

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette

#20



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December 2009

Colophon

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #20 (December 2009) is the work of Garth Spencer, who goes on living in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Nobody knows why. Please send comments, subscriptions, suggestions, and/or submissions to Garth Spencer (the Editor), at garthspencer@shaw.ca or 82 East 40th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, CANADA V5W 1L4. The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette solicits electronic submissions, and black and white line illustrations in JPG or GIF format, and offers contributor's copies.

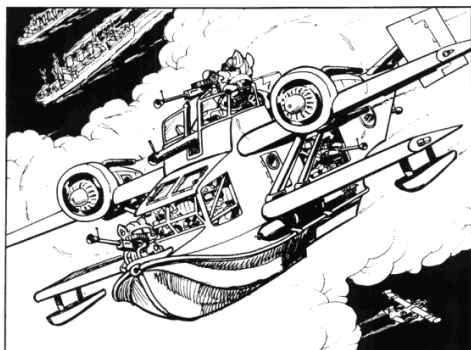
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"Osprey" patrol torpedo bomber; Raincoast naval syndicates circa 1930
Armed with the semi-useful 3" recoilless rocket launcher

Pick a Direction

Things We Could Be Doing:

There are a lot of things a group titled "Royal Swiss Navy" could be doing, like lampooning police malfeasance or the RCMP's most embarrassing moments or the foibles of Canadian forces, such as our entire involvement in the Middle East. But for one thing, it's cowardly, like kicking somebody when they're down; and for another thing, in each of these cases the force in uniform is being embarrassed and degraded by its orders.

I could speak volumes about the Canadian government, and the Harper administration specifically, keeping our forces involved in ill-conceived, unwinnable foreign campaigns. And since an aspiring immigrant to Canada died from multiple Taser shots, I have learned that there is more to the RCMP's story than a long series of company-goon incidents. I have been told that the training for RCMP officers has been cut from three years to six months, and a recent survey, reported in the news, showed that management and morale in the force are pretty poor. Finally, the Vancouver police seem to be used now, by local institutions, to sweep homeless people out of sight in time for the 2010 winter Olympics.

Given a little imagination, we could be holding street theatre skits to send up the less sensible things that uniformed groups do.

Given a little sense, we could focus on the *behaviour*, not on the people involved, with a view to finding behaviour that *works better*. But I've been inviting people to brainstorm about stuff like this, and not getting much response, let alone action.

Anyway there are better-researched and better-organized lampoon groups out there, like the Upright Citizens' Brigade. Look them up.

Why aren't we doing what they're doing?



(The VCon Robotter mascot)

Popular Culture:

Before I exhausted my credit I held a room party at VCon 34, in early October. Barely saw the rest of the convention, which is just as well as this is a general-interest convention; it's a smorgasbord, no one could take in more than a selection. The Royal Swiss Navy room party was allegedly one of the better room parties, albeit there weren't very many. Maybe room parties are going out of style. Maybe other conventions are more like partygoers' conventions.

VCon has been moving around from hotel to hotel in recent years, and this was one of the few years it was actually held in the municipality of Vancouver – indeed, in one of the pricier hotels in the downtown core. I am still waiting for news about next year's convention venue.

I have also indulged myself by seeing *2012*. In a way I was disappointed, and in another way I wanted to see more, largely because I have some prior knowledge of the fringe ideas that went

into this movie. (I would like, for instance, to have seen orbital views of the North American coastline without California; or even better, a view of the whole globe with the poles shifted, i.e. the surface rotated so that Wisconsin ends up under the North Pole.)

Making Life Over (again?)

New Year's Resolutions: 1. Declare bankruptcy. Trying to live a simple and modest life hasn't worked. 2. Get back in shape. 3. Set a deadline for finding employment; if I don't, become an entrepreneur. 4. Start a surreal political party. 5. When I get rich, begin a covert program to establish a private space station and industrial plant. 6. Next December, look at this list and see how many goals I achieved.

Nobody ever defined "success" for me, but for a good many years I felt like a failure. It was actually good to know that I became an unqualified failure this year, because it was *definite*, no two ways about it. That way, I could go ahead and file for bankruptcy, and start solving other problems one at a time. I felt thoroughly energized and upbeat, for a while.

