



Broken Toys 28 is produced by the world-weary and disillusioned old fan you know as **Taral Wayne**, who has not ceased to live, yet, at 245 Dunn Ave, Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, Canada. If there is any need to e-mail me, try Taral@bell.net. The date is late **May, 2014**, though it may seem much later... As you might guess, Kideldivee Books & Art 281 doesn't promise to be a cheerful issue, but the curtain rises whether or no I'm in the mood.

A DANCE IN THE OLD DAME YET

As advertised, this issue of Broken Toys won't be a very cheerful one. It's been a hard Spring, for one thing. It's been hard for nearly everyone, and I can't even claim to have been particularly singled out compared to people I know. One of my friends had the roof of his house damaged by a falling tree branch during the winter ice storm, had his car struck while entering on-coming traffic and required surgery on an especially delicate part of his anatomy all in the first couple of months of the year. Now, *that's* bad luck. Comparatively speaking, I have little to complain about. Still, the cumulative effect of my Christmas celebrations being cancelled (by the same ice storm), mysterious pains in my legs and finally the death of a cat I had become very much attached to, have all conspired to drag my emotional state into the gutter.

As if I needed further discouragement, to my surprise I recently learned that an old acquaintance had recently died. Adding completely unnecessary insult to numerous injuries, the attempt to ignore this year's smattering of pointless awards was an utter failure. With all the blows I had already suffered, my ego no longer had the fortitude to weather the FAAns, Auroras and other claptrappings of fandom.

In fact, I was beginning to strongly feel that I disliked fandom more than I liked it.

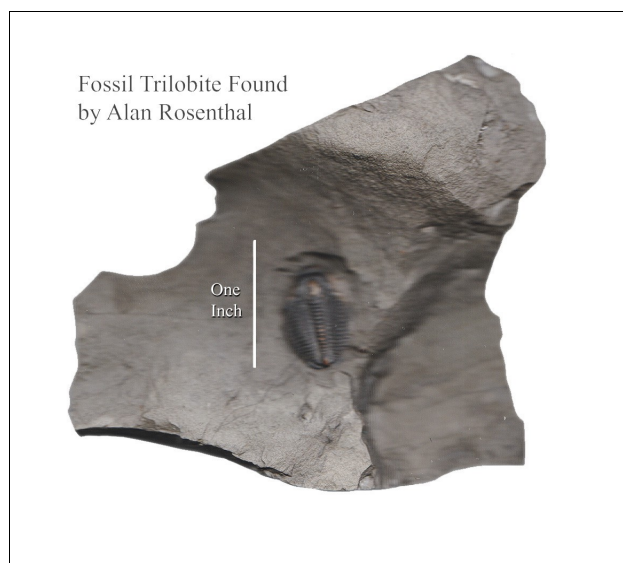
Don't go getting bent all out out of shape because I need to grouse. I suspect we all go through periods like that, and I'll get over it in all good time. Maybe even by next issue, if we're lucky.

Certainly, I seem to be undergoing some sort of sea change as Spring finally catches up with the calendar. The mysterious leg pains that left me stiff and hardly able to walk, have been abating gradually over the last few weeks. I obtained another prescription for Tylenol III in case the pain became unbearable – as it often did this winter – yet haven't had to take a single one. I'm still weak as a kitten when I walk more than 50 or 100 feet, but with the new roller I can sit and rest wherever I need to. I've even been able to take the roller with me on streetcars, busses and subways with only slight

difficulty.

One Saturday last month was red-lettered on my calendar. Alan Rosenthal was in town to visit family again, with Jeanne Bowman, and they wanted to get together with me at Bob and Sharry Wilson's place. Bob and Sharry live just north of Toronto, and therefore beyond easy access by public transit, so getting there was tricky for me. Alan said he would be able to pick me up from the passenger pick-up area at the end of the Yonge subway line. We had done something like this the last time we all met at Bob and Sharry's, but the effort had just about done me in. I was a bit doubtful about doing it again. Fortunately, it turned out much easier this time. To start with, the roller saved me a lot of effort. Also, the pain in my hip and leg hardly troubled me anymore. It is, in fact, largely absent much of the time, now.

We ordered in Chinese Food, and I over-ate ... as I usually do when I sit down to a non-routine meal. There was apple pie and French pressed coffee as well.



One topic of conversation was the advanced reading copy of Sharry's new book on Neil Young. Although I have almost no interest in Neil Young, I look forward to reading about his early life in and around Toronto.

Alan gave me a very interesting book on various states and territories that never came to exist in the USA. I was a bit flumoxed by some of the acquisitions that Americans have considered making to their already humongous nation – Greenland and Newfoundland, for example. British Guiana also. And even the United Kingdom! Most of the states that never came to be, however, were mere redrawings of the borders of states that are or might have been, such as Franklin, Transylvania, Nickajack and South Jersey. Alan also gave me a very nice

fossil trilobite that he found himself, somewhere in the desert on one of his hikes. He said he split the rock open with a hammer, and there it was, big as life ... or the petrified remnant of life.

Bob promised he had several books he could lend me to read, so I brought a backpack along. Although they made quite a burden, I had no difficulty. I rested the backpack on the seat of my roller and just pushed on. Although I've gone through all the science magazines and a couple of the books already, I figure that those remaining should keep me blissfully occupied for another couple of weeks ... thankfully. I was reduced to reading Science Fiction, out of desperation.

With a full load of food in my belly, and another load in my backpack, I was worried about the trip home, however. It was late enough that I was quit tired. Fortunately, the return trip wasn't the epic horror I anticipated. The previous visit to Bob & Sharry's place had nearly soured me on the whole idea, but I didn't have any cause for concern, after all. Of course, I wasn't prepared for the trouble I found waiting for me back at home, but that's another story, that has to do with a very ill cat, and one I don't think anyone needs to hear now.



Crad Kilodney at Work

The Shabby Bard of Yonge Street: Crad Kilodney

It was an otherwise ordinary get-together of friends. Alan Rosenthal and Jeanne Bowman were in town again, and they and I were all invited up to Bob and Sharry Wilson's place for dinner. The five of us engaged in the sort of brilliant small talk you'd expect, and then consumed enough order-in Chinese food for ten. There was one topic of conversation, though, that wasn't so palatable. Alan mentioned that Crad Kilodney had recently died.

Crad Kilodney was not his real name, but that was how everyone knew him. He was a fixture in Toronto for many years. You usually found him, summer or winter, looking like one of those street vendors who sell ties or cheap watches out of a suitcase. But what Crad sold were eccentric little chapbook collections of short stories, that he wrote and published himself. Self-publishing didn't seem to be an option for him. Crad was the *bête noir* of Canadian literature, whose very name evoked shudders of distaste from our literati. It is said that he had once submitted stories to a literary contest under his own name, which he had copied verbatim from various well-known authors. The plagiarism wasn't spotted, but every one of "his" submissions had been rejected ... apparently solely on the basis of his by-line on the manuscript.

I always thought of Crad's own writing as that of a 12-year-old boy who never grew up. Violent, gross, irreverent and iconoclastic, it cut to the quick with an economy of art. In one short piece Crad showed his disrespect for the province's head censor by writing about her fictional death. His work wasn't great literature by any stretch of the imagination, but there seems little doubt that Crad it made his reputation. Crad was *persona non grata* with the Canadian literary elite – and he loved every moment of it.

