

BROKEN TOYS 38

Broken Toys 38 is in a race against the end of **April, 2015**, with odds about 50/50. I have not moved from 245 Dunn Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada, and my e-mail address is still Taral@bell.net, should you want to loc. As usual, copies can be downloaded from eFanzines.colm or fanac.org, even cdnsfzinearchive.org, furaffinity.net/user/saara and taralwayne.deviantart.com. It hardly matters since I've no evidence anyone has ever downloaded an issue from any of these fanzines sites and locced it. I suppose you just have to do these things, anyway. *Kiddelidivee Books & Arts 297*

who needs a Satan?

Do you ever get up in the morning and sense that God is looking down at you, glaring hatred? Do you feel that it is His will that you understand that He is going to take back all His gifts, one by one, until you are a gormless lump of flesh in a bed, left to be washed and fed by uncaring, inattentive nurses who will paw through your bedside drawer for things to steal? Do you sense that your ability to enjoy the one life given to you by a loving Deity is slipping irretrievably away? Welcome to the human race.

It's only God's truth. He *doesn't* love us. We live only by a contractual obligation He made with Noah in a moment of folly.

For the last few days, I've been unusually weak. In the past, this sometimes took the form of being unable to keep my right eye fully open at the end of the day, or to hold my head upright. Of late, it's more often been my right hand that goes. It gets so weak that I can't type with it for more than a few seconds, and can barely hold a pencil. The weakness can be so severe that it is not even possible to lift a spoon to my mouth without using my left hand to hold the right hand steady.

I have medications for this, but must take only *six* pills a day. If I take more, I will run out of them before the end of the month. Besides, I've been led to believe that one can grow unresponsive to Pyridostigmine ... and if I do, then what will prevent me from deteriorating completely? So, on those days when the drug's protection fails me, I cannot write ... and can only draw slowly, with great effort. I will probably also experience trouble with every other activity for the rest of the day, and can hardly

enjoy my last meal of the evening while my head is on one shoulder and half my food ends up on the table. Even chewing can be hard.

It's all too easy to imagine a future in which I simply cannot draw or write, and where reading or watching movies will provide no pleasure since I will have one eye perpetually closed and my head nodding on my chest. Even meals could become something to get through only because I must. No one will want to visit me, because I'll certainly be no fun to be with. Because my speech can be badly slurred sometimes, my conversation won't be very rewarding. All I may be able to do, someday, is listen to music ... if I can get up to change the CDs. All this could be how my life is in ten years... five ... even two, if my *Myasthenia gravis* continues to worsen.

What is the point of living this way at all? How does Steven Hawking do it? I guess it's because he's a "thinker" rather than a "doer" ... but my thoughts about anything, plus a cup of coffee, are worth a buck at any Tim Hortons.

Ah well. Try to look at the bright side. I have another appointment with a neurologist to look at the problem again. Maybe I can be prescribed a larger dose after all, or the Pyridostigmine can be supplemented. There is an alternative: immunosuppressive drugs. They are a last resort, however, because they suppress one's immune response across the board, making it easier to catch diseases or become infected ... and more likely to develop cancer. But better that, maybe, than sitting like a lump listening over and over all day to whatever the nurse puts on the CD player.

I admit that I'm sliding into pessimism. I try not to, and I do have much to be grateful for – thanks to friends and the health care system of Ontario. But after having a kidney stone last month, then discovering I had a lung full of fluid and fluid around my heart as well, I'm beginning to lose my usual sunny disposition! For every one step I take forward, I slip one back.

I have to make it clear that I don't believe in a God, not even an abstract, impersonal guiding force behind the universe. But is it any wonder that I fantasize about a malevolent Creator who giveth only so that He may taketh away? Those of us who are not run over by a bus, or struck down by disease, have little to look forward to but the gradual loss of our senses, abilities, joys, mobility, bodily functions and even the familiar world of movie stars, pop singers, fashions, news, family and friends that have surrounded us all our lives ... until, finally, God grows tired of this slow torment and peremptorily *murders* us.

If there is a God, I'm certain that He and Satan are one and the same.

ALTERNATE ENDINGS

THE OLD ENDING

I was beginning to frighten myself. Not only had I not written anything for eleven entire days – which must be a record for me over the last few years – but I didn't give a damn. Perhaps the FAAn Awards threw me into a funk after I read that I had fallen to 5th place as fanartist, and that *Broken Toys* had fallen from second to third place, tying with *Flag*. And as a fanwriter, I did no better than 6th place after Andrew Hooper. Here I thought I was getting better!

But no ... I don't think even the FAAn Awards have that much power over me. More than likely, it was just the accumulated distress caused by my deteriorating health.

I'm happy to say that I've hit rock bottom, however, and am now on the rebound. I wrote "Who Needs a Satan" to wring out the last drop of negativity, and then felt remarkably clean – almost buoyant – afterward. I'm the sort of guy who listens to the Broadway recording of Sweeney Todd to cheer myself up!

LIFE SIGNS

In fact, life has been fairly good to me since. I have not only made the first two doctor's appointments I had scheduled, but the third proved redundant. I have also had no trouble getting to them, not even the appointment with the neurologist, all the way downtown. The distance turned out to be well within the range of my chair, Traveling Matt. I returned home from Toronto General with less than half the power drained from my batteries. It appears, then, that I can take Traveling Matt to anywhere I'm likely to want to go. I'm looking forward to driving all the way to this summer's coin show and surprising Robert, my number-one dealer. In the fall, I hope to take in the Canadian National Exhibition with Simon and Victoria. I've already toured the grounds, to see how much juice it took, and circumnavigated the CNE Grounds with ease. Since the weather has definitely taken a turn for the better, I've been out several other times, for no other reason than to see parts of my neighborhood that I haven't seen for years.

My bill of health is also good. The medications prescribed for me have been increased from six to eight of the white pills (Mestinon), and an immune suppressant (Mycophenolate) has been added. Immune suppressants have serious side effects – not the least making you more vulnerable to infections and even cancer – but this one is a product of the *penicillium* fungus, and not a steroid. This should spare me the possibility of adverse effects on liver and kidneys.

The fluids have long disappeared from my lung, so I'm breathing much easier ... and that means sleeping regularly. According to the most recent readings, the amount of fluid around my heart is reduced and is apparently no longer applying pressure on it. Although I have more energy and breathe better, my blood pressure is now up a mite, so there will be yet *more* pills to take.

Even the swelling in my left leg has largely disappeared, restoring its youthful, svelte appearance.

Take that, Satan or God, whoever you are! There's a dance in the old fool yet

THE NASCENT PRO

One other loose end that needs tying up is the fate of the story I wrote last January, and submitted to *Weird Tales*. I'm unhappy to say that after a brief communication about two months later – in which they apologized for the delay and promised to read the manuscript soon – I never heard from them again. After 16 months, I decided I would have to find another potential publisher of "The Canaries in the Dark."

The problem was that I know nothing about the SF market, *nothing!* I haven't cared enough about SF

as a genre to keep up with such nonsense. I just want to sell a story, not become an instant expert about a complex, confusing business. (That's what agents are for, isn't it? Pity I can't get one, but what agent takes on an unpublished writer?)

I asked the two writers I know well enough to turn to for advice. Robert Sawyer was a little help, though it has been two or three decades since he's needed to know anything about the market. He suggested *On Spec*. Why sure! Even I have heard of *On Spec*! Why didn't I think of that? Unfortunately, when I went to their web page, I discovered that they had stopped buying until sometime later in the year. My friend Bob Wilson was less helpful than Rob. He confessed that he knew almost nothing about new or on-line magazines, or how young writers get started in the second decade of the century. Bob hasn't had to worry about the business end of his writing for even longer than Rob Sawyer.

Never mind ... my ass was in gear, and I soon found three other on-line magazines. The first was *Pulp Literature*. They weren't buying just then, but said they would begin again later this month. The second was *Clarkesworld*. It was buying *then*, so I sent them my manuscript the same day, getting an automatic confirmation shortly after.

Clarkesworld got back to me in only a couple of days. They had read the manuscript, but a pastiche of William Hope Hodgson wasn't their cup of tea. Fair enough.

In the meantime I had heard back from the second magazine, *Pulp Literature*. They hadn't been sent the manuscript, but were responding to my enquiries and would be happy to read it. They also wondered if I had any graphic stories (comics, in other words). In fact, I do, but if memory serves me they are all anthro stories, and probably not what the editors were hoping for. Nevertheless, I sent some sample art they could look at. Since *Clarkesworld* gave "The Canaries in the Dark" a pass, I sent the story to *Pulp Literature*.

