

# WCSFAzine

The Fannish E-zine of the West Coast Science Fiction Association  
Dedicated to Promoting the West Coast Science Fiction Community

#15

November 2008



Science GoH Jaymie Matthews



Conchair Danielle Stephens



Author GoH Kelly Armstrong

VCON 33



SPECIAL!

Danielle, Author GoH Patrick Rothfuss, Artist GoH Lisa Snellings

**WCSFAzine** Issue # 15, November 2008, Volume 2, Number 11, Whole number 15, is the monthly E-zine of the West Coast Science Fiction Association ( founded 1993 ), a registered society with the general mandate of promoting Science Fiction and the specific focus of sponsoring the annual VCON Science Fiction Convention ( founded 1971 ).

Anyone who is a paid member of VCON 33 or who has paid a membership fee of \$5.00 to WCSFA is a member of WCSFA till noon, Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 ( when VCON 34 registration opens ). No other criteria applies. Said membership involves voting privileges at WCSFA meetings.

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WCSFA Website: < <http://www.user.dccnet.com/clintbudd/WCSFA/> >

WCSFAzine *IS* a fannish E-zine publication sponsored by WCSFA to promote and celebrate every and all aspects of the Science Fiction Community on the West Coast of Canada.

You can download the latest issue ( and past issues ) from < <http://efanzines.com> > or contact the Editor at: < [rgraeme@shaw.ca](mailto:rgraeme@shaw.ca) > and ask me to email you a PDF version.

WCSFAzine is not intended to be an information newswire service, or an industry promotional outlet, but rather an eclectic ongoing anthology of bits and pieces of nifty rumours and misinformation as viewed through a fannish lens. You can expect the focus to be on the West Coast, but with a peripheral vision including the entire world of fandom. Anticipate info on upcoming books, fannish events, local clubs and conventions, film reviews, short essays, weird cover art, spin doctor publicity announcements, peculiar speculations and astounding bits of trivia to put you in touch with your fannish heritage.

Anyone ( even non-members ) may submit short articles, mini-essays, letters of comment, art fillers ( small pieces of art ) and/or cover art to the Editor at:

**R.G. Cameron, Apt 72G – 13315 104<sup>th</sup> Ave, Surrey, B.C., V3T 1V5.**

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## CONTENTS:

- 01..... Cover photos: colour ones *by Stephen Samuel.*
- 02..... Important Stuff.
- 03..... Contents & Editorial.
- 04..... Hidden History of VCON 4: Part One.
- 08..... Impressions of VCON 33: *by Jenni Merrifield.*
- 09..... Impressions of VCON 33: *by Shaddy.*
- 10..... Impressions of VCON 33: *by Chilam.*
- 11..... Impressions of VCON 33: *by The Magic Rat (Alyx J. Shaw).*
- 14..... VCON 33: Part One: *by The Graeme.*
- 21..... Pre-Reg for VCON 34!
- 22..... Ditto 8: Part Two.
- 30..... History of UBC SFFEN: Part Two.
- 37..... Ask Mr. Science!
- 37..... 2008 Rotsler Award.
- 38..... The Ongoing Saga of Promoting 'A Strange Place in Time'.
- 40..... Author Happenings of Local Interest.
- 46..... Retro Film Review: It Came From Beneath The Sea (1955).
- 52..... Upcoming Nifty Film Projects.
- 52..... Letters of Comment.
- 54..... Adverts.

Note: All uncredited articles are by the Ghod-Editor.

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Stephen Samuel: 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21.

## EDITORIAL



Great arrgh! This issue is fantastically late. Unaccountable levels of fatigue on my part. The open hatch on the left is symbolic of all the air sucked into the vacuum of space in terms of a catastrophic drop in my energy level. Skirting with gaffiation it seems. Part of it may be due to the lack of response to my efforts. But I will carry on regardless.

Taral Wayne wrote to suggest that the information pages be published separately, since much of the info does not change from month to month and the expense of printing out what amounts to the same stuff over and over is rather a burden. I have to rethink my info policy. This IS an online zine after all. No paper copies are distributed. If you're not on the internet, you're not reading this. Perhaps I need only list clubs and conventions with their email addresses. Results of rethink nish (next issue).

I should have the next issue finished by December 1st. Many thanks to Bill Burns at < <http://www.efanzines.com> > for hosting. Please send me feedback! < [rgraeme@shaw.ca](mailto:rgraeme@shaw.ca) >

Cheers! The Graeme

# CONVENTION STUFF

( BECAUSE WCSFA IS ALL ABOUT CONVENTIONS )

## THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF VCON 4 PART ONE

THE 4<sup>th</sup> VANCOUVER SF CONVENTION – FEBRUARY 21-23, 1975:

by *The Graeme*

I did not attend this convention. As a result the following account has been cobbled together from many sources.

The Convention Executive included the following:

CHAIR - Mike Bailey.

TREASURER - Vicki Bushell.

PROGRAMMING - Ed Beauregard.

PUBLICATIONS - Nick Grimshawe.

REGISTRAR - Gary Walker.

PUBLICITY/ART - Allan Dickeson.

HUCKSTERS - Ken Wong.

FILMS - Ed Hutchings.

RECORDINGS - Al Betz.

Months later, in the convention's final report, Mike Bailey made the following comments: *"The subsequent SF activities of ex-conCom members might make an interesting in-house sociological study someday.... Mike Bailey vowed to himself never to become involved in the planning and execution of another SF convention. Vicki Bushell's club activities have slowly declined. Ed Beauregard became BCSFA President and remains actively interested in conventions. Gary Walker has slowly dropped out of SF activities. Ed Hutchings and Al Betz seemingly have been unaffected by the convention. Ken Wong now may be more interested in club activities than previously. Nick Grimshawe has not appeared at a club meeting since V-Con IV and his membership has lapsed. Allan Dickeson has stated that he doesn't wish to be associated with any future SF conventions, feeling that the rewards (egoboo and trauma) do not justify the work. So it goes."*

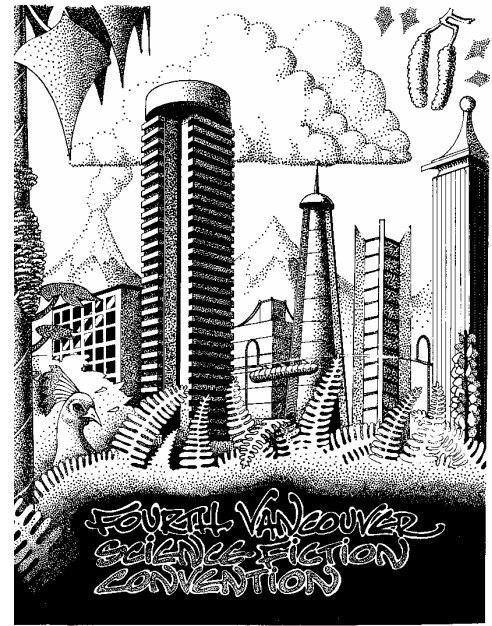
The poster for the convention ( by artist Carl Chaplin ) depicts a gnome-like author with pen nibs for shoes, book in hand, sitting in a flying chair. A nearby planet appears to be spitting bullets at him ( or spaceships? ). Anyway, kind of neat.

Carl Chaplin also did the cover art for the program book, a pen and ink depiction of buildings in Vancouver's West End with several unusual touches; like a monorail, a Saturn Five about to lift off, and a smoldering volcano among the North Shore mountains in the background. The Peacock, frog, ferns, mushrooms and swamp cabbage added nicely to the scene as well.



The program book was twenty pages long and 8 & 1/2" by 11" in size. Among other items it featured a three page glossary of fandom by Ed Beauregard, listing such terms as BNF, CRIFANAC, GAFIA, etc.

The convention took place at the Sheraton Landmark Hotel (featured prominently in the Program book cover) on Robson Street in the West End, a district



which lies between Downtown Vancouver and Stanley Park, and between English Bay and Coal Harbour; a perfect setting to impress out-of-towners.

Guest of Honour was Robert Silverberg. Writer Frank Herbert ( V-Con III guest and author of 'DUNE' ) provided this introductory essay in the program book, titled "A Man Of Many Talents":

*Are you ever fortunate to have a man of Robert Silverberg's talents as your guest of honour! The word prolific was invented to take care in describing his out-put. As you may realize now and certainly will realize by the end of your convention, he is known far beyond the field of Science Fiction. He has published more than 450 books, almost 1,500 magazine pieces -- and Sf represents less than 20% of that output. But thank God he wrote/writes SF, a field in which he is an accomplished master. He deals better than most with the complex interaction between science/technology and humans.*

*It was on Fred Pohl's advice that I read 'DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH', which has to be the definitive book on alien-human interaction. I believe the first Silverberg I ever read was 'MAN IN THE MAZE', the signal that there was an artist--storyteller in our midst. I particularly enjoyed 'HAWKSBILL STATION' and 'THE SECOND TRIP'.*

*Behind that goateed face with its hint of Mephistopheles there is an intellect as sharp and curious and imaginative as any in letters today. What you should know about Silverberg to appreciate his many facets is that he is also a well-respected author in history and politics and that he is able to make these subjects highly readable and enjoyable to both young readers and adults. He is that rare fellow, a scholar who can take a difficult subject and hold you spellbound as he unfolds the fabric of his exposition. Within easy reach in my bookcase right now is a book called 'HOME OF THE RED MAN'. The author is Robert Silverberg. Truth to tell, he once spent about ten years hiding out from Science Fiction, writing all sorts of interesting works -- fiction and nonfiction -- exploring many fields. Did you know he is well-respected as a writer in the field of archaeology? Ask him about Roman Britain or the ruins of Persepolis. Then prepare to be spellbound.*

*Silverberg is a Columbia University graduate (1956) which makes him comparatively young in the writing field. If he continues to be as prolific across the next twenty years as he has been in the preceding twenty, he may well be the author who finally breaks the back of academia. they'll never be*

able to completely cross-reference, analyze and "study in depth" all his works down to that final exclamation point. If we have nothing else to thank him for, that would be enough -- but we can also delight in the fact that whatever he does, he does it with artistry and sensitivity.

*Prepare yourselves for a memorable experience with Robert Silverberg as your guest.*

Herbert must have been prescient, for it turned out that Silverberg was once again thinking about "hiding out from Science Fiction."

As far back as December 18th, 1974, he had written to the ConCom:

*"I warn you that it's going to be rather more somber than the job I did at Westercon; I've been having some heavy thoughts about the future of Science Fiction and in particular the future of me as a Science Fiction writer..."*

On January 27th, 1975, he added:

*"Your guess is correct: I'm discouraged by the state of SF and by recent events in my own career, and I'm going to quit writing it on the grounds that the sort of thing I write is not really what the bulk of readers want to read. I thought I'd explain the reasons for the dismantling of my career at Vancouver. It does make a somber talk, I know, but it might be instructive..."*

The ConCom was upset with his proposed keynote speech. As Mike Bailey later wrote in BCSFAzine #22:

*"The Committee knew in advance what Bob Silverberg was going to say and it presented a scheduling problem. When a major genre author quits writing at a convention at which he is being honoured, it is more than ironic. Do you clap when he says he is unappreciated? We scheduled him for Sunday and he handled himself well: we knew he would."*

Silverberg got a surprise of his own when he stepped off the plane at the Vancouver airport. It had been snowing, and though the ground cover had melted, the airport snow ploughs had left enormous banks of snow lining the runways. Silverberg was stunned, as he had flown in direct from California and was wearing a light shirt, shorts and sandals. So, a "chilly reception." But hey, this is Canada after all, snow all year round, commuting by dogsled, igloos for office buildings....

