

BCSFazine #344

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**The monthly newsletter of
the British Columbia Science Fiction Association**

Something to interest everyone!

Vol. 30No. 1 * Jan. 2002



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BCSFazine

Something to offend interest everyone!

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CLUB NEWS, eCOAs, MEMBERSHIPS

Membership expiries:

December 2001: Stanley Foo
January 2002: Vera Johnson, Garth Spencer
February: Jon Foster

Upcoming events:

Friday, January 4th: **BCSFazine 344 production**, distribution and enveloping at FRED, and mailout.
Saturday, January 5th: **Perihelion Party** at the home of Philip Freeman and Kathleen Moore-Freeman, 7064 No. 1 Road, Richmond. A fairly wheelchair-accessible home, with driveway space for six cars. Munchies, hot chocolate, tea, instant coffee and a non-alcoholic punch will be provided; bring your own booze, or whatever else you like to drink. RSVP Kathleen, even at the last minute, whether you will attend the dinner or party or both; phone 604-277-0845 or email pfreeman@direct.ca; also if you have any further questions.
Friday, January 18th: **BCSFazine 345 Deadline**
Saturday, January 12th at 7:00 p.m.: **Feeding Frenzy** at The

Art Credits

pages 1, 11 Garth F. O. Spencer
page 14 Colin Upton
Cover, pages 12, 16, 18 clipart

Reef, 4172 Main Street, Vancouver. Specializing in spicy but inexpensive Caribbean cuisine. Very friendly service. Only place in town that serves "Red Stripe" beer! No RSVP required. (Doug Finnerty)

Friday, February 1st: **BCSFazine 345 production**
Friday, February 15th: **BCSFazine 346 Deadline**
Friday, March 1st: **BCSFazine 346 production**

eCOAs:

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Cathy Mayo, catloma@shaw.ca

Plain Speaking

DOWN WITH DEMOCRACY!

It's a sad realization, but it seems to be true: at the same time as democracy is desperately needed in three-quarters of the world, and martyrs are getting shot and tortured for daring to practice free speech ... whole industrialized nations seem to be turning away from participatory democracy.

I cite in evidence the way people behave in small leisure-interest groups, such as our SF clubs.

Of course that should strike you as an absurd example, but just why is it absurd? I happen to think it's a fair example of habitual, voluntary behaviour. I also think we exhibit the same behaviour in public and private activities.

Here's my reasoning: voluntary leisure-interest groups have at various times demonstrated an efflorescence of enthusiasm and activity and original, creative expression. At other times, the same groups and the same people have demonstrated remarkable apathy. At the moment, fans express an interest in seeing interesting club events, and great conventions, and maybe original independent publications or costumes or creative filk and fanfiction ... but the *same* fans demonstrate rather *less* willingness to participate in, and support these activities. Less, I think, than the activities require.

Do we see the same imbalance between what it takes to carry on a democracy, large or small, and what we're willing to put into it? I would argue that we do.

Of course we all have excuses. My point is that we're coming up with hurdles instead of ways to get over them. That says something about our level of motivation. And as I have said elsewhere, levels of motivation seem to ebb and flow in erratic cycles. I don't know why.

Perhaps the biggest excuse is that nothing and nobody told us what a democracy is: something you *do*, not something you *have*. By now I conclude that there are several conditions required to make a democracy work: an informed electorate, for one thing, one that knows pretty factually how their community works; practice at participation, for another thing – the kind of practice that teaches people to speak



their piece, *concisely* and *succinctly*, and to *listen*, intelligently and skeptically. Do you think those conditions are met today? In our club, at least?

I confess I'm not a good example. By the time I figured out the foregoing, I was in my late thirties, and already had a history of being an uninformed voter. The fact that most public affairs are governed by *representative*, rather than participatory democracies, and that public issues are generally massaged by spin doctors and a manipulated press, does not whip up my enthusiasm.

So. Under the conditions we've created in our local club – and apparently the same conditions produce the same results, repeatedly, in any local clubs – **democracy doesn't work**. At least, we have had pretty low participation in several meetings that required the participation of the general membership.

This has some grievous consequences. Ostensibly BCSFA is supposed to have an Annual General Meeting and choose new executives in October; that didn't happen last fall, and that means Graeme, and I, and other BCSFA officers are outstaying our mandates, just for lack of better ideas. Ostensibly the V-Con Society should have had its Annual General Meeting in October, and the general membership would hear the VCon bid that the executive heard. But we kept trying to solicit general attendance, and participation, and that held up VCon matters until the end of November. At that we had less than a dozen people in attendance.

At the moment I have more respect for people who get things *done* than for people who will not respond. Therefore, I propose that we abolish democratic procedure, and revise the BCSFA and V-Con Society constitutions to support Benevolent Dictatorships.

This, coming from the man who wants to institute the Canadian Anarcho-Surrealist Party!

Comments?

Letters of Comment

Harry Warner Jr., 423 Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown, MD 21740, U.S.A., Sept. 13, 2001

You have been very kind to keep me on your mailing list during these several silent months. I wasn't well much of the summer, the heat was too severe to do typing ... and mundane tribulations cast a paralyzing spell over my fannish self. I believe one or two issues that are unlocced have secluded themselves in the shadows of much fatter and larger fanzines so I can't catch up on obligations to you all in one letter. But I'll cover three issues tonight and try to find the others before writing again.

(Editor responds: you have little to apologize for; I believe you're older than my father, and he died recently, in his eighties. I suffer from summer heat as you do, and I'm less than half your age. Even when I'm at my best I do not match your punctual and regular responses.)

'Way back in the August issue, you saddened me with the news that you, too, in the generous reaches of Canada have been forced to include area codes in your telephone dialing. I believe Maryland was the first part of the continent to suffer this fate several years ago. But Hagerstown's situation is particularly bad because in this city of only about 35,000 residents, two area codes exist ...

(Editor responds: There are several Canadas, starting with the physical one, which I think of as the size of Siberia, and the demographic one, which is a ribbon of concentrated population crammed up against the U.S. border. Population centres such as Montreal and Toronto are comparable to other centres in the U.S. and Europe. Even Vancouver, which I was talking about, contains half the population of British Columbia in just the southwestern corner of the mainland. In that context the subdivision of area codes isn't too surprising. In the context of a five-figure population like Hagerstown, or Bellingham, it is more surprising.)

I was glad to learn from Lloyd Penney's loc that some fans in Vancouver do not indulge in alcoholic beverages. This habit produces many benefits, financial and physical, and it doesn't waste as much time as those who are doomed to have firewater as a part of every social activity.

The first instalment of "Crank Theories" was

fine. I once met and chatted with one of your featured players, Ivan Sanderson. He seemed like such a level-headed, intelligent individual that I suspect he may have espoused weird causes only because it attracted much attention and got him television spots regularly. In conversation, he reminded me of the roles enacted by William Powell or Ronald Coleman, suave, witty and intelligent.

The foreign language item on page 7 is Portuguese. I can't make complete sense from it, but it seems to be about the writer's plans to publish a new fanzine soon. I hope you didn't forget to turn off your spellchecker while you copied these paragraphs, because it would have heated up something awful.