Crad Kilodney used an unusual means to choose titles for some of his Charnel House publications. He had a box of cutout words that he chose from randomly, creating such unforgettable classics such as *Suburban Chicken-Strangling Stories*, *Lightning Struck my Dick and Incurable Trucks & Speeding Diseases*. Other titles were likely chosen simply to shock and offend, such as *Simple Stories for Idiots* and *I Chewed Mrs. Ewing's Raw Guts and Other Stories*. Still others had curiously bland titles like *Nice Stories for Canadians*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Green Book*. Crad wrote and published a prodigious number of such booklets under his Charnel House imprint. I have about a dozen, and that's barely a representative sample. One curiosity about Crad's books is that he autographed them *all*. If you ever find one that he overlooked, snap it up ... it might be collectible!

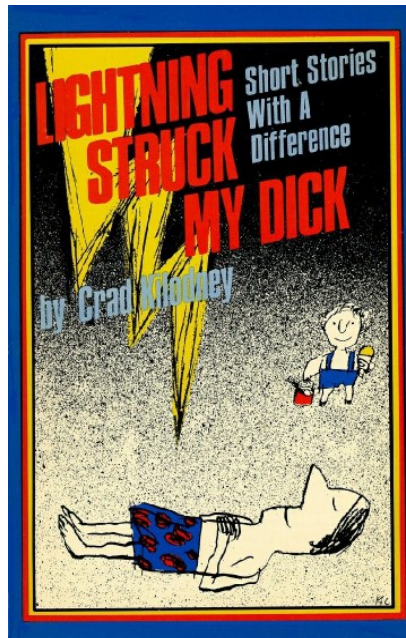
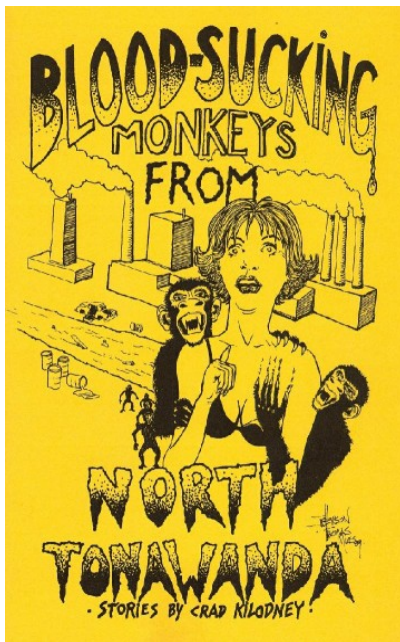
I didn't know Crad Kilodney well. I talked with him a few times in the 1970s, when he sold me a couple of his booklets. But a few years later I came by his phone number somewhere, and learned that he lived in a basement in North Toronto. I immediately felt a kinship, and send him some fanzines. He sent me some more booklets in exchange. I think I spoke to him about the idea of illustrating one of his booklets sometime. It's a pity nothing came of the idea. I would dearly have loved to list on my resume that I was the illustrator for something with an outlandish title like *Putrid Scum*.

During one of our telephone conversations in the late 1980s, Crad said he had quit writing and banging his head against the stone wall of the Canadian literary establishment. He said he was going to move back to New York City, where he was born. We lost contact after that, and I had always assumed that he had done both. Apparently, this was not so. Crad never left Toronto, and had continued to write ... though he may well have stopped publishing. One thing for certain is that he went online. There is a rich vein of his essays on the Internet[1] and a "literary foundation" has been established to preserve his work online.[2] To tell the truth, I had no knowledge of any of this until now.

No doubt, going online was the smart thing to do. Presumably, Crad Kilodney reached many more readers via the Internet than he ever could by standing on street corners, peddling his cheaply printed booklets for a dollar or two dollars apiece. But there is no romance to a Website. Nor any character. Nobody will be much the worse, I suspect, if all Websites vanish someday. But no one who had ever seen Crad Kilodney in person, flogging his homemade publications on Yonge Street in the middle of a blinding snowstorm, is ever likely to forget *that* sight.

[1] <http://cradkilodney.wordpress.com/>

[2] <http://www.cradkilodney.com/gallery.html>



Sailor's Final Voyage

Facebook: 25 April -- My cat, Sailor Mew, is in pretty poor shape. Over the last few months she had gone totally blind, and showed increasing reluctance to get up on my bed or sofa. From having trouble getting her to eat regularly, she has progressed to the point that she does not eat at all. Last night I had four separate foods out for her -- freshly opened "fancy" cat food, freshly opened tuna that I eat myself, some of my cold cuts and even warmed fresh hamburger. She ate none of it. Sailor is not even drinking much water, which she used to do in lieu of eating. So, it's pretty much a matter of time, now, before she starves to death. She can barely stand, and sleeps most of the time in the kitchen, for no reason I can understand. Maybe it's too much of an effort to leave? It can't be to be near her food. She had been peeing on the bathroom floor (not too much of a problem if I see it and mop it up), but she's stopped that too. I expect she'll die in the next few days, and the only question is whether I should speed up the process by taking her to the vet. I hate to do it just for my own convenience, though, and Sailor appears to be in no distress, either. Nor would taking her to the vet be easy. I have a collapsible carrier I'd have to stuff her into, and then take her there on the seat of my roller. I wish she would simply die in her sleep, much as I'd hate to discover her that way. Perhaps the best thing to do is get it over with on Monday. It was astonishing how quickly Sailor deteriorated. She was acting a little oddly late last year, but was still active and healthy looking. In the last few months she's turned into a skeleton that can barely stand up. At 17 ½ years, I guess I shouldn't be too surprised.



Facebook: 27 April – Today I woke from a dream that left me feeling a little uncomfortable. I had dreamed that my ailing cat, Sailor, jumped up on the bed as I was waking, and was chipper and healthy as ever. I said to my mother that Sailor had gotten better. But then I realized that it had to be a dream, and said to Mom that I knew that, because *Mom* had been dead herself, for 23 years now... I sat up for real and got out of bed to check to see if this had been a sort of omen. It wasn't ... Sailor was still breathing, unfortunately, but looking still worse than the day before. She hangs on, but I don't know what's keeping her going. Her rear quarters are dry, but mused from wetting herself last night. I looked at her eyes, and saw that the pupils aren't properly opened. Her eyes looked dry also, so I suspect she is resting without closing them entirely. She still responds to me, though. Bit by bit, bodily functions seem to be shutting down. I don't think she can move her rear quarters. She hasn't

left her chosen spot in hours. On the whole, I guess I'll let her go in her own time, rather than force the issue, but I have to admit it tears me up to literally stand over Sailor to prepare my own meals while she starves.

E-Mail: 28 April – Sailor is gone. She passed away quietly in the wee hours of Sunday night/Monday morning. I last saw her still in the same spot in the kitchen, breathing with effort. When I checked around 5 a.m. she was already stiffening, so she must have died sometime around midnight or 1 a.m., as best I can guess. I've bagged her and have her in the deep freeze until I can deliver her to a vet for disposal. It seems like a monstrous thing to do, but leaving her out, even in a plastic bag, is not an option. Excuse me ... I'd better go mop the floor, make dinner and distract myself.



Later, 28 April – I woke this afternoon to be truly alone in my apartment for the first time in 23 years. When I moved to my building in Parkdale, I had *three* cats. They were as many as I was able to bring with me from the family home after my mother died – my sisters took one or two each as well. We found homes for a few more, but unfortunately the remainder had to be put down. We had kept something like 15 feline freeloaders at the time of Mom's death.