As for the convention, Silverberg is said to have remarked later in a Locus interview that "no one seemed to know him", but, according to Stan G. Hyde, fans shied away because he tended to give short, non-committal answers to questions and it took a real effort to engage him in conversation. Still, he must have had a good time, because he came back next year for V-Con V as an attending pro rather than a guest.

## **FRIDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 1975:**

The action began at 2:00 pm with a showing of videos in the Broughton room. At 3:00 pm 16mm films began in room 102 of 'the annex' ( very inconveniently located. Guests had to leave the hotel, walk past the parking lot entrance and go back in up one flight of stairs ). This convention marked the first time continuous showings of films had been arranged at V-Con, at least during the day. The films proved embarrassingly successful. As Ed Beauregard later wrote:



*"The second most common complaint was that the film room was too small. There were two reasons for that. Firstly, it was the only room available for that purpose, and secondly, we just did not expect the balance that occurred in film-lecture attendance. Most committee members, myself included, felt that the lectures were the backbone of the convention. I was, and in fact, still am, disappointed in the meagre attendance given the lectures. At the same time, we felt the films would serve as a sort of sideshow for people with nothing better to do. Were we ever wrong! The films, in fact, turned out to be the most highly rated feature of the convention." ( in response to a questionnaire given to attendees. )*

The program book states that videotape films would be broadcast internally on the hotel's closed circuit TV throughout the convention, but since the Friday News sheet only lists videos being shown in the Broughton room, I conclude the deal for using the hotel system fell through at the last minute. Further evidence for this is Ed Beauregard's comment that the Broughton room (located next to the huckster/art show room) was originally supposed to have been a combined hospitality/rest area, but wound up being selected for video display *"because there was just no other place to set up the equipment."*

As a result, the convention had NO hospitality room. Well, almost no hospitality room. Because of the con, there was no official February club meeting, so BCSFA rented a suite on the 4th floor to serve as an informal gathering place for BCSFA members and their guests, or for that matter anyone who dropped by ( the idea being to sign up more members ), but apparently not many attendees found their way there. One who did was William Gibson, attending his first V-Con ever. Evidently he had a very good time, to judge by the letter he wrote Mike Bailey three months later:

*"You probably remember me as the drunken ex-fan editor who went on and on in 4002 ( the hospitality suite ) about the fanzines he had edited as a boy and would doubtless edit again at the first opportunity, etc... Needless to say, in the cold post-con light, I developed a rapid case of cold publisher's feet. I'm still excited at having rediscovered fandom, though, and fan-writing, rather than fan-publishing, seems the most likely outlet for those mysterious fannish energies frustrated by ten year's fafiation.... Specifically, I'm working on a review of Stanislaw Lem's THE INVESTIGATION...."*

At 5:00 pm came the CONVOCATION, with the official introduction of distinguished and/or notorious attendees. Frank Denton ( well-known Seattle fan ) was master of ceremonies, and spoke for 15 minutes.

At some point in the convention Stan G. Hyde found himself standing in line beside Dr. William Broxon, husband of author "Bubbles" ( Mildred ) Broxon. Dr. Broxon ( now deceased ) was a large man, a very large man, and Stan couldn't help noticing that, aside from the leather mask with enormous antlers Broxon wore and the full-sized spear he carried, there was a live six foot Boa Constrictor draped across his shoulders. Broxon saw that Stan was staring at him (at the snake actually).

Quickly, Stan blurted out the first thing that came to mind. "Uh, that's a nice snake you have there."

Dr. Broxon glared back. "It's a MALE snake."

"Oh, really?" replied Stan nervously. "I couldn't tell."

"That's because you're not a FEMALE snake!" declared Dr. Broxon, lowering his antlers in what Stan construed as a threatening manner.

The snake's name, incidentally, was 'Sigmund'.

Possibly this meeting occurred while they were waiting to enter the ballroom for the costume ball, the IMPERIAL COSTUME BALL, where "*due to atmospheric conditions, masks are mandatory.*" The ball was supposed to begin at 8:00 but was delayed half an hour, in part because Allan Dickeson, the ball's organizer, was busy elsewhere trying to calm an LSD-excited con member, and in part because the hotel PA system was found to be inadequate and a jury-rig system had to be patched together. The 'Free Air Ensemble' and 'Ross Barrett & Friends' were able to perform, but 'The Synergy Dancers' were asked not to perform because of an "*inadequate technical environment*" or as another source put it, because of "*bad vibes.*"

Said "bad vibes" were the result of Allan Dickeson's conception of the ball. He wanted a "*far-out affair by having a real ball*", i.e. live music and dancing. This was not what some fans were anticipating. As the Saturday News sheet put it the next day:

*"If you observed or heard the hassle in the ballroom last night and don't wish to know what happened, stop reading.... At SF conventions in the U.S. (traditionally), masquerade balls are more or less amateur nights. Fans dress in an SF-or-fantasy-oriented costume, are presented, and perform in a short skit. Realizing that 80% or more of the V-Con membership are unaware of such a tradition, the committee organized (just) a dance with live music. Unfortunately several longtime fans expected a presentation and became noisy in their disappointment."*

Leading the charge was the antlered Dr. William Broxon, who at one point was seen prodding Mike Bailey across the floor with his rubber-tipped spear shouting "*I wish it were real!*" But when he began to shake Sigmund at Mike, Sheraton management moved in and demanded he divest himself of his snake. Michael Walsh, Province movie critic, rushed to Sigmund's rescue. He explained to management that the spear-carrying, snake-brandishing man in the antlered leather mask was in fact a renowned medical practitioner, whereupon hotel management backed down, permitting Sigmund to remain, providing Dr. Broxon "*kept it upon his person at all times.*" In the interests of peace, anyone who wanted to make a presentation of any kind was now requested to do so.

Mike Bailey later described the costume ball as a fiasco, but on the positive side it was certainly memorable. Ed Beauregard commented:

*"The organization of the costume ball was the principal 'organizational' complaint received and, unfortunately, very justified complaints they were. One can cite the obvious problems we encountered - - inadequate and hastily assembled sound systems; misunderstandings between those in costume and those conducting the affair; but all these do not disguise the fact that we overreached our skills and experience...."*

TO BE CONTINUED:

## IMPRESSIONS OF VCON 33

by Jenni Merrifield



I thoroughly enjoyed VCON this year. I ran my D&D Duels for the second year with a 40% improvement in the number of participants (up to 7 from 5 last year) and there were two people who came back from the previous year. The event itself was a blast, fun was had by all and the best quote of the night was as follows: "Nothing is funnier than a raven familiar grappling a tentacled toad familiar over ownership of a flag."

I thought the dealer's room was awesome this year – there was so much stuff I would have bought if I only had a large enough wad of discretionary funds.

The artist guest of honour was wonderful, especially her presentation for kids "The care and feeding of your BRAIN," and I discovered that, seen in it's native 3D form, many of her sculptures were wondrous and charming, unlike the mostly disturbing or creepy vibe I had got from the 2D form of a photograph. I also gained a great appreciation for the work of her colleague Benton Warren – especially the "magical box" called "Ooops" which showed a flower with a figure over it from one angle and a closed up flower with no figure from another angle. If I'd only had a spare \$600....

This was my 10 year old son Nathan's first VCON and he really had a great time. He really liked the Lego table in the games room and was quite disappointed when it was only available on Friday. He made quite a few friends at KidCon and was really pleased to get so many compliments on his Elf Ranger costume (everyone loved that he had elf ears on). We were also able to get to the Dance Party he had a blast getting his groove on out on the dance floor (he simultaneously entertained many of the other guests who marveled at his youthful abandon and energy). He was very sad when we had to leave after only a short time at the Dead Dog Party, so I'm quite sure he'll be looking forward to next year.

## IMPRESSIONS OF VCON 33

*By Shaddy*

I lost my voice during the con; when I left, I had a headache and was so tired I couldn't see straight. I was completely and utterly exhausted. My thoughts after several hours of sleep?

Best. Dead Dog party. Ever.

Beware of Danielle; she has a sweet smile that can melt your brain and cause you to agree to do things that you would never normally agree to. This is one of the reasons that we had such a kick a\$\$ con. But honestly. Someone needs to make some MiB style Danielle-charm proof glasses.

It's all the Sun God's fault. Though apparently, the Dark Star may have had something to do with it.

Dr. Jamie Matthews is AWESOME and should be at VCON every year. In addition, it would be helpful if the following label was slapped on his forehead before being released into the general VCON population: "Warning: This man may be injurious to your mental health." Because I may need therapy after the thing with the tongue. No, I'm \*not\* telling. Go ask him yourself. I dare you.

Also, Russ and Jeff are evil. EVOL. Seriously.

OMG I love my con. Just sayin'.

# IMPRESSIONS OF VCON 33

*By Chilam*

I actually enjoyed the con very much. It exceeded expectations - and my expectations were high. Well done, good and faithful volunteers! Hospitality was soooo much better in that room - great job, Cindy, Jasmine, Jeff, et al. They had wine! (not just beer).

I saw little of the Ops and Security people, but I take that as a good sign that things ran relatively problem-free.

Thanks to Russ, Jeff, Graham and Grga on the room-share - good roomin' wit' youz guys! (I think I owe Russ a saw-buck).

Hot-tub did wonders for my back - but maybe it was just the people I was hanging with.

Artshow came together after a few glitches thanks to Rose, Lynne and Steve stepping up to the plate. We will build on that success next year.

Dealers' room was a hit although a little tight, but there isn't much we can do about that.

Panelling was good, what I got to but some of the panels could have been in bigger rooms, and others in smaller ones: ie. remember I said to schedule Jaymie's panels in the biggest rooms? (SETI !)

Sounds like very good Registration and financial numbers. I won't comment further until the official numbers are available, but good work by Les and Tatina. Les, I hope you got to see at least SOME of the con.

# IMPRESSIONS OF VCON 33

*By The Magic Rat ( Alyx J. Shaw )*

Left Thursday. I spent the better part of the day trying to decide what to take. Among the things I *did* take were six bottles of the infamous Magic Rat Mead, whoo! Five grape & strawberry, and one of the pumpkin pie.

I got to spend the evening at the hotel by myself - Mr. Rat was going home at night to look after the critters. So a whole night to myself, yay! I watched scary movies and replaced a couple of sequins on my skirt, and drank a half a bottle of mead. Not a wild night but not bad. Was a real treat to have the whole bed to myself.

Friday!! Got registered, got my panellist's kit, had lunch with Mr. Rat, then got ready for my four pm panel - Constructive Criticism. Eeek. Someone should have told me that my other four panellists ran magazines and small publishing houses. Hi, my name is Alyx and I write. How do you like me so far?

It was a good panel. I got to talk about what I like to see in a critique and they got to talk about

how hard it is to word a polite response to something that truly sucks. Lotsa fun. So that was what I did from four to five; then at five pm.... Endings! How to write them, what we like to see in one, and cultural differences in how we end tales. I said I really admired JK Rowling's ability to use an ending to turn her own work into bad fan-fiction. I mean... come on, that takes talent, am I right? I said I like an ending that is conclusive but leaves room for the characters to exist after the tale ends. Then we categorized the three types of endings as conclusive, inconclusive, and meh. Was great fun.