(Editor responds: yeah, I thought I recognized the language, and even figured out much of the message, but the last time I received a foreign-language fanzine I couldn't make head or tail of it then, either. Not like we could regularly trade. I don't normally have the spellchecker on automatic.)

The October issue is the next in line among the Unvanished Ones (*My emphasis - Ye Ed.*). "Helping to rebuild Afghanistan for the Afghans, or helping to build up Arabia's domestic economy for ordinary Arabians" sounds like a sensible alternative to the violence, as a response to terrorism in the United States. But it isn't because such efforts would only lead to a giant increase in propaganda against the United States for empire-building under the guise of humanitarianism, for Americanizing the Moslem world as a subversive attack on another religion, for dividing the bonds between the Arabian nations. The United States has tried to help relieve suffering, poverty and ignorance in many parts of the world and received in return only false charges and hatred-flaming propaganda from those in power or seeking it, over there, and their stooges in North America itself.

(Yes, as you indicate, no matter how honest and god-fearing the intentions of foreign-aid programs, suspicious and fanatic people will make false charges against them. At the same time, some people on this continent will misdirect aid, misuse educational resources, and accomplish some empire-building for their corporations. It was ever thus. I have some information that this is how and why Canada was built.

SOME WORDS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

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(Garth's Law #232: Every major political power generates political resentment, in equal and opposite reaction to the political weight it can throw around. It was ever thus. Same thing happened to the British, the French, the Spanish and the Romans, among other major powers.)

Another good chapter from you on cranks and crank theories. I don't trust any of the wild speculations about things that are allegedly happening. But at the same time, I feel more skepticism than most fans do about the assumptions science currently makes, like the number of thousands or millions of years since this or that happened on Earth, climate changes, the rising and falling of land masses, and so on. It's too much guesswork to be a firm basis for dogmatic claims. And too often something turns up in geology or anthropology or some other field that ruins some scientific judgements. Not long ago I read in a newspaper article about the discovery of a fossil lemur in a contradictory

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place; this animal was so far developed that it couldn't have been in a formation of such antiquity, if assumptions about the age of rock deposits and evolution of lemurs are both right. I don't think the Hawaiians could have developed their own customs in the comparatively short time given for their first settlement of the islands. Topsoil is supposed to form at the rate of about one inch per century, so why isn't it enormously thick in areas where the time scale shows no inundation for tens of thousands of years?

(Editor responds: Maybe Wilson "Bob" Tucker was right; this is a manufactured planet and system, like the other ones that humans have presumably colonized; the fossil record and sedimentary deposits here are artifacts, and every so often some sophomore inserted a practical joke, on the order of ball bearings found in Pre-Cambrian rock, or a Neanderthal skull with gold dental fillings. The question is, who is in the business of manufacturing artifacts like Earth? Low-bid contractors?)

The November edition arrived only four days ago. Graeme's lament over the apparent petrification of fanac in Vancouver is sad, but not completely surprising. Apathy toward things that once were attractive is very strong today, *both in and outside fandom* (*My emphasis - Ye Ed.*). A couple of weeks ago, Hagerstown's civic, government, health and police leaders arranged for a special meeting at which local authorities in every area that might be affected by terrorist threats or acts would describe to the general public how well the local public is protected, what courses of action people should take if something serious happened or seems imminent, and would answer questions. This meeting got a front-page newspaper story and I heard it announced several times on radio stations. Came the night of the meeting, and there were more authorities on the panel ready to talk and reply to queries than there were members of the public in the audience.

(Editor responds: Graeme and I have been on fanzine panels like that. I just assume the general motivation level in clubs ebbs and flows, in an erratic cycle, if the past is any guide. Call it Garth's Law #151.)

Of course, I've never been a member of a local fan club, never lived in Canada, and so I can't offer advice on what to do about your apathy problem. But I can speculate that it may be nobody's fault. I've noticed that quite often a local fan group has been goaded into growth, activity, and enthusiasm through the influence of just one member who won't take no for an answer in club affairs, displays so much enthusiasm that some of it glows off into the psyches of other members, and doesn't feel hurt when criticised. Bjo [Trimble] had this effect on Los Angeles fandom, many years ago when the LASFS was almost moribund. Ralph Holland descended upon the NFFF [National Fantasy Fan Federation] with such vigour and energy that the group had its finest flowering under his presidency and has never quite been the same since. I gather that Joe Siclari held [a] somewhat similar influence over the South Florida fan group until he moved away. Maybe some such person will spring up and bring your organization back to something approaching its former whirlwind of fanac.

Andrew Brechin <breklor@telus.net>, 01 Dec 2001 (quoting my editorial in #343)

> For example: a fan coming to conventions for the first time these days has

every reason to think that he or she is buying a ticket and watching a show. That is almost the only model of leisure interest activity available, in popular culture, for the last generation.

That's an excellent point, and one which came up at this year's Illuminares – you know, the lantern festival that the Public Dreams Society holds every summer at Trout Lake Park? I was one of the Topless Faeries (most of whom were women, but there were a couple of guys involved). Once the sun went down and the tourists started to arrive, there were very few costumes belonging to non-Public Dreamers; rather, there were batteries of cameras – literally, we'd be walking along and suddenly a row of goggle-eyed tourists would form up with cameras to take our pictures. The point of the Topless Faeries is not to be all nekkid and shaking boobflesh at people; it's to be naturally nude and to grant wishes – there's a little game that Michelle, the Faerie Queene, likes to play with it – and during the day, the folks who didn't expect us were generally quite willing to play along. But the tourists just wanted to snap some pictures to wank over, maybe try to cop a feel, and nobody even wanted to play the games **we made for them**, let alone bring their own. Cons are getting to be like that these days. I'm not sure if it's a pendulum that's gonna swing back in a while, or a progressing trend...

> Participatory activities [today] are limited to charitable institutions, except for maybe the SCA.

Yes, and then as soon as they become "open to the public", people expect to be able to go and be entertained, rather than to participate.

It's sad.

Lloyd Penney, December 18, 2001

For something that is as inherently disorganized as fandom, it is full of little organizations, interests, lexicons and customs for each of the now hundreds of possible interests that can now be called "fannish", like animé, filking, Regency dances and fanzines, and any others you could name. I'm sure that any one interest [group] finds another a little stand-offish, possibly because there is the fear that someone might come in and change everything around to suit themselves and their foreign interest. (General literary cons usually are leery of others coming

in to help, for those new helpers will often change the direction of the convention. This almost happened in Buffalo, NY fandom, when local mediafans volunteered to help a local literary horror convention, and then had to be stopped from installing a media actor GoH, a Star Trek track, etc. This did happen in Ohio to Marcon, a litcon that became a mediacon, and back again. My own experiences have shown me that many people involved in media fandom find fandom to be a loose network of conventions, parties and friends locally, and nothing more. They are unaware of the origins of fandom, fanhistory, Worldcons, and what some call central literary fandom, and even if they do know, they don't really seem to care.)

(I have to stifle a laugh every time someone seriously says "literary con", when they're referring to a general-interest convention, like VCon, or "literary fandom" if they simply mean not-media. I don't know whether to laugh or not when I see contemporary fans who neither know, nor attach any value to a previous or different brand of fandom.)