That's how matters stand ... for now. I may well have more to report before I even before this issue of *Broken Toys* goes to press.

RUNNING IN PLACE

Over the last month I've kept a number of appointments with neurologists, cardiologists and, of course, my general practitioner. Most of it has been routine follow-up and changes of medication, and I'm happy to say I'm still not feeling badly at all. Still, I was in a state of shock after filling a recent prescription and being told it would cost me \$34. I'm supposed to be covered by the province for medications I need, so I couldn't understand why the cardiologist would prescribe one that wasn't covered. For that matter, why are *any* medications that any patient needs not covered? We aren't talking about a disease that can only be contracted by an intimate association with an infected Rocky Mountain Yellow Snow Otter. Furthermore, I'm completely in the dark what the new medication is supposed to *do*. I suppose it's a matter I'll have to bring up with the GP when I see Dr. Lee in early May. Specialists can be somewhat out of touch with reality, and there may be a generic version or an alternative drug.

THE SOCIAL GADFLY

The other day, I drove my power chair to Bakka-Phoenix Books, to give some sort of vague moral

support to Bob Wilson's book-signing event. I had already demonstrated that the store was well within my practical driving range, so I saw no reason not to go. I hadn't seen Bakka in years, and was a little curious. When I arrived, Bob was already speaking to the fans, and began signing copies of his latest novel, *The Affinities*, a little later. The signing was well attended, I thought, and Bob's talk was well received. Sitting in the back in the chair, I didn't hear much of it, mind you, but I expected that. Also, I can hear Bob talk any old time. The fans who came to hear him couldn't, so I sat in the back and kept my mouth shut ... mostly.

I had hoped that people I hadn't seen in a long time would be there, and I wasn't disappointed. Talking with them again made the trip well worthwhile. One of those I had not seen for the longest time was Bob Hadji. He goes by the name Knowlton, now, yet I will always think of him as "Hadji." I was also surprised to discover that Jon Rose had attended the signing. Jon was the owner of Bakka after Charlie McKee, who sold out to the present owners a number of years ago, before moving to the Canadian west coast. I also bumped into Shirley Meier, one of the local fantasy writers, Colin Hinz, Catherine Crocket, Diane Lacey (a local convention guru), Hope Liebowitz and her friend Charles Levi. Before very long, though, it was all over. I had a good time and was prepared to see Bob and Sharry off to an interview-in-waiting.

The only thing, though, was that the interview wasn't waiting any more. It had been put off to another occasion, and so a dinner party began to form up. It would be Bob, Bob's wife Sharry, Sharry's sister (who was visiting on Sharry's birthday), Hope, Charles, and me. It would have been a simple matter of picking the first decent-looking place we came to once we left Bakka. It should have been that simple ... but one place after another turned out to be several steps above the street level. Remember, I was in a 300-lb. power chair that could not be lifted up a single step, let alone three, four or five steps! It was a puzzle at first why so many restaurant entrances were elevated this way, until we realized that they were converted from old Victorian homes, and once had stoops. The stoops were gone, but it was still necessary to mount to the original entrances. We went back and forth along Harbord Street, but found nothing I was able to enter.

Eventually I summoned up an uncharacteristic gallantry, offering to leave the party and go home alone. After all ... there had been no plan for a dinner party at all, originally, so in a way I was missing nothing. Bob and Sharry offered me a grubstake, however, so when I was back to my home in Parkdale I took out a double cheese, pepperoni and crumbled bacon pizza.

In a way, I had the last laugh. I really, *really* enjoy good pizza. But later I learned that the rump of the dinner party settled on a very ordinary pub-style place. Bob told me he ordered a burger, and Hope complained about both the food *and* the TV on the wall ... which she despises. Still, it's best to remember that it's the company that one goes to these impromptu dinners for, rather than the grub.

Just what we will do on future occasions is a problem we will face when we come to it, I suppose.

The Affinities, Robert Charles Wilson,
Tor, 2015, US\$25.99/\$29.99 Cdn.



Storefront on Harbord St. near Spadina



Sharry's photo of Bob Wilson at work



Bob, Charles, Hope, Sharry



Sharry Wilson

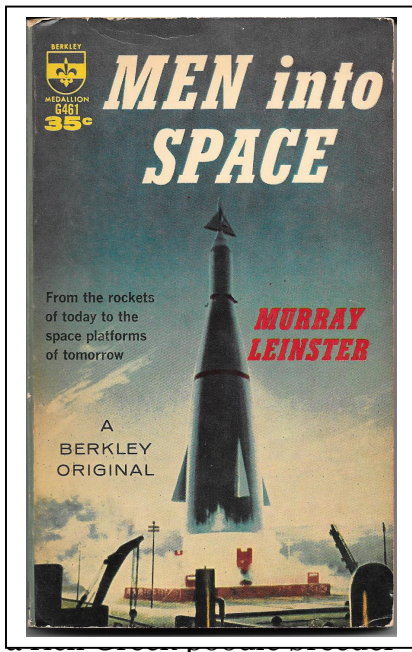


Shirley Meier



Bob Hadji, Diane Lacey, Catherine Crocket

(All photos were taken by myself, except the one at top right by Sharry Wilson)



BLACK & WHITE *Into Space*

It was 1957, and I was six. A lot happened that year, not the least of which was the Russian launching into space of a primitive radio transmitter called Sputnik 1. At the time, I lived with my family in a farmhouse near the small town of Gormley, a short drive from Toronto, where we managed a puppy mill for a rich Greek poodle breeder named Karageorgis. I recall standing outside on a gorgeously starred night and my father pointing up to a moving glimmer among the stars and telling me it was an artificial satellite. I also remember how the radio news kept replaying the Russian signal – “beep, beep, beep” – as though it were the most significant sound of the 20th century.

Maybe it was.

A great many other things happened in 1957 that I remember. I remember going to a two-room schoolhouse, and a kid named Danny who could pop out his glass eye. I remember a snowstorm that created drifts so high my father could almost reach up to touch the telephone lines alongside the dirt road in front of the house. The radio blared “Ain’t Nothin’ But a Hound Dog,” and “Does Your Chewin’ Gum Lose Its Flavour on the Bed Post Overnight?” I found a lost Dinky Toy in the abandoned asparagus patch. I saw a dead cat for the first time. On television, the animated *Ruff and Ready* dog and cat team went to an artificial planet in space called “Munimula” (which the narrator was careful to point out spelled “aluminum” backwards), and I collected bubble gum cards that outlined the future history of interplanetary travel!

It was clearly the Space Age. Alas, I was just a little too young for it.

Men Into Space was a program I would have died to watch. But it came on at 8:30 on Wednesday nights, and no matter how stubbornly I dragged my heels, in 1957 I was already on my way to bed by 8 p.m. I would be slow to pick up my toys. I would answer “okay” over and over again, but do nothing. I would plead for another few minutes before I had to go upstairs. But all to no avail. Before 8:05 my mother’s or father’s arm would hook around me, drag me to my feet, and I’d be marched off to the foot of the stairs.

To make matters worse, I was scared to death of those stairs. We lived in an old Dutch barn of a house, whose staircase was a narrow, unlit tunnel in two flights, around the corner of which I could almost *hear* the breathing of the Angel of Death lurking in wait for me. How I came to

fear these stairs I no longer recollect. In daylight, they were perfectly harmless – I took them two steps at a time, without a care in the world.

Nevertheless, my real grievance was turning my back on the TV. The only memory left to me of *Men Into Space* is that of an angular-looking asteroid floating in the blackness of star-spangled space. That was all!

For those of you with no memory of *Men Into Space*, it was a half-hour, black-and-white television program produced by CBS in 1959 and '60. Unlike its syndicated predecessor, *Science Fiction Theater* (an anthology series), *Men Into Space* strove for realism. The program followed the career of astronaut Col. Edward McCauley during the pioneer days of

manned space travel – from the first moon landings, through the construction of a space station and orbiting of a space telescope, to the first attempted mission to Mars. The technology was that of its day; extrapolations were based on NASA's own blueprints. The noted astronomical painter, Chesley Bonestell, was clearly an influence on the program, as were contemporary Disney documentaries and the series of *Collier's* articles.

Evidently, somewhere online I wistfully mentioned how I had missed seeing this old TV program, because the comment was read by one of my readers. Out of the blue, he sent me both volumes of *Men Into Space* on DVD! Although he is shy of being recognized publicly, I extend him my thanks.

While I haven't watched all 38 episodes yet, I found time to watch the first couple of disks as soon as I could, including the elusive "Asteroid."