My three were Fussy, my personal cat, Nicky, a sweet-tempered male who had too many toes, and Amber, who was clever. One by one, they passed away over the years. Amber died hard, I'm afraid, as had Nicky. Before Amber died, I found Sailor in the street. She was just out of kittenhood, and in a place such a young cat had no business to be – there were no homes nearby she could have belonged to. So I took her home and she has been my sole companion for the last 12 years.

Before turning in, this morning, I went about tidying up. There was no reason to leave Sailor's water dish out, so I scrubbed it out. The litter box was now equally pointless. I poured the clean litter back into the bag, to put out on the balcony later. I put the liter scooper in the closet. Then I remembered I had a couple of opened cans of cat food in the fridge, that Sailor had last touched several days ago. They were fit only to be washed down the sink. I folded up her blankie, which to be honest she rarely used anyway, and put that away. So far, I haven't had the heart to touch her padded bed, which I bought for her only this winter, and which had been Sailor's favourite sleeping place almost to the end. It was

only when she decided to die in the kitchen, near her water, that she gave up her bed for good.

Putting away her things has hollowed out my life a little, but has not been quite as much of a trauma as I had feared. I also glance through doorways whenever I go by, keeping an eye on a cat who doesn't live here anymore. If nothing else, the things Sailor has left behind will be the legacy she passes on to my next kitty.

There will be another, I'm fairly certain. I won't rush into it – I'd like some breathing space before once again assuming the role of caretaker for another cat. When the time is right, I'll try to get a ride to the Pet Value where I shop for cat food and litter. They have shelter cats there, with their shots and already neutered. I'd prefer another female, I think, and white would be nice, although my choice is likely to be limited. I like to think that it is a sign of optimism that I've already chosen a name.

But until then, I'll grieve for the poor, dumb-ass, loving creature asleep in my freezer.



Sailor, Sept 2011

LEFT-OVER PARTS

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: **William Earl Haskell**, who sent a photo of moose in a wading pool, who were watching a Honda burn. **Terry Whittier**, who first read about the Oak Island Mystery in *The Readers' Digest*, in the 1960s. **Steve Jeffery**, who asks where we draw the line in returning lost items – a newspaper? A book? A jacket? A twenty-dollar bill? A wooden leg? I suppose it depends in part whether you can just call, “Hey, you, you lost your leg!” or whether you think it worth using up a strip of bus fares to return them. **Leah Zeldes**, who is of the opinion that regardless of our kvetching, Corflu will run the FAAns whichever way it wants ... which is undoubtably true. It is nearly impossible to change working institutions.

Bill Patterson, bpral22169@aol.com

And here I thought Canadian TV was becoming Vancouver-centric. Not having broadcast or cable any longer, I watch TV on Hulu (when I can stand the commercial-repetition-overload), and the last couple of series I've watched were set in Vancouver.

Well, not quite: *The Bridge* was set in Toronto -- but that's more than "a couple" ago. It's been awhile since I saw it, and of course it was a Canadian remake of a Swedish show (I believe), but my recollection is that they found the first body on a bridge somewhere. I think also they weren't very consistent with their locations, as the second season had some foolery with an American Bureau of Indian Affairs and an Indian Casino.

So *The Bridge* may have been set in some mythical geography combined of bits of this

In fact, the hotel site of *Endgame* is just a couple of blocks in Vancouver from the hotel I stayed at when presenting at the American Comparative Literature Association a few years back. There's a grill a block from that bayside hotel (well, it would be bayside in SF; I don't know what they call that waterfront area in Vancouver – it's a strait), from which I would see the building they were using as the Huxley Hotel every day. And by coincidence, the *day BT 27* arrived I started another series, *Intelligence*, which I thought would be set in Ottawa for a change, but, no, it's Vancouver, too, though they don't make as much of their location as they might.

Turns out that “The Bridge” is meant to be El Paso, and some of the location shooting was in Windsor, Ontario, using the Ambassador Bridge over to Detroit. That's “in Toronto” about the way the Brooklyn Bridge is in Boston.

Fraggle Rock was shot in Toronto, however. Although the location of Doc's workshop was never mentioned, I figure that the North American version was meant to be somewhere in the Canadian Maritimes. And when Doc moved to “the desert” in the last episode, he must have gone to Alberta. But the live-action segments in the first season, where Uncle Matt explores “outer space,” are clearly Toronto. I've stood in Travelling Matt's shoes many a time. In subsequent seasons, he explores more of the rest of the world, but the Fraggles Hole he used to leave the Rock *had* to be somewhere near Toronto. I just haven't found it yet, that's all...

Brad Foster, bufoster@juno.com

Face it, it's beyond your control now. As I may have mentioned once or twice in the past, you cannot stop creating, your mind just won't allow it! Just give yourself over to it, stop fighting the flow, and let it happen.

I liked the note in the opening info box that: "If I wait until May, I might end up publishing another 30-page monster!" A quick glance at the top of the screen shows there are 26 pages here. So, if 30 is a monster, 4 pages less is a midi-monster? A maxi-mini-monster?? (By the way, what the heck is the name for this box of info at the start of an issue? I always called these the "indicia box", but as was getting ready to type that, I did a Google on the phrase, and found I've been totally wrong all these years, it's more like a postage meter stamp, or sometimes refers to those boxes in the upper left corner of Marvel comics. So, *is* there a name for the info at the start of a zine/mag like this, or have I been fooling myself all along?)

[I think it's called the colophon.](#)

I wish you wouldn't hold back so much, and really tell us what you think about HPL. (By the way, while I've had a couple of sports jackets and a single tie to try to disguise the ol' blue jeans, I also have never had a true "suit." That always seemed like such a grown-up thing to do, as if I would just be putting on a costume to pretend to be someone else.

[I once owned a hand-me-down, tweed jacket that I could wear with a pair of grey dress pants, but thought the combination looked like the seat-covers of a 1956 Plymouth and almost never wore it. I was a good deal more fond of a pair of soft, light blue jeans and a matching denim jacket. They were always a little snug, but if I hadn't gained too much weight over the years I'd be wearing them today. Now I don't even wear pants without an elastic waistband ... everything else requires me to have a waist.](#)

I read the first Potter novel, and thought it was a good enough working of familiar fantasy elements, but it just didn't grab me enough to want to wade into the following monster volumes. Saw the movies, but in kind of a random order as they happened to show up on television, and never could keep the titles straight as far as which one came in what order. So, mostly, have just been confused by all the characters and plot lines. Definitely out of step with modern culture on that one. Looks like the same is now happening with *Game of Thrones*. Have not seen any, and really no great interest in doing so. And while I have the excuse of not having access to HBO for that one, I also have not been following *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* Just seems to be something about episodic TV, dramas most particularly, where I'm just not interested in investing the time in something that just goes on and on. I think I can blame it all on *Lost*. I really believed that there would be some sort of explanation for all the weirdness that piled up week after week, and the ending was such a crushing let-down, I've had little interest in taking on any other series since. Am I an outcast yet?

[No, just a member of a washed-up, unfashionable generation. Like me and most of my readers.](#)

Loved Bill Patterson's take on sport: "In bowling, you find a large heavy object, and you throw it away from yourself." Perfect!!