Fandom guides are useful to some extent, and only if you are willing to absorb what they have to say; too many will dismiss them as wrong or outdated, and not connected with their own little corner of fandom. If writing such guides (or writing anything, for that matter) were not out of fashion with most fans, I would recommend that such a guide be written for the management of your convention, club or other organization. Others will not be so daunted by the task, and carry out the management instructions within the guide. Yet, fans will be fans, and will reinvent the square wheel, and will do as they please management-wise, for good or ill. Maybe this is why there is little interest in the fannish past; "who cares how things were done before? I'll do it my own way."

(Plus ça change ... Note elsewhere my announcement that The Horror of Howe Sound #1, a collection of convention horror stories, is now available and already says most of what you say here. There simply is no excuse for not finding out what works and what doesn't.)

Even with all of this, those of us who have read about the history of fandom over its 70+-year history have seen it change greatly over the years, so there is no reason to expect that it won't change over the next decade or so. Whether we'll like the changes is moot.

I agree to some extent with Donna McMahon's comments on the Harry Potter books, even though I admit that I haven't read them ... I have seen the movie, though. As the action took place, I found that Harry was an archetypal character, and very similar to Luke Skywalker. Here's a boy living in obscurity and poverty, with a great destiny ... he is found by those in power, and taught their arts so he has power himself, greater than anyone else around him, even his teachers. Harry or Luke? Yes.

(You may or may not be aware of the lost-prince stereotype, which dates back to fairy tales of the 19th century and earlier; there were that many sons, and daughters, who felt like alienated ugly-ducklings surrounded by clods, for the character to be a stereotype.

(If we explored implications such as Rowling's reference to a "Ministry of Magic" we might conclude that the magicians and their college are not, in fact, those in power. But I'll spare you an archetypal post-modern deconstructionist harangue.)

December 19 is Yvonne's birthday, and it's also premiere night for *Lord of the Rings*. I think great things will happen here, so I look forward to it. We've also seen *Monsters, Inc.* twice now. Very enjoyable movie. Time to go, and seeing when this zine will be published, I hope that everyone's had a marvellous Christmas/Hanukkah/ Solstice/ Kwanzaa, and that 2002 will be your best year yet. Take care, and see you next year, and next issue.

(Don't forget Emperor Norton Day - January 8th! -GS)

We also heard from Jill Pruett ("Keep up the good work")

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NEWS

Our Club News

Fictions #8 is still in progress, and Doug Finnerty reports it should be a good one.

The *BCSFA Handbook* (2nd ed.) has been turned over to Steve Samuel for final formatting, and should shortly be posted on the BCSFA website and Steve Samuel's website. Hardcopy editions of the *Handbook*, too, can be purchased from Garth through his POBox address as soon as he has some money.

Garth has finally "published" *Confabulation*, the anthology of fiction by fans, about fans, largely describing (or satirizing) fannish and fanzine fandom, with some emphasis on Western Canadian fans and exploits. PDF copies of *Confabulation* can be downloaded from <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/~hrothgar/confab.pdf>. Hardcopy editions can be purchased from Garth through his POBox address as soon as he has some money for copying.

Another Garth Spencer initiative is *The Horror From Howe Sound #1*, a collection of convention horror stories, not all of which you have heard already. This will be posted (and published) Real Soon Now.

Other Local Stuff

A new bookstore opened recently on Main Street, **Village Books** at 4307 Main (604-877-1109, villagebooks.ca). Although it is more of a mainstream fiction and nonfiction store, you might like to visit it, between noon and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays (except Monday), noon to 5:00 on Sundays.

Regional

Mad Scientists online!

Steve Greenfield of the SF Northwest listserv started a Mad Scientist mailing list on Yahoo Groups on Oct 30, 2001. "This group is about having fun with chemistry, physics, geology, botany, astronomy, electronics, engineering, and technology. Anything to do with amateur or mad science. Mad Scientists Bookmarks welcome!" Topics covered will include: Water rockets; Tesla coils; Particle accelerators; Potato cannons; Geiger counters Carbide cannons; New Darwin awards; Self-heating soup cans; Flashpaper fun;

Van de Graaff and other Hi-voltage static electricity generators; Bubble and fog machines. "If it's about amateur science, it's "on-topic" here. For adults and children of all ages If you're curious, feel free to ask a question! The only "stupid" question is the one not asked.

"I just added a bunch of links to Mad Scientist stuff including Vortex Tubes, Mind Control via Ultrasonics and Microwaves, Directed Energy Weapons, Magnetic Levitation, Gauss Guns, etc.

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To contact the list owner: email mad_scientist-owner@yahoogroups.com

The website is http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mad_scientist

Steve Greenfield <polymorph@polyphoto.com>
On SFNorthwest MailingList
<sfnorthwest@yahoogroups.com>, 2 Dec 2001

National

More news from Made in Canada, from Convention 19/Convention 22, and from Murray Moore about CUFF, should be available Real Soon Now.

International

Belated Hugo Award Winners 2001news:

Novel: *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, J.K.

Rowling

Print Version Novella: *The Ultimate Earth*, Jack Williamson

Novelette: "Millennium Babies", Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Short Story: "Different Kinds of Darkness", Dave Langford

Related Book: *Greetings from Earth: the art of Bob Eggleton*, Bob Eggleton & Nigel Suckling (Paper Tiger);

Dramatic Presentation: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* () Directed by Ang Lee;

Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois;

Professional Artist: Bob Eggleton;

Semi-prozine: *Locus* (edited by Charles N. Brown);

Fanzine: *File 770* (edited by Mike Glycer);
 Fan Writer: Dave Langford;
 Fan Artist: Teddy Harvia;
 John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer:
 Kristine Smith.
 (from Cheryl Morgan's *Emerald City* website)

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Some news items from #173, the December 2001 issue:

- SPOOKSAFE. It's good to know that British insurance firm Ultraviolet sells this cover against alien abduction, poltergeist attack, and becoming a werewolf or vampire. Most Spooksafe sales, for some reason, are to California. But it isn't easy money: a UK newspaper reports that they 'paid out #100,000 to a woman whose claim that evil spirits threw her over the banisters was apparently verified by experts.' [IoS 4 Nov] No doubt ultra-expensive premiums would be quoted to Whitley Strieber.

- *Malcolm Edwards* offers mystic confirmation of the [rumoured] *Foundation*/al-Qaeda link: 'I note, conclusively, that "Osama Bin Laden" is an anagram of "I a Seldon BA, man" - proof of his deep study of the Holy Text.'

(That, by the way, was a reference to the rumour that Isaac Asimov's novels were Really Popular in Arabic and that al-Qaeda took their name from The Foundation.)

One of my favourite *Ansible* features is "Thog's Masterclass", featuring recent examples of Really Bad English:

- 'The first smart rock overloaded the Phinon's shields and it collapsed to nothing but a smile of satisfaction on Rick's face.' (Jeffery D.Kooistra, *Dykstra's War*, 2000) [] 'This wasn't like him. But he had just vanquished an alien race single-handedly. It was natural he'd

be different after that.' "I'm going to remove the skull so I can watch what happens in the brain when I make you my mate," he said. "No one has ever determined if there is any actual physical response in the brain.'" (Rodman Philbrick & Lynn Harnett, *Abduction*, 1998) [FR]

Asians in Space!:

A private company, Asian Pacific Space Corporation, is going to use Christmas Island to launch various satellites starting in 2003. Stephen Kawamoto writes:

"I haven't found the environmental impact statement ASPC made to convince Canberra for the go ahead ... there may be a threat to amphibious land crabs unique to Christmas Island - nicely addressed by the website.