So *that* was what they were up to, mucking around with that asteroid! Col. McCauley and his crew had been sent there to investigate whether this one-mile by two-mile chunk of rock could be used as a way-station ... or if it was a potential threat to Earth. Their decision? It was a threat, and had to be blown up.

Given the attention to detail shown by the series, it is often amusing to ponder on why certain lunkheaded mistakes were made – such as allowing men to work in space without a tether in sight. Also, instead of simple handholds, astronauts in the show wore magnetic shoes. Of course, *Men Into Space* wasn't the only early science fiction program to be fascinated with footwear – it was assumed to be the logical answer to weightlessness in everything from *Fireball XL5* to *Destination Moon*. Yet, if you think about it, being nailed to the nearest mass of metal while there is nothing with which to push or pull yourself loose may not be the best of ideas. Exhaustion could not be far away. How could anyone planning a space-walk possibly overlook the advantages of a tether?

For all the care the writers took, I discovered a number of similar oversights in *Men Into Space*. For example, launching and re-entry in a shirtsleeve environment. Another example, a lack of simple CO2 detectors in the crew cabin. One monumental slip-up was attempting the first



manned landing on the moon without any apparent previous attempts with a robotic lander. As a result of *that* oversight, two of the ship's landing legs sank into soft soil and the ship nearly tipped over. Fortunately (but implausibly) there was *still* enough fuel left to attempt a second landing!



It hardly seems fair to hold the show up to too high a standard, though. Let he who is perfect cast the first quibble.

One of the most intriguing things I've noticed about the episodes of *Men Into Space* I've watched is that almost every one of them has scenes in which we are introduced to the families of one or more of the astronauts. As families go, they are amazingly atypical! I don't know if I saw even one that didn't consist of a trophy wife and a solitary son. The women were

all fashion-model beautiful, and the boys were too wholesome to have ever glanced into an issue of *Mad*. Their behavior was as uniform as these families looked. Son would ask Mom, "Is Dad in any danger?" "No, son," she'd answer, "Your father *promised* he'd return safe and sound!"

Clearly, these family scenes served some purpose. I suppose it might have been a formula to dramatize the risk taken by astronauts in the performance of their duties. But I suspect the real reason was a perception that only men would watch a program like *Men Into Space*, and that if the ladies were to be lured to the screen, they had to be thrown some token involvement. Hence the virtually identical scenes of worried little nuclear families.

Of course, my comments might well seem over-hasty once I've watched the other 30 episodes ... something I intend to do at the earliest convenient moment ... and savored them. As well, it will be an excuse to dust off all my old-school rocket models and toys, and set them up on my desk while I watch the TV.

It'll be just like old times, but without the scary stairs.



WAHF: Linda Bushyager, lindabushyager@aol.com Glad you are home from hospital and doing better with a better doctor. I enjoyed the ish and the tribute to the old Gestetner 66. It was a sad day when I carted my last Gestetner down the hill in front of my old house in Paoli to the trash area. I enjoyed the photos of the Gestetners at the end of the article. End of an era. Sigh. **Reese Dorrycott**, who sent me a multi-disc set of DVDs of the 1950s TV program, *Men Into Space*

(reviewed in this issue)! **Darrell Benvenuto** (one of my old comics publishers), who speculated on whether or not my first doctor would have killed me in the end. Hope Leibowitz, tiki@interlog.com who wrote briefly about her noon-day meal. R-Lauraine Tutahasi, lauraine@mac.com who is behind on her reading, and gave up singing regularly with her church choir. She also wishes she could have met Jim Moffat. **David Redd**, dave_redd@hotmail.com, once again from **Kjartan Arnorsson**, kjartana@comcast.net, a mad Viking who currently lives with guns in Arizona. Finally, a loc from **Walt Wentz**, *on this issue* that I plan to run in the next issue.

KIM HUETT, [KIM.HUETT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:kim.huett@gmail.com)

This isn't a comment on any specific issue of *Broken Toys* but a more general response to the collecting thread which runs through them.

I have long viewed the desire to accumulate possessions as a leftover trait that was once useful to our hunter-gatherer ancestors, something not unlike the ability to see faces in random shapes. Shopping and collecting are thus pleasurable activities to us because the ol' lizard brain is happy when we're engaged in an activity which, as far as it is concerned, is keeping our bellies full. This doesn't mean everybody likes shopping or collecting to the same degree as each other or likes them in every situation, because a lot of other factors affect our enjoyment of such activities. However I believe the basic impulse which has us out looking for stuff is universal. The collecting of first editions or antique cars is simply a refinement allowable by the ease with which we can obtain food. Just because an individual reaches a point where obtaining food is (theoretically) no longer a driving issue, it doesn't mean the food collecting drive turns off. Thus we scratch that persistent itch by collecting things other than food, whether they be objects or experiences (gossip is probably the oldest form of collecting in existence). For many of us the collecting urge may not be an especially productive urge, but clearly it's one we're stuck with so we might as well enjoy it.

I mostly do that by adding to my fanzine collection. Given I don't own my own home, I'm mindful of the fact that periodically I will move house. That means I'm always mindful of the fact that whatever possessions I own will have to be moved at some point and I'd very much like to keep the moving process as painless as possible. I do that by limiting my collecting urge to two areas of special interest to me, fanzines and early Australian science fiction magazines and booklets. The fanzines at least are a major item to move but at least they're the only one. My library of books for example is an especially lean one compared to most people I know.

As it happens I had been meaning to tidy up the library for a while and found the necessary enthusiasm the other week. Attached is a photo of the now re-organised bookshelves and a PDF file which contains a list of every book on same. Would this photo of my library tell anybody anything about me? I think so yes, though I admit the book list would tell a lot more.

You might also like to know that this set of bookshelves was built for me by my father when I was 16. I'm pretty sure I've had these shelves longer than any other of my possessions, about 37 years to date.

The box on the bottom shelf is a ring-in as it contains rolls of film and family documents rather than books. Also, to the left you can see one of the two vinyl records I still own in the form of Jeff Wayne's "War Of the Worlds." I decided to not get rid of that one when I disposed of the rest of my record collection because it's so much more than a simple record in a cardboard sleeve. It's also my second oldest possession.

Beside the "War Of the Worlds" album is a fragment of Indonesian altar cloth dating back to the 1900's (love the colours and pattern of it), and a share in the Hektograph Manufacturing Company Of New York. Underneath are stored a collection of duplicate fanzines waiting for me to decide what to do with them.

Everything uncluttered. Just the way I like it,

NED BROOKS. NEDBROOKS@SPRYNET.COM

Hi Taral - Your medical adventures sound a bit like those of my brother Dan, but he did not survive. He went to the doctor for what seemed like a persistent case of flu - and two months later, after a triple bypass, half his colon and his gall bladder removed, and a tracheostomy, he was no longer able to speak or even acknowledge contact, and was allowed to die. And he was neither overweight nor a drinker and had little medical history - but he had smoked all his adult life.

I never cared that much for plain water either - you might find it better with a wedge of lemon squeezed in. There are varieties of water of course - the water here has been through limestone and is loaded with calcium carbonate. To me that improves the taste, but does it make kidney stones more likely? I don't know.

Toronto's water is pretty hard, too. It lines toilet bowls and kettles with calcium almost with a single use! I just keep tap water in some plastic jugs in the fridge. As well as a cap, they have molded handles, so I can hoist them just like mugs!

Excellent review of the *Furry Future*. If Fred had gotten you to illustrate it, he might sell more!

[For the record, Ned means the review of *The Furry Future* that was posted on File 770, here: <http://file770.com/?p=21524#comments>. The review is also reprinted in this issue.]

There are different schools of furry art, and the cover that Fred chose was clearly in the Terry Smith school, and was, I think, probably what he wanted. It has a generic appeal to the entire fandom.

There were also two illustrations inside, but they were quite wretched and best not commented on. I doubt I'd have been interested in doing illustrations for the book unless there was some form of compensation – money, collectibles, liquor, or money.

The only bicycle I had as an adult was stolen from the rack at a mall where I had gone to a movie – it was locked to the rack with a cable. The thief just cut the cable – as with warfare, offense has long since passed defense in the anti-theft field. Better cable merely inspired better cable-cutters. And this was not an expensive bike. The long solid hasp would be harder to get through – but I once watched someone open a security padlock in under a minute with a common hacksaw, and of course such a lock can't be used with your chair. The best security for such a chair might be a loud audible alarm such as some cars have.

The cable I have is probably enough to deter an impulse thief. And who prepares for stealing an electric powered wheelchair? I'm more worried about stealing things I leave behind in the chair if I can't get it inside the shop I'm visiting. However, I've been able to get into all but one or two, so far, and I just have to remember to take the backpack off the seat back and carry it in with me.

