

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette



#21

June 2010

Mostly, a personalzine

Colophon

The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #21 (June 2010) is usually 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 82 East 40th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, CANADA V5W 1L4, or to garthspencer@shaw.ca. *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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Contents

Recent Fan News	1
Recent SF News	2
Letters	2
Illegible History	8
Guest Editorial	11
“Ambulance Blues”: A T.O. Travelogue.....	12

Art Credits

Ken Fletcher	cover
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Recent Fan News

It seems there are no commonly-known and recognized newszines, or fan websites, or even local fan gatherings, which people generally know about and resort to for news in the subculture. This may be rectified now that a café in Burnaby has become a common gathering place for scores of local SF clubs, and since Keith Lim has made it his business to publish a weekly list of upcoming events in Vancouver. One Daryl Bergmann is putting together a similar online resource. But the situation in Vancouver came to the point where fans were regularly surprised to hear VCON was still being held. (I gather that Garth wasn't too surprised to hear about this reaction.)

A little online correspondence has been connected to Canadian fan institutions, such as the Aurora Awards and the Canadian Unity Fan Fund and the Convention, which is the title for whichever convention gets to host the Auroras and the CUFF delegate. I used to be centrally involved with these things, but never quite got the sense that most fans were interested, or even aware. It is as if, when a national Canadian SF and fantasy award or a transnational travel fund was conceived, already they were ideas whose time had passed. I have joked that these institutions were what happened when Canadian nationalism met SF fandom. Almost nobody got the joke. Anyway I voted when I was asked to, and we'll see the awards announced at Keycon in May.

This year's Convention was KeyCon, held in May in Winnipeg. This year's Canadian Unity Fan Fund delegate was Diane Lacey. Next year's Convention will be SFContario. No word yet on next year's CUFF delegate.

Recent SF News

About Self-Publishers: Robert Sawyer has a very low opinion of self-publishing, which apparently some people are promoting as an avenue for aspiring writers. I have contemplated self-publishing, at least to the extent of producing some non-fiction chapbooks (on world building, say, or constructing languages). But there is a reason why publishers hire editors, and reject manuscripts.

One of the novels I avoided reviewing for *BCSFAzine*, *The War of the Apocalyptics*, is a good argument against self-publishing. It is about as badly-written as the alleged Hubbard novels sent me for review in the mid-1980s. (They came from a press transparently operated by the Church of Scientology; I was editing a Canadian newszine at the time and they must have thought I was a way to Spread the Word.)

Letters

Sharry Wilson, February 1, 2010

I would like to thank Taral Wayne for forwarding my article for inclusion in issue 20 of the *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette*. I would also like to thank Garth Spencer for agreeing to publish it.

I was pleased to see some familiar names in the issue, including Lloyd and Yvonne Penney. I'd like to extend my congratulations to Lloyd on securing a promising full-time position with the Law Society of Upper Canada. The last time we chatted he was employed part-time at the *Globe and Mail* in Toronto.

I would also like to mention that *Sugar Mountain Live's* "Bookstore Rap;" or, Neil Young, Stock Boy was originally published in *Broken Arrow* #113 (February 2009). *Broken Arrow*

is the quarterly magazine of the Neil Young Appreciation Society (NYAS) at www.nyas.org.uk.

I've had a number of articles published in *Broken Arrow* since first joining 1984. I have a large two-part article about Neil Young's school days that's being published in issue 117 (February 2010) and issue 118 (May 2010). Much of it is original research including many never-before-seen photos.

Darcy Mann, February 9, 2010

I can totally relate to the article on losing history, how computers have subverted the letter-writers in our midst. I know, I was once one of them. When I first moved a significant distance away from home, it was to a small hamlet in the Northwest Territories. Long distance phone calls were a lot more expensive then, so I considered stamps a bargain. I had a couple of regular pen pals, one another fan, and the other, my mother.

By the time I moved to the coast, long distance was cheap, and I mostly replaced letters with phone calls. With the advent of email, while I've gone back to the written word a lot, there isn't that sense that the words should be preserved. (I admit, I'm one of those weirdos who files away her email correspondence into a separate folder, but I don't print it out. I'm trying to reduce my environmental footprint, and printing out hundreds of emails doesn't cut it anymore...)