(Nienna & Alyx)

It ended at six pm and I went up to my room, where I found.... drumroll please! My American friend NIENNA from Washington State! I was so thrilled to see her! Was awesome. We chatted while I got changed for the book launch party, then we headed down to what can only be described as the most badly-planned event I have ever attended at a VCON. Seriously. This was supposed to be a gathering of authors, all getting a chance to do a quick reading, mingle with other authors, and discuss their work. Right. When Nienna and I show up, there is a plate of bagels on a table along with a veggie platter that would not be suitable for a dinner party of four, never mind roughly fifty people, and the only thing available to drink is water. Not even anything as wild and crazy as tea. So I hunt down the individual in charge of this soirée, and ask when I get to read.

"Oh just stand up anytime!"

Right. Let's think about this. Fifty people, milling around, chatting, and I'm just supposed to blithely stroll into the middle of the room with no moderator and no one paying attention and just begin reading to the wind with no one paying attention. Rat. Was. Pissed. This was my chance to read in front of authors like Robert Sawyer and Spider Robinson, and what do I get? "Oh just stand up anytime!" The highlight of the party was when the string holding the crystal danglies on my skirt broke, and some people came to help me gather them. The people turned out to be other authors, and Nienna and I ended up sitting with them. We had a pretty good time chatting and trading the rinky-dink little black and white promo things for our respective books like trading cards. But I was pretty pissed about the over-all poor planning. I asked the other authors if they were going to just pop up and read and of course they said no. Nienna and I hung out for about an hour then went up to our room.

This is the point where my memory gets a little blurry...

One of the first things we discovered is the restaurants, of which there are three, keep really bizarre hours. It was almost impossible to get food. We finally wandered up to Hospitalities and I introduced Nienna to some of my friends, such as Chilam, Tammi and Clayton, Greg Cairns, and a few other folks whose names presently escape me. Nienna and I ended up getting hammered with Greg Cairns on mead in our room. I like Greg but he's a lot like a demented puppy on a bungee cord. He ended up crashing in our room for the con. We drank, acted stupid, watched telly and passed out... I mean went to sleep. Yeah. That's what I meant.



(Greg Cairns)

Saturday! And the quest for a place to eat continues. We finally went to the pub in back of the hotel and had a Rickard's White Ale (*very tasty!*), but I ended up giving my beer to Greg and asking him to bring my food to my room because the service in the pub was so slow that there were skeletons in turn-of-the-century clothing tapping their fingers in annoyance at a corner table. I had to scoot to my panel; Believable Evil. Very fun panel. We ended up attempting to define evil and realized that's a very big issue, so we went back to believable evil. I personally believe that in order for an evil character to work that the reader has to be able to identify with him/her to some extent. The more faceless the evil the harder it is to relate to, the harder it is to fear. I cited as my example the murdering psycho in Black

Christmas - the original version as opposed to the modern version, which in my opinion was just not as good. In the original the maniac is utterly insane, and while that makes him difficult to relate to, you can gather in his actions and demented ramblings on the phone that someone has done something so mind-bogglingly horrific to this man at some point in his life that his mind snapped. So... he was once sane like us, but he was corrupted and twisted into something evil. That to me makes him more frightening because I can't help but wonder what made this guy bonkers. It was another good panel, lots of fun, got to do it with some really cool and intelligent people.

After the panel, we hit the Art Show and Dealer's room. Whoo! I found a fantastic birthday gift for Master Erestor, and got a few little trinkets for different friends. I would have loved to get something for everybody but I just didn't have that much money, sad to say. It broke my heart because every time I turned around I saw something wonderful that I knew someone would love. The artist guest of honour was Lisa Snellings, and her art was truly wonderful. She does these little critters called Poppets, which are very cute and a teeny bit creepy. I would have loved to have bought a couple pieces but I just couldn't afford it. I mean one teeny sculpture that I desperately wanted to buy for Rei was one hundred dollars. If I had bought it, happy as it would have made Rei, it would have been the *only* thing I could get. So I had to buy less expensive gifts, but no less delightful in my opinion.



('Magic Rat' by a fan)

She also had a Magic Rat for sixty bucks. It was precious and I loved it but I ended up buying a blue Celtic sarong instead. Very pretty.

At one point I realize that I have lost Nienna, and went on a hunt for her. I couldn't find her for the longest time, until I walked by a clothing vendor and thought the hot babe in the full length black gown with the green silk brocade corset and the funky black party mask looked familiar. It was our own Miss Nienna dressed to the nines in the most gorgeous dress! I'm thrilled to say she bought it and pictures of it will soon be available in her LJ.



(Alyx giving reading)

We were both most satisfied with our purchases, and after some general mucking about and spending of money, eight pm rolls around. Time for my reading! Yayayayayay!! And boy gosh golly wasn't I just thrilled to bits and tickled pink to find out that WHOOHOO! It was going to be held at the same time as the masquerade! And right next door, too! Wow gosh golly I sure did enjoy trying to compete with canned rock music. That just made my whole night, it surely did.

For those of you unfamiliar with the concept - that was sarcasm.

On the up side, my friend Craig showed, along with his girlfriend Patty, and we ended up in my room later along with Nienna and Greg. We ordered pizza, played music, drank, chatted and had fun. Greg played his guitar and he and I debated the proper way to sing various lines from Jesus Christ Superstar. After Craig and Patty left, Greg, Nienna and I went upstairs to Hospitalities where we ran into Chilam. I'm not entirely certain how, but we ended up founding a religion based on Chilam's ass. Granted it's a very nice ass but I'm not sure it is worthy of cult status. So we hailed the great and all-mighty Ass of Chilam, toasting it muchly and often, hailing it with puns, and at one point one of my fellow con-denizens attempted in engage the Great Ass of Chilam in conversation. Alas, the ass remained aloof.

Eventually we made our way to bed, where Nienna went to sleep and I ended up gabbing at Greg until all hours. Then... Sunday! And with Sunday comes.... TURKEY READINGS!!



(Alyx enjoying Turkey Readings)

on stage. However I did get to pelt her with cries of “Turkey virgin!”

For those of you unfamiliar with Turkey Readings, that is where a panel of people select the WORST sci-fi books ever published and read the most awful passages they can find while audience members act out what’s happening. You have to pay money to make them stop. However you can also bid more money to make them keep reading. I would like to mention at this point that Nienna bid twice to keep me on stage and locked into a skit wherein I was apparently trying to hang myself with a knife or a neck tie made of iron or something. I would have loved to return that favour but she’s smarter than I am. She didn’t get up

One skit involved a herd of pictish warriors, their flamingly gay feather-clad leader, a hapless victim tied to a stake, and a mad beast which was played by a little girl in a pink dress who was having far too much fun. Her menacings consisted of poking at the poor guy repeatedly, finally biting him on the ankle, after being encouraged to do so by the reader, and at last dragging his dead bleeding body to her lair.

I nearly peed myself.

After an hour and a half of this silliness, Nienna treated me to dinner. This after spoiling me rotten all weekend. She bought me a New York cut steak with King Crab and a pint of Rickard’s White. Was fantastic!! Oh just *sooooooooooooo* good, I would eat crab seven nights a week if I could. Lovely. After steak and crab came closing ceremonies and, of course, the ever-popular Elron awards. The Elrons are a collection of awards that one doesn’t really want to win, rather like a Darwin but with a sci-fi theme. Mr. Rat is the current Lord of the Elrons. Winners this year included the Iranian Space Programme, (*and I bet you didn’t know the Iranians even **had** a space programme*) and some guys in the states who are attempting to build an elevator to the moon.



(M. Walsh & P. Rothfuss at Closing)



Just goes to show you that not all nuts come from trees.

So that’s pretty much it. Nienna and I hit the traditional Dead Dog party that happens after the con but we were both pretty fried, and it was extremely loud so we wrapped it up early. It was a great con and a great visit, and I can’t wait to do it all over again next year. Which I will.

(Dead Dog security arrives)

Me: “Greg what do you owe me for letting you crash in my room?”

Greg: “Thirty bucks.”



Me: “How much is a pre-reg membership for next year?”

Greg: “Thirty bucks.”

Me: Blink cutely.

Greg: “Oh I get it.”

See you next year, folks!

## VCON 33: PART ONE

THE 33<sup>rd</sup> VANCOUVER SF CONVENTION – OCTOBER 3-5, 2008

*by The Graeme*

Author Guest of Honour: Kelly Armstrong  
Author Guest of Honour: Patrick Rothfuss.  
Artist Guest of Honour: Lisa Snellings.  
Gaming Guest of Honour: James Ernest  
Science Guest of Honour: Dr. Jaymie Matthews

### Thursday October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008

Alyx and I arrive at the Compass Point Inn circa 5:30 PM on the Thursday. We want to settle in so that we can enter the actual convention relaxed and comfortable. Besides, I figure something may need to be done and I can help out.

Sure enough, the art display is only beginning to be set up. Rose Wilson is in charge, with her husband Dave, Lynn & Steve Fahnstalk, Keith Lim and Chilam already hard at work trying to make sense of the task at hand, namely filling half the room with art boards while leaving the other half free for programming. Someone had already set up a few of the boards, but on the wrong side of the room. They will have to be moved.

Ahh, the legendary VCON art boards. Basically slabs of pegboard 8 feet long and 4 feet high, designed to rest on A frames at either end, with the option of being single-sided or double sided, depending on the placement of the boards. Been around for years, originally designed and made by VCONers, on occasion repainted, beginning to crumble at the edges. But still serviceable. Been stored in Steve Forty's basement for years. A patient lad is \$40. Someday we'll find another storage location. Someday...

Heavy suckers though, and screwing them to the A frames no easy task. Personally, I thought putting the board on the floor and laying the A frame alongside made for the easiest screwing (always been in favour of the laziest,



(Steve Forty)



easiest method of screwing) but the others prefer the more acrobatic challenge of standing the A frames up and holding the boards against them till they were screwed in place. A lot of cussing and grunting and groaning and the whirring of mechanical devices, but eventually twenty or more of the things are solid, heavy and secure on their own four feet. Great. Now we have to move them to their correct positions.

Final placement is orchestrated by Rose, who keeps a mental map in her head as she considers the differing requirements of various artists, and in particular the need to showcase the Artist GoH who will require at least four panels and several tables. At this point we find out the hotel is running out of tables. Rose confers with the hotel staff and they come up with several small, very heavy metal and glass contraptions that can be shoved together and covered with cloth to convey the illusion of a large table. The layout selection (in terms of what the artists want) is even more complicated than it sounds, but events will prove that Rose nailed it magnificently. The final result rings the space with single sided boards, with double sided boards and tables down the centre, every board and table assigned appropriately to the artists, while leaving plenty of room for the milling crowds and the security station where people will check their bags. Rose is content.

“So which tables will the Monster Attack Team Canada get?” I inquire innocently.

Hmm. Turns out no one told Rose that the MATC display was to be based ‘in’ the art room. There’s no room for them. The art room has just enough space and tables for the artists.

“Well, I suppose their tables could be put outside the door...” I suggest, my voice trailing off as I realize this will partially block access to the service rooms across the hall, something the hotel will be unlikely to agree to. An exasperated silence ensues as all contemplate the possibilities or lack thereof.

Amazingly enough, I come up with a solution. As set up, fans enter the room and find the entrance to the art display in front of them, a path leading to their left toward an unused bar, then a right turn into the programming section. I figure, we have two very narrow but long tables left over. Why not place one against the wall between the door and the bar, and the other at right angle in front of the bar, steal some chairs from the programming area, plop them down behind the tables, and call that the MATC zone? A tight fit, and the MATCers might hit their heads against the edge of the bar behind them, but at least it will be in a high traffic area....with quite good lighting in fact...SOLD! As far as Rose is concerned. Quick solution. Now there only remains to convince the members of MATC it will be suitable. I will find out tomorrow I guess.