Too bad about *eXccentric* - if the stencils are still usable, I could run them off on a Gestetner 120 or the RexRotary. The vinyl electronic stencils may be immortal, but wax stencils, who knows.

They look usable ... but the paper backing is getting brittle. Offhand, I was thinking of scanning the stencils as a form of archival *verité*, and releasing the issue digitally. Still, I have so much *else* to do.

BRAD FOSTER. BWFOSTER@JUNO.COM

I looked forward to this issue as being something of a "collected works", since I had been following your recent "adventures" through postings in Facebook, Or, at least as much of it as good ol' FB decided to let show up in my feed there. But figured you would put it all into more reasonable order when you recounted it all in a new issue of *Broken Toys*.

I finally got around to having a physical exam about two weeks ago, my first one in something like three years. All the eye problems a couple of years ago, and the bills that came from that, kind of had me going "Naw, I feel okay, I can skip a few exams" for a while. But, hitting 60 this year, plus an odd short-term memory loss a couple of months ago had Cindy insisting it was time I get checked out again. Everything seems fine (considering the 60 years, as fine as can be reasonably expected), though the doc has no clue at all why I had the period of memory loss. Hoping it was just a weird aberration. But, nothing on my own medical front that would fill a zine. Double-edged sword, stuff like that: you get lots of material to write about, but, in the balance, you would have not have it been this kind of material.

Your tales of Dr. Quack make me happy that, while I don't see her that often, I have been very pleased with the doctor I now have as my "main" physician. Finding someone you can have confidence in and trust to do the right things for you is hard to do at times, more the luck of the draw than anything conscious we can actually do in finding a doctor to go to. Glad the Quack is gone from your life at last.

The question I that bugged me from the start of this tale of woe was *why* your lung was full of water? After your opening comments about drinking less and less fluids, possibly it's not that you needed more fluids, but that they were simply going to the wrong place? Of course, when the reason was found, the answer to one of your physical ails was: Dr. Quack. Of course! You need to do a "special edition" fanzine, with all the tales of horror from Dr. Quack, then print up some copies and leave them in his waiting room to warn off others before they are taken down the road to ruin as well.

Some of my earlier articles were about on-going troubles with Dr. Quack ... and make those in *this* issue seem pale by comparison. I remember his demand for monthly appointments, that seemed to have no better basis than a monthly stipend from Ontario's health coverage plan. I argued him into bi-monthly, instead, but he wouldn't go as far as quarterly. Without those appointments, though, he wouldn't renew my prescriptions, and I remember one winter when I had the flu, but nevertheless had to struggle to Dr. Quack's office to renew my meds – I remember literally sitting in the snow and thinking I would die before I got there. I complained, but he was about as sympathetic as a hyena disturbed at his spoils.

Oh, and in a follow-up to my loc this issue about Christmas lights – the neighbors across the alley have, indeed, continued to switch on all the red and yellow lights in the tree out back since Christmas. Not every night, kind of random, but they are on more nights than not. Very cool.

Isn't his electrical bill *high enough* without running the outdoor Christmas lights all winter?

If you don't actually make that "Swoosh!" banner to put behind you on Traveling Matt, you should get someone to take a photo of you on TM, then Photoshop in the affects for a pic in an upcoming issue!

Sort of like the chair in the snow photo I cluded together in the last issue? First I need to get someone to photograph me in the chair. I had one opportunity a couple of days ago, but forgot to bring the camera with me. I always do ...

I think that the ideas for new Christmas trees that both you and Milt Stevens came up with were excellent. I could probably put together my own version of your idea one day, though I think will have to wait for someone with quite a bit higher level of technical skill to make Milt's come true.

I've heard there are trees that fold up like an umbrella ... lights and all!

Holy crap! R-Lauraine is going to take an Antarctic cruise?? That's so... well, "cool"!!!

You mean, "cold!" Even downright "frigid."

You know, until you mentioned it, I never thought about the need for different tires on an electric chair to deal with snow. Surely someone, especially there in the snowy north, has come up with a remedy for this problem? Maybe not specifically tire-chains, but something similar that you can put on for the winter months? If not, it would seem there are enough wheeled chairs, electric and otherwise, to make developing and marketing such a product worth the time for someone. Hopefully you will find something, or something will come on the market. It must be done!

Hey, I need to get back to work, and you need to get back to working on a nefarious plot to destroy Dr. Quack.

I intend to cook his duck ... er, goose.

BRUCE GILLESPIE. GANDC@PACIFIC.NET.AU

I haven't had much time to read fanzines recently, but I did take time out to be as scared shitless by your medical problems as you must have been while suffering them. I've been having relatively minor health problems (compared with yours), but also I had the feeling that something that was happening to me that nobody could explain, and I just had to hope that the problem was as minor as they kept saying it was. (Specifically, I've had a dry cough for two months, obviously allergy-based, but triggered by something in my recent environment. For two weeks, it turned into bronchitis, and I also had great trouble sleeping at night, but finally the second lot of antibiotics cured the bronchitis, but not the underlying dry cough. I'm testing a few possibilities at the moment, and the cough is greatly better, but not yet vanished.)

Anyway, I'm glad things have turned out well enough that you have been able to publish a very good-looking fanzine. I'll return to it when I've finished some very urgent paying work.

DAVE HAREN. TYRBOLO@COMCAST.NET

BT 37 was an interesting read and I was quite happy to hear you had discovered what was causing a lot of problems and were now seeing them reverse direction.

At least if you get holes pokend in you for drainage, you'll know why and expect some more

relief. It is similar to an astronaut's rig except the hoses plug into you instead of your suit. I found it the least objectionable part of being split open like a chicken.

In your case you can miss the being split-open part.

I've already had the pleasure, I'm afraid. My second kidney stone, back in the late 1970s or early '80s was lodged in the kidney, and was a monster about the size and shape of a kidney stone. (I still have it in a jar.) To get it out, the surgeon sawed me open like a melon, making an incision from nearly the small of my back all the way to the pubes. At least he sewed me back up again, and didn't remove a slice. For a few days, though, there was leakage around the sutures holding my kidney together, and the fluids were drained from the surroundings through a simple rubber hose that passed through an open hole in the side of my body that I could have inserted a finger into. The area had a adhesive patch over it to keep me from doing just that – not that there was much danger of it – and a pouch to collect the stray urine, blood and seepage. Although it was changed twice a day, it smelled *bad!* What really got me, though, was the expedient used to prevent the tube from pulling back inside my body, and disappearing. The nurse fixed a large safety pin through it which wouldn't fit through the hole! When the time came to remove the makeshift drain and let the hole heal up, the pin was visibly rusty.

Thundering along in powered machinery changes drastically if you toss in snow and ice. There's a learning curve involved but once you master it you'll be a lot safer and more comfortable. The Japanese who only got a few days of snow (Tokyo area) managed to create havoc during that period, I was appalled that they hadn't mastered the difference. I see the same thing happen here with the first rainfall so it isn't just an inscrutable oriental fad.

Even in Toronto, where we know a little something about snow, the first day or two is always chaos on the roads. It's as if the sub-species, *H. sapiens automobilensis* has a memory span somewhat shorter than 8 months, so forgets all about winters between them.

I find no fault with your writings. I'm not always enthused by the subject matter but find it well written about.

ERIC MAYER, GROGGY.TALES@GMAIL.COM

I hope you'll forgive me if I refrain from reiterating what I've already said in correspondence about your frightening medical adventure. Four days in hospital would scare the hell out of me. I'm glad that the problems actually seem to be resolved as best they can and do not seem as serious as one might have thought from the symptoms.

The series of essays do make for a "good" read, particularly since I already knew that the outcome was okay and so could enjoy the humor. Nicely written indeed.

You make an excellent point in that essay about the furry anthology. The ability to string words together nicely is probably the least important skill involved in writing fiction. A lot of people fixate on style but that's just a finishing touch. If the more important elements aren't there you have something that maybe a bad literary critic might like, period.

To clarify my position a bit better, I consider all elements of writing as touching on style. What I meant by the "mere ability to string words together" was simple literacy. Any literate person should be able to write, "I looked for my pipe, but couldn't find no matter where I looked." It does matter, I think, to be able to say that in a more interesting way, let's say, "No matter where I looked for that infernal pipe, it stayed clear out of sight until I gave up the search." Or, "In despair, I searched for my pipe, but there was no denying that it was inexplicably gone!" A dull style fails to pique the reader's interest or make the experience vivid.