The only person I ever write to anymore is my mother, who is a techno-luddite, and cannot seem to join the wired world. And then the letters are only when I am sending her something else, otherwise a phone call seems so much more personal. I have to admit, though, every now and again I crave a letter that isn't a bill or junk mail. The feeling of slitting open an envelope and sliding out pages graced with another's hand writing. This is a joy that the current generation may never know, and I think that's a shame.

*Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2,
February 10, 2010*

I sent the .pdf for *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette 20* to the photocopier to make it a little easier to read, and to let it blend in with the surrounding paperwork. Ulterior motives, and all that. Comments start below.

Given the insanities of the Harper government, the RCMP, and the various police forces across the country, it is hard to think of a group wielding power that one can speak positively

about. I have never been pro-military, but I'd like to support our troops by bringing them back home to rejoin their families. I have thought of a cause the RSN can get behind...Charity Begins at Home. We have given big businesses billions to bail them out, and we regularly hand out millions of dollars to other countries to help them out. Meanwhile, our native citizens live in poverty, and the homeless on the street get short shrift from everyone. Who's going to help us out? I propose that 2011 and 2012 will be the Years of Self-Investment. Instead of spending billions on business and other countries, those two years will see Canada invest in...Canada. The money will focus on solving our inner city problems, investing in farmers to help solve their problems and keep them growing, giving native reservations a complete renovation with decent houses, water and employment opportunities, so many problems that we have, but have focused our money elsewhere so that we can be seen as good international citizens. That money will also go to hiring people to carry out that new investment and implement those new programs, which create jobs, and will take people off the EI and welfare rolls. After those two years of self-investment, the country will be in much better shape, structurally and financially, that we can return to our investing elsewhere, and we'll probably be able to invest more elsewhere, too. This may not be the focus of a lampoon group, but I'd like to see someone at least consider this idea.

Wow, I rarely get to see Ken Fletcher artwork anymore. Good for you in getting this.

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? Are some conventions less tolerant of people making their own fun by staging parties? Some conventions locally are professionally run, and come down hard on anyone trying to promote their fan-run events.

Now that we are nearly half-way through February, are you still planning to declare bankruptcy? If you do, this might mean a lack of credit for some years to come. It's a big step; make sure you've got all the facts before you do so.

Cats know everything, from why we are here to the meaning of Life. And, they're not telling. Imagine cats with opposable thumbs and the English language. We'd all be in serious trouble. Not only would they rule, as they do now, but we'd all be subservient cat

toys. Because of my two current jobs, I rarely watch television. The news, and that's about it. I keep getting told I'm not missing anything, so as a result, I get a lot done. I find it hard to care about any of the programmes on the TV as a result. Makes conversations in the office short, especially when it starts with "Did you see..." or "Do you watch...". The answer is almost always, "No." Should I get to the point where I can get my evenings back, I doubt I will go back to spending the evenings watching TV, but you never know, bad habits are always easy to re-acquire.

The jobs referred to above...still at the *Globe and Mail*, five years as of Valentine's Day. The Law Society continues to keep me busy in a good job. At neither place am I a full employee, so that's why I keep going with both; either could end at any time. The money is some security, but the perks of being an employee are where the true security lies. I'm not there yet; I haven't been an employee for more than ten years. Got my fingers crossed for the Law Society; they do 6-month and 12-month trial periods before they hire. My contract is a six-month contract, so they might hire me when it's done.

I understand Lyn McConchie's plaint in that we are losing our tradition of writing letters. Our computerized world makes communication immediate, and the world has shrunk. Used to be it could take days to travel from one city to another, so a letter was the best way to keep in touch with distant friends. Not that efficient in this Facebook era. I never really wrote letters when I was a kid, but I have learned the value of a written letter through the ones I would receive from penpals and old friends from a ways back. Today, I am writing about 300 letters a year, all of them written in a letter format, and most of them fired off via e-mail. I still keep a stock of paper, stamps and envelopes for those who don't trust or like or use e-mail, and just as it is good to get mail, it's also neat to send some out, too. Lyn refers to the WRENs and the WAAFs...many of us are sometimes WAHFs.