In my continuing search for a lifestyle that works, or at least a comforting set of delusions, I have stockpiled a lot of books about a) Web design, bookkeeping, accounting and MS Office, b) ritual magic and runework, and c) Gnosticism and fringe religion generally. I haven't evaluated how to apply my time profitably, except to realize that I buy more books than I can afford. It's past time I started advertising an online used bookstore, maybe on Craigslist.

Letters

I had some fun emailing RSNG #19 attached to odd covering emails, viz.:

In answer to the email statement "Attached is evidence that I don't think like the rest of you":

Murray Moore, November 3, 2009

Evidence? We don't need evidence.

In answer to the email question "Do cats know something we don't know?":

Felicity Walker, November 2, 2009

Cats can see things we can't. That's why they keep looking up at the walls and ceilings for seemingly no reason.

Beth Toerne, November 3, 2009

I don't think they do, but I think they waaaay definitely want to give us the impression that they do.

Brad Foster, November 3, 2009

Why yes, as a matter of fact, cats DO know something we don't know. That is why they rule the world, but make us do all the work.

Glad to see you were able to fit one of my fillos in the new issue of RSNIG. My records show you've still got two more on hand, so I'll hold off sending anything new until you've used those. (As usual, if you don't care for anything I send, feel free to return it and I'll send something else your way.)

Regarding your noting that "...a recent issue of *New Scientist*, which anticipated habitable climates receding to the circumpolar regions..." seems to indicate we should all immigrate up there to Canada. I mean, always seemed like a nice country and all, but looks like you might be the only place with habitable land. Watch out for the flood of US citizens rushing the borders!

((Parts of Russia, Australia and New Zealand, and even western Antarctica would be habitable, in the worst-case global warming scenario. The problems with this scenario are that [1] the climate may be livable, but the growing season would be incredibly short, [2] in Canada and Russia, little of the terrain would be arable land, most of it would just be melted permafrost — one vast bog, and [3] the stagnant oceans would eventually release so much hydrogen sulfide, it would wipe out nearly all life.))

Work, everyone seems to be looking for work. My income from the art festivals I show at has dropped off this year, so I am trying to get any kind of freelance art assignments I can find. If you know of anyone looking for an odd artist who has a few dollars (Canadian or otherwise!) to spend, send them my way!

Interesting thoughts from Taral on what would have resulted in WWI had the Germans won. To quote The Who: "Meet the new boss, Same as the old boss." Most of us just want to get on with our lives, but there will always be a group who desperately wants to be the boss, and tell everyone else what to do.

Don't shoot your TV. But unplug it and put it somewhere that will take you some time to get it out again. That way you will only use it when you really feel the need to see something, and not just easy to click on whenever you happen to walk by. I know of what I speak, trust me, I can be sucked into the shiny maw of the boob tube as easily as anyone else. In my own case I've got the TV set up across from my drawing board. To watch it, I must sit at the board, and while I'm there, I tend to get work done. If you put the TV where your only option is to sit and watch it, that can be trouble too.

And speaking of getting things done, back to work for me!

Taral Wayne, November 3, 2009

A couple of small details.

I'd forgotten about the Phil Paine essay, but I'm sure I must have suggested you get permission to use it from Phil, and must have given you the email address for him. Is so?

((Of course.))

Second, I sent you the Word Doc of "Lest We Remember" with the following message in the mail.

"I wrote this today, from a much shorter set of remarks made about this time last year. At this point I don't know what to do with it. I'm looking for a zine that would publish preferably before the end of November, and sends hard copies. I'm not eager to have to pay to see my own writing in print, particularly with long zines."

Where in this did I say I was contributing the piece to RSN? I can see that you might infer I was asking you if you were

interested in having it, but you should still have confirmed this by answering back that you were. As it happens, I wasn't submitting it to you and have another publisher who is using it in his next issue, and this is something of an embarrassment.

Not only that, but you weren't sent the final, proofread version of the piece, and they differ in minor particulars.

I guess we'll just have to let it go, but please be more careful in future.

*Lloyd & Yvonne Penney, 1706 - 24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2,
November 11, 2009*

Another *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* graces my monitor with its presence, issue 19 already. I have some time for some letter writing, even after this hectic Remembrance Day. Below is why it was hectic...