So you got your kicks with mimeo 66. I enjoyed the article. Touching in an inky kind of way. We're all getting to the point, I guess, where we find ourselves saying goodbye forever to certain things. It isn't pleasant. Do good memories outweigh the ultimate loss?

I don't suppose they do, but what choice have we got? The most favourable way to view how our perspective changes as we grow older is that over the years there is less and less to look forward to, but more and more to look back on.

Your trusty old mimeo reminded me of those twilltone days of yore which I fanned through but never actually experienced. At least not as a mimeographer. I faunched to pub my ish as much as the next fan (see, I even remember the lingo) but I couldn't afford the postage, or the printing supplies, let alone a machine.

I haunted second-hand shops searching for a mimeo but all I ever found were a succession of spirit duplicators all of which leaked, or refused to feed paper or malfunctioned in some other terminal manner once I got them home. No doubt someone with a modicum of mechanical ability could have fixed them up, but I am not such a someone. I managed to keep my hectograph running because it had no moving parts, except for when the gelatin would begin to tear loose from the tray.

Yes, my quest for the enchanted duplicator finally led me to a hectograph. I also had to limit my zines to six pages (the maximum I could mail for a stamp) and my circulation to around sixty.

I did finally manage to scrape together enough to buy a hand cranked spirit duplicator from Sears and that made printing easier, although I still couldn't afford a larger circulation.

Eventually, however, I did locate a used mimeograph. It was an enormous motorized thing apparently made of cast iron. I lugged that around -- or rather movers did -- from place to place, in the vain hopes that someday I might be able to get the monstrosity repaired. It was so

heavy that one mover charged me an extra piano moving fee.

Stupid? Of course, but for a few years I was really into fanzines and figured with a decent duper and a little extra money for postage and supplies, I too could produce a classic faanish zine for the ages.

Today a mimeo, tomorrow the world!

By the time I left the last house I rented for a house of my own (well, my own and the bank's) I had grown disenchanted with fandom and wouldn't have paid a dime to move the damn mimeo. It was left in the basement with my fanzine collection and good riddance. No sad parting such as you depict, alas. Rather a nasty breakup.

Just for the record, though, I did manage to print one horribly mimeoed page to insert into an issue of *Groggy*. So I can honestly say I have printed on a mimeo.

I'm reminded of a story I was told about the Fifty Cent Monster was that Phil Paine had talked Bob Wilson into going in on it (a quarter each?) and hiding it in an abandoned development called "The Bayview Ghost." That way, when the government finally tipped its hand and declared itself a dictatorship, they would be able to publish defiance, *a la Samisdat!* It's hard to imagine anyone believing anything this inane ... but I don't recall the source of this story.

Great cover for Victoria's "lost" fanzine by the way. A shame that she retains no interest in fandom, but understandable.

I managed to recreate that cover by scanning an electrostencil that is about as black as licorice! My thinking is that I might be able to scan the wax stencils as well, to create a digital facsimile.

JEFFERSON SWYCAFFER. ABONTIDES@GMAIL.COM

Ye cats, that sounds like a month of no fun at all! Get well, stay well, and do well.

Sure makes me wish I lived in a country with a sensible health care program. Why does "American Exceptionalism" have to mean doing things the stupid way?

Mainly because a lot of Americans are unable to imagine anyone else can do anything better. Unable to learn from others, the "American" way grows more and more stupid, by default.

Re: the old Gestetner, I'm just young enough never to have used mimeo or stencil repro. I've never sniffed corflu. I'm of the Xerox generation. I have used carbon paper...and despised every moment of it. Nasty stuff.

Mimeography was more than just a way to reproduce words – though to listen to some Britfans, that was all any fanzine was. For me, though, mimeo was a hobby for its own sake as much as it was a way to publish. I became pretty good at it, and in my day was held by some as one of fandom’s ablest practitioners. With the crank in one hand and slipping waste sheets between the printed pages as they rolled off the drum, maintaining an even speed, or (trickier) varying the speed where there was need of extra ink in some spots, preventing the ink rollers from becoming too dry or from allowing so much ink to build up under stencil that it began to float, and inevitably tear or crack, turning out two and three colour pages with art was a minor miracle. It helped a lot to have a top-of-the-line model, with an electric motor and automatic registration. But most fans had to make do with considerably less, since a Gesterner 466 cost several hundred dollars. Still, the time came when I had reached my limits and mimeo became an onerous chore. Inevitably, I turned to print shops and office copiers. Today, I compose a fanzine with desktop software and “publish” it as a .pdf file. There is no reason to ever go back to mimeo.

I didn't know about Fred Patten's book, *The Furry Future*. Thanks for the heads up!

I'm e-publishing my own collection of furry stories. I'm working up my courage to ask Craig Hilton if he'll write a back-cover blurb. Would you be willing to add to my very short LOC a notice, a kind of ad? I just put "**At The Sign of the Brass Breast and Other Stories**" by Jefferson P. Swycaffer up on Amazon. If you'd be willing to put that in, I'd be right appreciative. If you feel it is not appropriate to your content, that's cool too.

I can't endorse a book I haven't seen, but I see no reason why I can't let you promote it in the letter column.

In any case, take a look at the Amazon listing for it, if only to take a peek at the cover art! My sister drew it, and I think it's quite spiff!

Wish me luck, as I, of course, wish you the very best.

MILT STEVENS. MILTSTEVENS@EARTHLINK.NET

In *Broken Toys #37*, I'm glad to hear Fred Patten is still doin' stuff. Science fiction fandom lost a resource when Fred went off to be the Grand Old Man of anime fandom. Fred is a very meticulous and scholarly person. Many people wished he had finished his history of the worldcons.

Also G.O.M. of animation fandom, of furry fandom, and almost any other group that will let him speak for them. I remember the worldcon histories fondly, though. I don't think he could ever have “finished,” since there are still worldcons every year. I also can't imagine any coverage of a modern worldcon that wouldn't be almost book length, and, since they cater to so many interests, bore the propeller beanies off most readers. But bringing the series to, say, Torcon II or Ausiecon I in 1975, might have been a practical goal.

Not many fans have a scholarly approach to things. I know I don't. My background is journalistic, and I do research as a journalist would. I look for an answer. Once I've found an answer that seems to make sense, I'm satisfied. In contrast, a scholar looks for all the possible answers that might make sense. A scholar might also want to look at all the answers that don't appear to make sense.

I use a four-wheel mobility scooter that is faster and more stable than your power chair. I also don't have to worry about snow at my elevation in Southern California. However, that doesn't mean there aren't navigational hazards around Simi Valley. From experience, I think I've discovered all the navigational hazards within about five miles of my home. There is one place where some damned fool put a fire hydrant in the middle of the sidewalk. You have the choice of falling off one side of the sidewalk or the other. There is another place where a brick wall is a fraction of an inch too close to a light pole. I hung up there once. There is the general problem that sidewalks have been broken up by earthquakes and then patched. If you take a patched stretch of sidewalk at too great a speed, you may knock your eyeteeth loose, and you won't do your kidneys much good.

I used a three-wheel scooter at the Montreal worldcon. It didn't seem either faster or more stable than my chair, but perhaps the four-wheel kind are different. I don't recall seeing one. I had been holding out for a scooter, in fact. But the social worker insisted on a chair, since scooters were a bit larger, and I had very little room in the hall to park it. No question about the chair's agility, however. It can turn in circles without budging from the spot! In tight corners, I've found that useful indeed.

I once owned a Gestetner 105. I eventually gave the machine to Bruce Pelz, who needed a mimeo for doing apazines. I was never very good at doing mimeography. That may be just a part of my lack of mechanical skills in general. I don't have any nostalgia for the time I spent cutting stencils. About the only good thing to be said for it was that improved my typing. Correcting stencils was a bitch. With the ease of correcting mistakes on a computer screen, my typing had entirely gone to the devil.

Odd, my typing just got better, as well as faster, and leaving me free to concentrate on writing.

I like the desk-top publishing era much better than I liked the mimeo era. It's so much easier to do better. With a friendly neighborhood print shop, you can also avoid the muss and fuss of collating and stapling. Ain't the future wunnerful?

Except for the part about getting older in the future, yeah, wunnerful. I wouldn't give it up for fresh underwear.

BOB JENNINGS. FABFICBKS@AOL.COM

Received *Broken Toys* #37 a few days back; thanks for sending it along. You spend a lot of time this issue telling us how depressing the news and life comments this time round are, but I, for one, look at it differently.