I sure remember that old Coles bookstore Sharry Wilson refers to on Yonge Street. When I was a Ryerson student in the 80s, I'd been told that it was a cheap place to get the textbooks you needed. I did go, found lots of books, but only a couple of books I needed. So I saved \$10, which was a lot for a student back then. Not far away was the old building that housed one of the first SF landmarks in Toronto that I remember, Mr. Gameway's Ark. That was where the fabled fan-made Star Trek bridge was kept, and that was where I first met Yvonne.

Hey, two pages, not bad at all. Off it goes to you and to my LiveJournal. Just saw online today that Google will try to create their own version of Facebook, called Buzz. Nope, not going to do it. Got enough social media to worry about as it is. Take care, and see you nextish.

Dwain Kaiser, June 1, 2010

(On whether cats know something we don't know:)

They know how to avoid working and still get fed. Not bad.

R'ykandar Korra'ti, June 16, 2010

Garth -

Sorry I haven't been writing for a while, but I have been reading your 'zines. I finally read nr. 20 just the other day and said dammit, I'm writing a LoC.

I thought about your "why aren't we doing these things?" question in the editorial. I know I haven't been doing a lot of fannish stuff lately in general, outside Norwescon. A lot of that has to do with life things impinging upon fanac for the last several years - getting hit by the car, Anna's cancer, and so on. But lately, a lot of it also has to do with my attempt to build some sort of music career. I know, these aren't words that you'd likely expect to go together with me, but they kind of are, tho' the progress is slow and the labour intensive and the chance of success probably small (as it is for anyone), but, well, the thing is, I really like it. I haven't liked anything like this in a long time, so I've been going with it. I'm getting a lot of the creative satisfaction I've gotten out of fandom in the past from my sorta-kind-a-wannabe-career now, you know?

It also kind of kept me sane during Anna's cancer fight, which she won. But that's another story.

Still, sometimes fandom intersects even new and unexpected interests! And I provide such an example here. ^_^ Do you remember The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension? I've joined an online fandom of it, on Livejournal. (Buckaroo_Banzai, which means "Buckaroo Everything" in English.) Anyway, Buck's band was the Hong Kong Cavaliers, but we never really got to hear them do a song - just an intro to one. So I've fixed that!

Title: The Diesel-Driven Eight Dimensional Jet Car Blues
Pairing: Buckaroo Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers (banzai-institute.com) / Crime and the Forces of Evil (crimeandtheforcesofevil.com)
Author: Dara Korra'ti
Rating: PG at most
Word Count: n/a
Time: 3m14s
Link: <http://www.megaupload.com/?d=XMM2QU1G> (mp3, "The Diesel-Driven Eight Dimensional Jet Car Blues," Live at Artie's Artery)

Summary: Remember that first song the Hong Kong Cavaliers start to do at Artie's Artery, the one they don't finish because Penny is crying? Remember that lyrics appeared a few weeks ago? [I'd written and posted same.] Remember that there was a series of concerts recently to keep Artie's open? Some of those featured the Hong Kong Cavaliers sharing the stage with other bands. And this could be called a bootleg.

I of course have no idea where this came from. Noooooo idea at all. But I do know that Buckaroo Banzai is on lead guitar and coronet; Perfect Tommy and Pinky Caruthers are on rhythm guitar and bass, respectively; Reno is doing some horn work, but I'm not sure who the other trumpeter is at the end. For the guest band (Crime and the Forces of Evil), Crime (Solarbird, the Lightbringer) is on vocals; the archer twins (Truth and Consequences) are on mandolin and Irish bouzouki, respectively, and Cold Hard Reality provided some work on drums. And Conscience ran sound.

OOO, the parts I wrote are Creative Commons 3.5/Share Alike/Attribute/Non-commercial, and this is total self-insert fic, but, well, at least I own up to it, and besides, what'm I gonna do? Somebody has to play all these instruments. ^_^

I kind of want to do more Hong Kong Cavaliers songs now, but I need to be working more on music I can actually perform out, and charge for, and all that. But the fannishness will out!