I finally got the good job I wanted. This past Tuesday, I started as a production assistant for the Law Society of Upper Canada, and it's been a great job so far. I've been subject to a lot of layoffs, so I hope I get to stay at this one. Pleasant atmosphere, no real pressure, training to come, free coffee, brand new lunch room...my fingers are crossed.

I'd make a list of all the things I want to do with the Royal Swiss Navy and other organizations. Never said I'd actually *do* them, but at least the list would be done. What better way to prepare for complete silliness? It's not to be ready at all; at least you'll have real results. Or lack thereof...

Not only am I working, but so is Yvonne, at a document shredding company. Looks like our own personal recession is over, and I am hoping that everyone else's is, too...I keep hearing about lots of new jobs. I admit to feeling a little spooked...I wished Ben Indick good health, and he passed away just a couple of weeks ago. One never knows when it's their time to go.

When I add up the various Canadian major conventions, I refer to the record of Canadian fandom. I believe that we redeemed ourselves to some degree with the Montreal Worldcon. I've heard about some true disorganization, but not until after the convention took place. I'd like to get some honest opinions from Montreal fans about having the Worldcon in town.

Toronto had its zombie walk, too. It was organized by a young lady named Thea Munster (uh huh), and some Ad Astra committee members participated in it, and helped to manage it. I could roll my eyes at it, but I'm into steampunk these days, so I shouldn't talk. Perhaps it's safest to say that like most eras in fandom, we're coming up with more to do.

Remembrance Day came and passed...I will honour those who have gone before, but I wish we could go back to our peacekeeping past, and get out of a war we never asked for. Our glorious Afghan dead now total around 135 or so; I shudder to think how many thousands of American soldiers have died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I'm going to go now; it's the only break in the madness...take care, get some work, and get some peace.

We Also Heard From: Ken Fletcher, Allan Burrows (RAEBNC), and the former fan formerly known as E.B. Frohvet



Losing History

By Lyn McConchie

(Some background from Lyn: "This article has appeared in several places, but there isn't likely to be a lot of overlap. It's been in writers' magazines in NZ and Oz, Peregrine Nations in the USA, and in a crime (subscribers only) magazine in the U.K.")

In 2007 I had a bout of expensive and irritating computer problems. It cost me some \$600 to get them fixed, and they lasted on and off for several months, until I could get a technician out to my rural fastness to do the work. It was irritating, but it was also

outside my usual book-writing period; so I settled down and spent many happy hours instead in reading and re-reading books I'd picked up - and occasionally other items. Amongst them, over twenty years worth of an old friend's letters.

It was then that it occurred to me that, in future, less and less will this be possible. This genre writer disliked her computer. She used it towards the end of her life for some of her professional writing, but as a lady of the old school, she believed that personal letters should be personally written. I have no problem with a computer for letters, but my letters are still printed out and posted.

I'm 62 and still prefer to post hardcopy letters, even if done on and printed out by, computer or word processor. But those who are younger than I am are mostly an e-mail generation. And e-mails by their nature and general usage are ephemeral.

They are also more often very short. I write long personal letters. Those that go to friends average three pages. I do e-mail, but most of those are brief notes intended to reply specifically to a point and immediately. Many of them are business replies to editors, publishers or my agent in America. Or to acquaintances from whom I hear now and again, maybe 2-3 times a year and who are asking a question that needs an answer fairly quickly.

It is to my old friends and regular correspondents that I write the longer printed-out letters at least once a month. These contain publishing news – or failures – farm events, what my current cat is up to, what some other friends are doing, and how my life is generally, along with the occasional reflections on life and writing. One Australian friend, who has kept all these, has some 25 years worth in a massive file.

But the point of musing on my own letters is that writers tend to write. There have been many biographies of writers, some dating back a very long time indeed. But they were made more possible because writers wrote to each other, also to friends, to relatives, and to the authorities. When a famous writer died, all a biographer had to do was write in turn to his subjects' correspondents and request copies – or the loan of originals – of all the letters by the subject that they had in their possession. This would provide both an excellent framework for the biography, and a selection of amusing anecdotes culled from the letters, to make the writer more human to the readers.