Thanks for running the sketch for Tucker's Hotel, and the accompanying description. If you've other such unfinished gems sitting around, and no urge to spend the time to push them to the final degree of finish, still running them like this would be fun, as the sketch is still a close look into the creative mind and your ideas. How about a sketch-an-issue feature from now on?

I'm actually gettbug more drawing done. However, I tend to be drawn irresistibly to new, easy-to-do drawings rather than some of the more ambitious ones sitting around waiting to be finished.

That's 'bout it for now. I've got to go out and set up our art-show tent in the driveway, and go at it with hose and scrub brush for a while. Last weekends outdoor festival ended up not only with cold and rainy weather, which managed to splatter mud all over the thing. But some local miscreant who was wandering the downtown streets we were on Saturday night decided the back of my tent would be the perfect place to scrawl his illegible "mark." I've tested getting that marker off with a bit of alcohol, and seems to work, so will be splashing that all over as well to try to remove it. Yet another benefit of the outdoor art festival!

I've always wanted to invent a paint that conducted a 10,000 volt charge and electrocuted the jackass who tried to add his "street art" to my fence or wall. If I find it adequate to express myself on paper; so should he.

Ron Kasman, ron.kasman@gmail.com

Thanks, Taral. I read all of the issue except for the letters. I read my own of course, saying that I am not into the fan thing as much as I used to be. It also occurred to me that I have never read H.P. Lovecraft, or Harry Potter, and I have never heard anything about the Old Oaken Fuckit. I have seen *I Love Lucy* and would love to see the episodes again where Lucy, Ricky and the Mertzes go across America. I went across America and I would love to compare notes. I also remember most of the Canadian shows you mention, though I never saw more than a minute or two of any of them, because they weren't as good as other things on TV. I remember CannonBall largely because of a song parody that was going around the Grade Two classes.

Goin' down the highway / Doin' a hundred and four / Phillip [a large, fat boy] lit a gasser / It barely hit the floor / The wheels couldn't take it / The rudder gave away / Phillip lit another one / PU I could not stay / Cannonbaaooooaaal! Cannonbaaooooaaal!

I think Philip is a dentist today.

The commission route sounds tough. Do you know the definition of a portrait? It is a painting with the mouth done wrong. See my latest portraits at ronkasman.tumblr.com . I am off to work on another.

Now that you've reminded me, I remember the tune of that theme song, but not the real words. The show left little impression other than it was about two truckers plying Highway 401, *then* north of Toronto ... Now, of course, the 401 runs almost through the middle of the city, Toronto has grown so much. I remember none of the episodes. How much can you do with two guys with a truck? "Episode 11: the boys stop and help a motorist with a flat tire." "Episode 19: the boys are falsely accused of an accident involving their own truck." "Episode 32: the boys are abducted by Martians who probe their anuses for a never-depleted energy source, and abandon them at the summit of Macchu Piccu, near the temple of Nyarlathotep." Two guys and a *Corvette*, on the other hand, was good for four seasons...

I have no clear memory of the episodes of *Lucy* in which they drove across the continent ... I do know that I began a life-long dislike of Lucille Ball and every later incarnation of her TV shows just about when they arrived in Hollywood. It was as if all the sucky parts of the show were given more prominence – getting autographs and mugging at movie stars – while the plausible, homey parts were given short shrift.

Ned Brooks, nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Thanks Taral! I remember hearing about the e-apa, but the two apas I've been in since the 60s are quite enough. SFPA does require "6 pages of original material" in every two consecutive mailings - I suppose recycling might be detected, but I don't remember it ever being much of a problem. Certainly not for me, as my SFPA zines are almost entirely commentary on the previous mailing. With ever-rising postage costs, the e-apa may be the wave of the future.

Toronto is of course famous for one Vietnam-era joke - "Why did the draft resisters go to Canada? Because that's the only place they have Toronto" (to run to). I knew one of them, the fan Bruce Robbins. I might have been one of them but NASA said they couldn't spare me and I never got as far as the physical so I never found out if they would take anyone with 20/600 myopia.

Famous joke? I never heard it. But it doesn't work in the local argot, which pronounces "Toronto" not as "Too-ron-tuh" but as "Tronnuh".

The city-crushing Saara Mar certainly appears to be in a trance, as if zombified or sleep-walking. The word "macrophile" conveys nothing to my aging brainpan. The deadbeat seems to be a diversity-compliant deadbeat – he stiffes everyone. I like PayPal myself.

You must be hard up for anything to read if you are reading Lovecraft in spite of hating his stories! I must say I have read all the fiction and seen all the movies - and I enjoyed them, and they inspired some excellent eldritch art. His style was deliberately archaic, but not as difficult as say William Morris' – I found Morris a bit tedious, but Lovecraft's tales seem to flow right along. As for Baum, much as I like the 1939 movie, I never could read his saccharine fantasies at all - what makes the 1939 movie is the depression-era snark and the talent of the cast.

I do tend to get hard up for fresh reading material from time to time – and I have a large backlog of fantasy and SF I acquired during my collecting years, that I subsequently never felt like reading. That included a fair amount of those old Ballantyne Adult Fantasies, little of which was to my taste. I have one William Morris novel that I keep for its putastive value. I don't have a bookmark in it, which means either I read it (and have forgotten everything) or I tried to read it and was too disgusted to go on. Just browsing the first page, I found three reasons in one sentence to go no further. "Builded?" "Withom?" "Hight?" Who's used language like that since Chaucer? At least he had the excuse of actually writing in the 13th century. I read Baum's Oz novels and one or two others. Once you get past the syrupy prose, he's clearly demented. Despite being written for children, there are more beheadings in the Oz series than in *A Tale of Two Cities*. But the books rapidly became mechanical exercises in parading all the characters for the readers to enjoy. "Look, here's the Cowardly Lion. Hello Cowardly Lion. I see you too, Tin Man. Is that the Pink Panther, lurking behind the Backward-Talking Professor? Hello Ragged Little Boy with a Bust of Beethoven for a Head. Say, can anyone tell me why Hitler's Brain isn't here?" Eventually, Baum finishes his list, adds one or two new characters, and ends the book.

I was never much interested in growing up and wearing a suit either – and in fact I wore a suit only once or twice. I still have that suit – my father bought it for me when I graduated from

college in 1959 – and have achieved my childhood dream of living in a library.

I never got far with Harry Potter, either the books or the movies, and have no idea what a "horcrux" is. I didn't even know that the tale ended with Harry and Lord Voldemort canceling each other as dramatically as matter and anti-matter. But Rowling must have read LotR, and your ending sounds much like what happens to Frodo once Sauron is defeated. Sam Gamgee and Merry and Pippin live happily ever after in The Shire, but Frodo never completely recovers from the wound of the Morgul-blade, and is allowed to leave Middle Earth with the Elves.

Well, Potter doesn't get to go live with Dumbledore in the Hereafter... and unlike Frodo, he gets married. That's a bit different. A "horcrux" is a talisman one uses to hide a part of one's soul, after dividing it. Dividing your soul even once is a perilous and ill-advised thing to do, but Voldemort is so terrified of someone tacking down every last piece of him and killing him entirely dead that he fissions his soul **seven** times! Once that he didn't even know about, which is the gimmick around which the plot twists.

Was there anything like furry fandom *before* the *Monty Python* skit about secret clubs for people addicted to pretending to be mice?