Sure, the Kidney Stone Crisis and the Great Hospital Adventure were frightening and difficult, and even painful for a time, but from my viewpoint the end results were certainly bright and cheerful. You didn't have a serious long-term problem, since apparently the kidney stone did pass thru your system without serious side effects, and the Canadian medical system, much maligned by political hacks in your country (and mine as well), proved that it worked effectively, efficiently, and was right there when you really needed it. In addition with proper care and a short hospital stay, some of your other problems (life-threatening problems at that) appear to have been dealt with. I think that's really good, upbeat news, all in all. I'm sure you would have preferred that none of these problems had ever occurred, but they did, and you not only survived well, but the medical safety net worked well. In addition, changes in your medications managed to alleviate some of the other medical problems you have been experiencing in recent months. Another positive result to a potentially depressing bad situation. That's what I would call positive news.

[Perhaps I should look at these little setbacks as opportunities ... for more fan articles, at least.](#)

I am curious, though, as to how taking the diuretic to flush out the water in your lungs and around the heart is going to affect your potential to develop kidney stones. Since drinking lots of water every day seems to be the best way to keep kidney stones at bay, what is the new regimen going to entail?

[That's actually a bit of a conundrum. If I drink lots of water to stave off a kidney stone, I may retain it instead of flush out the kidneys. On the other hand, the diuretic ought to ensure the fluids will be routed through my urinary system, not just accumulate in some inconvenient place – like my brain. So that's good. If I drink less water in an effort to reduce water retention, though, I might risk another kidney stone. That's bad. So I've been advised to make no changes.](#)

My experience with hospital and rehab facility meals is thankfully limited, however I've generally found the food to be boring to edible. The main problems I ever encountered was that the staff often will not listen when you tell them what you will not eat. For example, I will not eat eggs. If I was starving to death I might consider it. Or if they served deviled eggs I would eat them, but otherwise, no, never, thank you. The same with beets. In my opinion people who eat beets are probably hybrid creatures, the results of some inter-species fertilization experiments created by alien beings who live on the planet Neptune. I certainly won't eat the things. Even if I were starving to death I'd have to think about it a long, long time before I ever eat beets.

Despite that, the rehab unit where I was recovering after having total knee replacement surgery insisted on serving me eggs every morning, and beets for two evening meals.

Geeze, I like Cream of Wheat myself, but I don't usually eat it because it's much easier to pour out dry cereal and add milk rather than cooking up a hot cereal. I share your distain for macaroni and cheese. When I was a child our family had a lot of that, mainly because it was very cheap and the family was, if not poor, not exactly on the affluent side either. We also ate a lot of chicken. After I grew up and got out on my own it took me almost ten years before I would eat chicken again, and except for one or two bites at friends' houses, just to be semi-polite, I've never eaten mac and cheese again ever. Life is hard enuf without having to eat foods you detest.

Beets! Anything that is fluorescent purple and will eat through the metal lid of a jar should be giving you a clue – don't eat me! I gather that, in nature, they are just a bland, starchy root with little or no flavour, sort of like rutabaga, I guess. Eggs I mostly like. Runny yolks, not so much. I guess that's why beets are pickled in toxic chemicals for years before consumption.

Ah, another of life's hard lessons learned. The thrill of getting free books (or movies, or comics, or whatever) rapidly pales when you have to write reviews of the material. This is especially true when you write reviews for publication, and are apt to be quoted on publisher websites or author postings on social media. I've written about some of the perils involved before (comments which you ran in a previous letter column), but dealing with review copies is somewhat similar to the advice career criminals pass around – 'don't pull the crime if you can't do the time.'

Don't take free books from anybody unless you are prepared to write up a timely review; preferably a frank and honest review. Make sure people who want you to look over and deliver comments on their work understand that last part especially. If you can't make the time, or are afraid of trotting on sensitive egos with your comments, then don't take the free merchandise. It's more than a matter of principle; it's a matter of basic survival.

I know better, and still can't quite understand why I made an exception to my rule. Maybe I was just curious? Anyway, it's all over now. I wish someone would offer me animated features to review ... I often review them anyway, and it would save me a lot of money.

I am not surprised by your problems with your mobile cart trying to maneuver around the snowy streets during this winter season. I think I am a bit more surprised that the sidewalks were actually clear enough for you to get out and do much shopping at all. Of course, considering how much snow we've all had this year, maybe your short write-up represented your one and only outside excursion with the scooter. Do you have some kind of service or friends you can call on to bring little necessities to you in case the world is awash in perpetual winder wonderland weather? Seems you almost would have to, or else you'd starve to death because of your inability to maneuver on ice and snow.

Toronto is pretty good with snow, and usually have all the major thoroughfares clear enough within 24 hours for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Side streets are more problematic, though, and what's passable for a person on foot is often too narrow for a wheelchair. I waited two days after the snowstorm before venturing out, but a certain irreducible distance had to be traveled by side street. As it happened, I only had trouble when I decided on an extended tour of the neighborhood and encountered patches that the adjacent householder had been too lazy to clear as by law he should.

In the event that I really cannot get out of the house and must have groceries, there are a couple of options. First, I phone one or two of my friends and explain what I need. There are also social workers in my building downstairs, who can help in an emergency. Normally, even before Traveling Matt, I planned ahead to avoid bad weather or running out of things.

I am not going to complain anymore about the bad winter we've had here. Worcester County broke the record for most snowfall ever, and is officially the snowiest mid-sized city in the USA. This is a distinction we could all do without. Spring officially sprung a while back, and in two more days it will be April, but I still have four inches of packed ice/snow on my lawn. It never seems to go away. I have unpleasant memories of another situation from years back where winter refused to go away. We got an eighteen-inch snow storm on April Fool's Day. I hope history won't repeat itself this year.

RON KASMAN. RON.KASMAN@GMAIL.COM

Thanks for finding time in all that ill health to put the fanzine together. I found it interesting as always. Also, I admire your ability to find novelty and some happiness within the medical system.

I now know three people with congestive heart failure -- you, my son and my brother's father-in-law. Hopefully I will continue to know three for a long, long time.

I have an interest in medical quackery. I get the James Randi bulletins and eSkeptic. I go to quackwatch every once in a while. I read science based medicine. I really hate paid healers who have no idea what they are doing. My pharmacist is one, but I think he takes that role to stay employed. He is at a Hoopers and they specialize in carrying all kinds of things that rarely do a lick of good and occasionally cause harm. Mostly they have a stock that does nothing beyond placebo, aimed at people with money and distrust of many, many of the things for which they should only have a healthy skepticism.

"Dr. Quack" is one of the reasons why alternative medicine is doing so well. My doctor, who just retired, was excellent. Almost all the people I have gone to with the new baby are good too, and none of them have been horrible. However, I have seen doctors who rush people through, assume their patients are stupid, treat patients with little decency because there is a doctor

shortage and they can, doctors who do little good for the community (like one who I had been friends with and made \$400,000 a year by signing the bottom of otherwise untouched prescription sheets for old Americans bussing up to Canada to get cheaper drugs) and skin doctors who have become high priced beauticians. I could go on about the drug companies too. So people look to the pure blooded quacks. I suspect it is worse in the USA where access to medicine is more difficult and people pay more. There are many, many good doctors but it can be frustrating when you don't have one.

KEITH SOLTYS. KEITH@SOLTYS.CA

Time to get a LOC in for *Broken Toys 37*. It's been a good afternoon, ribs are on the BBQ and the Jays just won, and I just put the first dose of weed and feed on the lawn, so I'm in a good mood.

I do hope you get your health issues under control and can get out on Traveling Matt and enjoy the spring and summer. Today would have been a perfect day to go gallivanting.

There were a couple of splendid days just past, that I unfortunately managed to miss out on. Sleeping is not a matter of merely getting into bed and setting the alarm for eight hours later, so by the time I was asleep it was not practical to get out of bed in time for much daylight. However, the week just coming up looks as though it should give me several excellent opportunities to get out of the apartment.

Re: the Concorde, I've only seen it in flight once, when it passed over Nancy and me at Hanlan's Point where we were watching the air show. I think it's the most beautiful plane I've seen in flight and certainly one of the loudest.

I don't agree with your comments about stealth and the F-22. If that was coming at you on a low pass at say, 900 km/hr, not quite supersonic, you wouldn't hear it until it was almost on top of you. I've seen that with other military jets and the F-22 wouldn't be any different.

At supersonic speed, you are certainly right. But ground attack missions are carried out at subsonic speeds. The air is too unpredictable near the deck for higher speeds. It is probably true that noise or no noise, you probably wouldn't know precisely where the attacker was, and he would probably not be seen until he had gone.

I don't miss mimeo at all. I understand the nostalgic appeal, but I had just enough exposure to that technology to move to Xerox as soon as it was possible. Fortunately, *Torus* for its few issues, was launched in the desktop publishing age, so I didn't have to worry about it.