But how many writers still write and post letters? How many of their letters if sent in scrappy notes via e-mail will ever be retained? E-mails are a nuisance to print out each time, almost as a big nuisance to retain in a special file. And when last in conversation with several writers I asked if they did retain e-mails from well-known writer friends. I was told that no, they didn't retain them much beyond their reply.

And so it is likely to be that the interesting portions of biographies, the items that give us best a look at the real person, will be lost. How can it be otherwise? What will be left are perhaps a few e-mails to agents, editors, or publishers, that were printed out and retained for business purposes. Possibly there will still exist the occasional personal e-mail to a friend, retained for usable information or something sentimental, but nothing more.

A biography will have those, along with the records of contracts, the personal memories of friends and family, but nothing will remain from the person's own casual and uncensored words. There will be nothing left of the sort of personal connection that is so delightful in the biographies of older writers.

But the bottom line is that, in becoming computerized, we are losing history: not the wider sweep of events, but the small personal items and recollections that give clues to the outcome. Nor will we have the memories from those on the spot that give a contemporary picture of how the events were perceived.

A friend's great-aunt, who was living in an area of New Zealand when the Tarawera eruption occurred, sat down two days later and wrote a long letter about it to her sister. A copy is now in the Turnbull Library/Archive. Nowadays, if that happened, the eruption's human neighbours would write a quick half-page email, mostly to let friends and family know that they'd survived. After that, phone calls would cover the details. Friends and family would receive the e-mail, read, then delete it. Even if some passed it on to others, they would take similar action, and the contemporary and really personal record of the event would be lost.

Friends regularly tell me that computers are a wonderful invention. That they speed up writing, make editing easier, improve communication speeds, that they cut down on paper and workload, and are generally incredibly useful. I have to agree with most of that – but the one thing they are also doing is losing our history, all

the small things, the looks into personal lives, and sometimes the real roots of an event.

We know so much of the minutiae of the planning during WWII because Winston Churchill wrote letters extensively. So did many of the personnel – soldiers, sailors, and airmen, the WRENS and the WAAFs wrote letters that have been preserved.

And then too, writers wrote to other writers. They complained about the slowness to pay by their publishers, the demands of their editors, and how they wished their agent would reply sooner. In the case of Robert Heinlein, whose autobiography (*Grumbles from the Grave*) I have read, he saved and used his copies of older letters sent and the editorial replies to them to prove events in an autobiography written more than 30 years later.

The letters showed clearly the background to alterations that the editor forced Heinlein to make, so that the ending of one of his best-known books was substantially different from his original intended work. E-mails almost certainly deleted from one side or the other would not have upheld this, and writing events without proof could have led to a lawsuit.

In the future, biographies will be the poorer for this lack of 'real' letters; so will history, and so will we. When nothing exists that is left to say, in the person's own words, why they took a certain decision, what motivated or influenced them; when we readers no longer have that feeling of connection to the biography's subject through their personal letters; then that will be a great pity - and a solid weight on the other side of the 'usefulness of computers.'



Sugar Mountain Live's "Bookstore Rap"

or, Neil Young, Stock Boy

Sharry Wilson

"I was a stock boy. I wasn't very together. I used to stay out late and come in in the morning... I wasn't meant for that kind of life."

One of the delightful features of *Sugar Mountain Live at Canterbury House 1968* are the enlightening, and oftentimes quite amusing, raps between the songs. In a youthful, innocent, candid and exceedingly charming manner Neil raps on all and sundry, including the few weeks he spent working at a Coles bookstore in downtown Toronto. This would prove to be the only job, albeit a very brief one, that he held as an adult outside of his music career. (Although, as a child, he did raise chickens in order to start a small egg delivery business, and also worked as a newspaper delivery boy.)

I wish to expand on what Neil mentions in the recording and to augment what is generally known about this brief but important period in his life. (Neil's negative experience working at Coles bookstore would be added to other disappointments he encountered in Toronto in regard to his music career and would ultimately convince him to leave the city altogether and try his luck in L.A. The decision proved to be pivotal for him.) My intent is to place "Bookstore Rap" in a geographical and historical context, and

to embellish it with some pertinent photos as well as some of my own personal recollections of the bookstore and the surrounding neighbourhood (circa 1965).