Anyway, thanks for still sending me copies, even if I've been more than a tad lazy about LoCcing. Hope things are going

decently for you - it's been a rough decade in a lot of ways, y'know?

Illegible History

by Lyn McConchie.

(previously appearing in *Steam Engine Time*)

In the middle of 2008 I was giving an after-luncheon-talk to a women's group celebrating their 60th anniversary. Part of the meeting, before it was my turn to speak, was given over to a reading of the original minutes and the activity of the very first meeting – all recorded in handwriting. The young lady reading this had to leave out portions of the information, as she was unable to read the handwriting in which it was recorded. Over the sections she could read she stumbled often, misreading a word and correcting it as she realised from the context what it must really be.

At this point several things occurred to me. The lady was perhaps in her late twenties or early thirties. 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. I'm not talking about the beautiful copperplate script that some wrote - and that at least one

old friend still uses. That is legible always since in many ways it is akin to a number of computer fonts.

No, I'm thinking about the handwriting that was written by many who left school at twelve. Those whose writing is that spiky angular script that is quite readable still - if you grew up reading it as I did - but the sort of writing that to the next generation, and increasingly to those after that, is quite illegible.

(This problem will also apply increasingly to preserved family letters handwritten by fans or genre writers who perhaps are still not so well known. However as the years pass and for various reasons they can become better known, more widely accepted as influential. But many family letters written in the 50/60s and preserved by those who loved them, were written in poor handwriting. How many of those, even if they remain, will still be readable by those who were born 50 years later?)

The suggestion that leaped to mind is that such precious records should be brought out and transcribed onto computers. The best thing is to have dual records. The original, and a copy; a printout, so that the precious originals can be preserved, but that they can also be read, understood and appreciated by later generations of fannish writers. And a separate copy of them in printout will as well, save the originals the handling that, as they age, will be more and more damaging.

It is something that few fan groups will ever think about. But there are points to consider. One is that many professionals who are well known now were once amateurs or at the beginning of what would eventually be an illustrious career. They started or belonged to fan groups - often small groups serving their own specific area. They wrote the minutes, they were recorded as objecting, supporting, or abstaining, from various motions. They proposed, seconded, and acclaimed. And in another couple of generations of those who know nothing but computers, the words of such fans will be unreadable by the enthusiasts of their work - or by would-be official biographers.

And what of those who want to propose something based on - or changed from - an early regulation of the group? They may be

unable to do so as, while that regulation is known by tradition, the actual tangible record is in illegible handwriting and cannot be read in support - or denial - of the changes or support now proposed. .

And then there is the side of historical record. These early handwritten minutes of some fan groups can be invaluable to show how they developed and grew. How conventions or regulations arose, and who was involved in historic decisions. If these records can no longer be read, then we are losing the history of our groups and that would be a great pity.

Which of you belong/ed to small fan groups and know that the group's early records are handwritten? Can some of your younger members easily read those records? If not, then how much worse will that be in another generation? This is something that I notice at my age. That children who have grown up reading nothing but print find even quite clear handwriting almost impossible to read. Print, yes, they can read that, but flowing handwriting they find illegible.

But there is also a problem inherent in trying to save such history. Many groups may have lost most of their older members for various reasons and those remaining may not have the time or the energy to sit for hour after hour transcribing the handwritten records into the computer. Yet the younger members can't read the handwriting to do that job.

I listened to the member of that group stumble her way through handwritten records that dated to 1948, omitting large sections that she couldn't read, and thought that this is a project for people working by twos. One to read the handwriting, the other to enter it to computer. And if it is done this way I have little doubt that the younger members will find some astonishing pieces of information along the way. At the least they will learn a lot more of their groups' history and beginnings.

But I fear that while most fan groups will agree that this is something that should be done, few will set out to do it. They will say that they do not have the time, that it is an unnecessary expense. They will protest that a time will never come when they

or their successors are unable to read the handwritten minutes. Why, they can read almost every word still. And anyway, their group was small and items will be duplicated elsewhere.