I've been spending too much time following the controversy around the Hugo nominations. My latest comments about it are on my blog at <http://www.soltys.ca/blog/2015/04/more-on-the-hugo-awards.html>. I have purchased a Sasquan supporting membership, so I will be voting this

year and nominating next year, and you and *Broken Toys* will be getting a nomination from me.

The sentiment is certainly appreciated, but I suspect the day when traditional fanzines can make it to the Hugo ballot are over. This year only one did ... and it was a sercon zine not very unlike the webzines and blogs it shares the ballot with. I'd go further ... and suggest sercon zines always did have the advantage in the Hugos. Let's face it ... *Broken Toys* for all that there is the odd film review or reminiscences of this writer or that, is a personalzine. It would certainly give me a rush to earn a first Hugo nomination for something other than fanartist, though.



The basic male fantasy goes back to the dimmest origins of the human species. In this fantasy, a beautiful young woman unexpectedly comes on to you with a surprising lack of preliminary small talk, and there is no Earthly reason for you not to take her up on it. In real life, however, this only seems to happen to males that the majority of us despise. Yet some real-life version of this daydream probably occurs to the average guy at least once, and probably more often than he realizes. What daydreamers fail to understand is that context is everything ... perhaps especially in sex fantasies.

Anyone who has ever met me will likely assume that I haven't been propositioned often. It may even surprise them to hear that I've had *any* opportunities to explore the mysteries of sex at all. But that is not quite so. In fact, I've come closer to the primeval male fantasy than they would probably imagine.

At least ... I *think* I have.

The episode was in the long-ago and somewhat-far-away ... that is, in the late 1970s and the American East Coast. I had driven down to a Philcon or Balticon with Victoria Vayne, a co-conspirator and partner in fan publishing. Partway through the con, a mutual friend of ours, Linda Bushyager, tumbled down an embankment outside the hotel and broke her ankle. In short order, all Linda's friends at the convention had learned at which hospital and in which bed Linda would be spending the rest of the weekend. The cry went up to visit and cheer her up.

For some reason I've long forgotten, I didn't go with Victoria to visit Linda. It may have been anything, but the most likely explanation was a shortage of cars. Victoria may have been driving several other well-wishers, and I likely drew the short straw that put me in a different car. Whatever the details, I remember the *drive* to the hospital clearly enough.

The young woman behind the wheel was unfamiliar to me. I only knew she must be a friend of Linda's, and that she knew the way to the hospital. So it came as a complete surprise to me when she began suddenly talking about her lovemaking techniques.

Her conversation ran approximately as follows: "I really like it when my partners are rough in bed. Not just vigorous, you know, but when they hurt me a little? Of course, I hurt them back as much. My boyfriends love it when I scrape their backs with my long fingernails. Sometimes I even draw blood."

I must have looked at her out of the corner of my eye, but by that time I was concentrating on the road ahead as hard as I could. My response was monosyllabic and indecipherable.

"I mean," she continued, "not a *lot* of blood, but I leave them tender the next day. Unless sex causes a little pain, what's the fun of it? What do *you* think?"

Again I grunted noncommittally, wondering if she would go on in this vein much longer, and just how much farther was it to that damn hospital?

Look, this whole situation was entirely outside of my experience. I wasn't so naïve as not to know of sex practices *far* more extreme, but no one *I knew* ever talked about their own sex lives this candidly ... especially to a stranger she had never met before I got into her car and closed the door behind me. Why was she bringing this up? Had she mistaken me for a bartender?

Or ... was this some odd sort of come-on?

I wasn't sure then, and I'm just as unsure now. What I *was* certain of was that if this was an offer, it wasn't one that appealed to me. If it *was* an offer, I suppose I should have been flattered. But, while she wasn't unattractive, it mattered to me that I had never met this person before. Also, I didn't think the prospect of having long, painful furrows dug into my dorsal regions was much of a turn-on. Under the circumstances, I kept my half of the conversation to one syllable or less until, eventually, she began to talk about how long she'd known Linda. After that, I was able to contribute to the conversation in far greater comfort.

Such was my brush with one of the great male fantasies. Whether or not it was just that – a fantasy – or a real sexual advance, I'll never know. In any case, it was one gift horse whose mouth I did not care to look into very closely.



For Further Consideration ... *A Review*

The Furry Future, Editor Fred Patten, Fur Planet Productions, January 2015, trade paperback \$19.95 (445 pages). Retails on Amazon for \$17.56, but the Kindle edition is \$8 even.

What is a book? That question seems either too elementary or too profound to be answered by me. Nevertheless, the question cannot be evaded while trying to review this particular book.

Its editor, Fred Patten, sent it to me for a review. Fred has about as many oars in the water as the average trireme, and furry fandom is only one of those small ponds into which Fred puts his greatest effort. He has edited and published five or six books along the same lines as *The Furry Future*, as well as on other subjects.

Is *The Furry Future* a book? Well, it *was* published ...

But what *is* a book? To my knowledge, Fred's books are either very-small-press publications, or printed "on demand" through Amazon or Lulu, and as such, I suspect, only reach a microscopic niche audience. Modern desktop publishing has been hailed as a democratic revolution in literature ... but it has also been condemned as a breakdown in a well-tested system that judged material on its merits before it was made available to the public. Now anyone can publish a book. Anyone can be an author. Having a book in print may not mean a heck of a lot anymore.

On the whole, though, I found the stories more professional than I expected. There were one or two dogs ... and in one case I mean that literally. That particular story said much about the author that I had already suspected, and was not at all pleased to see confirmed in print. Other stories were mere wish-fulfillment fantasies. As well, human intolerance toward “furries” appeared repeatedly, rendering it a mere cliché. *But* three or four of the stories actually seemed to have reached a professional level.

There are 19 stories, written by 19 different authors. It is not very clear where the stories are from – I presume they are collected from a variety of sources of fan fiction, but perhaps some were written especially for this anthology. They have at least one thing in common: some or all of the characters in these stories are anthropomorphic. They run the gamut from talking cartoons to genetically spliced hybrids. Technically, *The Furry Future* is a theme anthology, no different from collections on the theme of exploring the planet Jupiter, or if the Confederacy had won the American Civil War. But where other theme anthologies explore different facets of science fiction or fantasy, *The Furry Future* is not aimed at the average science fiction or fantasy reader, but at a tiny niche audience called “furry fandom.”

I don't think it has much purpose beyond preaching to the choir.

Each story dwells on one rationale or another for why the future *must* contain talking animal-people, without much benefit of logic. Why are animal hybrids always better than ordinary humans, for instance? Does not the superior olfactory sense of a dog also come with impaired colour vision, for instance? And why do dog people not sniff their environment – and each other – in a manner we mere Hominins would find distracting ... if not downright revolting? Would it not make more sense to simply graft the gene for better hearing and smell into the human genome, without also cursing the offspring with tails, fur and muzzles? Or, if it is cheap labour that is the justification for engineering animal-people, why would it be necessary to breed so many different species of them, and not just one?

Most of these stories were, in fact, constructed around the anthropomorphic idea ... anthropomorphism is a given, not to be questioned, and does not develop naturally from the story. This is so much the case that one or two of the stories reduce to little more than big expository lumps, arguing the inevitability of “furries.”

“A Bedsheet for a Cape,” by Nathanael Gass, for instance, took a very unusual angle on the subject that I would spoil if I revealed too much about it.

“Trinka and the Robot,” by Ocean Tigrox also stood out, I thought, as did “Lunar Cavity,” by Mary E. Lowd. Curiously, both were very much like any SF story I might have found in *Amazing* or *Fantastic* in the late 1950s or early '60s. “Lunar Cavity,” in fact, was about an extraterrestrial race ... and as such, I would argue falls outside the bounds of this anthology!

“The Darkness of Dead Stars,” by Dwale also would not have seemed out of place in a 1961 issue of *Galaxy*.

“Field Research,” by M.C.A. Hogarth, began well but seemed to lose its way, and came to a weaker ending than I thought it deserved.

“The Curators,” by T.S. McNally, also might have been a fine story but for a weak ending.

I did, in fact, make notes on *each* story as I read it. But nineteen is a lot of stories to recall in detail, even with notes, so I was sure from the start that I was not going to review every story individually. Instead, I would meditate on larger ideas.

One of those ideas is about the nature of published fiction.

Why is it that stories that would have been perfectly at home in a professional SF magazine in 1962 probably could not be sold to a prozine today? Make no mistake about it ... although some of the stories in *The Furry Future* were written well enough for publication by the standards of 1962, I doubt very much they would find a home in any of 2015's limited number of paying markets.