Not that I know of. Of course, there were already people like me, who would start furry fandom off on the wrong foot, years later. Clubs for people who liked to dress up as "horsies," and wear saddles, go back to Victorian times. That was not what early furry fandom was about, though. It was mainly a genre of black and white comics, in which the narrative freedom of funny animals was recognized as a valid story-telling tool even for adult situations – politics, satire, violence and, yes, even sex. The early members were usually well aware of their roots and great fans of animation. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the new fandom to fill up with cosplaying ninnies.

Eric Mayer, groggy.tales@gmail.com

I particularly like the logo. At first glance I didn't notice the face staring out at me and when I did it was kind of startling!

It's from an unfinished stop-motion film called *WeRAnimals*. I haven't seen it, naturally, but a plot summary describes it as a kidnapping scheme gone wrong. More than that, I don't know. I thought the handful of stills I found were intriguing, though. There's a page on Facebook with a few photos but almost no information. It has been in production for ages. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/We-R-Animals/146646298708409>

Since I haven't owned a television set for years I'm not even *au fait* with United States TV shows let alone Canadian, and from the sound of those you describe I'm quite happy to retain my ignorance. *Little Mosque on the Prairie!* Seriously?! *Littlest Hobo* sounds like Lassie, but if he's traveling around who does he run to for help?

You've never seen *Little Mosque on the Prairie*? It's a real sitcom, all right, about a Mosque in a tiny little town somewhere in the Canadian prairies that has a small Islamic population for some reason. I've only seen a couple, but thought them pretty decent. In one, the mayor is obliged to be out of town, and leaves matters in the hands of her assistant. The welcome sign on the highway blows down, and has to be replaced. That's when one committee after another arrives at city hall demanding their language be added to the sign. At first, it's just French, but then Cree, Ukrainian, Punjabi, Tamil and so on, each with an increasingly flimsier rationale. Finally, the mayor returns home to find an enormous sign outside town, with about 35 languages on it. I suppose it was predictable when she discovers that doesn't say welcome in English anywhere. What I thought was genius, however, was her next remark. "Is that Klingon?"

"Hobo" didn't have a full-time Timmy, but sometimes made a friend along the way. Or went to the nearest Mountie HQ, trading post or beer store . Today he would call 911 on the cell phone he wore on his collar.

Never realized so much of the Canadian population was concentrated in Toronto. You're probably right that most Canadian news takes place in a few big cities and that's no doubt true of the US as well, except that here in the US the almost daily shootings by gun nuts are as likely to happen in small towns as big cities.

No reason to waste time working on art that doesn't inspire you and doesn't pay either. Can't grasp how someone can be such a deadbeat. I am glad to hear, however, that there is someone else in the world who doesn't have PayPal. I'm just not comfortable with it. I'd have to set up a very small feeder account at the bank as I'd never risk linking to my main account. And, frankly, I can't be bothered. Maybe someday.

With the breaking news about the Heartbreak bug, avoiding on-line banking and commerce altogether seems to have been the smart thing, after all. Too late for the rest of you technoaddicts, though.

I confess, I love the writing of H.P. Lovecraft, and hate flutes, although perhaps not quite as much or in the same way Lovecraft did. If your daughter, at ten, had been forced to try to learn to play flute for the school band, you might appreciate Lovecraft a little more. That aside, your essay strikes me as accurate in its characterization of H.P.. But then, no artist ever grows up. "Growing up" entails putting aside one's personal creativity and falling into step with the world. If an artist is successful enough, this is seldom remarked upon, but those of us who never make a living through our art come in for criticism for our lack of maturity. If only we had buckled down, grown up and got to work instead of frittering our lives away.

Hell, I chide myself often enough. It's not like I have much to show for my writing efforts. And naive child that I am, I still can't help feeling there is something I could write that would be better, that would finally match my expectations. But damned if I can figure out what, and it really pisses me off how the clock keeps running.

Jerry Kaufman says he is mystified why certain talented fan artists never made a living or got a wider reputation. Unfortunately the arts are not like normal professions. Competency or even excellence does not necessarily lead to success. There is too much competition for far too few slots, and almost invariably luck, as well as skill, is involved.

Jerry's mention of John Lennon quotes reminds me of how, when asked why the Beatles had succeeded rather than so many other Liverpool bands, Lennon said that it was because they were the biggest bastards. Going back to the subject of making a living at art or not, maybe that's our problem. We were never big enough bastards. I have to resolve to change! No more Mr. Nice Guy. Pete Best's ass is outta here!

In response to part of my loc you say: "What I find troubling about the idea that the same people produce the best fanac year after year is that it implies that some fans are very much better at fanac than the rest of us. But is that true, or are some fans just on a broader wavelength, appealing to a the currently popular interest?"

Obviously it isn't true. Except in the sense that the "best" fanac – meaning the fanac that seems "best" because it is most interesting to us – may usually be that of our friends in whom we have an interest. But what is irritating is the hubris of groups that insist they are in fact better. I'll take a neutral example of a fanwriter (neutral because he is no longer with us) who was superior most of the time to most of FAAn winners but as far as I know never got so much of a nod. Dave Locke. Dave was not only a better writer than most FAAn award winners, but also far smarter than any of us because he didn't give a shit.

Speaking of FAAn rules though, I will say that only three votes is a big mistake. No one but the usual favorites even has a chance to sneak into the lists with that sort of limitation. Jerry's suggestion of one point per slot would be better. Couple that with five or more votes. I don't really think in terms of who's Number One. When it comes to art or writing I think that's silly. People do totally different kinds of work. I'd be more comfortable making a list of people whose work I enjoyed in no order. The order would eventually derive from how many people put a fan on their lists. Essentially that's how the voting for the Baseball Hall of Fame works.

I have to admit that I had no ideas about how to reform the FAAns in the last issue. I have a vague idea for this issue, though. I think that instead of trying to pinpoint an absolute best in fandom for a given year, we should be trying for a representative selection of the best of the year. Instead of a winner, we should be voting on the **top five**, to be announced in no particular order. I know that names of the runners-up are available, but, like the Hugos the FAAns are modeled on, digging up the information later is troublesome. Moreover, it's hard to present second and third place as equivalent honours to first place when first place is clearly called "the winner."

That's fascinating about the value of the denarius being about the same as it was 2,000 years ago. Today of course the Romans would find a lot more choices when they came to spend their coins.

Don't have any useful comments about Oak Island but it was fascinating to read about. If only, someday, one of these "mysteries" would actually pan out.

Interesting article about *I Love Lucy* too. I loved that show when I was a kid, seeing it in reruns, although I only saw it when I was sick enough to stay home from school. Being a child, I enjoyed her mugging. I especially liked it when things got too much for her and she broke down and went WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!! I also thought Rickey Ricardo Big Band Leader was a rather stupid, tiresome joke. I mean...really...who could believe him as a band leader?

I probably didn't mind the mugging, and the WAAAAH either, when I was ten or twelve, but as I grew older I grew to dislike such unsubtle humour intensely. In fact, I began to notice more what the supporting cast was doing. The true connoisseur of comedy doesn't watch Moe smack Curly ... he watches Larry's reaction. It was the same with *Lucy*. Once familiar with Lucille Ball's rubber mouth and whiny, scheming personality, you begin to realize how actually brilliant the Mertzes were in their understated takes on the situation. Even Ricky begins to look good, once you realize how well he is holding up in the difficult role as straight man. But no matter how deep your insight into the show grows, Lucy is still just Lucy.