Or they will protest that their group is a major one, so someone will always be interested and able to read the records, copies can be sent to specialist archives anyway, where experts will work on them. They will have a multitude of reasons and excuses – all of which add up to not wanting to do the work. And in a very few more years it may be too late. After that fandom will be the poorer.

Guest Editorial

By Rajiv Witherspoon-Li

Garth is taking time out at Unitarian monastery, getting a personality transplant, and asked me to guest-edit this issue of RSNG. This should allow us to reassess and redirect this fanzine. The fact that this is coming out months later than planned should be a Clue to you.

You may be interested by a number of subjects that have emerged recently. For one thing, since the longest-running SF convention in Vancouver has chosen a steampunk theme this year, we had to reflect on what science and technology *was*, in the Victorian era, as opposed to the present. It's one thing to reimagine the 19th century as if 20th-century inventions, and industrial revolutions, had appeared a lot earlier. It's another thing to know *why* things developed the way they did, and especially how our attitudes and certainties have changed. Put yourself in your great-grandparents' shoes, for a minute; imagine how life looked, in the world they lived in, or how your world would look, in their eyes. Have we gained more, or lost more, in the intervening decades?

Another subject that came up was our recent reading. Garth has encountered a whole series of adventure/crime/espionage/thrillers,

which makes *The Da Vinci Code* look like just one novel in a long-established genre. From that perspective, the media attention given to Dan Brown's writing is a little over-the-top. In fact Garth keeps saying Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* is a lot better work, not just more to his taste; I'm inclined to agree.

In the last couple of years, I have been reading more thrillers about crime and terrorism with obligatory Internet/computer technology aspects. Is it just my impression, or has the degree of stark inhumanity in this fiction gone beyond credibility, or reason?

You may be wondering about the need for a personality transplant. To quote Garth:

In retrospect my personal interactions this month shifted almost entirely online. Maybe I needed more company, even though I'm used to being a loner. It is unfortunate that our regular Friday gathering was suspended during the Olympic craziness, but again, I simply didn't have the money for it.

Online I got ... well, my tone was pretty sour. In fact I verbally abused one person on the CanadianConrunners list, for what turned out to be no good reason; I think I was simply in a mood to completely misread Alexander von Thorn as if he wilfully misrepresented the moderator. Maybe I should have renewed my prescription for antidepressants, but I simply didn't have the money for it.

Well, admit that I fucked up, and put it down to a lesson in self-knowledge.

Now you know.

“Ambulance Blues”: A T.O. Travelogue

Sharry Wilson, (for *Broken Arrow Magazine*)



One of the things a great song can do is capture memories of a time and a place. Neil Young's "Ambulance Blues" is one of those songs, explicitly evoking many of the sights and sounds of T.O. in the mid-1960s.

If it isn't already crystal clear and readily apparent, T.O. stands for Toronto, and Neil includes pointed references to the city of his birth in the song. Many meanings can be construed from the lyrics, which are both metaphorical and autobiographical in nature, but I want to concentrate on the lyrics having to do with Toronto "back in the old folky days," when Neil was young (and I was *very* young), and he was not yet famous.

"Ambulance Blues" is part of the "blues trilogy" from *On the Beach*, which also includes "Vampire Blues" and "Revolution Blues." It has always been one of my favourite songs in Neil's canon. (In fact, my long-time handle on both the Rust and Human Highway computer lists is "Up in T.O. keepin' jive alive.")