This has taken up an amazing amount of time. I leave Alyx happily ensconced in her room with TV and Mead and wend my way home to feed and service our assorted pets, to wit: 2 Tarantulas, 2 Cats, 2 Crows, 3 Guinea Pigs and a Duck. One very disconsolate duckie, most upset his mistress is no longer present. He likes to race figure-of-eight style around and through her legs. No one knows why. My legs he just wants to peck. Apparently my legs are a huge turnoff for a duck. Just as well methinks. He objects mightily to being escorted into his cage for the night. I am subjected to irritated half-quacks for several hours. I like to think our household is fairly unique.

Technically one is not allowed to keep crows, they being wild things, but they refuse to leave, as witnessed by bylaw officers, so we have permission to care for them. Both were kicked out of the nest and set upon by other crows, no doubt due to congenital defects. Both are damaged. But they seem content to sit atop the bookcase and hurl insults at the cats. Sometimes they fly around the living room, which can be a bit distracting when you’re trying to watch TV and something black and cackling flashes past inches in front of your face. I think I’m beginning to understand that poem of Poe’s....

**Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008**

I enter the hotel lobby circa 1:30 PM. Note the presence of Conchair Danielle Stephens. She seems quite cheerful, a good sign.

“How’s it going?” I ask.

“OK so far,” she replies.

I also note someone has propped up a scrolling L.E.D. sign in the lobby informing people the con is to be found downstairs. Don’t know who came up with it, but a darn good idea. Catches the eye. We should have it every year.

One odd note: one of the main function rooms is not available to us, it having been pre-booked by an outfit selling leather jackets and such. Hence throughout the con we are treated to the spectacle of puzzled mundanes working their way through fans to find the ‘leather’ room. So far as I know none stop to inquire about ‘our’ activity, and few if any fans purchase ‘their’ leathers. Next year we will have all the facilities to ourselves. This is a good thing.

Next I spend a merry half hour in the registration lineup. There’s a lot of people, which bodes well for attendance, but the pace of registration is a wee bit frustrating. There’s only one computer and only one badge printer, and poor Les Shewchuck soldiers on handling both pre-reg and new-reg, albeit with Tatina Lee dispensing the registration packages. But Linda Demeulemeester and Donna Farley are in the lineup ahead of me and I get to hear all about their latest writing achievements. And various fen of my acquaintance pass by and exchange greetings. Scott Patri for instance, whom I promptly grab and request art for my newly revived SPACE CADET. He says “of course” and I rest content. In short, not a boring experience being in the lineup, but time consuming. Ideally though, there should be two registrars present, one to handle pre-reg, the other to handle the new-reg. Perhaps next year.

Provisionally Alyx joins me just as I step up to registration. Turns out the computer doesn’t know we’re registered. No matter. I ask if our VCON T-shirts are available. Turns out they haven’t arrived yet. No matter. Les is able to vouch for us to himself and so we get our badges and packages and unleash ourselves on the con.



(Don DeBrandt in action on left)

Naturally the first thing we do is go to the hotel’s breakfast/lunch restaurant and order a meal. Andrew Brechin, in charge of kidcon, waves hello from one table, Don DeBrandt from another before quickly plunging back into animated conversation with a fellow writer, no doubt plotting something, perhaps literally plotting something. You never know with Don. Everything is grist for his mill. His creativity spins off his experience and produces wonders. Kind of a human dynamo, never rests, never sleeps, always thinking. Well, that’s my impression anyway. His enthusiasm is infectious, the kind of thinker who gets people listening to him excited very quickly. He’s in love with ideas, exults in the art of concept creating, and it shows in his writings. I like Don. A lot of people like Don. We’re proud he’s one of the regular fixtures at VCON; one of the hidden attractions for them in the know. He’s more than just another author... he’s DON!! (To figure out what the heck I’m talking about take the trouble at the next VCON to get to know him. You’ll be glad you did.)

While waiting for our food, I peruse the program book. Absolutely love the cover, one of Lisa Snellings sculptural creations, this one depicting a couple of brains – one with human hands, the other with four metal legs ending in human feet – apparently doing the bidding of one of her Poppet creations, or perhaps ‘building’ said Poppet; it is a lab setting after all! Quite striking, and strangely beautiful.

One thing which irks me, both the program book and the pocket program list events in 24 hour ‘military’ style time. This is intended for absolute clarity of course, but even though I come from a military family I still can’t wrap my brain around this logical system. Only the AM/PM system means anything to me. Before the day is over I ink out the 24 times and replace with ‘normal’ time. Am also a bit disappointed my brief blurb about WCSFAzine didn’t make it in. Alas, my budget so tight this year I couldn’t afford to print handout sheets explaining WCSFAzine to the VCON attendees, the very people WCSFAzine is targeted at. Oh well.



(Program book cover by Lisa Snellings)

Most worrisome to me, a near full page ad promoting VCON’s “first ever multi-author Book Launch” lists all 24 authors and their books and asks congoers “to hangout with some of your favourite authors and meet some new up and coming stars”, but makes no mention of any readings. The idea that each author would in turn read briefly from their work had been emphasized in the initial descriptions of the event presented to Alyx concerning her participation. As a result Alyx is looking forward to her reading in front of other, more established, authors as the highlight of her convention, something she is very, VERY excited about. But here, no mention of readings. Hmmm.



(Pauline & ConChair Danielle Stephens) SHOULD be done. Great job, Pauline!

On the plus side, Pauline Walsh has done a splendid job with layout, everything is easy to grasp because there’s no confusing visual clutter at all. Each section is clearly differentiated, the program is described in detail, the blurbs on individual attendees of note and/or notoriety are informative and often entertaining, and best of all, the individual pages devoted to the five Guests of Honour include a list of the particular program items they will be participating in, so you can literally and easily plan your convention around their activities should you wish to do so. Excellent idea. To sum up, this is the way a program book

And speaking of great jobs, kudos to Barbara Scutt for putting together a program that really showcases the Guests of Honour as well as taking advantage of the local talent (authors, media people longtime fans, scientists, filkers, etc.). Once again VCON is living up to its mandate as a multi-interest sci-fi/fantasy convention, but this time especially with a particular emphasis on exciting ideas and discussion. As an example, the panel in which Astronomics Physicist Dr. Jaymie Matthews, Neo-opsis Magazine editor Karl Johanson, best selling authors Robert J. Sawyer and Spider Robinson, plus Mr. Science (Alan R. Betz) discuss ‘THE SETI CONUNDRUM: WHERE ARE THE ALIENS?’, is an absolute must-see panel. If I attend ANY panel, this has GOT to be the one!

“Oh, look at the silly monkey”, says Alyx, apparently pointing at two police Constables eating at a nearby table. They seem startled and slightly affronted. She is in fact pointing at a reproduction of an old time ad hanging on the wall above them, a poster featuring a monkey flying a biplane through stands of cactus, or something like that – I glance at it briefly, not wishing to appear as if I was staring at the Constables, who continue to stare back. I briefly consider pointing at the ad, but they would probably think I am giving them the finger. I drop my head and continue reading the program book. Then the food arrives. Saved! Not our food, the Constable’s food. They have no time for distractions now.

As we leave the dining room and enter the hotel lobby we run into Clint Budd and Donna McMahon (brief digression, normally I’d write Clint & Donna, but I’m giving full names in this report – at least at first mention – for the record, for the benefit of



those readers who are unfamiliar with these fans, but mainly to make life easier for fan historians fifty years from now who’d otherwise tear their hair out trying to decode the identities of those involved) and hold a brief discussion. Clint asks if I’d like to be a member of the Aurora Awards Committee, he being the Chair and all. He’s particularly interested in any fan category nominations I can come up with. Being the altruistic saint that I am, it immediately occurs to me this means I probably won’t be eligible for same. I won a 2001 Aurora for ‘Fan Achievement’, but I still hanker after winning one for WCSFazine, or SPACE CADET, or my ongoing Canadian Fencyclopedia web site...possible conflict of interest, what? Still, there’s a lack of awareness among fans and fan organizations that what they do entitles them to be nominated. I’ve been involved with fandom for forty years, I should do something to help out...I give a tentative yes, pending further discussion.

(Clint Budd on left promoting Auroras)

And as I turn to leave the hotel Scott Patri comes forward and gives me several pages of fillo artwork as promised. As they are very fannish in nature I will probably use them exclusively in SPACE CADET. (A Faned has to ration art carefully, art being rather difficult to come by...) After he leaves, I wonder, had he spent the several hours since I requested art creating these drawings? That would be amazing. On closer perusal I see they are photocopy compilations. In other words, like many a fan artist at many a con, Scott came to VCON with a portfolio of art ready to hand out should he run into any faneds. Very much a traditional aspect of the fannish scene, and one of the reasons why conventions are so very important to fandom, to keeping fandom alive. All the personal contacts, you see.

I leave the convention, catching the Skytrain to the main street train station in order to greet Alyx’s friend Nienna coming up from the States and escort her to the hotel where she’ll share Alyx’s room. Alas, this means I’ll miss two panels Alyx is on, one to do with ‘CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM’ and how to cope with it, or give it for that matter, the other on ‘HOW STORIES END’. Additional panels I am interested in but will miss are ‘TABLE TOP GAMING VS BOARD GAMES’, IS ‘THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD THE DEATH OF GOD?’ with Jaymie Matthews, a panel on Lunar Colonies and another on ‘JAPAN’S SPACE PROGRAM’. But Nienna is arriving at the beginning of rush hour, and I have visions of her getting on the wrong skytrain or getting off at the wrong station, so I figure going to meet her is very necessary.

Now the mundane world is often unsettlingly illogical. Nienna is coming up by Amtrack, which maintains a train service between Seattle and Vancouver. However, Amtrack is sending her by bus. I



have a hard time coping with this bizarre reality. Fortunately the train station is also the principle bus station, and I soothe my confusion by sitting on a bench reading Seneca's 'Letters From A Stoic', which is always good for a laugh. I'm directly opposite the bay her bus is supposed to arrive at, but the stated arrival time drifts by and the bay remains empty. I head back into the 'Baths of Caracalla'-style train station and join a long lineup to seek information. Soon a pack of teenagers burdened by enormous duffle bags straggles by, one of them repeatedly and somewhat plaintively asking. "Is this really Canada? Is this really another country? It doesn't look weird enough. Aren't we still in the States? Is this really Canada?" etc. I clue in. The bus has arrived!

I run back out to the loading bays. Sure enough, there's a bus. An empty bus. Plenty of people standing about, but no Nienna. I run back into the train station. Tons of people. But which one is Nienna? Cleverly I discount the males, the elderly, and the children, and begin examining the adult females (potential risk that) and after a while conclude that the woman in the distance waving frantically at me and calling me by name is probably she whom I seek. My deduction proves correct.

As we ride the skytrain standing up, jammed into a corner (it is VERY crowded) I bore Nienna in a very entertaining manner (or is it entertain her in a very boring manner?) with tales of previous VCONs, the time Isaac Asimov turned us down, the time Fredrick Pohl decided I was a lunatic, and so forth. People begin to give me strange looks. Don't know why.

We find Alyx back in her room resting up in preparation for the Author's readings. We're all famished, so after studying the room service menu I phone Jake's restaurant to order. Someone answers, listens to my initial request, then states very firmly "This is Jake's restaurant. You should phone the hotel." Click. It dawns on me that since the Book Launch is being held in Jake's restaurant, perhaps their kitchen is closed. Alyx and Nienna decide to order in pizza instead. But I'm dying for some coffee, so I decide to check out the hospitality room on the top floor.