Hard as it may be to understand now, Desi Arnaz actually was a successful band leader in his day. After WWII, Latin American culture was hugely fashionable. Californians slipped over the border into Baja or Old Mexico. Easterners went to Havana, squandering money in the hotels and casinos as though Dollars were Pesos. Brazilian movie stars danced on the silver screen, and Cuban bands played in New York. Of course, it didn't last. Americans went back to sleep again, and forgot the rest of the world could be cool. It didn't help when Castro put an end to the good times for American tourists in 1959. But that was **five** years after *I Love Lucy* went on the air. Dezi's accent was thick enough to pluck from a tree, as well. He sensibly gave up leading a band as the Big Band era drew to a close, and instead of pursuing a career as an actor, went into production.

That's a remarkable tale of the wallet and its suspicious, and supremely dumb, owner. But maybe you were a thief with a sense of honor or something. Or maybe he thought you were even dumber than he was. Whoa! I don't want anyone to suspect me of taking this money. I'd better return the wallet, then no one will suspect. Or something. It's hard to say what his thought processes might have been, if any.

Okay, I'm wearing down here. Have I written two issues worth of mailing comments along with a loc? Anyway, excellent issue, even if you aren't slowing down.

Tom Turrifin, tom.t@shaw.ca

Heya Taral! Whaddya know, I'm actually replying for once. :) I actually came through Toronto in late February, but it was a very short trip, mostly seeing my family. I'm saving vacation days for this summer; my mother's going to show me around the town of Northfield in Minnesota where she grew up. My job's become a bit rockier lately; they're pushing us to produce more than we can, and I hope there won't be punitive measures. At least the weather is finally turning around.

Toronto-centrism: I think it's mostly a symptom of how the rest of Canada hates Toronto's size and economic centrality, they assume everyone in Toronto has an ego about being from Toronto. Heck, someone pulled a "Center-of-the-Universe" comment on me yesterday. I agree with the thought that pretty much every city focuses on its own news. Here in Winnipeg, do we ever hear about goings-on in Regina? Edmonton? Charlottetown? Quebec City? Kelowna? Only if it's something pretty big.

Murdoch Mysteries is a TV series set in late 19th century Toronto. My parents spoke highly of it, but after watching the first episode, I couldn't stomach the writing. Heck, maybe it got better; *Star Trek: The Next Generation* eventually did.

Regarding Harry Potter, I thought the last book, although offering closure, was a bit of a victim of its own success. Rowling had set up such a detailed story universe, with so many secondary and tertiary characters that the fanbase loved, that she had to squeeze them all in somehow, somewhere, I think it suffered as a result. The movie adaptations also had very weird pacing because of the books.

If they want to keep the Harry Potter franchise alive, what I'd really like to see would be an animated TV series, retelling the books. The advantage of that would be they could take as much time as needed, as many episodes as required. No worrying about young real-life actors aging too quickly. Special effects? Draw everything!

I think one of the other appeals of the Harry Potter books is that it shows the adult world as flawed. Some adults are great people, some are complete bastards, some are a mixed bag, and institutions (school, government) are shown to not always be trustworthy. It shows how people and politics can effect things in a very complex way and have repercussions decades later, and that sometimes, there are no easy answers. I thought this was a very realistic thing to put in a book series for a young audience.

Oak Island? Are people still trying to dig up that place? I remember first reading about it in an issue of

Cricket (a kid's magazine aimed at promoting reading) in the early 80s. I looked up some books on Oak Island later in high school, they were terribly written, full of sensationalism. I figured that given enough time, the island might be entirely dug out and would vanish beneath the waves. :)

Milt Stevens, miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Broken Toys* #27, you discuss Toronto not being the locale of many movies and TV shows. Here in Greater Los Angeles, we certainly don't have that problem. In films, Los Angeles becomes everywhere and anywhere. I recall one novel with the premise that Los Angeles was an infectious disease which was spreading across the continent. This became evident when palm trees began sprouting in Nova Scotia.

Simi Valley has one part of movie history. Before most of the houses were built here, Corriganville was located in the eastern part of what is now the city. Corriganville was the site of most Hollywood B westerns from the Thirties up to the Fifties. As a result, some of the rocks around here seem strangely familiar. When Corriganville fell victim to real estate developers it was pretty much the end of the B western.

I've never cared for horror, so I've never made any effort to read H. P. Lovecraft stories. I encountered some Lovecraft stories in anthologies and some in issues of *Avon Fantasy Reader*. (I've been told that *Avon Fantasy Reader* reprinted most of the best stories from *Weird Tales*.) This was enough to give me a basic idea of what people were discussing when they were talking about Lovecraft. If you calmly explain most of the elements of a horror story, they usually sound pretty funny. I guess you need a tinge of hysteria for horror to work right.

At times, I've wondered why pirates never seemed to think of money laundering. They steal gold. They bury gold. They never seem to dig the gold up again. If I had a mountain of gold at my disposal, I would start thinking of interesting ways of spending it. I can conceive of the idea of having enough money. However, pirates just went on pirating. It's as if they were being compelled by some cosmic scriptwriter. The cosmic scriptwriter probably also made them say "Arg!" all the time.

There have been very few pirate treasures ever found. Most doubloons and pieces-of-eight from the golden age of piracy, the 16th through 18th centuries, were from shipwrecks, actually. Pirates most often spent their share of the loot in some unsavory tavern, drinking and whoring, and the captain was as likely as not to keep his ill-gotten gains in a strongbox under his bed back home. For most pirates were not really high-seas pirates, but "honest" working men, fishermen, sailors and merchants who occasionally indulged in robbing off-shore shipping. The loot was likely to be bolts of cloth, wrought metal, dye, tobacco or anything that could be re-sold to a fence. Huge chests of gold and silver coin, sprinkled with jewels like raisins in your breakfast cereal, were (not surprisingly) hard to come by. When treasure of that sort was shipped, it was well guarded on an armed vessel belonging to his Majesty King George or King Phillip. There were easier pickings... High seas pirates like Drake, Kidd or Morgan, who attacked Spanish warships and ransacked whole towns, were few and far between. Drake was not technically even a pirate. Kidd was a Royal Navy officer who went outlaw after a bout of bad luck, and was notoriously unsuccessful, actually. And Morgan probably made more money when he was later appointed governor of Jamaica. Apparently, crime in the interests of the state *does* pay.

I think Lucille Ball was much better before she became "Lucy." I recently watched a movie titled *The Big Street* which was written by Damon Runyon and produced by Damon Runyon. It had Runyon's quirky characters, but it was anything but a comedy. Lucille Ball played an arrogant nightclub singer, and Henry Fonda played a mentally impaired busboy who adored her. After Lucille Ball's mobster

boyfriend beats her to the point of crippling her. Fonda takes care of her and plots revenge.

I saw that, years ago. It's a very curious movie, but I wasn't sure what to make of Lucy's performance. On safer ground is her comic role in *The Long, Long Trailer*.

LA was the setting for many places around the world ... for the obvious reason. The film companies settled there for the 360 days of good shooting weather, then just took the trolley to the "location" of choice ... and voila! Kansas has mountains! Paris has a desert climate!

Toronto actually does get used in film a lot ... but not often as itself. If you've seen *Police Academy*, you've seen St. Lawrence Market, downtown Toronto. If you've seen *Robocop* on TV, you've cruised Queen Street right outside my door. If you saw the movie *Hairspray*, you were all over my neighborhood, Parkdale, but it was presented as Baltimore. For some reason it's rare anyone assumes that Toronto would itself be a fitting place to set a story. Although it's hard to believe, *Baltimore* is regarded as more interesting...