Hopefully, they won't pave most of the public roads on the island.

I think, but am not sure, that the environmental people here have constructed tunnels to facilitate migrations of the crabs when they spawn in the sea.

I still would like to get ahold of the proposed environment impact statement of the ASPC. The layout of the space centre impinges on unprotected rainforest within the clearcut area for the technical centre and launch centre proper, which should be of concern to environmentalists from Australia.

But given that flights to Christmas Island are limited to Fridays and Sundays consisting of 5 or 8 hour flights arriving in early morning or early evenings, most environmentalists would not go out of their way to protest the construction of a space flight centre with possible impact on the unique flora and fauna of Christmas Island... yet.

There are over a dozen species of plants and animals at risk, plus cultural buildings (including two Buddhist temples) and a re-settlement area for the Chinese community at risk by the roll-on/roll-off facility needed to transport the Aurora spacecraft parts to South Point. ..."

<http://www.apsc2orbit.com/>
<http://www.space-technology.com/projects/christmas/epip/notifications/christmasisland/pubs/assessmentreport.pdf>

(Stephen Kawamoto, Oct. 21, 2001)

CRANK THEORIES

(Part V in a serial)

by Garth Spencer

Maybe people turn to conspiracy theories – *and to other alternatives to standard reality* – when they feel insecure, and threatened by unknown forces outside their control. Depressions and wars will do that to you.

Until about a generation ago, conspiracy theories mostly revolved around some few familiar themes: the suspicions people had about governments, British and other royalty, banking systems, Evil Corporations, the Catholic Church, new religions, the Freemasons, other secret societies going back to the Bavarian Illuminati and even the Knights Templar; suspicions about assassinations (both real and imagined) of political figures and other celebrities; paranoid ideas about Nazis and neo-Nazis, intelligence agencies ranging from the CIA (a paranoid favourite) to CSIS, the End of the World, UFOs, and the Hollow Earth.

In more recent years, conspiracies have emphasized aliens out to get us, the Government out to get us (as witness the Oklahoma City bombers), computers and new technology and the medical establishment out to get us (as witness the Unabomber manifesto), nuclear power out of control (the Karen Silkwood story), and you name it.

Obviously there is no firm division between the material scooped up by *crank* theories and the material scooped up *conspiracy* theories. I say “scooped up” because the incorporation of themes in popular culture is a feature, not only of cranks and conspiracy theories, but of some kinds of mental illness. It is precisely as if a mind that isn’t thinking too

well Hoovers up almost anything in its path.

It is almost not worthwhile to ask how much of this material is true and verifiable. Almost.

Obviously there really *are* conspiracies, from time to time. The Oklahoma City bombing, the World Trade Center bombings, and the Columbine high school massacre alike were each the work of small conspiracies – if only a couple of high-school students, in the last case.

We have to distinguish real conspiracies from conspiracy *theories*, both well- and ill-founded. I observed previously that people seem to come up with conspiracy theories as a response to events out of their control. Now, I put it to you, we’re seeing some tasteless conspiracy theories going around, about the World Trade Center bombing; I have actually seen people speculating that it was, not a foreign extremist, but a *CIA* operation, meant precisely to motivate the current “war on terrorism”, and the attendant restrictions on civil liberties. Perhaps that says a lot about what some people are willing to believe.

Evil Spirits, Magic, Fortunetelling, Prophecy, Etc.

As a matter of logic, some very ancient, widespread folk beliefs can be lumped under the heading of crank theories. I mean specifically the traditional folk beliefs in magic, and witchcraft, and foretelling the future, and ghoulies, and ghosties, and long-leggedy beasties, and unicorns, and virgins, and competent bureaucrats, and other fabulous beasts.

Monsters and Unknown Critters

A naïve naturalist from another planet might innocently investigate pixies and gremlins and *chindi* and *wendigo* on the same basis as beavers, and giraffes, and the nine-spined stickleback. Such a newcomer might imagine that creatures of myth and fable were simply encountered in a limited area, by the humans who first colonized the habitat, in the same way as they encountered other unique species.

Vampires: The main clues we have that vampires do not literally exist are that a) coroners do not regularly report corpses sitting up and walking around in their morgues, b) historical accounts of vampires are so inconsistent, and change so much over time. Having read collections of vampire stories ranging over several generations, it does seem to me that they were myths of unquiet corpses that preyed on the living *and spread pestilence*, in the original versions.

As entertaining and sometimes absorbing as modern vampire fiction can be, there is really no very good explanation for the supernatural attributes given to vampires. Or I just missed reading those stories. I have simple mass-energy-cube-and-square-law problems with the story that vampires can turn themselves into wolves or bats or invisible mist, or the story that vampires have the ability to cloud our minds. (Hell, most science teachers can do that!)

There seem to be a number of *real* ailments that might have originated the vampire legend, ranging from porphyria to simple rabies. My pet theory is that vampires symbolize a general anxiety, that we're going to be metaphorically preyed on and sucked to death - by taxation departments, actually, and

public utilities and large, private service corporations; by any powers, in fact, that are not accountable to citizens.

Werewolves: The main clues we have that werewolves and other shapechangers do not literally exist have to do with biology, or specifically with disciplines like biophysics.

We know of several species which change their physical forms radically in the course of their lifetimes, notably pupating insects. We also know of species which change their appearance frequently to survive, as for instance chameleons. But we do not know of any *large land mammals* which can alter their limb and trunk proportions, the lengths of their teeth or nails, or the mass of their body hair, for whatever cause. I have simple mass-energy-distance-cube-and-square-law problems with these supernatural attributes ... but I've said this before.

One of the science documentary shows established that some psychological problems, or some medieval hallucinogens, could induce in people the belief that they are turning into wolves. There is also a suggestion, how authentic I do not know, that the eastern Canadian legend of the *wendigo* originated as some physical and psychological ailment.

My pet theory is that werewolves, like vampires, symbolize a general anxiety that we're going to be devoured alive without warning, by some sudden invader outside our control ... perhaps a biker, perhaps a city policeman, perhaps a serial killer or a Family Services social worker.

Sasquatch-Bigfoot-Yeti: Stories about manlike apes, or apelike men in the wilderness, come from practically all parts of the earth. If they exist, it is astonishing that they leave so little physical evidence that the scientific establishment won't acknowledge it.

If we were to take our local sasquatch legend seriously, we would either grant some form of citizenship to sasquatches, or give them protected-species status, and probably reserve wilderness areas for them. Our naturalists would be advocating a program to preserve the species with a breeding program. Hunters' associations would petition to cull the species when it overbreeds. Our anemic civil liberties association would campaign in their defense. None of this has happened except for the protected-species legislation (which says something about the B.C. legislature).