At the beginning of “Bookstore Rap,” Neil engagingly invites us to listen to his story by asking, “Do you know what I used to do before I did this? Before I ever did this, you know what I did?” He informs the Canterbury House audience that he worked in a bookstore for two weeks. He reassuringly adds, “I’m not kidding. Nothing I say up here is a lie. I never ever have told a lie on stage. [...] That’s true. I worked for two weeks at Coles bookstore in Toronto.”

The circumstances leading up to his brief employment in the bookstore are recounted by Scott Young in *Neil and Me*. Neil arrived in Toronto in June 1965 after a harrowing hitchhiking trip from Blind River in northern Ontario. This is where Mort, his beloved 1948 Buick Roadmaster hearse, experienced serious mechanical difficulties and could not be fixed. Scott Young and his second wife Astrid put up Neil and the other prospective band members (Ken Koblun, Terry Erickson and Bob Clark) for a few days at their home in the posh Rosedale neighbourhood of Toronto until they could find alternate accommodation. It was mutually decided that Scott would co-sign a bank loan for Neil for \$400 to tide him over the summer. It would be doled out to Neil in \$40 increments over the following 10 weeks, and Neil could begin to repay the loan by giving Scott \$25 per month when he was able.ⁱⁱ

By the end of the summer the group was no longer together and Neil had still not made a dent on the outstanding loan. Neil was bothered that he owed his father this money, so he decided to look for a day job in order to begin paying it back. Neil figured that he could work during the day and still play at night.

Neil was trying to get a new band together. Terry Erickson and Bob Clark had already left and gone their separate ways, while Ken Koblun was still trying to get things together with Neil. Jim Ackroyd, formerly from Winnipeg, was recruited to replace Terry. (Jim had been in a popular group called The Galaxies in Winnipeg.) Neil found Geordie McDonald, a replacement for their drummer Bob Clark, listed on the bulletin board at the Long & McQuade music store on Bloor Street West.ⁱⁱⁱ The quartet was named 4 To Go by agent Martin Onrot, whom Neil had called shortly after arriving in Toronto. Onrot recognized Neil’s “unique style and

unique voice” and thought he might be able to land him some gigs if he had a band.^{iv}

Neil knew that he needed to get a haircut in order to land a full-time job. Scott took him to his own barber after Neil remarked that Scott’s hair was styled nicely. They went to Mister Ivan’s on Yonge St. and Scott paid \$4 for Neil’s haircut (which was considered quite pricey in 1965). Neil’s hair was left nice and thick, but styled neatly.^v

The first place Neil applied for a job was a Coles bookstore located a few doors away from Mister Ivan’s. He was hired as a stockroom boy at the salary of \$50 per week. Scott Young remarked, “He had always been self-sufficient. Neil always had money that he made himself, delivering papers, whatever it was. So I thought him walking down the street from the barbershop straight into Coles and getting a job as a stockroom boy was fairly typical.”^{vi} That week Neil paid the first \$25 due on the \$400 loan. (This would turn out to be the only repayment Neil ever made on the loan.)

The Coles bookstore in question was located on the southwest corner of Yonge and Charles St. W. The exact address was 726 - 28 Yonge St., since it was a large building and took up the space of two regular storefronts. The building it occupied was built in 1889 by the award-winning Toronto architect George Wallace Gouinlock (1861-1932) and his (sometime) partner, George W. King.^{vii} This was the flagship store of the huge Coles chain of bookstores that would soon proliferate rapidly in cities across Canada from 1939, until it was absorbed in the mid 1990s into the even larger Chapters/Indigo chain. (The name Coles has been retained for its smaller format bookstores located in shopping malls.) The flagship store was started in 1939 by brothers Carl and Jack Cole.^{viii} This building is now officially listed as a heritage property of the City of Toronto. City Council adopted the motion on March 15, 1974, recognizing the architectural significance of the building.^{ix}

While working at Coles, Neil lived in 4 to Go drummer Georgie McDonald’s former flat, in an old Victorian house at 88 Isabella St. (which was, of course, immortalized in the song “Ambulance Blues.”) The location, one block south and a few blocks east of the store, made it convenient for Neil to walk to

work. The flat was very bare, so Scott Young and Astrid collected what they could in the way of a sleeping bag, a cot, a two-burner plate, dishes, pots, pans and assorted cutlery, and gave it to Neil to set up housekeeping.^x