E.T. Bryan, abpix.gremlin@verizon.net

RE: Harry Potter. The first Harry Potter book follows the "Cinderella curve" – see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP3c1h8v2ZQ>. He's an orphan who lives under the stairs and is no better than a servant. He's terrorized by his brutish step-brother and abused by his step-parents until his fairy godfather arrives. Then he gets the incremental treatment up the scale, and ends up at the end much better off, but not as high as the end of the Cinderella curve. So I'm not sure why HP's condition should involve enough envy to hate the character, unless you also hate that white trash bitch who made good (Cinderella), as well. As for Harry being immortal, that's apparently a fan fic or theory and not part of the story, unless Rowling has decided to go full George Lucas on her creation.

No, it was clearly a fan notion of how to "improve" the original.

Lovecraft: Personally, I enjoy Lovecraft quite a bit and put him in the same box as Robert E. Howard and Lester Dent. Beginning of the century fantasy/adventure authors with some obvious limitations but quite enjoyable in their own way. I came late to Lovecraft and had some of the same objections you do, but eventually was able to get into the atmospherics and campy descriptions, which I interpret as an attempt to create a speculative metaphysical rather than speculative science based fiction. Something more at home in the Magic Castle than Griffith observatory.

I never got into Lester Dent. The one Doc Savage novel I tried to read seemed dumbed-down to an unbelievable degree, with the major characters being re-introduced every two pages with something like "Entered Monk, the team's burly, red-headed, quick-tempered mechanic." I can only figure that Dent assumed his readers could not remember such details for more than a few minutes. Howard, on the other hand, I still enjoy in small doses. Although badly compromised by borrowing names and places from real history, the Conan stories are still vivid and entertaining. I always chuckled over the Hyperborean actually being smarter than the "simple barbarian" that Howard insisted he was. In that respect, Howard betrayed something like the muscular-folkish ideology of the Nazis.

Just asking, but from your Lovecraft piece I take it you have some problem with early 20th century popular lit using uniformly white male protagonists?

I have no problem with older fiction in which the characters are almost all white. Or even with more recent fiction. I grew up in a real world that was largely all white and I'm as comfortable with it as I am with the real world today ... which is *not* all white. Both seem normal to me. What annoys me about Lovecraft, though, is his blatant assertion that white people are the epitome of civilization ... and his insinuations that non-white people

are inferior, even inhuman. That attitude wasn't merely a reflection of his environment, but a conscious position he flaunted like a limp wrist in a Broadway musical.

Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net

Once again, I am way behind on my logging, and I am two issues behind with you. It's high time to remedy that, and here are some comments on issue 26 and 27 of *Broken Toys*.

Broken Toys 26... You say you let your schedule slip... I guess so did I. I had job interviews, some work with the EQAO, and Easter as well, so I am way behind in my correspondence. The term 'Rob Ford crazy' has taken on new levels of meaning now.

This very evening is when we shall find out who wins the FAAn Awards for this year. This was the only award we voted upon, and while I sometimes have my doubts about the FAAns, the winners are at least familiar to me. I can't say that about the Hugos or Auroras any more.

I will probably not get this issue published in any hurry. The sense of urgency about my fanwriting seems to have diminished perceptibly. Maybe it's the long illness and death of my cat, Sailor. Maybe it's just that I've other stuff to do that seems more interesting at the moment. But a little of it is probably that I feel very jaded about fandom at the moment. It's hard to listen to the playing of "Pomp & Circumstances" with patriotic attention when there's a corner of your mind in which you that the little kingdom you're a subject of has been overwhelmed by invaders and must shortly vanish from the map.

Yes, our Graeme has been busy with fanzines and other fannish projects with which to fill his retirement, and I would like to think that at least a few people have received some level of education based on his efforts, but it does seem he's preaching to a shrinking choir. Still, fanzine fandom does have a somewhat raised profile in Canadian fandom thanks to Graeme. I am amazed that he isn't on the new Aurora ballot.

He was. I don't know how you missed it. Both he and Steve Fahnstalk have been singled out for their presence on the *Amazing Stories* site. Not for his fanzines, I notice. No Canadian fanzine got enough nominations this year, so once again there is no fanzine category. I have to wonder whether I'm wasting my time publishing a fanzine, since at least nobody in Canadian fandom seems to have any interest in them.

Way to go on getting your TV back. I guess I've had it all this time and gotten jaded by it. We watch the news and documentaries, and not much more. Should Rogers and the others decide to go to pick and choose, which is choose the channels you want and only pay for those, I suspect we will save a lot of money, have far fewer channels to watch, and we will be a little happier.

Tim Marion's comments on my comments on Judith Merrill ... well, it's good to see I can still surprise the readers. Maybe it's a sign of my coming crankiness. I have no regrets over writing that, for it was all true. I did not gloat over her death, for she did many positive things for SF, but my dealings with her were largely distasteful and negative. The sister who's in charge of the Robert Family Christmas has decided that the adults will not exchange presents this year, which is a financial relief for many, including us.

Sleep comes easily for me at times, and then not at all for the longest time. Melatonin helps the odd occasion, but I really shouldn't have anything caffeinated after 2pm. Some sleep schedules aren't the usual 8 hours, but sleep when you need it, and not before. My mother was like that. She often got as

little as 1 to 2 hours of sleep a night, and when my father awoke in the morning, it's very likely she would have knit him a new pair of wool socks in the early hours.

Broken Toys 27... The whole country thinks we're all Torontocentric, and their favorite game is hating Toronto. I used to live on Vancouver Island, and hating Toronto occasionally interfered with me doing my job as a reporter. I hear Torontocentric when *Murdoch Mysteries* comes on and pulls 1.4 million viewers a week.

Yvonne loves the Harry Potter series of books and movies, and even she knew that there was only one way for the story to end, with the good guys winning, but J.K. Rowling had to cook up a proper reason to win, and she didn't do it well. It was better done in the final movie. I fully expect an eighth book in the near future, even though she is richer than the Queen.

I have been on the *Amazing Stories* website a couple of times, and I did register for it, but it simply hasn't caught my attention, and I am reminded of it when Steve and Graeme start competing again re columns, but I've got enough on my plate right now to forget the website, and get on with the things I need to get done.

It hasn't really captured my interest either. But, then, I don't really give a damn about SF these days.

It's getting late, and I am getting rather tired. Perhaps I will get some of that rare sleep mentioned above; I sure hope so. I will say my thanks, wind it up, and get it in your in-box shortly. Many thanks, and see you with the next issue.

What Are the Odds?

Earlier today, I read the FAAn Award results in e-mail. There were no surprises. I have been saying that I could have made book on the results ... but who would have given me worthwhile odds? I would have won a dollar for every dollar I put up, and after taking my cut as the bookie, my net winnings would have been 90 cents.

Yes, very nearly the same people who won in every category won in every category last year. There are minor differences – Steve Stiles won as best fanartist this year instead of Dan Steffan. But the two artists have traded the FAAn back and forth for the last several years, so it amounts to the same thing, whichever one wins. In four of the categories, the winner was the same person or fanzine as last year:

Best Single Issue: Trapdoor

Best Website: eFanzines.com

Best Fan Writer: Andy Hooper

Best Letter Writer: Robert Lichtman

The other categories show only slight variations from the previous year(s):

Best Personal Fanzine: Andy Hooper (multiple winner for Best Fanzine and Best Fan Writer)

Best Genzine: Banana Wings (multiple winner for Best Fanzine and Best Fan Writer)

The remaining two categories haven't existed long enough for such a pattern to develop.