Neil has admitted that the melody unintentionally quotes British folk legend Bert Jansch's "Needle of Death." In an April

1992 interview with French *Guitare & Claviers* magazine, Neil discussed Jansch's influence by stating, "[. . .] But as for acoustic guitar, Bert Jansch is on the same level as Jimi. That first record of his is epic. It came from England, and I was especially taken by 'The Needle of Death,' such a beautiful and angry song. That guy was so good... And years later, on *On the Beach*, I wrote the melody of 'Ambulance Blues' by styling the guitar part completely on 'Needle of Death.' I wasn't even aware of it, and someone else drew my attention to it."ⁱ As fate would have it, Neil got to play "Ambulance Blues" with Bert Jansch during a Bridge School Benefit concert at the Shoreline Amphitheatre on October 22, 2006.ⁱⁱ

During Neil's 2007 and 2008 Chrome Dreams Continental Tour in North America and Europe, "Ambulance Blues" was played at every show as the second selection immediately after the opening number "From Hank to Hendrix." Previous to this, Neil performed "Ambulance Blues" regularly during his 1999 Solo Acoustic Tour. In addition to the aforementioned 2006 Bridge School Benefit show, he played "Ambulance Blues" with R.E.M. at two memorable 1998 Bridge School Benefit concerts. He also included this song in his excellent solo acoustic show at the Bottom Line in New York City in May, 1974, his 2003 performance at Vicar Street in Dublin, and in some 1974 CSNY shows.ⁱⁱⁱ According to *Ghosts On The Road* by Pete Long, Neil first performed "Ambulance Blues" live in concert on March 16, 1974 at the Cuesta College Auditorium of Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, California. The Eagles were also on the bill and Neil played some songs together with the Eagles as well as solo. "Ambulance Blues" was one of his two known solo numbers that night.^{iv}

The first Toronto reference in "Ambulance Blues" occurs right at the beginning with a mention of the Riverboat. ("Back in the old folky days / The air was magic when we played / The Riverboat was rockin' in the rain.")

The Riverboat, located in the narrow basement of a Victorian row house at 134 Yorkville Ave., was a Yorkville area coffeehouse which was opened in the late fall of 1964 by Bernie Fiedler, a former coffee salesman. Yorkville during the 1960s was Toronto's cultural equivalent of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury or New York City's Greenwich Village. Brent Titcomb of the popular folk group Three's A Crowd recalled, "Yorkville was really the whole epicentre of the music scene in Canada, with an incredible energy all its own. And the Riverboat was its most prestigious venue."^v Fiedler owned and operated the Riverboat until 1977, although it continued under different management until June 1978. It briefly

lived on from August 1978 to mid-1979, when it was known as the Ship of Fools. There was seating for approximately 100 people, with red booths, pine walls and brass portholes.^{vi} The Riverboat was a showcase during the 1960s for numerous emerging Canadian folk-inspired singers, including Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Murray McLauchlan and Bruce Cockburn. Many well known international acts also graced its stage over the years. In addition to the Riverboat, there were approximately 40 coffeehouses and clubs that made up the Yorkville circuit, among them the Penny Farthing, the Purple Onion, the Mynah Bird, Café El Patio, Boris' & the Red Gas Room, the Flick, the Night Owl, the Village Corner and Chez Monique.

During this time, Neil aspired to play a solo performance as a folksinger at the Riverboat. As recounted by noted Canadian music journalist Nicholas Jennings in *Neil Young Nation*, “Bernie Fiedler was a talent spotter, but for whatever reason he didn’t see the talent in Neil Young. Neil tried very hard to get a main-stage showcase night at the Riverboat. But the only time he ever got to play there was a Hoot Night, when he managed to get onstage with a couple of other local folksingers, including Vicky Taylor. They performed as the Public Utilities and did a folk satire number: a bit of theatre, some humour, and some serious folk music.” Jennings also noted, “He played mostly at open mike nights at different coffeehouses like the Half Beat, the New Gate of Cleve, and the Cellar.”^{vii}

At the farewell concert at the Riverboat in June 1978, Murray McLauchlan played the final three sets that closed the doors on Yorkville’s most famous coffeehouse. The Riverboat was a victim of the times and could no longer compete with licensed clubs that served a younger clientele after the lowering of the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 in 1971.

During the course of conducting research for this article I decided to pay a visit to Yorkville and take a photo of the building at 134 Yorkville Ave. that formerly housed the Riverboat. I discovered, much to my astonishment, that 134 Yorkville Ave. no longer existed. I had not been to the area in quite some time and discovered that the Hazelton Hotel, a 10-storey luxury hotel-condominium, now stood in its place. There were actually 5 old Victorian row houses in total that were demolished to make way for the Hazelton Hotel, which was completed in June 2007. A local residents’ association, the Greater Yorkville Residents’ Association (GYRA), protested the building of the Hazelton, but construction went ahead as planned anyway.