Stories about apemen and monstrous predators and shapechangers sound awfully as though we are *driven* to populate the unknown, to cover up our areas of ignorance with made-up bogies. Kim Stanley Robinson mentions in his "future Mars" trilogy a 'desert man' figure, glimpsed but never tracked down in the Martian wilderness, so he is probably alive to this motivation.

Cadborosaurus-Ogopogo-Nessie *et al.*:
Same as above, only substitute "big fishy thing" for "sasquatch".

(to be continued)

I forgot something, didn't I?

NORTHWEST CONVENTIONS

JANUARY 2002

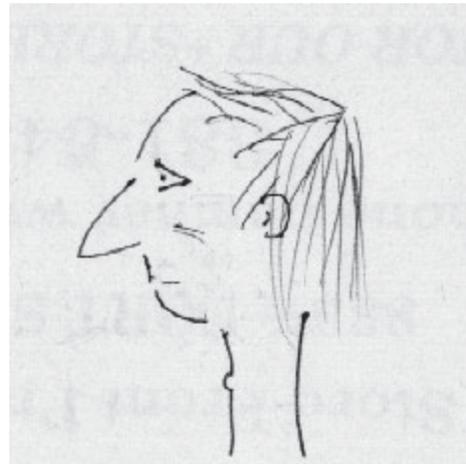
Jan. 11-13: **Rustycon 19** at the DoubleTree Hotel Bellevue in Bellevue, Washington. Writer GoH: David Gerrold. Artist GoH: Ellisa Mitchell. Fan GoH: Ann Prather. See www.rustycon.com. Rooms: DoubleTree Hotel Bellevue, 300 112th Avenue S.E., Bellevue, Washington 98004, 1-800-222-TREE or 1-800-222-8733, (425) 450-4119 (Fax); Rooms \$105.00 + Tax and up. Please mention Rustycon when registering with the Hotel to receive these rates. Rustycon Membership Rates At the Door: \$55 full Weekend; \$25 Friday only; \$35 Saturday only; \$20 Sunday; Children under 6 Free; Children 6 to 12 are 1/2 the current rate. To register for Rustycon, please send a check or money order for the appropriate amount, to: P.O. Box 84291, Seattle, WA 98124-5591. If you are paying by Visa or Master Card, please fill out the credit card portion of the registration form and submit it with the membership portion.

Jan. 13, 11am to 5pm: **Comic and Card Winter Swap Meet** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Admission: \$2.50 per person; free for kids under 14. Dealers Tables: \$30 per centre table/\$35 per wall table Free giveaways and hourly door prizes, including a \$100 show gift certificate at 3:00PM. Buy, sell, and trade comic books, action figures, sport, non-sport, and gaming cards, and other collectables.. For more information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com. Also see <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

Jan. 27th, 11 AM to 4 PM: Toy, **Model & Collectables Show** at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street (Main & 15th Ave.), Vancouver, BC. Buy, sell, and trade character toys, action figures, Beanie Babies, toy cars, Star Wars, model kits, trading cards, comic books, Barbies, games, and more! Admission: \$2.00 (\$1.00 for kids under 14). Dealers' tables: \$35.00. For more information please call 604-322-6412 or e-mail lswong@uniserve.com. Also see <http://mypages.uniserve.com/~lswong/Comicon.html>

FEBRUARY 2002

Feb. 8: **Conspiracy 2002** (a gaming con) at the Mission City Lodge in Mission, B.C. Member-



Eduardo Redonzo - World-Class Congoer

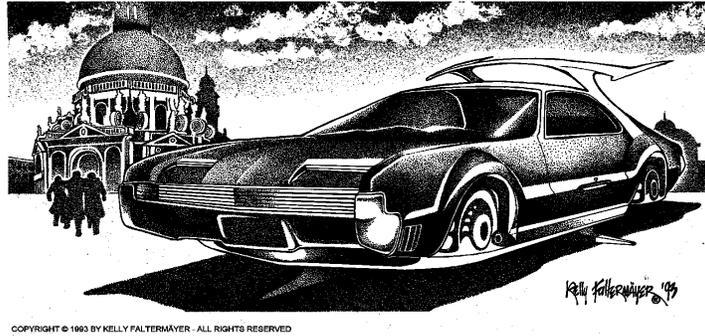
ships range from \$10 (Friday only) to \$40 (all weekend). Write Mission Games, 33124 First Ave., Mission, B.C. V2V 1G4, or telephone 604-820-3224 or 1-888-21-GAMES between 12 and 6.

February 15 - 17: **RadCon 3B** at the Pasco, WA Double Tree Inn (Pasco/TriCities, Washington). RadCon's Artist GOH: Theresa Mather! RadCon's Science GOH: Les Johnson RadCon's Writer GOH: Kay Kenion! RadCon's Fan GOH: Edgar and Norma Lincoln! RadCon's Special Science GOH: CatTails! Features of Radcon include Card Gaming, Artshow, Dealers Room, Critter Crunch, Masquerade, Gaming. This year's RadCon will be held at the Pasco, WA Double Tree Inn. This is the same hotel that we have been in for the last four years. Rooms will go fast, so please make your reservations early! Hotel Info: Pasco Double Tree Hotel, 2525 N. 20th, Pasco, WA; Reservations: (509) 547-0701. Be sure to mention that you are part of RadCon for our special rates! Membership Price: \$20.00. URL: <http://radcon.yi.org>

February 22-24, 2002: **Potlatch 11** at The Best Western Executive Inn in Seattle, Washington. A discussion-oriented science fiction convention; A gathering of the writers and readers of literary science fiction and fantasy at which participants exchange ideas. Memberships: \$55 until February 1, 2002 (no mail-in registration after this date), \$75 at the door. You may purchase memberships by printing out and mailing the Registration Form, with a check. If you're wondering if you have your membership yet, you can view our current membership list. See the Web Site <http://www.potlatch-sf.org/> Contact Potlatch at: kate@oz.net or: Potlatch 11, 2002, PO Box 31848 Seattle, WA 98103-1848

MILLENNIUM PHILCON: WORLDCON 2001

The Penneys' Report



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Millennium Philcon, the Philadelphia Worldcon around Labour Day ... we had a great time. We had no Torcon commitments, so we were free to wander and do as we pleased, and we did. On our flight to Philly, two “gentlemen” sitting right behind us had body odour strong enough to stink up the entire back end of the plane. Yvonne spoke to a steward about the problem (in French, which nearly assured privacy on the plane), and we were moved to a less stinky part of the plane, as were about a dozen other people. After landing and arranging a commuter bus, it took us careening through some of the narrow back streets of Philadelphia to the Hawthorne Suites Hotel, on the edge of Philly’s Chinatown. This hotel used to be a warehouse, with 12-foot ceilings in the hallways. Our “suite” had a kitchenette crammed into the wall by one of the beds; otherwise, it was a regular hotel room.