I wondered long about why this should be – was it a mere prejudice against “furry” stories? No doubt the signal from *The Furry Future* is geeky enough to deter almost any slush-pile reader. But, as I noted, some of the stories entirely lack the obsessive quality of most anthropomorphic fan fiction, so they must be noncommercial for some other reason. Far more likely, it is precisely *because* the stories would be so at home in a 1962 prozine.

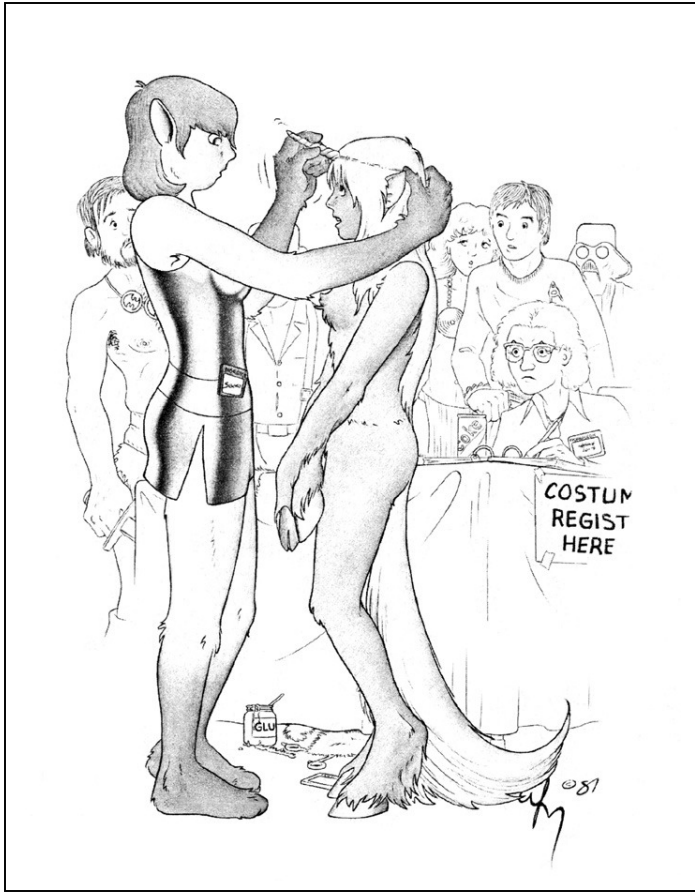
To generalize, these are stories of asteroid miners, holstered blasters, sub-space and starships. Even when there is up-to-date computer science involved, they just feel old-fashioned. But the science fiction genre has moved on in the last 50 years, and not just stylistically. The genre has left those ideas behind and occupies a more nuanced space. For the printed word, a different vision of what the future might bring is in fashion. There's no going back.

Unless, of course, you resort to Lulu or Amazon to print it for you. In this brave new world of democratic literature, anyone can be a publisher or writer. That is no guarantee that anyone *else* will ever read your words, however.

Should you take *The Furry Future* seriously enough to buy and read it? In good conscience, I can't really say, “yes” ... but not altogether “no,” either. If you are a furry fan, you will find much to enjoy in the collection ... much that even *deserves* to be enjoyed. I hope that all such readers give serious thought to buying a copy. But if you are like most readers of modern science fiction and fantasy, you will quickly grow tired of stories about talking-animal people who have so little original to say about anything but their own anthropomorphism. These modern readers can find an almost infinite number of more suitable books to read, and shouldn't waste their time on *The Furry Future*.

Perhaps they should re-read a Cordwainer Smith collection containing “The Ballad of Lost C'Mell” instead. For that matter, it would be a good idea if furry readers also did just that.

It seems to me that for decades, fans have looked forward to the day when the “literature of the future” would no longer be an esoteric body of work known only to a chosen few, but the literature of choice by many thinking members of society at large. Well, we got what we wished for. Science fiction today is as mainstream as National Football League Super Sunday, Wall Street bailouts and the Kardashians. But we were wrong to think we would transform the mainstream: the main-stream simply incorporated us. That is why have “sad puppies” today. They are an extension of the mainstream's “culture wars” and reactionary politics into what we had until now thought of as “our” sphere. Honestly, what did you expect? There will be worse ahead, most likely, as we lose relevance entirely. Next time, we should be more careful in what we wish for ... immortality, perhaps?



An oldie but goodie... art from 1981

Cos' I Dont Cosplay, That's Why!

One of my long-standing grudges against furry fandom is how it has evolved from a comic book and art-oriented pastime into one for costuming and cosplaying. It isn't as though I'm down on those things on their own merits – they just aren't *my* thing.

I remember a couple of years ago, a reader of FurAffinity or DeviantArt sent me a private note, asking if I would cosplay with him. My first question was, "What is 'cosplay?'" I'd heard the word around, and thought it had something to do with role playing games, but wasn't sure if there wasn't a distinction between characters played in a board game and whatever "cosplaying" was. I gather there is ... and there isn't. One developed naturally from the other, but is performed without a board or a game. You are free to correct me if I've missed some vital point.

In any case, once I had a rough idea what the question was, my answer was, "No, I don't."

Why won't I? Of course, the simplest answer is that I'm an old fogey and the idea of pretending to be a cartoon character embarrasses the hell out of me. But I think there's a little more to it than that. For one thing, I don't especially identify with furry characters as such, or want to be one. My fantasies run along similar lines, but not parallel to other fans. In my make-believe universe, there is *only* Saara Mar or Tangelwedsibel. They don't share their universe with Muppets, Duckberg, Teen Titans or the Simpsons. Moreover, I am not myself either Saara or Tangel' – they are separate people in their own right. If I act "myself" in cosplaying, then I'm just acting myself as I really am!

To me, the entire point of an imaginary world is that *I* get to set the rules. No one else can tell me that in my universe a Jedi can use The Force to overpower Saara, or that she is not as strong as Spiderman. I don't care ... there are neither Jedi nor superheroes *in* my imaginary world. No Ponies, Klingons or Cenobites, either. I may allow others to share my world, but I won't share *control* of it.

I wasn't always a control freak, of course. It just helps.

Back when I was a kid, we called "cosplay" "make-believe," or "pretending." Since we were kids, we didn't have to dignify it with a non-kid name. I still recall a crucial afternoon, when I was about twelve.

I had made a friend my age, whose name was Mark Britain. (It really was.) Like me, he was interested in comic books, building model hot-rods, and running around with toy guns. Believe it or not, you could do that in perfect safety back in the 1960s. Mark had a particularly nice Thompson .45 cal. submachine gun made by Marx. It was quite realistic, though molded in jungle greens for camouflage. If you drew a bolt back and pulled the trigger, it made a ratchety sound for about ten seconds ... and then the "magazine" was empty. I badly wanted one like it, and he wouldn't let me use it. I'm not sure what I used to play with, myself. It might have been a Daisy lever-action air gun, which made an unbelievably loud "BANG!" I know that I owned one. Today I own two, in fact. But it just couldn't compare with the indisputable coolness of a Tommy Gun!

Mark had come over to my place that afternoon. I lived right beside a creek ravine, which was the perfect place to play "war." We didn't do too much "hitting the dirt" or crawling on hands and knees. At twelve, you already begin thinking about dirty pants and scraped knees. So we "patrolled" a lot, sneaking from tree to tree, sometimes dashing across an open space, and pretending there were Nazis ready to nail us if we gave them a clean shot.

I think Mark imagined he was just like Vic Morrow, in the TV show *Combat!* Sgt. "Chip" Saunders also carried an M1A1 Thompson, so Mark had a nickname too. He wanted to be called "Great Britain." The moniker was brilliant – I was never able to match it. I was still using my family name, of course, and it just didn't lend itself to *anything* cool. There was a cigarette brand by the same name ... big deal. The hamburger chain of that name was in its infancy and had not yet reached Canada yet. I wonder if, perhaps, being unable to fully establish a role like Mark's for myself might have been a catalyst?

That very afternoon, however, somewhere between the second machine gun nest and the minefield, I suddenly felt like a complete ass. I looked at my friend Mark, and saw a 12-year-old boy in ordinary cotton shirt, pants and running shoes, glasses, tousled ginger hair, carrying a cheap plastic gun with "Marx" in raised letters on the side. This was no "Great Britain," no hardened veteran of a hundred combat missions in embattled Europe. Then I pictured myself, looking much the same except for darker hair, with a silly noise-making toy in my hand. I was no "Murd'rous Mac," either!

I think that was our last patrol together. From then on, I restricted my make-believe to pen and paper.

And that's why I don't "cosplay."