

Lost Toys 2

Taral Wayne makes no excuse for producing a second contrib to “our” new apa of Arnie’s, sometime around the end of March 2014. My real world address is probably of little use to anyone, but is 245 Dunn Ave. Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario, M6K 1S6 Canada. Or e-mail me at Taral@bell.net This is Kiddelidivee Books & Art 277, in case there are still any fan historians in the future who care ... something that I very much doubt, unfortunately.

Tale of Two Covers Or, “If you want something messed up right, mess it up yourself.” That could almost have been the thinking behind the late fiasco of our first mailing’s cover. How it came about is rather typical of fandom, so nothing to follow will surprise you. Arnie sent me a note asking if I had a piece of artwork to use – it didn’t have to be original. He knew I was not only busy, but likely also afflicted by the common failing of all fans, procrastination. Right enough! Along with the best of them, I can simultaneously manage to have no spare time and yet somehow get almost nothing done. But I remembered a piece of art that had been used by Mike Glyer for File 770 a long time ago, and sent it by e-mail that same night.

That’s when the trouble started. It didn’t take me long to realize that if left up to Arnie, the art might well be disfigured with Arnie’s patented square lettering and crayon box colours. I hate to break it to you, Arnie, but surely you must have had an inkling: your choice of fonts, sidebars, backgrounds and colours for *FanStuff* was unquestionably it’s least attractive feature. Your layouts for *4-Star Extra*, *Folly*, *Swan* and *Swerve* were elegant in their simplicity. The sheer neon exuberance of *FanStuff* indicated that too many possibilities offered by digital publication had gone to your head. But *FanStuff* was your fanzine, and your right to publish it however you wanted was sacrosanct. I was less complacent, however, about the prospect of a purple-bordered, chartreuse, block-letter logo plastered over my carefully rendered black and white artwork.

So I sent a second e-mail to Arnie, this time suggesting that he tell me what he wanted printed on the cover and I would do the Photoshop work of lettering it. I never heard back.

I worried over this for about two weeks. Then I remembered a bit of colour artwork that I thought would look much better than the older, black-and-white composition. I resolved that this time I wouldn’t make the mistake of sending it to Arnie until I had already worked a logo into it. I did so, and got it into the mail

I received this e-mail from Arnie: *“Thanks for the fine illo. You’ll be seeing it on the cover of emailing I as soon as the last re-send arrives. Or Noon PST, if that comes first.”*

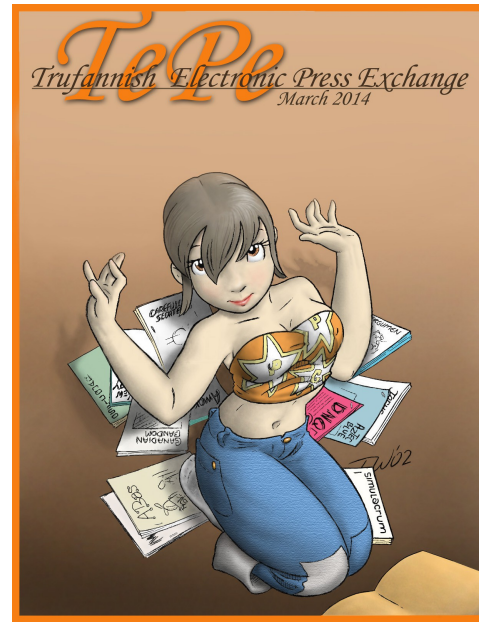
The problem was, I didn’t know which submitted cover he meant – the first one, or the coloured one with the logo? At that point, I did the only logical thing under the circumstances. I panicked.

I sent Arnie another e-mail, *“Which one? I sent that mail and the b/w image 17 days ago! Since then I’ve sent you a different cover, with a logo, that I like better. So which cover are you referring to? Your skill at confusing me is making me crazy.”*

This might be a good moment to illustrate what was running through my mind.



The first, black-and-white cover, as it *might* look if lettered by Arnie



The replacement, colour cover lettered by myself

The reality was neither as bad as the first example, nor as good as it might have been. Arnie didn't respond to the new submission, so I can only hazard a guess as to what happened. Maybe he only reads his mail once every week or two?