Our daily walk to the convention...two short blocks south to the northeast corner of the convention centre and then walk around to the southwest corner, which was the only place to enter it. Walk to an escalator, up to the second floor, and there’s registration. For the fanzine lounge, go past registration, down a long, wide hallway with lots of rooms, and into a large, domed area which I think used to be part of a train station. Reading Railroad, just like it says on the Monopoly board. Walk through the domed area to a aerial walkway to the Marriott Hotel. Long hallway to an elevator, up a few floors, and another long hallway to the lounge. That took about 15 minutes. People had trouble gauging how many were at the convention because it was so geographically strung out. John Mansfield can provide Registration’s figures for the convention; he and Linda were in charge of it.

Philadelphia itself was fun, what little we saw of it ... shopping nearby is connected to the SEPTA, or the subway, great meals at Maggione’s Italian Bakery, the Independence Brew Pub, the Reading Market and the Hard Rock Café. The above description of the convention centre might be a little vague ... this huge convention centre is in the shape of a T, about two long blocks wide and three blocks long. We ate what we pleased, for we knew we’d walk it of f...

I spent time in the fanzine lounge with Ted White, Michael Lowrey, Vicki Rosenzweig, Steve Stiles and other zine-type luminaries; we shopped in the dealers’ room for the first time in nearly a decade; we saw some of the art show; we got in touch with the Los Angeles in 2006 Worldcon bid and the new 2004 Worldcon, Noreascon 4 in Boston (we will be working with both these groups); we took in a few panels; we saw some of the masquerade and all of the Hugos; and were present for the audible sigh of shock and disappointment when the Hugo for Best Novel went to J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, beating out Canadian authors Robert J. Sawyer and Nalo Hopkinson. We attended a panel on railways and streetcars, wearing conductor’s caps that a friend just happened to have in his room. Another panel was about fan funds, and I am happy to tell you that Americans who take part and support fan funds know a lot about CUFF, to my surprise. Sales of our CUFF trip report in the fanzine lounge were fairly good. Best of all, we saw friends we hadn’t seen in a long time, from Canada, the US, Britain, Japan, Norway, Australia ... a Worldcon is amazingly expensive, and we trimmed down our trip to fit our tight budget, but already, we are looking at ways to go to ConJosé in California next year, and failing that, we will be at Torcon.

FANNISH FILM MAKING

by R. Graeme Cameron

SF Fans have always dreamed of making a "proper" SF film. It's an old tradition. I have heard of films done by Fans in the USA back in the 1950s. I myself as a young teenager did several 2 minute 8mm animated versions of *War of the Worlds* in the mid 1960s. BCSFA produced two promotional videos, one for VCon 19/Westercon 44 in 1991, and the other for VCon 20 in 1993, the latter being shown three times on Rogers Cable TV. The MonSFFA club in Montreal produced two hour-long video movies in the late 1990s: *Plant Nine* about invading sentient space cabbages, and its sequel, *The FedEx Files: Moxie*, starring Meddler & Scurry.

This article is about the making of the amateur SF film *Spaceship* as reported in *Canadian Fandom* #18, Sept 1953, in an article by David Lane of England titled *Project: Rocket To The Moon*. It's about a group of some 30 amateur film makers who decided to make a 40 minute film about a trip to the moon. One astronaut dies there when his spacesuit rips, the rest die when the ship is hit by meteorites on its return trip. I think you'll find the following excerpts fascinating:

"Our first problem was to build a model of a spaceship... We made several experimental space ships from cardboard, tins, and even a carved solid one from a wooden block but none satisfied us. Then passing a toy store I saw... a mechanical fish about nine inches long. I purchased it and removed the tail... found some incendiary bomb fins, a souvenir of army days. These were soldered on..."

"Through a hole drilled in the side, a rubber feed led to the rear, the other end being attached to a gas jet. When this was lit we had our jets. The take-off was done by stop motion, the jets kept steady by a fan to prevent the flame from curling."

"We were fortunate in our rocket interior. One of our members, a lighting expert, had a large console control panel in black glass and chromium: so we just moved in ... and secured all the shots we wanted."

"Our next problem was the journey though

space. We made a large black panel... in which holes of various sizes were drilled ... to copy a star map. The rocket was mounted on a thin strut... feed tube being taped behind, the whole painted matt black. A flood behind the board illuminated the 'stars', and a reflected spot behind the camera illuminated the rocket. In shooting, the stars were moved slowly from left to right as the gas jet was turned on and off to simulate boosts from the jets."

"As the ship approached the Moon, we had balls of different sizes each covered in plaster... For the landing, a model of the crater Copernicus... was made; this measured 3 by 5 feet so a smaller space ship model was made from a pencil-case."

"We tried the landing... by suspending the ship from silken thread, but this was visible... We tried: fuse wire, nylon thread, and cotton, but all could be seen... One of the girls with 3 foot long hair suggested human hair and sacrificed a couple of hers..."

"Next came the space suits... We decided on padded flying suits, but the helmets were a problem... Then we had a suggestion... cardboard hat boxes. We cut panels from 4 such boxes and let in celluloid panels; silver metal tubing running to the oxygen packs and a radio mast finished the helmets."

"We secured the use of a quarry to shoot the scenes on the Moon... by shooting in the early morning and by using every reflecting device we could borrow we got a very hard light and deep contrasting shadows, peculiar to the Moon. All these scenes were shot in slow motion to simulate the loss of gravity."

"The destruction of the ship by a hail of meteorites was indeed a problem and I must confess we 'stole' half our final effect."

"As seen on the screen, the view of the ship shows the bright glowing meteorites approaching at colossal speed, then we cut to a long shot as they strike and the rocket

disappears in a terrific flash...

"The approaching swarm is a reverse shot of truck-launched rockets cut from a documentary film, and the destruction was accomplished by... a small tin lid... this being filled with flash powder and a spark gap... We were very pleased with the result.

"The film has taken 5 months to make and cost us 70 dollars, and I can safely say that all... enjoyed themselves. While no epic, it is quite convincing ... by SF magazine standards... we attempted no trick shots aboard the ship, but brought in an anti-gravity resistance motor which we labelled 'the Gravitation' — this enabled everyone in the story to move normally after leaving the Earth... We remembered to lose radio contact... and have our progress observed by astronomical telescopes...

"Yes — putting together a film like 'Space Ship' is hard work, but the thrill of producing your own 'unusual' picture is well worth the effort!"

The idea that space ships would lose radio contact with the Earth as they moved away was

quite common in SF literature in the '50s. I guess it never occurred to anyone signals could be enhanced by computers.