And of course I arrive just as they run out of coffee and need to make more. I relax for a few minutes and plop myself down besides Mr. Science who informs me that Ed Beauregard (one of the founders of the BCSFA) is looking for me. 'What have I done now?' Turns out he has DVDs copied from Al Betz' video collection of early VCON programming to give to me for the WCSFA/BCSFA archives. Wow! Suddenly I am very excited.

As I leave to go back to the room, I pass by Scott Patri who is wearing his elaborate, embroidered, propeller-beanie. On an impulse I ask him, "where did you get that? I've always wanted one."

"I didn't buy it. I MADE it." Great Ghu! How faanish is that? Wowzers.

Back in the hotel room I gobble down some lukewarm pizza, then join Alyx and Nienna as they wend their way to the Book Launch Readings Alyx is wearing a dress she made especially for this event, featuring a white sequin Phoenix on black (the design on the material was made by a fan of hers, the sequins she added herself) and clutching one of the gorgeous Doppleganger Press editions of her first novel. She is so excited she is practically walking on air.



(Scott Patri in propeller beanie)

Sad to say, no readings are taking place. Alyx is bitterly disappointed. The highlight of her convention turns out to be authors sitting at tables greeting fans or tablehopping to meet other authors,

but none of them are giving readings. How can they? People are milling about talking up a storm. As a social event it's fine. As an opportunity to meet authors, it's great. But there's no way in hell to give a reading. There's no focus to the room, no podium, no microphone, no moderator. In theory each of the 24 or so authors has been allocated 5 minutes to read a brief excerpt from their latest book, but a reading doesn't work unless everyone shuts up and listens, and how do you impose your reading on a room full of people excitedly engaged in conversations with the authors they've been dying to meet? Not unexpectedly, none of the authors present choose to disrupt the scene by attempting a reading. So Alyx certainly isn't going to try all by herself. She's very upset.

Also not unexpectedly, considering the situation, Alyx asks me to get her a drink from the restaurant bar. Turns out it is closed. 'Great', says Alyx. Seems to me both the hotel and the convention are missing a bet here, but I guess the liquor laws won't allow a restaurant to continue serving drinks if the food service is closed down.

Ah well, in the great fannish tradition of coping with the inevitable convention snafus, Alyx shrugs and starts mingling herself. She's determined not to let this one letdown spoil her convention. But I feel for her, I know how eagerly she'd anticipated this event. Oh well. I start mingling too.

Walter from White Dwarf books is there, manning a table piled with the majority of Book Launch editions (Not Alyx's though, which is available by mail order or online only) and seems to be doing a brisk business. I note several fans buying stacks of books. But alas, I'm on a tight budget, so dare not examine the books available. Why is it I am always broke by the time VCON rolls around? Has it something to do with the fact that I am normally broke on any given day in the year? Could be.

Someone tells me the concom T-shirts are available in the KidCon room. Good. I'll look into that tomorrow.

And finally, there's Beaugard! He hands me a stack of DVDs covering some of the convention events from VCON 6 to VCON 15. Fantastic! And more to come!

"How about VCON 17?" I ask. "I've always wanted to see the tape of me interviewing Robert Sheckley. He said it was the most comprehensive review of his life ever interrogated out of him, sheer torture. I've always been keen to find out what I actually asked, since I didn't keep my notes."

"Ah, sorry. Have got more on VCON 15, and some from VCON 16. Nothing on VCON 17. No one knows where the tapes are. Probably gone forever."

Ah dang it. Robert Sheckley is no longer with us. To have a video interview in which he details his life as a sci-fi writer would be wonderful. Sigh.

Talk some more with Clint, who is pushing hard for me to become involved with the Auroras. He will try to figure out if my being on the board will render me ineligible for nomination. Perhaps I could function merely as an advisor, a contributor of names of potential nominees. Sounds all right. I'll think about it. Clint adds that Robert J. Sawyer is hosting some sort of website wicki where anyone can add potential nominees. I should talk to him.

After hanging out with Alyx at one of the tables for a while, I kiss her goodnight, announce I'm going to give the hospitality suite one last visit, then head on home to tend the critters.



Lo and behold, as I head toward the restaurant exit I spot Rob Sawyer deep in conversation with several fans. Rudely I interrupt (though I apologize as I do so) to ask him about the Aurora's wicki.

"Go to [canadiansf.com](http://canadiansf.com) and add a fan category," he replies. "Easy enough to do." I thank him profusely.



(Ed Hutchings, Al Betz & Sidney Trim)

Up in hospitality I relax with a beer and converse with various fans. I talk to Garry Owens who has a lot to say about the way fandom has changed and the current lack of emphasis on various aspects he has always been interested in. Being a twentieth century kinda guy I know exactly what he means and comment, "If you live long enough everything you love becomes irrelevant." For some reason this fails to cheer him up.

Clint wanders by. "So where's the Book of VCON? People have been asking."

"Back in the archive. I didn't think to bring it since it's only the first day of the convention and not everyone has arrived yet."

"Like I say, people have been asking."

"Okay, I'll bring it tomorrow."

For those who have never heard of the book of VCON, it's a hardbound scrapbook filled with comments and drawings by VCON attendees and Guests of Honour from as far back as VCON 6. There are comments by such as A.E. van Vogt, Samuel R. Delany, Robert Bloch, William Gibson, etc. It's a tradition unique to VCON. Must remember to bring it.

And so to home and bed.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## PREREG FOR VCON 34!

**VCON 34** -- ( Oct 2-4, 2009 ) at the Compass Point Inn, Surrey, next to the King George Skytrain Station.

**AUTHOR GUEST OF HONOUR:** Tanya Huff ( Wizard Crystal, Blood Books, Smoke Books, other series. )

**ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR:** Miles Teves ( a concept/character artist/illustrator/sculptor for films as diverse as *Ironman*, *Chronicles of Riddick*, *Van Helsing*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *King Kong*, *Galaxy Quest* & numerous others – a fantastic Artist Goh! )

**CONVENTION RATE:** Not sure what the current rate is or where to send it. Certainly the current rate is much lower than the actual 'at-convention' rate. Will have full details next issue.

# MY ADVENTURE IN SEARCH OF DITTO 8

## PART TWO

THIS BEING A TYPICAL CON REPORT:

### OR HOW I FOUND DITTO 8 THE SECOND DAY I LOOKED FOR IT

by R. Graeme Cameron

Last issue I wrote about arriving at the Mayflower Park Hotel in Seattle on November 3rd 1995 and not being able to discover Ditto 8, the fanzine fandom convention. Pretty darn frustrating.....

#### MORNING, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1995:

Awoke. First train of thought in head: This is the convention hotel. Somewhere in this hotel is the convention. How do I find it? Ask at the desk? Nah, too obvious. It's Saturday. What happens at conventions on Saturday mornings? Nothing. Everyone is lying in a drunken stupor.... except for the few smug early risers. Where are they liable to be? Breakfast? Nah, not if there's free food to be scarfed in the...HOSPITALITY SUITE! Aha!

I went down to the lobby by elevator, then marched up the stairwell to the second floor to begin my exploration of the hotel. ( Why not simply take the elevator to the second floor to begin with? It's more fun to come down the elevator, tromp through the lobby and disappear up the stairwell.... That way the hotel desk clerk gets to think: "Hmmm, something going on here, but what?" )

No matter! I found the hospitality suite! There was a convention after all! As I entered the room I asked: "Is this indeed the hospitality suite for Ditto 8?" ( To state the obvious is to state the obvious ). Before anyone could reply, I zoomed over to the salmon and bagels and began stuffing my face -- thus reassuring one and all I was in fact a fan and not a mundane slumming.

Observing the amount of food I was shoving toward my gullet, Doug Faunt quickly introduced himself and suggested we have breakfast together in the hotel restaurant ( I think with an eye to preserving Hospitality's budget ). Grateful to finally have someone to talk to, I eagerly went along. In the course of our subsequent conversation I quickly discovered that -- like many a travelling fan -- Doug had in his luggage two tins of canned Haggis (!) which he was bringing back from England. Talk about coincidence! ( Go ahead. You have my permission. ) I'd been corresponding with Harry Andruschak about this very subject! Seems Haggis is illegal in California, and Harry wanted to know if canned Haggis existed, and was it available in Canada? Well, here was Doug telling me anyone could mail-order it from Harrods (sp?) of London. Naturally, once I got home I emailed Harry with this urgent information. Here is part of his reply:

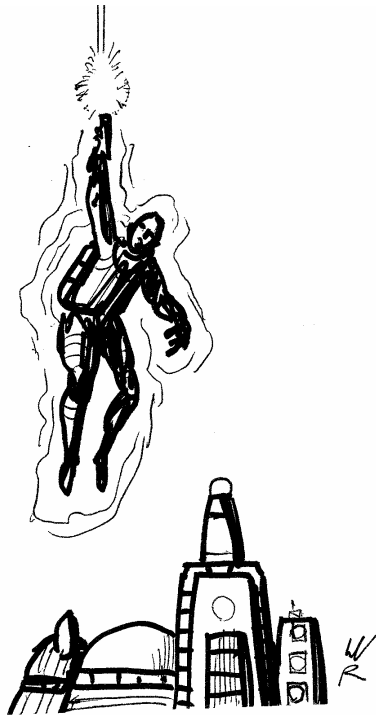
*"Thank you for your messages. Both THE HIGHLANDER and THE SCOTTISH BANNER magazines carried announcements that the Federal Government had banned the import of canned haggis from Scotland. The problem seems to be the use of sheeps' lungs as part of the product. As for California, the law says sheeps' lungs cannot be sold for use by humans. (Yet notice how many Americans, including fans, have no qualms about eating Spam, Big Macs, and Hot Dogs. Go figure.) As such, at least here in southern California, most of the Scottish gatherings I go to serve a sort-of-*

*haggis without the sheeps' lungs, and maybe also without the liver, heart, and kidneys. Just ground shoulder or ground leg of lamb with the usual oatmeal and seasonings....."*

The above may seem like a digression. I suppose because it is. But a vital one.

We also talked about zine fandom. Doug denied that there was anything cliquish or elitist about the old guard, commenting that they were just a small group of people who had been around for many years and gotten to know each other very well. Ah, sounds very friendly. Precisely the kind of 'organization' I'm looking for. All it takes is time... and some ability to say hello.

Doug informed me that the **FANZINE ROOM** was open and worth checking out. I hot-footed to said room in the mezzanine and paused in the doorway, mouth agape and eyes bulging. "Look at all the freebies!" There were thousands of them. Hot damn! But when the first one I perused turned out to be issue #1 of LOCUS my mind finally clicked into gear. Display zines. These were display zines. Touch. Read. Do not take. Oh well. I gazed upon the assembled multitude, a mighty library in itself, and sighed. How could the fanzine room I was planning for V-Con 21 possibly compare? ( To find out, read the article following this one. ) Still, there were a number of excellent freebies, "THE INCOMPLEAT TERRY CARR" for instance, and I quickly, not to say voraciously, gathered them up, and left a few SPACE CADET 4s strewn about in return. SC's cover was attractive and appropriate I thought, as it was by Ditto 8's GoH Taral Wayne, so I had high hopes people would pick it up if only for that reason.