If the cover Arnie designed for *TePe* isn't as bad as my imaginings, it certainly wins no prizes. The art is so small, it is no doubt difficult to see any detail in it. And the little square in the middle of the page with simple, sans serif lettering top and bottom is so sublimely basic that you expect it of *The World According to Garth* or *Space Cadet*. Canadian zines can get away with that sort of retro-look ... probably because nobody expects better. But from the fan who published *Quip* and *Tandom*, it was a bitter, bitter disappointment.

Still, as I sit at my keyboard, I can look out the window, and clearly the world has not ended.

The fact is, apart from the ignominy of it, the other cover can still be used sometime. All I have to do is paint over the date and letter in a new one. But what would life be if there were no opportunities to play the drama queen? – 7 March

Wolf von Witting asks a question that I'm somewhat reluctant to answer, because I hate a smarty-pants as much as anyone else. Also, I'll be surprised if a half-dozen people don't rush to answer the question.

“Yet, according to the Big Bang Theory, where all matter came from a singularity in which everything was created out of nothing 13,8 billion years ago, we are led to believe all matter was focused to one point in space. So, how can these objects be so far apart?”

There are nuances to that question that still cause an uproar in the scientific debate, but the basics are simple. Space is expanding. It has expanded since the first instant, in which the universe either came into being altogether or exploded from some primeval state beyond our ability to describe. It expanded extremely quickly at first, but has been gradually slowing down as the gravitational attraction of matter has time to act. In time, it was once thought that the expansion of the universe would slow, come to a stop, and possibly begin to collapse in on itself again.

That's where one of those tricky nuances comes into the picture. Early, crude measurements once seemed to support the slowing expansion of the universe, but now our more accurate measurements show a small, but real increase in the rate in which the universe expands. Just why that is, nobody is sure, but the theory that there is a repulsive, "dark" energy is the current best explanation. You really don't need to know that, but I thought it good to mention in case anyone, rightly, says the universe is expanding ever more quickly – *even though* the expansion in the first moments of creation, from singularity to immense size, must have been almost instantaneous. *That* nuance is called "inflation" theory. Forget about all that. It's just too damn confusing.

What you need to picture in your head is a balloon, with spots painted on it. The balloon is four-dimensional space, and the spots are galaxies or groups of galaxies. Now inflate the balloon. See how the galaxies fly away from each other as the balloon expands? By straightforward laws of geometry, the larger the balloon grows, the faster the spots move away from each other. The spots farthest from each other recede fastest, too.

In the Einsteinian universe, of course, the speed by which galaxies receded from one another cannot exceed the speed of light. But it can get infinitesimally close to the speed of light. Since the universe seems to be about 14 billion years old, the farthest galaxies can be almost 14 billion years away from our point of view because they are moving that quickly in relation to Earth.

Keep in mind, too, that there are no favoured points of view on the balloon. Pick any spot, and the spot farthest from it is moving away as fast as it can. But our spot is moving away from that farthest spot just as fast, from *its* point of view. Pick another spot, and the spot farthest from *it* is moving as fast as possible also. That's where Relativity comes into it. All velocities are relative, and no point of view is special.

So, the farthest galaxies got where they are because they are traveling at nearly the speed of light from our point of view, and have had 14 billion years to travel.

Now, none of this is exactly right, sad to say. Because they couldn't have been traveling at the speed of light from the very first instant until now, so they really haven't had time to get where they are. But the explanations are complicated, and nobody can agree on them in detail anyway. Don't even think about it. It will just make your head hurt, as it does mine. – 7 March

The Old Oaken Fuckit Fandom without sour grapes would be a pretty poor vintage, I think. We might be reduced to talking about science fiction and be no better than those people whose lives are dedicated to Elvis, Marvel comics, Esperanto or Marxist literary criticism. So no matter how chipper and chirpy **Graeme Cameron** is, I intend to preserve the integrity of my cynicism.

