

## THOUGHTS ON 'CENSORED' (July 2013) – buy Taral Wayne

I can only think of two great censors in history. Petronius Arbiter, the Roman author of the infamously ribald *Satyricon*, and Cato the elder, another Roman, of such notorious rectitude that you wonder how they lived in the same imperial capital.

Fred Hurter's *Censored* is mildly historical ... but far from great.

First, a few words about Fred Hurter, Jr. "Few" are about all that can be found, and not all of those can be fully trusted. Harry Warner Jr., for example, strongly implies that Hurter began college in 1944, after he began and ended the first volume of *Censored*. This is not so. In issue two, Hurter plainly states that he is already a student at St. Andrew's, in Aurora, Ontario, a moderate drive north of Toronto. Warner also states, with lamentable vagueness, that while *Censored* was not Canada's first fanzine, that it was nonetheless the first produced for an ajay. He might have come right out with it and revealed that in fact it was produced for FAPA, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association.

According to Warner, the zine began life somewhat inauspiciously as *Rocket*, but when Hurter discovered that title had been previously used by another fan, he hand-wrote "Censored" over the title of every copy of the first issue. I cannot verify this detail, as I lack a copy of that first issue, but it sounds like something an earnest young fan would do. It was also mentioned that Beak Taylor, another St. Andrew's student, lent a helping hand with the zine. Along with Hurter, Taylor was a student at St. Andrew's College, circa 1941. As we all know – ahem – Beak Taylor went on to become the publisher of his own fanzine, *Canadian Fandom*, an altogether different proposition from Hurter's modest fanmag.

For reasons the editor never saw fit to mention, *Censored* ceased publication in 1942, after only four issues. Unexpectedly, it resurfaced six years later, and lasted for at least two more issues that anybody seems to know about. One can speculate that it was excitement over the first Canadian Worldcon in Toronto in 1948, *Torcon I*, that brought about its temporary resurrection. I have no doubt that Fred Hurter Jr. hung on in fandom for a few years longer, but the young man had already made all the mark on our pocket universe that he was destined to make.

As for his fanzine, it was typical of its era, I suppose – badly typed on mimeo stencils and handcranked off the drum with legibility being its highest, if unreliable, virtue. The contents consisted mainly of amateur fiction that I can see little reason to read more than 70 years later, a smattering of poetry, attempts at humour that defy laughter, some indifferent reviews of books and a primitive letter column. There is also a precious glimmer of light cast on the activities and personalities of early fandom, such as the fifth issue's report on *Torcon*.

So, why exactly have I scanned the three issues in my possession? One answer is that I don't know if anyone else even could. Another is that I knew it would please a Canadian fanhistorian who seems even more nuts about this old stuff than I ever was. But the best reason is because *Censored* was so typical of its time. Fanzines evolved swiftly in the early 1940s, changing from imitations of existing pro magazines to a medium for fannish self-expression in as little as ten years. It isn't that serious, academic or fiction fanmags didn't survive into the next decade. As a

matter of fact, that particular wheel is re-invented on a continuing basis, and sometimes succeeds admirably in its goal of mimesis... though more often not. But in the 1950s, fanzines like *Hyphen*, *Skyhook*, *Horizons* and *Quandry* became the norm for most fans.

*Censored*, however, is clearly a creature of the 1940s, as were all its Canadian cousins of that decade. Even *CanFan* would retain a somewhat antiquated air about it well into the 1950s, until more modern fans such as Boyd Raeburn, Norm Clarke and Gina “Dutch” Ellis turned their backs on that model once and for all. If we are to understand early Canadian fandom at all, it is through reading zines such as *CanFan*, *Vanations*, *Light* and, yes, *Censored*, that we must hold our noses and do it.

I know ... I’m *such* a snob. But, the fact remains that *Censored* would not rank even as highly as a crudzine today. Standards have risen. But they rose for entirely explicable reasons – many fanzines published in the 1940s were written for and published by teenage *kids*. Moreover, the models they had to learn from were the pulps, aimed mainly at an immature market – much, perhaps most, of the contents of those pulps would never have been published in any pro magazine after about 1950, by which time the readers had grown up. Fanzines grew up along with them.

Final Thoughts – I’m reminded of a pair of odd coincidences noticed while scanning the issues of *Censored* from my collection. In number five, there is a short piece of illustrated fiction titled “Ignorance and Intellect,” by one Bert Joss. It is about a secret invention that allows a mad scientist to race his Austin at – are you ready for this? – 110 mph!!! (Your Ford Focus will do better, by the way.) Naturally, the experiment goes bad and the inventor cashes in his chips.

But right away, I saw something that floored me. The car the scientist raced against looked surprisingly like a modern Audibuilt concept. Then again, the Audi was a deliberate retro-design meant to suggest a 1930s Auto Union racer, so maybe the resemblance wasn’t altogether unlikely.

Still more surprising was the make of the rival car – it was a Tucker. So what, you say? Bob Tucker was a well-known fan in 1948, and plainly the beneficiary of a “Tuckerization.” Yeah, but that’s not the surprising part about it. Oddly, there *was* an automobile called a Tucker in 1948, designed and produced by Preston Tucker, whose forward-looking ideas may have been partly responsible for his car’s failure. Since the ’48 Tucker never made it to any showroom, did Fred Hurter Jr. know of it ... or not? He might have. To be sure, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission’s investigation of Preston Tucker’s business practices – the main reason for his failure – were headline news.

So which was it? A humorous hint of a future in which the Tucker succeeded? Or a “Tuckerization?”

On this question, fanhistory is silent.

Data on *Censored* from the Pavlat/Evans Index and the unpublished Pelz index:

### **Pelz circa 1984**

Censored 1 (v1/n1) Jun 1941 13 pp  
Censored 2 (v1/n2) Oct 1941 19 pp  
Censored 3 (v1/n3) Mar 1942 28 pp  
Censored 4 (v1/n4) Jun 1942 26 pp

### **Pavlat/Evans 1952 Index**

Censored 1 (v1/n1) Jun 1941 12 pp  
Censored 2 (v1/n2) Oct 1941 20 pp  
Censored 3 (v1/n3) Mar 1942 26 pp  
Censored 4 (v1/n4) Jun 1942 26 pp  
Censored 5 (v2/n5) Fall 1948 28 pp  
Censored 6 (v2/n6) ? 1954 56 pp

(The difference in how many pages are recorded is no doubt due to different methods the indexers used to count pages – for example, is a blank, inside cover page a page?)