Next I checked out the **HOSPITALITY SUITE** again. This, of course, was the traditional post-con name dropping prep-event arranged for my benefit. Except that I'm very shy in the presence of people I've never met, and a room full of such was quite daunting. Still, armed with handfuls of SPACE CADETS, I made Herculean efforts ( from my perspective ) to introduce myself. I pressed my zine on the likes of Roger Wells ( whom I'd seen at V-Cons ), Andy Hooper, Marci Malinowycz, George Flynn, Alan Rosenthal, Don Fitch, Art Widner ( whom I'd met at Westercon 44 ), etc, only to discover this had been done by everyone on Friday night, and no one had any copies of their latest zine left to hand out. Still, I found my zine to be a good icebreaker.

I was particularly impressed with veteran fan Art Widner's zine receiving technique. He simply turned away to expose several large empty pockets on the back of his vest, into one of which I plunged my zine. A clever, practical fannish invention. No need to put down food or drink, the zine-devouring vest does your collecting for you.

Let's see, I know I talked for some time with Joyce Scrivner about Vancouver fandom in the old days, and I discussed the upcoming first issue of FHAPA with it's OEs Lindsay Crawford and Faye Manning. Then people started to break for lunch and I ran off to keep a 32-year-old date....

When I was twelve years old, I spent a lazy summer-of-63 afternoon rocking slowly in a couch hung from the rafters of a shady veranda facing the calm, silvery waters of Lake Simcoe near Barrie, Ontario ( my birthplace ), sipping lemonade, and browsing through a pile of recent National Geographics. One of them was the September 1962 issue. Articles included: "I Fly the X-15, Half

Plane, Half Missile" ( Neato! ), "Strange Little World of the Hoatzin" ( Weirdo! ), "Early America as Seen by Her Native Artists" ( Dullsville! ), and "Seattle Fair Looks to the 21st Century" ( Cool! ) I didn't know this was one of the smaller World Fairs, it looked pretty futuristic to me. After all, the next century was way far off. I knew, for instance, that by... say... the year 1996, I'd be spending my summer vacations, not in a cabin by Simcoe's shore, but in a cozy little dome on Mars..... Sigh.....

Anyway, the Monorail built for the fair looked supremely nifty to me. *"Silently riding a concrete beam on rubber tires, the electric train makes a bid toward solving city traffic problems..."* Ahh, that Geographic info-packed prose style! Then and there, swinging on the couch, sipping my lemonade, I vowed to someday ride the Seattle Monorail! ( Whenever I drink Lemonade I think of the Seattle Monorail... always a positively Proustian experience...)

Conveniently enough, the downtown terminus was in the Westlake center attached to the Hotel. Eagerly I boarded and found myself a good seat. Hmm, wider than the Vancouver Skytrain, with more window space. Good so far. Then we started off.... and arrived. Dang! Forgot about the line in the '62 article which read: *"Monorail zips 1.2 miles in 96 seconds..."* Although time seems to have slowed the thing, as the driver stated our trip lasted two whole minutes. Still, I felt curiously pleased with myself as I got off. A childhood dream fulfilled.

Wandered around the Seattle Center ( former fair grounds ) for a bit. Leaned over the railing at the Science Centre, conversing with a suspicious crowd and staring at the life-size bronze (?) sculptures of a Triceratops and a Stegosaurus.

Then I headed for the Space Needle, which looks like a flying saucer on stilts, though Nat Geo preferred *"the 606-foot Space Needle rose like a gigantic sheaf of wheat"...* an image aided at the time by the fact that the two story saucer bit, now white, was originally painted a rusty-red... I don't think the flaming beacon of natural gas on top contributed to the bundle of wheat image, myself..... Flame seems to have gone out of late....

The Space Needle certainly looks top-heavy, but its centre of gravity is actually quite low to the ground, what with being anchored by a 5,850 ton block of concrete. The 43 second ride on the elevator isn't all that much shorter than the Monorail trip. But the view! From the observation level at 525 feet I stared down at the toy-like freighters in Elliot Bay, past downtown Seattle to Mount Rainier, studied Lake Washington, etc. etc. I noted that the older section of Seattle round Pioneer Square seemed rather dark and grungy, foreboding. This is where the train station is located. I had been warned not to take the train, that the bus depot was in a much better ( read 'safer' ) area of town. Years of watching American network news has made me susceptible to such advice. But to be fair, there are sections of Vancouver I routinely avoid...

The last place I expected to experience violence was the Space Needle itself. But on riding the elevator down, just as the door opened and before I began to move, a powerful blow to my back pushed me forward and down, dropping me to my knees on the pavement. I looked up to see an impassive elderly Japanese man in a business suit stalk past with arms folded. I was so angry I nearly shouted "This isn't the goddamn Tokyo Subway!" and "Who won the war anyway?!", but there didn't seem to be any point. Nothing personal. He'd just cleared the way is all. Talk about cultural shock!

Riding out of the ex-fair on the monorail, I noted that what had been the 'Home Interiors, Fashion, and Commerce Pavilion' was now the antennae festooned headquarters of KOMO TV ( I think it was Komo...memory fades...), which struck me as an intelligent utilization of a 'temporary' structure.

Back in the Hotel by 2:00 pm. Let the programming begin!

**WALL AND WINDOW: FANDOM AND THE "REAL WORLD"** with Jerry Kaufman, David Levine & Debbie Notkin.

A panel on relating to fandom, on fans relating to the real world. One woman ( I forget who ) commented, "I'm not ugly, but I don't turn heads either. Yet when I walked into a room at my first con twelve guys shouted 'It's a girl!', and I walked right out." This led to a general discussion on the number of females in early fandom, with a consensus being reached that the rise of Trekkdom brought in the first flood of women.... David Levine commented that one of the questions you should never have to ask at a convention is, "Where are my pants?"..... I brought up how irritating it always is to mention to a mundane that one is a science fiction fan and hear them say, "Oh, so you believe in UFO's too? Great!".... Debbie Notkin quoted Greg Bear as saying "Before you can publish you need to write a million words. Zine fandom is an excellent place to do that.".... And somehow, the subject of a certain Westcoast delicacy came up, namely the Gweduc, pronounced "Gooyeduck." As David Levine put it: "What we're basically talking about here is giant ambulatory penises in shells." ( The April, 1960 Nat Geo has a photo of a 'Dungeness Bay Digger' holding a Gweduc nearly as long as his arm! Even Madonna would be impressed! )...Which lead to my infamous 'Gooyeduck' story:



One day, back when I was a Store Manager for Williams & Mackie Stationery, it was near closing time and I was getting ready to call it quits. Suddenly I hear a strange rustling. Odd. Can't see anyone. I follow the sound to its source. Down one of the aisles is an unkempt man resting on his knees. Beside him, an open plastic container of 'Gooyeducks'. In front of him, a row of boxes of elastic bands, one for each size we sell. Carefully, meticulously, he was opening each box in turn, taking out a sample elastic band, and slipping it around a dead 'Gooyeduck'. Then, with a heartfelt sigh, discarding the band. It was sometime before I could bring myself to ask, "Can I help you?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so. I don't seem to be having any luck. I'm looking for a one-size-fits-all-Gweduc rubber band."

I pondered this for a bit. "But rubber bands come in different sizes. And so do 'Gooyeducks'."

"I need a rubber band that'll fit any Gweduc."

Carefully, cautiously, I inquired, "Why?"

"Well, I own a Gweduc farm," he explained, "and I need to ship 10,000 Gweducs by air. Need something to keep their shells closed."

"How about shipping wires? Twist them tight, fits all 'Gooyeducks'."

"No!" he said, beginning to get angry. "I don't want to hurt their precious shells!"

"Ah, I see," I said soothingly, thinking quickly. "I'm afraid we can't help you. Our stock is so limited, you see. But our competition, Grand & Toy, is just two blocks East on Manitoba street. They have an enormous stock of rubber bands. I bet they carry a one-size-fits-all-'Goodyduck' rubber band."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," he said, a delighted expression on his face. He gathered up his Gweducs and went running out the door. I ran to the door and locked it. Then I discarded all the rubber bands smelling of dead Gweducs. Hope the Grand & Toy people were able to help the guy....And by the way, I now work for Grand & Toy.....

What does a Gweduc farm look like, anyway? Acres and acres of mud flats?.... Anywho, this story got a lot of laughs, and I began to relax, began to feel a part of the convention, as opposed to a mere observer....

**THE PRESERVATION OF FANDOM'S HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY** with Dick & Leah Smith, and Faye Manning.

This was essentially a Timebinders/FHAPA panel. Timebinders being a group of Fhistorians ( myself included ) devoted to preserving fanzines, and FHAPA the group's Fanhistory APA. ( I have since become the archivist for BCSFA/WCSFA, inheriting over 5,000 zines, so it's an area I have strong interest in. )

Some points of interest: There are very few large collections, and when fans die, their relatives tend to toss the zines into the nearest dumpster, so Rule #1, never throw anything away! If you tire of your collection, give it to someone else.... Photocopying and distributing enhances survivability. Recent US copyright law now grants copyright with the very act of writing, but the consensus was this should not intimidate people into copying for archives purposes.... Placing into an institution is no guarantee, as policies change, shelves get crowded, collections can be dumped.... F.M. Busby brought up the hoary problem of the marching Chinese, if you march them past you ten abreast, the column never ends, because they reproduce at a rate faster than you can count them. Attempts to preserve zines and make them widely available are doomed for the same reason....

**ELECTRONIC FANDOM: BOON OR BARRIER** with GoH Taral Wayne ( Canada's best known fan artist and zine-pubber, & one of the founders of Ditto ), and I think Eric Lindsay ( of 'GEGENSCHWEIN' fame ), and either Debbie Notkin or Leah Smith ( Dang! Wish my notes were more complete! ).

A lot of discussion, some of it highly technical and way over my head. The consensus seemed to be that electronic media was useless, at least from the preservation viewpoint, since technology has a short generational span. I mentioned an example: the C.B.C TV network has tens of thousands of hours of rare programming on an early form of videotape, and only one machine that can run them. No spare parts. No backup. When it breaks down, their archive might as well be thrown away..... Noticed Stu Shiffman, legendary fan artist, asleep in a corner. Ahhh, fannish traditions..... Taral Wayne pointed out that one of the limiting factors in electronic media is that not everyone can afford a computer. I got my obsolete Macintosh SE/30 for \$50. Can't complain....

The most memorable part of the panel was the ten minute conversation I had with GoH Taral Wayne after the panel concluded. I introduced myself with some trepidation. You see, earlier I had mailed him samples of SPACE CADET. He wrote back, *"I also remember YOU! You're that fellow in that other fanzine who thinks Furry Fandom oughta be squashed!"* On this occasion I tried to explain that when I wrote in a LoC to Scott Patri, Editor of 'THE ZERO-G LAVATORY': *"In fact, you might*



*have to shift your wrath towards a new threat to general SF-Fandom: the growing power of "Furry" fandom, devoted exclusively to.... anthropomorphic characters, especially if insufferably cute.... Furry fandom is the coming thing, complete with conventions, electronic BBS and zines. Maybe I'm paranoid, but I think this particular egg should be flattened before it hatches..."* that I was only kidding, ha ha! I was merely tweaking Scott a bit about his constant anti-Trekkdom stance, ha, ha!...ha...

"Hmmm, well, I posted it on the net and tore it to pieces," said Taral.

Oh, God.

Still, Taral graciously helped remove both my feet from my mouth and we got along fine after that. After all, he had sent a wonderful cover piece ( depicting futuristic biplanes ) with the above mentioned letter. Obviously not a chap to hold grudges.

Anxious to regain face, I tried the old fannish ploy of threatening to send him future issues of SPACE CADET. Ah, but he was far too experienced and agile a fan to fall for such an obvious trap.