I have to agree with him about cable television, though. I was thorough in the bashing I gave my new cable service in the last issue, and have nothing to add. But, by the sort of coincidence that pushes buttons, Graeme happened to mention a documentary on the Oak Island Mystery. Now, it happens that I've been interested in that subject for a long time, have read a very good, skeptical book on the subject, and by the aforesaid coincidence watched most of the same documentary criticized by Graeme!

First, you might want to know what the Oak Island Mystery is. To begin with, Oak Island is a tiny little isle off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia, barely the size of Tom Cruz's ego. For a couple of hundred years, many people have believed there was a vast treasure, or something at least mysterious and grand, buried on this sandy lump of limestone. Among favorite candidates have been Captain Kidd's pirate loot, the treasury of the Order of the Templars, Shakespeare's original manuscripts (written by Roger Bacon, of course), and the Ark of the Covenant. In fact, there is nothing whatsoever there.

However, two centuries of looking for something that wasn't there have transformed the place enormously. At present, Oak Island resembles a cross between the beach at Gilligan's Island and the craters of the Moon. The original location of the supposed "money pit" has been excavated so many times that it physically isn't there any more, and the exact spot where it once existed is in some conjecture. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I'm relying on memory, but, as I recall, the story of Oak Island supposedly begins with the discovery of a shallow sump, over which a rope dangled from an overhanging tree limb. It appeared very much as something had been lowered into a pit and buried. Curious to see what was buried there, and very much hoping for gold Doubloons or silver Reales, a pair of brothers dug into the sand and soon came to the first obstacle. They found a layer of rocks. Removing the rocks, they dug deeper still and came to a layer of logs, seemingly laid side by side. They dug farther still and came to more rocks. Then more logs. To the brothers, it seemed as though this couldn't be natural, it must have been built by someone who had something of extreme importance to hide.

But dig as deep as they could, the brothers never came to the bottom. Before they had dug more than 30 or 50 feet, water suddenly burst into the pit and flooded them out.

Let's skip ahead about a hundred years. The pit had been re-dug many times, and the alternating layers of logs and stones had been confirmed. But each time the pit was excavated, it flooded. Other pits were dug to one side, hoping to dig into the original pit at a lower level, but they flooded at precisely the same depth as the original. I don't know why anyone thought they wouldn't. Oak Island can't be much more than ten feet above sea level anywhere, and the island is made of porous limestone. The diggers were well into the water table. Desperate for some other explanation, the diggers found thin layers of what proved to be palm leaf fiber under the sand. In their imaginations, these layers became a deliberate trap, laid down by clever pirates, pious Templars or frustrated Shakespearean actors to extend all the way from the pit to the nearby beach, so that water would be efficiently siphoned into the pit if anyone was foolish enough to try to dig it up.

Just how the owners of the pit were to ever recover their hidden goods was never explained.

Twentieth-Century diggers were very ambitious, bringing modern engineering equipment to the task. By then, the original location of the money pit was very problematical, and one excavation had collapsed and nearly killed a man. Two other lives had been actually been lost by unventilated

carbon dioxide. Yet, tantalizing clues had been brought up by the drills. Bits of metal link, such as would be part of a watch chain, for example. A pair of antique scissors. Scraps of gold that were unidentifiable. And then there were the camera probes that broke into small cavities in the limestone. Although excited observers claimed to have seen, at the 200-foot level, a skull and the outline of a hand, as though preserved in the briny, oxygen-poor water, the objects also looked a good deal like fallen lumps of limestone. Not only that, but the cavities were about the size of a chesterfield, barely large enough for Harry Houdini to preform one of his escapes in. When modern tunneling techniques couldn't dependably keep a shaft open for Twentieth-Century treasure hunters, how would pirates or Templars have gotten there without bringing the whole island down on themselves? Not to mention that the cavities were already flooded with water.