As fate and synchronicity would have it, I discovered much to my delight that Nicholas Jennings was conducting a free walking tour of the Yorkville area on Saturday, June 1, 2008. The title of the walk was “The Yorkville Music Scene of the 1960s.” He had been conducting this walking tour, as well as a walking tour of the Yonge Street Strip music scene in the 1960s, for a number of years under the auspices of Heritage Toronto.^{viii} I was familiar with Nicholas Jennings because I had read his excellent book *Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound* and seen the accompanying documentary titled *Shakin’ All Over: Canadian Pop Music in the 1960s*. I also knew that author Kevin Chong had interviewed him for *Neil Young Nation* (see Chapter 14). Kevin kindly introduced me to Nicholas via e-mail and I received a positive response which included his telephone number. When I spoke with Nicholas I told him I was planning to write an article about “Ambulance Blues” to submit for publication in *Broken Arrow* and I was interested in joining his Yorkville walking tour.

Before the walking tour began I introduced myself to Nicholas and asked another walk participant if he would kindly take a photo of us standing together. I then asked Nicholas if he would sign my copy of *Before the Gold Rush* as well as Chapter 14 of *Neil Young Nation* and he happily complied. In return, I gave Nicholas a brown paper packet containing photocopies of some of my *Broken Arrow* articles as well as the four Riverboat tracks (“Sugar Mountain,” “Broken Arrow,” “On the Way Home” and “I Am A Child”) that were included as individual bonus tracks with certain *Chrome Dreams II* CDs that were sold by iTunes, Barnes & Noble and a few others. Nicholas was thrilled to receive these and I was happy to have been able to supply them.

The Yorkville walking tour was enjoyable and informative. We stood at the southeast corner of Avenue Rd. and Davenport Rd. (referred to by locals as the intersection of “Av and Dav”), on the spot where a jazz club called the Cellar used to be located. In the early spring of 1966 Neil designated this as the pick-up spot for himself and the five others who were beginning their fateful trip to Los Angeles. Neil pulled up in a 1953 Pontiac hearse -- purchased from the proceeds of pawning all of the Mynah Birds’ equipment - - and the rest, as they say, is history. (During this point in the walking tour one of the assistants from Heritage Toronto played the 1965 demo of “Runaround Babe” from a tape machine he was carrying.) Nicholas also pointed out a location across the street at 102 Avenue Rd. (Toronto does, indeed, have a road named Avenue!) This was where the Night Owl was located and where musician Vicky Taylor lived on the upper floor over the club.

Taylor was considered a sort of den mother for all the homeless musicians in Yorkville, and Neil stayed at her place on at least one occasion as well.

As we approached the former location of the Riverboat, Jennings remarked that Bernie Fiedler hadn't recognized Neil's talent at the time, but saw the error of his ways after Neil enjoyed success as a member of Buffalo Springfield. Fiedler signed Neil as the headliner for a well-received series of concerts in February, 1969. (See accompanying interview with Nicholas Jennings for more details about Neil's Riverboat gigs.) While discussing the Riverboat, Jennings held up a number of photos of musicians and performers who played there, including Neil. It was shortly after his series of dates at the Riverboat that Neil recorded his first solo album, *Neil Young*, for Warner Bros.-Reprise.

The next Toronto-centric lyrics in "Ambulance Blues" are "Oh, Isabella, proud Isabella. / They tore you down and plowed you under. / You're only real with your make-up on. / How could I see you and stay too long?" This can be seen as a direct reference to 88 Isabella St., an old Victorian house divided into separate apartments where Neil lived for a short time while trying to get the group Four To Go together.^{ix} This house was torn down sometime in the 1970s, when the entire area of Yorkville and vicinity was undergoing a process of gentrification. Neil may have been remarking and lamenting on this in the song as well.