This area of the city in the mid-1960s was a real mixed bag. It was downtown, but not “way downtown.” At the same time, it wasn’t an “uptown” location either. Isabella Street was located south and east of Yorkville Village and wasn’t considered a part of it, although one could easily walk between the two. Neil’s neighbours on Isabella Street would most likely have been other aspiring musicians, students, waiters and waitresses, aspiring thespians, and assorted retail store workers. Isabella Street where it intersects with Church Street (one major street east of Yonge) was also a known “stroll” for prostitutes at the time.

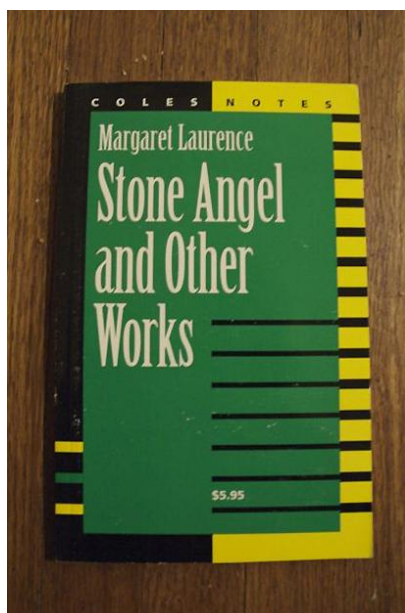
Even though the flat on Isabella Street (located on the north side of the street between Yonge and Church streets) was ideally located for Neil’s job at the bookstore, he still had a problem with his daily walk to work and the job in general. In “Bookstore Rap,” Neil remarks, “I was really uptight about working in the bookstore. I had to get up at 7 in the morning and walk to work in the winter.” He then goes on to detail his mundane duties, such as unloading the boxes of books from the delivery truck, taking the books out and entering them on a list, licking price stickers to place on them and then carrying them in big armloads to be shelved in the store. Neil adds, “So you can imagine that I didn’t get behind it, you know, too well, on the natch.”

Band rehearsals with 4 To Go would last until the wee hours of the morning and then Neil would have to wake up a few hours later to go to work. In order to remedy this situation, a female friend of his in Yorkville would lay “one of these little red pills” on him. Neil introduces this episode by shyly screening the audience first: “Everybody here’s OK, right? There’s no cops here, right?” He then goes on to broach the subject by asking the audience, “All of you know about pills, right?” Neil accepts the audience’s laughter as a positive response. He expands on the subject (apparently with gestures, judging by the amused reaction of the audience), explaining that different pills produce different reactions. Neil goes on to say that his female friend told him the pills she had given him were diet pills, and Neil exclaims, “They were really *great* diet pills!” Presumably these were “pep pills” that

included a bit of amphetamine, and they produced their desired effect. Neil hilariously describes how he would be rushing around in the bookstore, not even taking a break for lunch, and doing so much work that he was utterly exhausted the next day and didn't even want to see a book. On one of the inevitable "down" days, Ken Koblun paid Neil a visit. He was feeling sorry for Neil and wound up moving heavy boxes of books: "I remember Neil sitting in the basement smoking while I was doing the work."^{xi} This mixture of hyper-activity and inertia on Neil's part naturally produced inconsistency in his work, and this is why he thinks he was fired. Neil tells the audience, "I got fired for irregularity...because I couldn't be depended on to be consistent."

Scott Young confirms in *Neil and Me* that Neil was experimenting with speed at the time. "In those days when Neil worked at Coles and played the nights away trying to get the group into shape, sometimes he would be roaming the streets at three or four in the morning unable to sleep, getting by on the odd joint, the odd meal, experimenting with speed, pushing himself to the limit."^{xii} (Neil continued to experiment with speed for a while after that, and popped amyl nitrates when he played with Rick James and the Mynah Birds.^{xiii})

It's interesting to note that Neil's timeline diverges a bit from Scott Young's account in *Neil and Me*. The result was the same – Neil was ultimately fired – but there are a few interesting variances to the story. In "Bookstore Rap," Neil states that he worked at Coles bookstore for two weeks and was fired for "inconsistency" in his work habits. Scott Young writes, "Five weeks after Neil started work at Coles, I was out of the city when he phoned my home one morning. In a voice so weak, Astrid could hardly hear, he said he was sick."^{xiv} Astrid immediately drove to 88 Isabella and brought Neil back to their house to recuperate. He slept most of the time, only waking to eat ravenously or use the bathroom. Astrid phoned Coles to book him off sick, and they were none too pleased. Neil had been late for work a lot lately, Astrid was told. In a few days Neil was feeling much better, but his job at the Coles bookstore was gone.