Yet the ever-hopeful treasure seekers had concocted an elaborate plan of the original pit. In their minds, the Oak Island pit was the Grand Central Depository of the Pirate Nation. They believed it had been a wide, vertical shaft, with horizontal tunnels sloping upward at different depths, and at the end of each was a separate treasure vault. The entrance had been filled in later, and the water trap set to prevent anyone from digging up the original shaft. Earlier, I wondered how the owners of the buried treasure ever expected to retrieve their ill-gotten gain. Apparently, the compass bearings and depths of the horizontal tunnels would have been recorded. When the pirate who owned the treasure in tunnel number six wanted his loot, he knew where to dig and how far, and never had to go near the booby-trapped original shaft.

It's a very clever idea, you have to admit. The trouble was that there was no proof.

Oh, to be sure, the island had regular and very secretive visitors. All sorts of late 18th and 19th century trash can be found all over Oak Island, and some curious enigmas as well. There are large polished stones, for instance, with holes neatly drilled through the upper part. Treasure seekers claim they mean something, that perhaps sighting through the bore holes help locate the right places to dig. Unfortunately, nobody can read the puzzle. It is even possible they are just crude anchors, abandoned or washed up.

Similarly, there's no reason not to think that visiting smugglers might not have dropped a pair of scissors or other oddments to be found a century later. Oak Island is conveniently very close to the mainland, connected in modern times by a short causeway. And yet it is quite isolated. There's been a suggestion that Freemasons might have used the island for rituals, which is not as unlikely as it may sound. Freemasonry was under strong disapproval Colonial days, if not outright illegal. Any amount of trash might be expected to be found. Treasure seekers themselves may have left some of it.

Then there is the questionable evidence of gold scraps found in one of the drill holes. They have since conveniently disappeared, and who's to say they weren't "salted" in the shaft to convince skeptical investors to put up money to drill deeper? Other supposed "evidence" has also disappeared ... if indeed it ever existed.

The only compelling evidence that there was something unnatural about the original money pit was the odd layering of logs and rocks in a vertical stack, plus the fiber-lined "channels" that created the water trap. Keep in mind, Oak Island is limestone. One of the things you find in a limestone landscape is natural sinkholes. The original depression found by the 18th century brothers was probably nothing more than that. And what is more natural than logs and even rocks being moved by storm waves, to be trapped in a sinkhole? I myself have seen sinkholes in Tennessee whose

bottoms are full of such natural rubbish. Gravity might tend to lend an orderly aspect to whatever washed in. Add a little imagination, and it's not hard to understand why the brothers might have interpreted a natural phenomenon as man-made. As for palm leaves, they wash up from the Caribbean during storms too. Once they were littering the beach, there is nothing odd about sand gradually covering them over. Therefore, the most likely explanation for what lies in the money pit is nothing – just random, tiny cavities full of sea water and calciferous ooze. There never was a treasure because there never was a pit, just misinterpreted natural phenomenon. Now that the evidence has been long since excavated, ground up and bulldozed out of the way, so that proving that there never was a treasure is next to impossible. For all I know, there is someone digging a bigger and deeper shaft as I write.

The documentary Graeme watched was almost certainly a cynical attempt to make a documentary the producers could sell to History Channel or PBS. They would have known everything about the history of the Oak Island money pit, and nothing they filmed couldn't have been found in the index of the 1978 book I read. Nothing. They knew nothing they found was a new discovery, and probably never expected to find anything new. It was just a job of filming something ... anything. They would have filmed dung steaming, if they thought History Channel would buy it.

Unfortunately, the majority of TV documentaries today seem little better. There's treasure, all right. But not in the ground. The money is in the film can or video memory, and that's why cable TV is flooded with "documentaries" about Noah's Ark, escaped alligators in the New York sewer system, the lost ten tribes of Israel and spontaneous human combustion. For the script writers, cameramen and actors, it's not science or history; it's just a job. – 7 March

The Big Dig: The \$10 Million Search for Oak Island's Legendary Treasure, D'Arcy O'Connor, 1978. ISBN 0-345-35558-X or Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak_Island_Treasure

Arnie mentions a nearly-forgotten instance of entertainment history – *My Favourite Husband*. I've listened to at least a dozen episodes of this radio show that were recorded on the DVD collections of *I Love Lucy*. In tone, the radio program was much like the TV show, but the Lucy character played by Lucille Ball is rather more on the ball. She isn't as wacky. In some ways, the radio program was funnier than *I Love Lucy*. For one thing, there are no embarrassing scenes in which Lucy is slobbering all over Sonny Tufts or Alan Ladd. There is no music, either. The show never came to a stop as Ricky belted out "Babbaloo" in barely understandable English, or while the Mertzes did a Vaudeville song and dance routine. Another advantage that *My Favourite Husband* enjoyed was that you couldn't see it. Because you didn't watch radio, you weren't horrified by Lucille Balls mugging and rug-chewing.