I'll say it again, I love Steve Stiles as a brother, and Andrew Hooper is a writer whose tenacity of subject I admire. I'll go further and state that Trapdoor and Banana Wings are at the top of my list of fanzines to read. I have voted for them all in past years. Yet I cannot shake the feeling that the same names and titles appearing year after year in the FAAns cannot be right. Never mind "vox populi." It does not stand to reason that there is so slight a difference in the opinions of the voters year after year. Does Robert never have a bad year and produce a paucity of letters? Does no one ever think that Schirm has had a particularly good year and deserves to be moved up on the ballot? Has no one been impressed by the rise of Beam, or weighed whether three issues of Challenger are worth one of Trapdoor?

Obviously, such thoughts do cross some minds, but when the ballots are counted the same handful of names invariably rise to the top. The sum of fanzine fandom's thoughts seems remarkably inflexible. If we are going to award the FAAns to essentially the same six to eight people for the foreseeable future, I don't see what purpose the awards serve.

I realize that I'm repeating myself, but once again I think the problem stems from imitating the model of the Hugos. With fanzines as different as Banana Wings and Science Fiction Commentary, I don't see how we can point at one and say with any confidence that it's "best." Same with artists and writers. J.T. Majors writes book reviews, I write personal confessions, Chris Garcia writes about wrestling and B-movies and Claire Briarly writes about whatever it is Claire Briarly writes about. Who is the best writer depends an awful lot on whether you like to read book reviews or about pro wrestling. I draw furry pin-ups, Steve draws hip, offbeat humour, Brad Foster draws cute, goofy stuff. Who you think does it "best" is bound to reflect the subject you prefer. What kind of consensus can exist in such an environment?

The FAAns ought to have done away with the hierarchical model of the Hugos from the beginning, and sought to chose a representative sample of what was best in fanzine fandom every year instead. A poll that selected the most popular 3 or 5 in each category would have served us far better than a boring celebration of "the usual."

A Time to Reflect

So, it's been more than a week since Sailor died. A couple of days later I took her to the vet down the street for cremation, and returned home to an empty apartment for the first time. Not only had Sailor been my sole companion for 12 years, it is in fact the first time in my life was completely alone.

For several days afterward, I kept noticing things that belonged to Sailor, and putting them away. I still catch myself still glancing into the kitchen or the bedroom when I pass the door, "keeping an eye" on the cat who no longer lives here.

On the positive side, the amount of dust in the place has fallen dramatically, since I no longer have to pour fresh kitty litter into the box every two or three days, and no longer see tumbleweeds of cat hair blowing along the floor. Without a cat to upchuck water or food, I no longer step in unfortunate

accidents while on my way to the bathroom in the middle of the night. Nor do I have anything to mop up. As much as I miss *Sailor*, I miss *none* of that.

In the meantime, those of you who follow me here and there in the social media will notice that I've been posting new art. Yes, I've begun drawing again. Why the change, you may ask? So far as I can tell, it's just one of those things, but now that sufficient time has passed, the return of television to my lifestyle may be having an effect. I can turn on the set, and let it babble at me while I bury my nose in the drawing board. Still, I *could* have done that before. Somehow, though, putting on a DVD seemed to demand that I pay attention to the movie, in a way that "The Hour in News," or old cartoons playing over and over, do not.

Another possible cause for the recent change in my behavior is that it's "awards season" again. By now, you'd think I'd have learned to ignore awards, but they seem to have a way of getting under my skin. I don't mean "real" awards, like the Pulitzers or the Nobel Prize, just relatively lame-ass stuff like the Hugos, the Auroras and FAAn awards given by science fiction fandom. This year it has become painfully obvious that the Hugos have gone mainstream – the ballot is loaded with Dr. Who and blogsites. Worse, there was a campaign by a known right-wing mediocrity to promote his novel and his buddies ... and it succeeded in putting several unfamiliar, arguably undeserving names on the ballot. The fan categories were most shocking at all. Not a single name in the best fanwriter category is known to anyone ... in *old school fandom*, at least. Whoever they are, evidently their blogs have a large number of Internet visitors. There is only *one* actual printed fanzine nominated this year – the rest are websites. And so it goes.

The Auroras are a Canadian version of the Hugo, and perhaps the less said of them, the better. But this year there were so few nominations for the best fanzine category that it was cancelled ... not for the first time. In fact, there really *are* a few traditional fanzines published by Canadian science fiction fandom ... it's just that nobody in Canada seems to read them, so none are nominated.

The FAAns? Well, it's a peer award, selected by a tight circle of old-timers. Its greatest *strength* is that it is decided entirely by people who all know one another ... but that is also the award's greatest *weakness*. People strongly tend to vote for fans they know best, resulting in an award that looks very much the same from year to year. In the fan artist category, the same two people have won the FAAn for the past 11 years, trading off with each other from year to year since 2003. In fact, the winners tend to be regular attendees of the in-group convention that awards the FAAns. I can't complain personally, because I don't place badly in the voting. It's just that I've gotten tired of rising no higher than second place in several categories, year after year, and sometimes falling to fourth or fifth. It's knowing you might have been invited to the dance, if someone's first choice came down with the flu. But, of course, they never do. The FAAns seem so static that I judge there is no likelihood of ever winning. I'd have to attend the convention that gives them, and make more friends to have a real chance. Since Corflu travels around the US, and sometimes in the UK, that's not going to happen.

As a final reminder that I'm somewhat marginalized in fandom, there was a collection of the annual "best" fanwriting of the year. I've written something like 80 to 90 articles every year for ages, including some that I think were top-notch (even if I have to say so, myself), yet nothing I wrote was included in the collection. Murray Moore, the editor, picked some of what I thought was very laudable fanwriting ... but also some very *obscure* material, whose origins I, to be honest, have never seen. My best guess is that they represent selections from the apas Murray belongs to. What's peculiar about all

this is that the editor has publicly said he doesn't read "digital" fanzines. He said this even though, in 2014, probably half of all fanzines are posted online as .pdfs – including the one I publish, and do most of my current writing in. If it seems peculiar to you that a fan who disregards half the fanzines published should publish a "best of" collection of fan writing, and search for additional material among small-circulation apazines, it seems peculiar to *me*, too.

It's been several days since the results of the FAAns, or the Hugo ballot were breaking news. The topic is stale now, but I do wonder if my interest in writing isn't at low ebb because of it. It probably shouldn't have that effect. You know the drill – art for its own sake, never mind what other people think. The fact is, we are social animals, and can't live entirely independently of other people's opinions – public approval is important to a normal person's self-esteem. I'm *more or less* as normal as the next person, so like to know that people think I do a good job. Being consistently ignored by awards given in your own country, and by your own peers, is bound to sooner or later become discouraging.

Still, I'm already getting over the disappointment, and doubtless will return to writing for the "fun" of it ... all in good time. Just not yet.

It might be better for me to look at this as an opportunity to step back and examine my writing from a greater distance, just as the long period in which I've done so little drawing also seems to have been a period of adjusting my perspective about my art. Now that I'm drawing again, the respite appears to have been beneficial. Perhaps it will do me good to take a respite from words, as well.