"Well, okay," he said, "but I promise NOT to Loc. May NOT even have time to read them. But I DO have one of the larger collections, with an emphasis on Canadian zines. If YOU think your zine is worth preserving, you can send it to me. I can archive it, I suppose..."

Never, NEVER attempt to duel with a Master. You can't win.

**THE FAN FUND AUCTION** with auctioneers Andy Hooper and Dick Smith (I think).

I remember drooling as they laid out the zines. They apologized for the poor selection, but I was quivering with anticipation. Eric Lindsay had brought a set of Don Thompson's 'DON-O-SAUR' all the way from Australia! The club archive had a fine selection we'd received in the late '80s in trade for BCSFAzine, but here was a chance to get the one's he'd produced in the '70s! And then there were several fine 'SIMULACRUM's by Victoria Vayne, circa 1976, masterpieces of printing. And in general, what is technically known as "a whole bunch of neat stuff."

I bid on nearly everything. I became known as "that man in the corner". At least 75% of the money raised came from my pockets. I had about \$200 US funds left and was determined to spend it. Besides, it was for a good cause. TAFF, I think... Anyway, I had money to burn. The pile of zines mounted on my lap. They were sold in lots. I wound up with about a hundred.



One in particular I had my eye on. So did Jerry Kaufman. "HUITLOXOPETL" by Meade and Penny Frierson ( circa late '70s ). ( Interesting title, sounds like the name of an Aztec deity, though nothing I can find in my sources. ) This particular issue details at length the origins and development of characters like 'Simple J. Malarkey', 'Snively', 'Sis Boombah' and 'Sarcophagus Macabre' in the POGO Comic Strip written and drawn by Walt Kelly of beloved memory. As a lifelong Pogo fan, this was a 'Must buy!' Unfortunately, this was Jerry Kaufman's view as well. We pawed through it together

before the auction started, our drool turning the pages prematurely brown. Nervously, I wondered if I had enough money to outbid Jerry.

During the auction Andy Hooper's hand often strayed to the lot containing 'HUITLOXOPETL', Jerry and I would lean forward, half-rising out of our seats, and Andy's hand would pass on to another lot. Every time this happened the air grew electric with tension. Soon I noticed Jerry seemed quite agitated. Was he going to storm the stage? He stood up... sat down again... stood up, bobbed about, agony written on his face... then suddenly rushed from the room.

Hah! Victim of his bladder! This was my chance! Would the Fannish Gods smile on me? YES!!! Andy's hand rested on the lot in question. "And for this pile of crudzines..."

"TEN BUCKS!" I screamed.

Momentary silence. Somewhat taken aback, Andy said, "Uhh, sure, okay. Any other bidders?"

"FIFTEEN BUCKS!" I yelled.

"Fine, whatever," Andy said, warily handing me the lot.

Jerry Kaufman came racing back into the room. He plunged back into his chair, turned his gaze eagerly to the spot where HUITLOXOPETL had rested... His face darkened. "Damn, damn, damn damn!" He mouthed. He turned to glare at me suspiciously. I tried to keep a straight face. One shouldn't gloat in public....

Magnanimously, I let him hold HUITLOXOPETL for a few seconds after the auction....

But just so I don't appear a complete bastard, I do intend to photocopy it for him one of these days. Especially after I send him this issue....

### **HOSPITALITY SUITE**

This time it was quite crowded, especially when the Vanguard people ( Seattle Club? ) showed up. Felt a bit claustrophobic. Made myself feel secure by talking only to the people I had previously met. Eric Lindsay did come up and snap my picture, but then he snapped every one's picture. I wondered, was this just his way of introducing himself? Did he even have film in his camera? Just a random thought.... Speaking of Australian fans, Jean Weber, long famous for "WEBER WOMAN'S WREVENGE", was pointed out to me sitting on a couch. I wanted to introduce myself, but there was a solid wall of people in front of her and I thought, 'Oh well, maybe later.' Never do that at a con. Often, as in this case, there is no "later".

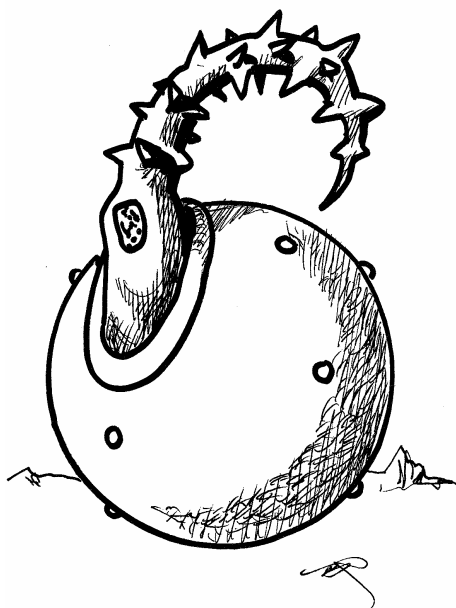
Then came time (9:00 PM) for:

**TEN FANZINES THAT SHOOK THE WORLD** a play written and directed by Andy Hooper, loosely based on "Ten Days That Shook The World" by John Reed ( ? -- if memory serves...), an account of the Russian Revolution, or more accurately, the 'Bolshevist' coup. This of course is the Fannish version, involving time travellers and Fandom's first attempt to take over the world and establish a Gernsbackian universe with a helicopter in every garage. At least, I think that's what it was about. There were maybe 60 people in the audience, at least 20 'performers' reading their parts, and

maybe 4,000 variations of Russian accents projected with great gusto and energetic enthusiasm. Thoroughly entertaining stuff.

This was the third time Andy's play has been performed, the first two occasions being Silvercon and ReinCONation. It's classic fan writing, easily on a par with the play version of 'THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR'. I don't know if Andy has it available in print, but if not, he should. I'd love a copy for the BCSFA/WCSFA archive. ( I wish I'd thought to ask for one of the scripts at the time, but I was exploring the limits of fatigue and wasn't thinking clearly...) Then back to:

**THE HOSPITALITY SUITE** where, if anything, the con population had been cloned in an attempt to fill up every cubic inch of waste space. A couple of times I fought my way out to go down the hall to the Smoking suite where Art Widner and F.M. Busby were holding court, but the grey haze of smoke drove me out.



10:00 PM. Dead tired. Time to call it a night. I paused one last time at the fringe of the multi-human blob pulsating in the hospitality suite. Vaguely I considered attempting to seduce one of the many interesting women present. But I detected no come-hither looks. Everyone was either excitedly exchanging fannish gossip or crumpled in a corner looking as exhausted as I felt.

Besides, it had been struggle enough to overcome my basic shyness in order to speak to fellow editors I'd not met before. Flirting was right out. Besides, I've noticed that "Hi! I'm the editor of SPACE CADET!" is a singularly useless come-on line, for some reason....

Yet, I thought wistfully, what about all the fannish mythology re sex at conventions? Was it all mere myth? I've been to 25 conventions and only been laid at two of them. And this hardly due to my own skill as a seducer. At one of the two cons in question, a friend came up to me and said, "You look bored. Anything I can do for you?" I flippantly replied, "Sure, introduce me to a nymphomaniac." And twenty minutes later, she did! But that was then....

This is now. I took one last look around. I was too tired to relate to any of the women as a fellow fan, much less fixate on them in an entirely reprehensible manner as a sex object. This fanboy needed sleep.

As I rode the elevator up to my room, I remembered the Stewardess who had gushed all over me when we shared the elevator earlier in the day, asking who I was and what Con I was attending. Like a fool, I told her in elaborate detail. Her eyes had glazed over by the time I reached my floor. Sigh. I'm just not very good at interpreting subtle hints.... always blowing my chances...

As I got off the elevator and trundled up the hall to my room, I thought, "Gee, maybe if I'm really lucky I can catch a rerun of that PBS special on Dung Beetles.".... And so to bed.

TO BE CONTINUED

# ORIGINS: THE UBC SFFEN

## PART TWO

### 1969/1970 ACADEMIC YEAR:

The first meeting in the new academic year was held 16th September, 1969. It was decided to man a booth at the UBC Clubs Day and recruit like mad. Thanks primarily to the energetic efforts of Daniel Say, about 40 to 50 people left their names and addresses at the booth, some of whom did eventually join the club, including Norma Hele, whom Ed Beauregard later married. The legendary Daniel Say was a phenomenon in his own right. Ed Beauregard describes Mr. Say in Garth Spencer's history of BCSFA "On The Bonny, Bonny Banks Of The Fraser" as follows:

*"Dan Say was unquestionably the most energetic, the most vocal, and the most enthusiastic of our group. He seemed to have embraced the concept of fandom with almost religious fervour. His 'conversation' was essentially an ongoing monologue filled with humour, insult, sarcasm and just plain bullshit. His appearance today is unchanged from UBC days, and among callow students he was certainly a sight to behold. His perpetual air of superiority offered no offense, since it was coupled with the most incredible behavior, which could not fail to leave one laughing hysterically. I became one of his favourite targets, and the verbal jousting did much to sharpen my own skills."*

My own recollection of Daniel Say ( based on my involvement with the club in 1971/1972 ) was that he would dominate a room as soon as he entered, bouncing up and down in one place, clapping his hands in glee as he fired off a torrent of ideas faster than the human mind could follow. Boredom was instantly vanquished. You couldn't help but be infected by his excitement. A most interesting character, and extremely useful to the club.

On either 7th or 17th of October 1969 the club's second executive was elected:

### UBC SFFEN EXECUTIVE - 1969/1970 ACADEMIC YEAR

General Chairman -- Maynard Hogg  
Secretary/Treasurer -- Norma Hele  
Librarian -- Christina Moore  
Public Relations Officer -- Nadir Mirhardy  
Publications Officer -- Ed Beauregard

Because of the increased membership, the University AMS decided to grant the club use of room SUB 216F in the Student Union Building for an office. This inspired Ed to publish Vol. 1, #1 of the UBC SFFEN Newsletter, dated October 1969, with a banner headline reading: "GLORIOUS NEWS FROM THE BUREAUCRATIC FRONT!" In it he announced the acquisition of the office and encouraged members to bring their friends. The office served as a permanent meeting place ( discussion groups every monday night, for instance ), as a drop-in centre, and as a secure base for their rapidly growing lending library of SF magazines and books.

During November 1969, the office now available, club activity picked up. For one thing, members began coming up with ambitious proposals, such as inviting Isaac Asimov to come and lecture. The club contacted the AMS Speakers Committee and they wrote to Asimov. He wrote back: *"I am the last*

*person left in our jetset society who absolutely refuses to use airplanes. Consequently I don't travel long distances and will probably never see British Columbia."*

Vol. 1 #2 of the newsletter was published in November. Again Ed pleaded for members to encourage friends to join. He also advocated showing a film to raise funds sufficient to produce a fanzine, but what with the spectre of impending Christmas exams, this was put off till January of 1970. Meanwhile the club did find enough energy to apply to Canada Council for a grant paying the expenses of four people to travel to Heicon, the 1970 Worldcon ( in Heidelberg, Germany ). In spite of, or perhaps because of, the many hilarious reasons put on the application form (though one, "inspiring Canadian Speculative Literature," sounds legit), the request was turned down.

Vol. 2, No.1, #3 of the UBC SFFEN Newsletter was printed in January of 1970 as the "Glorious New Year Ish" by "Publisher, Editor & Chief Censor" Ed Beauregard. In it he announced a new office for the club, SUB 216B, which was smaller, but better located. It was hoped that this would help bring in more members (the club membership only 43 as yet). Ed also talked about the fanzine shaping up, noting that it yet lacked a name and still needed several thousand words of copy to fill the issue. As he put it: *"If the response doesn't improve, we're going to drop the idea altogether. DON'T YOU WANT A FANZINE?"*

Ed also uttered the eternal lament: *"It's been suggested (with good cause) that we could use a much larger number of female members. (We only have about 4 or 5). Need I say more?"* And goes on to complain that only 19 members showed up for the last general meeting. Ed pleaded for members to make an effort to attend.