I have two seasons' worth of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz's history-making sitcom. Despite sometimes going well over the top, or sometimes stooping to new lows, *I Love Lucy* was often hilariously funny. Sometimes it was unexpectedly moving, as well. If you have ever seen the episode where Lucy tells Ricky, in the middle of his act at the club, that she is pregnant, you may remember how oddly intense it was. In reality, Lucy was pregnant. They both knew it, of course, but the actors became so caught up in the moment that, in effect, they forget they were acting. That was an instant of genuine emotion you saw, unplanned and very nearly lost. Ricky forgot his next line, and had to be cued by one of the musicians in the band.

The show was enormously influential. For more than a decade after *I Love Lucy* first aired, a surprising number of sitcoms involved show business in one way or another. *The Dick van Dyke Show*, for example, and the *Danny Thomas Show*, were all about entertainers. *I Love Lucy* was influential in another way, as well. Previously, sets were rather minimal. *The Honeymooners* had Ralph's apartment, and you rarely saw anything else, not even the bedroom connecting to the sitting room (where all the action occurred). This is hardly surprising, as Jackie Gleason's show grew out of five-minute blackouts on his comedy-variety show, and only later spun off as a sitcom. Another early classic, variously known as *You're In the Army Now* and *The Phil Silvers Show*, had few basic sets. The barracks, Bilko's private room in the barracks, and occasionally Ritzik's kitchen or the Colonel's office. They were simply backdrops, that were never seen from any other camera angle.

To my surprise, as I watched the nearly 80 episodes again for the first time in decades, I was impressed by the seeming reality of the sets used for *I Love Lucy*. I began to make sketches, and soon discovered that the Ricardo apartment was virtually a complete room. There is even one episode where you see Lucy and Ethyl from outside, leaning in a window in the "fourth" wall. Not only was the kitchen connected logically to the sitting room, but so was the hallway to their bedroom. The hallway outside the apartment door led to a real corridor, which contained a flight of stairs up to a logically laid out rooftop. The downstairs flight led to the Mertze's apartment, on the floor below. Even the balcony made sense, leading down to an alley that was seen in one episode. In the second season, when the Ricardos moved to a larger apartment in the same building, they were on the same floor as the Mertzes, and shared the balcony. There is even a basement set.

The producers, Desi and Lucy themselves, apparently thought it important enough to establish a believable environment for the series that they created all these logically constructed sets! This too made its mark on sitcom history, for most sitcoms thereafter followed *Lucy's* lead.

Next time you beg to disagree with a friend about whether there is a turbolift on the right side of the transporter room on the *Enterprise D*, or on both sides, remember who started it all. There might have been no *Enterprise D* without the Ricardo apartment. – 8 March

I read the Dorothy Sayers translation of *The Inferno*, many years ago. It had the virtues described by **Eric Mayer**, but I found the reading to be mostly tedious slogging. Every mind-bending vision was encased in stiff verbiage, almost as if it were frozen in ice along with Satan. Coming away from the scenes of infernal torments, you wonder what did poor old Gugio or Smeggo ever do, that Dante thought he should be stretched over an anvil and hammered like a horseshoe forever? You get the impression that the poet was a self-righteous, sadistic prig who might deserve a spot in the Inferno himself, where pontificating poets are punished. If I ever end up there myself, my punishment would be to have to read *The Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paridissio* over and over endlessly, while sitting on the clammy plastic seat covers of a 1954 Nash Metropolitan whose radio is playing *Stand By Your Man*. But until then, you won't catch me reading the second two volumes.