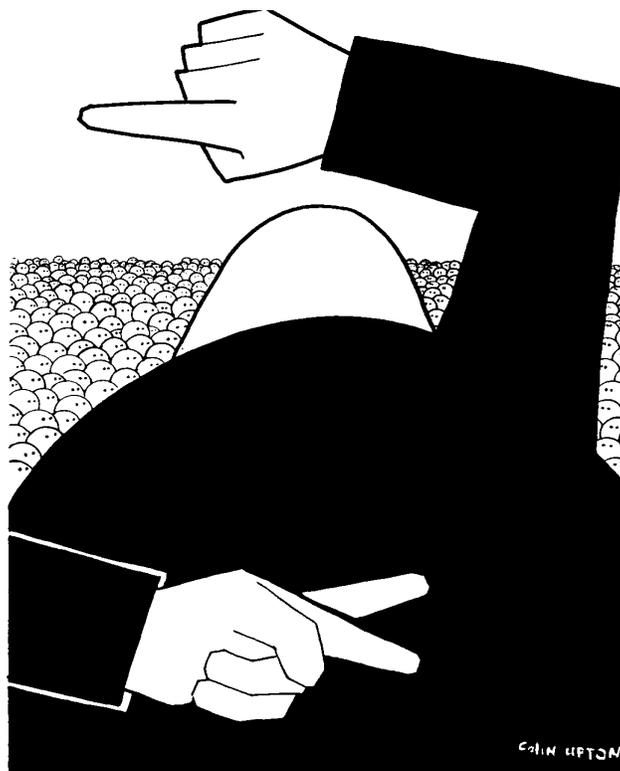
At any rate, the special effects in this film sound at least as good, if not better, than those found in contemporary Hollywood productions like *Cat Women Of The Moon* or *Missile To The Moon*. But then, by Hollywood B movie standards at that time, 5 months in production was an unheard of luxury. Films like *Robot Monster* or *The Giant Claw* were generally shot in a week or less.

Space Ship sounds like a classic! Wonder if it still exists? I, for one, would love to see it!

Could BSCFA make such a film? Given a decent video camera, good editing capability, and sufficient enthusiasm... who knows?

(Editor comments: I didn't know fans always dreamed of doing their own films. Sounds like it could be fun. I remember Victoria fans producing Dawn of the Living Socks, and Seattle fans producing Star Trek: The Pepsi Generation. Calgary fans produced an audio tape once, Cattlefarm Galactica.)

*This article brought to you courtesy of the **BCSFA Fanzine Archive**.*



FANZINES

By Ted White

Fanzines are a basic part of science fiction fandom, having been in existence as long as fandom itself – the past 70 years. Fanzines are a reflection of many fans' interest in the printed word and amateur publishing. The publication you are reading this in is a fanzine, but a specialized one. A variety of other fanzines are also available – many of them by request – and this column will cover some of them each issue.

All fanzines are published as a hobby and lose money. Their editors appreciate money to defray their expenses and sometimes list single-copy or subscription prices, but they appreciate even more your written response – a Letter of Comment, or LoC. Feedback – better known in fandom as “egoboo” – is what fanzine publishing is all about.

Check out the fanzine below and broaden your participation in fandom.

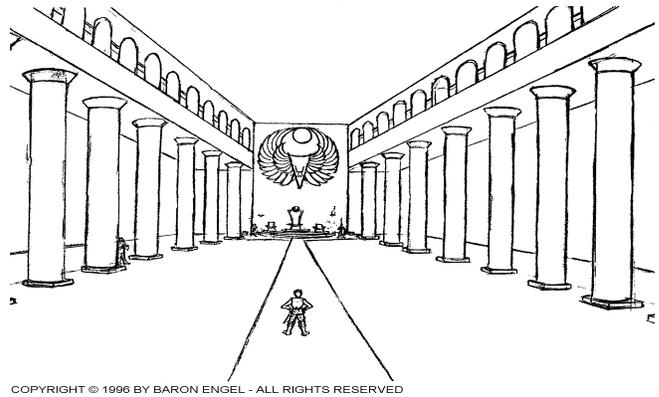
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CONTACT!/SPIRITS OF THINGS PAST #4

(Dick Smith & Leah Zeldes Smith, 410 W. Willow Rd., Prospect Heights, IL 60070-1250; e-mail to either Dick at rhes@enteract.com or to Leah at laz@enteract.com; published for members of Ditto 14 combined with FanHistoriCon 11, October 2001; copies are available for \$10, postage included, the proceeds to benefit Ditto, FanHistoriCon and DUFF)

Up to this point I've reviewed the regular issues of various fanzines here. This time is different: *Contact!* is an extraordinary (final) issue of an unusual fanzine. The first three issues of *Spirits Of Things Past* were essentially elaborate progress reports for the then-upcoming convention that combined Ditto and FanHistoriCon. Because Ditto (named after the once-popular method of spirit-duplicating fanzines) is a “fanzine-oriented” convention, this approach – turning progress reports into full-fledged issues of a fanzine, complete with letter columns – made good sense. And the Smiths, editors of the well-established genzine, *Stet*, were ideal for the task.

For the convention itself they produced *Contact!* Which, although billed as the 4th issue of *Spirits Of Things Past*, is in fact a stand-alone volume, a “fanthology” of material by 72 fans oriented around a common theme: how they



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first encountered fandom. Some of these contributions are only a paragraph or two long, occupying perhaps a quarter or a third of a page. Others are full articles or essays, some of which run for several pages.

The volume opens – once past a glittery cover – with a prefatory page which quotes a passage from *The Enchanted Duplicator* (Walt Willis & Bob Shaw's timeless allegory of fandom), in which Jophan is touched by the Spirit of Fandom's “Wand of Contact.” This perfect introduction is followed by Leah Zeldes Smith's “Our Fandom and Welcome to It,” in which she explains the nature and genesis of the volume and draws some comparisons between it and the 1961 Earl Kemp publication, *Why Is A Fan?* In this piece Leah observes the changes which have occurred in fandom over the last half-century, and wonders if the parts of fandom which she most values (as do I) are still attractive to the latest generation of incipient fans.

Then come 85 pages of reminiscences by 72 fans, arranged chronologically and beginning with Forry Ackerman's 1929 entrance into fandom as it was beginning to form (“I guess I didn't discover fandom, it just kind of grew up around me.”) and ending with Lisa C. Freitag's first encounter with fandom in 1984. This is followed by a five-page index and a back cover quote from the conclusion of *The Enchanted Duplicator*.

Most of the contributors to this volume will not be known to anyone not already involved actively in fandom (the real exception is Mike Resnick – whose piece runs more than five pages), and many of their stories will be most meaningful for those who already know them best. But for anyone curious about fandom, this volume of initial experiences may open a few doors and reveal a commonality shared by all of us who have become active fans.

—Ted White

V-CON SOCIETY (WCSFA)

2001 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

November 30, 2001, 9:10 p.m., Burrard Motor Inn Lounge

Present: Steve Forty, Garth Spencer, Barb Dryer, Stanley Foo, Clint Budd, Delphine Kelly, Duncan MacGregor, Dave Feinstien, Palle Hoffstein.

Motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting: passed by consensus.

Election of the Executive/Board for the 2001-2002 Season

Clint presented the following nominations:

President - Clint Budd

Vice President - Andrew Brechin

Secretary - Garth Spencer

Treasurer - Nico Iormetti

Members-at-Large / Board Members:

David Hale,

Lorna Appleby

This slate was passed by acclamation.

Motion to set the Canadian Thanksgiving/ U.S. Columbus Day weekend in October 2002 as the new date for VCon: The sense of the meeting was to accept the date. Passed by consensus.

Motion to accept Palle's recommendation of the Surrey Guildford Sheraton as the venue for VCon 27: The sense of the meeting was to accept the venue. Passed by consensus.

Motion to accept Palle's bid for VCon 27: The sense of the meeting was this bid is already accepted. Passed by consensus.

New business: A long discussion about promotional ideas followed.

