree "vision." He had only to look at the icon for launching an air-to-air missile was to actually launch it. It's a wonderful idea ...but, so far, Lockheed has not managed to make it work. Then there is the matter of the highly sophisticated system of redirecting the thrust of the engine to either propel the plane forward, or support it in a hover. Neither configuration is particularly difficult, but switching from one to the other has proven considerably more so. Most recently, the engine intake fans have displayed a nasty tendency to tear themselves apart.

More general criticisms have included limited range, inferior speed, an inadequate payload and poor agility. In other words, by attempting to be a jack-of-all-trades, the F-35 is second-rate at any task. It *is* stealthy, though ... although, barring the assumption that small, impoverished nations will become armed with superior ground-to-air missiles or advanced fighter aircraft, this seems like an unnecessary advantage. Given how much stealth costs, the expression "diminishing returns" comes to mind. More than any other setback, however, it is the F-35's endless developmental delays and uncontrollable, upwardly spiralling cost that is killing it.

Although an American dream child, voices in the Pentagon itself have spoken out against the new fighter, labelling it a mediocre performer and an historically expensive boondoggle. Remember, the F-35 was initially intended to be a *budget* aircraft! The F-22 Raptor was the halo fighter in the Air Force's inventory, but in its day *it* was too expensive for the Pentagon to procure the number originally desired. The F-35 was sold as a plane with *most* of the Raptor's capabilities at a fraction of the cost, so that larger numbers could be built. How good does your plane have to be to drop munitions on a village in the Middle East, after all? Reserve the more capable Raptors for a serious adversary, and deploy the cheaper F-35 for less challenging targets. But, somehow, the new aircraft grew into a "5th generation" design that was, in some respects, supposedly superior to the Raptor. When or how that happened has never been documented. I suspect Lockheed, in their arrogance, simply made up the new requirements.

As a result, a design that was originally touted at about \$65 million is now likely to cost at least twice that ... about the same as or even less than the F-22 Raptor. Pentagon spokesmen have said as much. Their estimates have been *higher*, and do not include long-term maintenance and operation. (Naively, the Canadian government issued statements that the U.S. would sell Canada the same jet for half what it would pay for the F-35 itself!) The Pentagon has

questioned whether it can afford the program, and has discussed cutting back the purchase order or cancelling it altogether. The United Kingdom, the major partner in the F-35's development, has been making similar noises to the press. Every potential customer (except clueless Canada) has expressed serious doubts about this plane and the wisdom of putting their money up for it.

All of this is merely background, leading to the final, capping irony.

The aerospace company that builds the F/A 18 E/F Super Hornet has offered Canada as many as of those as we need, for less than half what we would pay for the same number of the new F-35.

The F/A 18 Super Hornet bears a close family resemblance to the current CF-18 Hornet that the CAF currently flies, but it is, in fact, mostly an entirely different aircraft. It is larger, faster, more agile, has greater range and has entirely upgraded avionics. It is more than a match for all but a small number of First World fighters such as the RAF's Typhoon II, the U.S.A.F.'s Raptor, Russia's latest MiG and one or two others ... none of which a Canadian pilot is likely to encounter in a hostile situation. We could also accept delivery of the first airframes within a year or two. By contrast, no one knows when or even *if* the F-35 will begin rolling off an assembly line. The flight characteristics and performance envelope of the Super Hornet are well established. Canadian pilots may require little retraining to fly the plane whose starting point was their current combat platform. And it will salve American pride if when we abandon one military lemon we purchase its replacement from them. That may be no small point.



The only realistic alternative to this, as far as I can see, would be the so-called Eurofighter, the Typhoon II flown by several NATO forces. It is probably the better machine, but the price sticker will be nowhere near as reasonable as the Super Hornet's – although, at any rate, it would still be at least somewhat lower than the F-35's.

Perhaps the Canadian government will see reason over the offer. There's no mistaking the hornet's-nest of public anger over the F-35. It has been impossible to ignore reports by the Auditor General and other dissenting bodies that the government acted unilaterally in reaching its decision – there was no parliamentary debate, no competitive bidding, and, indeed, it would appear that the requirements for the aircraft have been consistently rewritten so as to match the flawed, over-ambitious Lockheed design. It would be as if you went shopping for the family car, refused to look in more than one showroom, and decided to buy an overpriced foreign sports car with a poor maintenance and safety record that cost twice as much as originally

budgeted! The Harper government finally backed down ... somewhat. They issued a statement that the “reset” button had been pressed, and the process would begin over. Still, a change of heart would be a first time the present government has ever reversed a policy, so I’m not optimistic that Ottawa won’t, at the end of the day, re-announce its intention to buy the F-35.

No doubt, the government is waiting until after the next election to make the announcement. Assuming it is re-elected. Look for no decision until then.

But, the irony. I’m getting to that. Let us suppose that the Prime Minister doesn’t defy public opinion this time, and does reverse his policy. Let us suppose Canada buys the Super Hornet ... instead of the flashy toy dangled in front of our government’s easily bedazzled vision. Do you know who makes the F/A 18 E/F Super Hornet? Originally, it was made by McDonnell-Douglas. In 1997, however, the company merged with and became a part of ... *Boeing!*

Boeing, who lost to Lockheed’s dishonest competition for the Joint Strike Fighter in the first place. Revenge is a dish best served “sold,” it seems.

THE BACK PAGE

This is the page that used to be used as a mail wrapper for traditional fanzines. This is the page where some people fill space with "Why You Got This" checklists. This is the page that is opposite to the front page. This is not an inside page.

WHY YOU GOT THIS

___ You wrote, contributed art, or sent me an article.

___ You sent me your fanzine by mail or email.

___ You haven't responded to my emails, and I'm trying to determine whether you're still alive, or at least where I should contact you.

___ I am trying to qualify for nomination to next year's Aurora / FAAn / Hugo Awards.

___ Age cannot wither nor custom stale your infinite variety.

___ I am trying to brainwash you with surrealist propaganda.

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