It's not really surprising that, when Eric discovered digital publishing, he would be intrigued enough to try it. Eric also fell head over heels for mini-comics, when they became fashionable in the early 1980s. He not only published his own, but encouraged me to try my hand. The result was a little chapbook called *Interview With Rocky the Flying Squirrel*. Eric ran them off and I guess must have sold a few here and there, but it was a pretty limited venture. It put grander ideas in my head, though. I produced a second edition myself, and improved the text and illustrations through several

subsequent editions. Over time I must have sold at least 100 copies, at prices ranging from \$1 to \$3. As fan pubbing goes, it was rather a shock to make money from it. I produced a number of other booklets and portfolios over the following years, selling them through the mail or at furry conventions. I'm out of the business now – the incomprehensible amount of free art on-line has made the sale of zines and folios unprofitable. But, I don't mind telling you, my pubs put a pretty penny in my pocket, in their time. And all thanks to Eric Mayer and his original mini-comics.

Gawd, I hate “bread donuts.” But what else can you get, unless you live near a Jewish bakery? Years ago, I used to walk nearly two miles, one way, to get to a half-decent bakery that made bagels I could eat. Then they moved another mile-and-a-half away. At least the bakery was next to a Kinko's, so any time I had to make photocopies, I'd buy a baker's dozen of bagels next door. But it was too far to walk – nearly seven miles there and back. And now I have much closer access to Xerox services, and no need to go to a Kinko's that far away. It looks as though I will never get the last stamp on my card, and a free dozen real bagels... By which I mean 13, of course. – 8 March

I notice with a certain amount of wonderment that **Murray Moore** is a member of this august body. (Actually, this *April* body.) Why this is to be wondered at is that Murray seems to exhibit a degree of *digitaphobia*. He has stated that he does not loc zines that do not come to him in the form of printed sheets of paper. I can attest that in spite of arm-twisting, Murray has not locced a single one of 25 issues of *Broken Toys*, even though – as the product of a fellow Toronto fan – it is virtually Murray's duty to do so.

But here we see Murray is editing a *Fanthology* for the next Corflu. Let us hope that Murray won't refuse to consider any fanwriting that wasn't printed by squeezing oil-based pigments onto vegetable fibers. If so, I want it plainly stated on the contents page – “I have refused to consider any fanwriting, however swell and fannish, that wasn't delivered to me with a stamp and an envelope. So sue me for being irrational.” – 9 March

So... Torcon II was also **Laurraine Tutihasi's** first science fiction convention? Earlier in the mailing, R. Graeme Cameron also confessed that Torcon II was his first SF con. Guess what? It was mine, too. I had been to a small comics convention at York University, sometime previously, where I met Vaughn Bode. He gave me a prize for best non-professional work in the art show, so it was no trivial incident in my formative experience. However, a small comics con is just not a Worldcon.

I wonder who else was at Torcon who I would later get to know? I did meet Harlan Ellison and talked him into attending our club's room party. There was someone there I thought he might be angry with, and, hopefully, that would liven up the party. Unfortunately, no noses were punched, but photos were taken of Harlan side by side with two apes from the *Planet of the Apes* movie. I think I was also briefly close enough to Robert Heinlein to do him bodily harm, if I had connected him that early in my mind to Ayn Rand. Neither author is anyone I claim to know, however. In fact, there were only two other fans whom I remember meeting at Torcon II. One was Ed Meskys, who showed me his sonar-glasses. They send out ultra-sounds, the echos of which were picked up and amplified by speakers in the ear pieces. The other fan was Moshe Feder. I remember Moshe and

some other New York fans mourning in a room in the Royal York Hotel because they had just learned that their friend back home, Barry Smotroff, had been murdered in a drug deal gone bad.

There's a lot more of Torcon II that I remember than just that, of course. Let's say that I'm saving it for another time. – 9 March

Working Against the Gain I hate to say it, but once again it comes down to questioning the point of working.

That is, for the umpty-umph time, I've had a customer default on his commission. You'd think I'd learn, and demand payment up front? In fact, I thought I knew better, and *almost always* insist I see the colour of someone's money before I'll muss up a fresh sheet of paper. This time I made an exception, for what seemed like a sensible reason. The customer had commissioned me three or four times in the past, and had always paid up. I thought I could trust him.