I have my own personal recollections of that particular Coles bookstore. In 1965, when I was a ten-year-old schoolgirl, it was considered to be the best place in the city to buy school supplies since they had the greatest selection at reasonable prices. I remember my mother taking me there every year just before school began in order to buy some brand-new Laurentian-brand coloured pencils (the large 24 pack!), a pencil case, ruler, eraser, and other essentials. A distinct memory I have of that store is of the wood plank flooring, though I seem to recall that some of the floor area was also covered with a light linoleum. As you entered the store you would be greeted by the intoxicating smell of books, school supplies, and the wood flooring, which creaked pleasantly underfoot.

In addition to the multitude of books and school supplies, I also distinctly recall a large part of a wall section filled with Coles Notes in display racks. Coles Notes were pamphlets produced as study guides to books commonly used in school courses (mainly English novels, math, language and physics). All featured an instantly recognizable black-and-yellow striped background with either a green or red foreground (except for special Shakespeare editions, which featured red and black stripes only.)^{xv} Neil

would have been intimately familiar with these, as the 1960s were the “glory days” of Coles Notes (with over 120 titles available). This is when sales peaked, because of all the baby boomer children entering high school at the time. The first of the Coles Notes series was printed in 1948 (an everyday English translation of the French novel *Colomba* by Prosper Mérimée).^{xvi} In 1958 Jack and Carl Cole sold the American rights to Coles Notes to Cliff Hillegass who published them under the title of CliffsNotes.^{xvii} This means that Coles Notes pre-dated CliffsNotes by a solid decade.

It’s somewhat ironic, although somehow quite appropriate, that forty years later the premises of Coles bookstore is now a drugstore (one of the many Shoppers Drug Mart stores in a huge Canada-wide chain), while 88 Isabella Street has been replaced by a non-descript 14-storey high-rise apartment building. (“Oh, Isabella / Proud Isabella / They tore you down / And plowed you under.”)

I sometimes wonder if Neil and I might have crossed paths in Coles bookstore, back when I was purchasing my school supplies and he was speeding around shelving books. I’d like to think so, anyway! (Although in 1965 I was really more of a Beatles fan. It would be five more years before I became an avid Neil Young fan.)

As the “Bookstore Rap” suggests, Neil Young may not have been the most reliable employee; but I think it’s safe to say that leaving the book trade was a wise career choice in the long run.

Notes

ⁱ McDonough, Jimmy. *Shakey*, Random House (New York), 2002, p. 123.

ⁱⁱ Young, Scott. *Neil and Me*, McClelland and Stewart Limited (Toronto), 1984, pp. 55-56.

ⁱⁱⁱ Einarson, John. *Don’t Be Denied*, Quarry Press (Kingston, Ontario), 1993, pp. 143-44.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 141.

^v Young, p. 59.

^{vi} McDonough, p. 123.

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- vii City of Toronto Heritage Properties website –
<http://www.app.toronto.ca/heritage/browseLetter.do?letter=y>
- viii Kearney, Mark and Randy Ray. *I Know That Name! : The People Behind Canada's Best Known Brand Names from Elizabeth Arden to Walter Zeller*, Dundurn Press Limited, 2002, p. 60.
- ix City of Toronto Heritage Properties website –
<http://www.app.toronto.ca/heritage/browseLetter.do?letter=y>
- x Young, p. 60.
- xi McDonough, p. 123.
- xii Young, p. 60.
- xiii Einarson, p. 167.
- xiv Young, p. 60.
- xv <http://canadiandesignresource.ca/officialgallery/?p=1646>
- xvi http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coles_Notes
- xvii *Ibid.*