Clint talked about holding a half-day writers' panel on "future Vancouver", as mooted by Donna McMahon and Sylvia Skene. The conclusion appeared to be that setting up this event will require four (4) volunteers.

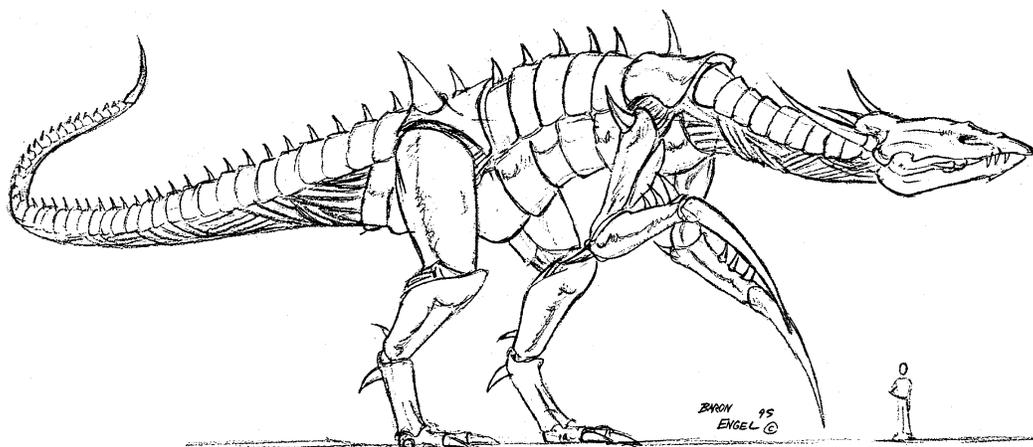
Steve talked about the misappropriation of some \$1400 in VCon 27 preregistration funds, as a careful reading of the published VCon 26 statement makes evident. Palle reported that he has talked with Chris Sturges about some details of running VCon 26, and Chris has suggested some ideas for debt reduction, e.g. an auction party at his place.

Among other V-Con Society fundraisers, Steve suggested a March auction party at his own place, tentatively on the third Saturday. (If this is agreed upon, then the *BCSFazine* editor should place an ad in each issue soliciting donations, in big bold letters.)

Palle and Steve discussed promotions at e.g. bookstores.

Clint raised again the notion of applying for government arts/cultural event grants.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.



KAWAMOTO DOES REVIEWS

Dennis Danvers, *End of Days*

I have just read *End of Days* written by Dennis Danvers, author of *Time and Time Again* (which I think made it to film) and *Wilderness* (an authentic werewolf story where the female protagonist transforms convincingly, unlike *An American Werewolf in Paris* and dozens of “I was a Teenaged Werewolf” clones). It’s the sequel to *Circuit of Heaven*, which introduces the lead characters in the present book.

This series is recommended reading to millennialist science fiction fans, especially those of you who don’t spell God G-H-O-D, attend church regularly, and are moderate fundamentalists rather than the ones depicted as the Christian Soldiers.

Basically, the series is about the cloning of humans as slaves, with the main female protagonist of COH, Stephanie, supplying the cells for the world’s first cloned sex slaves; the invention of the BIN, a virtual world that people can upload to rather than end their lives naturally or otherwise, examined or unexamined; and the rise of Gabriel and his Christian Soldiers to bomb the BIN with Star Wars missiles, bomb sinners in the Middle East and Asia, and bring the world to *End of Days*.

The main male protagonist is Walter Tillman, who suffered a certain skin disease that made him look like a toad, but is brilliant enough to clone people in 40 days. The villain is Stephanie’s husband who finances the cloning project, a power player whose marriage to Stephanie was merely a wise business deal.

Basically, Stephanie is THE WORLD’S MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN and she falls in love with the genius toad, Tillman, who clones her husband and visits her ;). The virtual world, the BIN, is a limited world because the inventor is playing God, but being human, he abdicates — which leads to a fantasy element I won’t reveal.

Donovan is in *EoD*. He is Bin-born, never been downloaded into a host, but gets downloaded into the Angel of Death. Wait till you read the switcheroo he’s involved in: even I didn’t get it - the author never explained.

I feel this book gets really sloppy near the end when the child of Stephanie’s granddaughter via her clones, Laura, meets a Christian Soldier rebel, Sam, Madeline grow up to come to New Jerusalem, a shell shocked Washington DC, to meet the reborn Gabriel.

Armageddon-obsessed millennialist scifi fans should be warned: There are no scenes of Armageddon in *EoD*; that’s done with in *CoH*. Instead we get treated to a kinder, gentler world that reminds me of Lucifer’s homecoming when he repents and is allowed back into Heaven. However, that’s my metaphor to conceal the last three chapters of the novel so that we can avoid spoiling the ending.

As a final note, I would caution that *Circuit of Heaven* and *End of Days* is for mature audiences, PG-rating, due to some profanity and a few suggestive scenes. I would also caution that true believers of science, especially the laws of physics, should be cautioned that there are two incidents in the novel where the law of gravity is repealed due to the fact that both incidents occur in the Bin, but then the Bin is subject to its members’ interpretation of reality.

Overall, a good book: 15 out of 20. I give a 3 out of 5 for scientific accuracy; 4 out of 5 for entertainment value; 4 out of 5 for character development and 4 out of 5 for plot development. Finally, Danvers should do more research on making the download/upload authentic. He never describes the process, and it comes off as just magick for my superstitious self to even suspend disbelief.

Danvers gives people in the Bin just too much ability with the potential to alter reality to suit themselves, which could lead to wild speculation on Fantasy as an artificial reality where magic rules, but the mechanics could be due to the individual rather than God being in control i.e. there is no God in a magick-based world. Even so, wait till your mind is touched by Madeline!

Darwinia, Robert Charles Wilson

Darwinia is written by Robert Charles Wilson who also wrote *Memory Wire*. Basically it’s a New Age millennialist scifi novel, with the universe cast as sentient, but something’s gone wrong. It’s also a typical good versus evil story, with natural organic life playing the role of Good and non-sentient life playing the role of Evil. The hero is one Guilford Law.

In 1912, a cataclysm renders Europe a primordial “wasteland” - and reverse colonization occurs amidst the underlying good-vs-evil Armageddon. Wilson doesn’t explain much about the evil demons, other than to transform a few humans into them.

The story is complex, but a good read, with less science and more fiction, so that one has to suspend disbelief over things like the Archive, just how the good guys neutralize Evil, and other untidy bits.

A lot of speculation can come about from reading this book and filling in the blanks Wilson leaves for us, thankfully.

I rate it a 4 out of 5, just because Ghod is the Universe rather than some anthropomorphic being.

Daughters of Bast 2/3, Shrine of Light, Sarah Isidore

The SF&F series, *Daughters of Bast*, appears to be a critique of religious hypocrisy with regard to world leaders, specifically Christianity versus the old folk ways of Druidism and Egyptian Magic (Bast, the Cat Goddess - White Magic - vs. Sekhmet, the Lion Goddess - Black Magic).

That aside, the second novel, *Shrine of Light*, depicts Eire c. 6th century and features the Frank King Clovis. This is another Good vs Evil story, well done and not too moralistic save for the subtle anti-Christian bias of the author.