I don't suppose I'll go so far as to name the person, but those of you in the macrophile community can probably make an educated guess if I merely hint that he's in the RAF. Past commissions have included simple cartoons, a lengthy prose piece, and a complicated picture of one of my signature characters – Saara Mar – as she unknowingly tramples a miniature alien city into the dust. This is not something Saara is ever likely to be absent-minded enough to do, but I found a tongue-in-cheek way to work it.

The art: <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/4676202/>

The new job was supposed to be a continuation of the incident where Saara trashes the miniature alien city. By that time, having never been into the macro concept myself, I was bored with the whole idea. Also, I had been finally granted a disability pension, and was no longer under any great pressure to earn extra money. So, while I had never been one to work cheaply, I set a price to make it worth my while. In the past I might have done the job for \$100, but the customer agreed to \$150 for the full-page piece (with multiple panels). I gave him a small break if he would settle for a high-resolution file that I didn't have to physically mail to him. As prices go in furry fandom, this is high, but nothing like the going rate in the real world. Also, if I was going to use my time this way, the money had to make a real difference to me.

As usual, I did a rough outline and e-mailed it to the customer. There were a few minor changes that he wanted, but also one somewhat more difficult change in Saara's pose that required me to erase most of her figure. Once I made the alterations, I e-mailed a new scan for his approval. I think that may have been the last time I ever got a willing message from the customer. That was back in August 2013.

Since then, I've left the drawing untouched. Until I had payment in hand, I had no intention of finishing it. Time passed, and every now and then I'd e-mail the customer about his job. Sometimes I got a reply, sometimes I didn't. There was *always* a problem. He was away from the base for two weeks, or undergoing helicopter training, or *something*. Then he would complain that it was a long trip to the post office, where he had to go for a money order or to exchange Pounds for Loonies. More often than not there were no excuses, just "radio silence" from the north of England.

Finally, the customer offered to pay me through PayPal. Now, I don't have PayPal, and I don't want it. But I found a trusted friend of mine who was willing to take payment on my behalf, and then pass the money deposited in his account along to me. I e-mailed my customer to give him the friend's address.

There was no word from my customer. My friend anxiously e-mailed me to say no money had turned up in his PayPal account. I e-mailed the customer a reminder about three weeks ago. Still no word.

I have to assume at this point that he's had second thoughts about the job, or he feels he's seen enough of it in the rough outline to be satisfied, or maybe he's overwhelmed with debts ... considering how many macro commissions he's posted lately on FurAffinity, that wouldn't surprise me. But as for the job I was commissioned to do, it looks kaput. I've filed the half-done job away and plan to forget about it.

As for future commissions, I'm not very keen on them. – 9 March

Ah, Sweet Idolatry I've been intending to reprint Francis Towner Laney's magnum opus, *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*, for years now. I don't mean this in the usual fannish, Gary Farberish way, "I really want to do this but can't be bothered to do the work." The entire 128 pages were scanned at least two years ago, and I had acquired all the other contents as well. There were really only three things that stood between me and the first reprint of *ASI* since 1962.

First, I had serious doubts about my original intention, of releasing *ASI* in the format I originally favoured. I had already republished the complete *Energumen* and *Xenium* as a CD-Rom and wanted to do *ASI* the same way. However, the technical challenges are demanding. I'd need to create disk art as well as jewel-case art, but worse than that I would have to make several trips to a neighborhood copy shop. Since I can no longer walk very far, that's awkward. I would also have to buy sticky labels, plastic cases and burnable CDs separately. More travel. I began to dread the ordeal.

There is an alternative, however. Bill Burns has suggested I use Amazon's Create Space to publish *ASI* as a sort of book, or magazine. A recent example you may have seen is Michael Dobson's Random Jottings 8, (which was all about Watergate). He supplied the .pdf and wraparound cover art, and they printed the entire 100+ pages of what looks like a typical Worldcon program book for a little over \$2 each. *ASI* and the related material I've collected would run to around 200 pages, so costs would be a little greater. But I gather that Amazon lists such publications for mail order, on a shared profits basis, so I would not have to stock 100 copies for future sales. This is an option I'm seriously considering. What do you think?