Up next are the lyrics that contain the T.O. reference – "Well, I'm up in T.O. / keepin' jive alive / And out on the corner / it's half past five / The subways are empty / And so are the cafes / Except for the farmers' market / And I can still hear him say / 'You're all just pissin' in the wind / You don't know it, but you are.' / And there ain't nothing like a friend / Who can tell you you're just pissin' in the wind."

These lyrics bring to mind an image of Neil roaming the streets of Toronto very early one morning after a late night socializing and playing music. The "subways" he refers to in the song is the subway system operated by the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). The first subway line was opened in 1954 and consisted of 12 stops covering 7.5 km of track up and down Yonge Street. In 1963 another line opened along University Ave., running between Union Station and St. George Street. (Neil lived briefly on St. George Street and nearby Huron Street before moving to 88 Isabella.^x) The subway would have been closed and free of any passengers at "half past five" in the morning, not opening to the public for at least another half hour.

According to the lyrics in the song, Neil then makes his way to the "farmers' market." This is where he hears one of the farmers (or workers) utter the immortal "pissin' in the wind" lines. The

“farmers’ market” in question is the St. Lawrence Market which is located on the north and south sides of Front Street where it intersects with Jarvis Street. This is at the heart of the “Old Town of York,” where the very beginnings of Toronto were established in 1793. The St. Lawrence Market is owned by the City of Toronto and today comprises the North Market/Farmers’ Market and the South Market. In 1803 Governor Peter Hunter issued a proclamation that the land bounded by Front, Jarvis, King and Church streets be officially designated the “Market Block.”^{xi} Neil would most likely have visited both the North and South Market buildings.

The South Market is an imposing red-brick structure dating from the late nineteenth century and very early days of the twentieth century, encompassing what remains of the original City Hall (1845-1899). For over a century the South Market has been renowned for the variety and freshness of its fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, grains, baked goods and dairy products. Approximately 50 permanent vendors sell their goods all year long. On Saturdays it opens at 5 a.m. instead of the usual 8 a.m. weekday opening time.

The North Market/Farmers’ Market survived the Great Fire of 1849 and underwent reconstruction several times. The present building dates from 1968, so Neil would have frequented the older premises, which dated from 1904. The tradition of a Saturday farmers’ market began on the site in 1803 and continues to this day. A mural depicting fresh produce decorates the face of the North Market building. On the other days of the week its 10,000 sq. ft. of modern showcase space is available for rent for promotional functions, flea markets, display, large social gatherings, meetings and exhibitions.

Since both the North and South Market open at 5 a.m. on Saturday, we can speculate from the lyrics of “Ambulance Blues” that Neil might have been wandering around the St. Lawrence Market area around 5:30 a.m. one Saturday morning.

The possible release of the first volume of the Archives this November has generated a great deal of excitement. Included in the first volume would be songs Neil composed during “the old folky days,” as well as some of his material from the Riverboat gigs in February, 1969. And there are rumours that recordings from Neil’s Riverboat appearances will be released as Performance Series 01.

Unfortunately we’ll have to wait for the second volume of the Archives for a performance of “Ambulance Blues” to make its appearance. But the song is already an archive in its own right – a lost time and place, perfectly captured.

ⁱ Thrasher's Wheat website:

<http://www.thrasherswheat.org/ptma/Frenchguitar492pt2.htm>

ⁱⁱ Sugar Mountain website: <http://www.sugarmtn.org/sets/20061022.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Sugar Mountain website: <http://www.sugarmtn.org>

^{iv} Long, Pete. *Ghosts On The Road (revised edition)*, The Old Homestead Press, 2007, p. 96.

^v Jennings, Nicholas. *Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound*, Viking, 1997, p. 93.

^{vi}

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002991>

^{vii} Chong, Kevin. *Neil Young Nation*, Greystone Books, 2005, p. 127.

^{viii} Heritage Toronto website: <http://www.heritagetoronto.org>

^{ix} Einarson, John. *Don't Be Denied*, Quarry Press, 1992, p. 144.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} St. Lawrence Market website: <http://www.stlawrencemarket.com>