Secondly, whether I go for a CD or a book, I need to do artwork. With the book, a wraparound cover would be adequate, so this is not really a problem, just something I have to do when the time comes. I've had a rough idea what to do since the beginning. The title I've chosen for the reprint is *The Louche Knight: Tilting at Fandom*, so a Don Quixote theme is irresistible.

Finally, I had to write my own introduction. Although I have several introductions and articles about Laney and *ASI* among the material I intend to reprint, there is no substitute for my own take on the

material. For some reason, though, I kept putting the writing off. There was always the next issue of *Banana Wings* or *File 770* I wanted to write an article for, or another issue of my own zine, *Broken Toys* due. And so the blasted thing hung fire for at least two years, while ASI waited.

However, I can't put it off any longer. Other keen archivists are sniffing around the material, ready to republish it themselves if I don't get off the pot. For once, I reacted sensibly and began writing my introduction.

In fact ... it's well underway! The intro is hovering around 3,000 words at the moment, and I estimate that it should close out at under 4,000.

For the interested, here is the likely table of contents:

The Louche Knight – Contents

Part 1

1. *The Louche Night: Tilting at Fandom*
2. *Ah, Sweet Idiocy!* (Francis Towner Laney)
3. *Fandango* (FTL – Issues 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7a, 8, 9, 17) [those are the issues in my possession]

Part 2

4. *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* (Harry Warner Jr., All Our Yesterdays, column 22)
5. *Francis T. Laney* (Harry Warner Jr. All Our Yesterdays, column 23)
6. *The Truth About the Laney Memoirs* (Rick Sneary)
7. *Francis Towner Laney, Threat or Menace* (an unused intro by Arnie Katz)
8. *FTL and ASI* (Alva Rogers)

Part 3

9. Death Shall Not Release (Hoax News from DNQ)
 10. Papers of Laney *Pere*, University of Idaho Collection
 11. FTL in Pictures
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This is an “update” of the Tucker Hotel that I sketched a little while ago, with Graeme Cameron's *Amazing Stories* column in mind. But it's a fairly detailed proposal, and I wasn't sure I wanted to spend the necessary time on it. Before I could do much more, new distractions came along that pushed the sketch of the New Tucker Hotel to the bottom of the slush pile.



As you can see, the old two-story Tucker Hotel still stands, at the back of the lot. Given the graying of fandom, wheelchair ramps and stair lifts have been installed. It is mainly used now for parties. Between the new building and the old is the First Fandom Fountain, an eternal gush of correction fluid, alternating between blue, green and pink. It is not recommended that guests linger near the fountain, as the fumes are both intoxicating and injurious to health. To the left of the fountain is Corflu Hall, where the formal presentations of the FAAn awards are held annually, as well as other ceremonies, lectures, readings and minor riots.

At the far right is the replica of the Tower of True Fannishness. Like Cinderella's Castle at Disneyland, it is merely a plaster facade, and there is nothing in the structure but public washrooms. However, the view from the scenic platform at the top is splendid. In the foreground you see the modern, main building, which contains accommodations for fans who wish the privacy of their own rooms, and also ample floor space in shared rooms for fans who are content to merely “crash” – pillows and foam pads are provided, and sheets are washed daily. There are six hot tubs and a gym in the solarium. A pneumatic tube connects the hotel directly to the airport, the nearest Chinese restaurants, a diverse fast food court, and a Denny's for purists.

The main building is also equipped with the latest in digital telecommunications – cell, Wi-fi, hi-speed optical, satellite dish, ansible, you-name-it! There is even a post-office and print shop on premises, offering a choice between old-school paper publishing, digital formats and social networking. Unfortunately, the only people who can afford to check in at the Tucker Hotel are the same-old, same-olds that you see at the Worldcon every year, who have never read a fanzine. – 20 Mar, and *Wrap!*