In Garth Spencer's BBBF, Ed Beauregard, in reference to the January '70 issue of the newsletter, said:

*"Included.... was a list of members, a list which is worth spending a few minutes going over.... The core group, the dedicated fans who almost lived in the club office, included such people as Daniel Say, Bob Bells, Mike Bailey, Stan Talarczyk, Ken Stairs, Brent Maclean, Maynard Hogg, and Norma and I."*

These were some of the people keen on producing a proper fanzine, as opposed to a one or two page newsletter. The club had received a small grant from the University Clubs Committee, but this was insufficient to cover the cost of the proposed fanzine. The solution, as announced by Beauregard, was to show the movie "One Million Years B.C." on Thursday, January 29th, beginning at 12:30 pm. In #3 of the newsletter he commented:

*"We hope that Raquel Welch will prove sufficient attraction to bring in enough people to cover the cost of the movie and other expenses. (Otherwise we may become suddenly bankrupt)... We are considering letting members in free, providing we get enough help for all the publicity and sundry chores... If you want to get in free, come and help!!"*

Years later, in BCSFAzine #80 ( published in February, 1980 ), Ed Beauregard described the consequences of the showing as follows:



(The poster that created the BCSFA)

*"We decided to show a film to raise money. This was quite common on campus, with various groups showing movies and charging 25 to 50 cents to attend. We risked a large portion of our cash reserves (about \$25) to rent 'ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.' It was the 'best' we could obtain and hope to attract a reasonably sized crowd. We spent two nights putting up posters and chalking adverts on blackboards. On 29th January, 1970, we presented 'ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.' (starring Raquel Welch) in Angus 104. To our immense surprise, the 50 cent admissions totaled to just over \$140. We were ecstatic, but quickly were confronted with a terrifying problem....."*

### **THE EMERGENCY BIRTH OF BCSFA:**

The problem was this: The University of British Columbia's Alma Mater society funded special interest clubs on campus (through the University Clubs Committee) with small grants at the beginning of the academic year. However, by the end of the academic year, any monies remaining (including any profits earned) were automatically forfeited back to the AMS. Members realized there was no reasonable way they could use up the movie's profits before this happened. Furthermore, individual clubs did not possess their own bank accounts, their funds being held by the AMS; consequently it was impossible to 'hide' the money from the AMS. In short, the club would 'lose' their windfall! What to do?

That very night an emergency meeting was held in the club office. Those attending included Mike Bailey, Ed Beauregard, Bob Bells, Maynard Hogg, Daniel Say, Claire Toynbee and several others. Mike Bailey is believed to be the originator of the solution. He conceived of a dummy/front off-campus organization to which every member of the UBC club would pay dues!

As a result, the very next day (30th January, 1970) Ed Beauregard, Norma Hele and Maynard Hogg went to the 10th & Sasamat branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and became signing officers on behalf of the B.C. Science Fiction Society ( later known as the B.C. Science Fiction Association ), depositing \$100 into account number 90-63. They then bought an 'official' stamp for letterhead purposes and a couple of account books. The remainder of the money was to be put towards the production of the UBC SFFEN fanzine 'STAGE ONE' scheduled for publication in late March 1970.

But published first was UBC SFFEN Newsletter Vol 2, No. 2, #4 which came out in early March, produced by "*Chief Bull Shitter*" Daniel Say. In it he mentioned a possible election to be held at an upcoming meeting on March 12, which had to do with proposed constitutional revisions to allow fall/winter members:

*"...to belong to the summer association of UBC SFFEN. Convert others to UBC SFFEN over the summer. Non-students to the B.C. Science Fiction Society, our off-campus group, and UBC students and grade 12's to the UBC SF Society. More girls, girls, GIRLS please."*

To which Ed Beauregard added:

*"For the mere charge of 50 cents per member (\$30) all members of UBC SFFEN have been enrolled as members of the British Columbia Science Fiction Society. Watch the newspapers (when they return) for meeting notices. This new organization has been set up to encourage fandom in B.C. and act as a co-ordination agency for fan activities. Let's try for a worldcon in 81! ( Vancouver's Centennial. )"*

In reference to the film showing and resulting fanzine, Daniel wrote:



*"[The] film went very successfully. We had a good crowd, but not too many people came out to help. More volunteers next time and we may let you touch the money.... Fanzine is definately coming out. We need more typists and there is still time to submit some material. But not much more than a couple of thousand words. Become famous. How about a review, poem, etc? Haven't decided whether to ditto it or have the AMS print it..."*

Other items of interest in the newsletter:

*"Have you seen the March GALAXY? Harlan Ellison has taken over. The new editor Ejler Jakobsson has gone New Wave or something. Maybe he is really HE in disguise.... Space War was cancelled by the Computer Club for Open House because some little old lady complained about war.... Say a prayer for John Beynon Harris ( John Wyndham ) who wrote 'Day of the Triffids', 'Midwich Cuckoos' and 'The Crystals', etc. He died March 9, 1969... State of the Library: More space needed. We are very overcrowded. All magazines before 1969 are now in the locker to allow the novels on the shelves. Most of the books are on IBM cards now but we need a file box. Bob Bells says of the quality of library "Ha Ha! What Quality of library?"... Party at Maynard Hogg's, March 14th, free booze if general meeting approves.... if you think you can do better on this newsletter, go ahead and work on it..."*

## **THE PRODUCTION OF 'STAGE ONE':**

'STAGE ONE', which came out in Late March, 1970, was edited by Robert Bells. At 50 pages, it can be considered quite an ambitious effort. The primary motivation behind its creation?:

*"This magazine has been published to prove to ourselves that we can produce just as professional a fanzine as the February 1970 GALAXY"*

'GALAXY' was a digest-sized SF mag at that time edited by Ejler Jakobsson who had revamped the format and given it the subtitle "The Best in Pertinent Science Fiction" in an effort to make it more appealing to fans. He even ran 'SUNPOT' comics by Vaughn Bode! 'GALAXY' eventually folded in 1980. All the same, I suspect UBC SFFEN did not succeed in their goal.



The fanzine's pages were printed by purple ditto, and were stapled between two stiff buff-coloured pieces of cardboard. The cover depicted a blocky yet somehow streamlined spaceship drawn by Ted McPherson.

Some 12 poems were present, not all of them SF, with titles like "DIRECTIONS TO THE DEAD END," and "LET US PREY." The budding poets were Ted McPherson, Ken Stairs, Paul Green and John Patrick Hewson.

Ken Stairs and Robert Bells contributed a couple of very short stories, but 17 pages are taken up by the "novel(ette)" 'ONE BRIGHT DAY IN THE MORNING', written by Mike Bailey and illustrated (4 illos) by Ted MacPherson. It is the tale of the youthful barbarian Graimon, who having robbed the wizard Haemon, and mercifully ravaged the fair Praeskilla, is pursued by the Glem, a jewel with the power of a Thral, and.... well, you get the idea. The story was introduced with the comment: "*Mike Bailey is the club historian*" but not, as you can perhaps guess, world-renowned Fantasy writer. Still, a worthy effort (and possibly a spoof? Not sure.)

Ed Beauregard contributed an essay titled 'HEINLEIN IS A HARSH MASTER' in which he argued there is no contrast between 'STARSHIP TROOPERS' and 'STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND', that in fact:

*"all of Heinlein's novels (at least within the last 15 years) are the result of one political philosophy, and that he has not contradicted himself, or proposed opposite types of societies. Within the framework of 'What-if?', all his stories are consistent."* The article was prefaced, "*Note: The opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author only and quite possibly no one else in the world.*"

Stan Talarczyk provided an article about a board game he'd invented and was planning to copyright, called 'SPATIAL WAR -- A GAME OF STRATEGY', essentially a space battle concept employing the use of travel through hyperspace to give it a kind of 3-D feel. Robert Bells and Ron MacFarlane contributed some art as well.

But it is not for all of the above that 'STAGE ONE' has a notorious Fan reputation. It was the inclusion of the story 'GONAD THE CONQUEROR: THE GREATEST SWORDSMAN' (by 'Anonymous') that led to controversy and infamy. Ed Beauregard seized the entire print run and hid it in a locker, refusing to release it till the ( possibly offensive ) pages had been removed. A compromise was reached. Brown paper sheets were inserted to set the story apart, with the following warning written on the first sheet:

*"RESTRICTED. For mature eyes only. Strong stomachs only."*

Gonad was a most precocious lad. I quote the following excerpts for your edification, but ask you to bear in mind the above warning:

*"To maintain the tremendous blood pressure required to expand his organ to its maximum length (14 feet) he has a second heart in his lower abdomen. The heart has 12 chambers so the pressure can undergo gradual increase, thus reducing the damage to his other (normal) circulatory system."*

*"The majority of his head is an enormous blood sinus to supply blood for his erection. This explains why most of Gonad's movements are spastic, spasmodic, and instinctive. It also helps to explain why Gonad is not excessively bright."*

*"Gonad's death we have determined from probability studies as being one of the following three. Gonad, as he always wished to, died in bed. But as he never wished to, he died in bed, alone."*

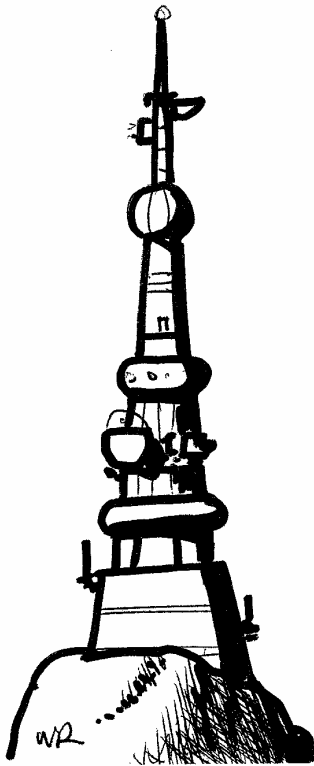
*"1) Gonad laid on his face, had an erection, and fell from a great height, smashing his blood sinus."*

*"2) Gonad laid on his face, had an erection, and drove himself through the concrete ceiling."*

"3) Gonad laid on his face, had a wet dream, and drowned."

Hmmm, not great literature, but it does maintain reader interest.

Ed Beauregard later described 'STAGE ONE' as *"a truly amateurish effort"* but it was probably, judging by the contents, a lot of fun to produce. As of January of 1992, the UBC Science Fiction Society ( the successor to UBC SFFEN ) still had about 20 copies of 'STAGE ONE' hidden in its SUB office.



After the publication of 'STAGE ONE' the course of the club, in the words of Ed Beauregard, was *"all downhill as conflict and confrontation came to dominate UBC SFFEN."* ( Which may hint that the 1970 summer session for the club did not work out ). This may explain why Ed Beauregard and Norma Hele dropped out of both BCSFS and UBC SFFEN and did not rejoin till 1973 when BCSFA was recreated as a truly independent entity totally separate from the UBC club. Still, enough members came back for the next Academic Year to ensure continuity and survival for both organizations.

There was a very curious wrap-up to the 1969/1970 Academic year which is still preserved in the WCSFA Archives. A most remarkable document, one might say:

#### **1969--1970 YEAR END REPORT BY DANIEL SAY:**

Unfortunately, it was indeed written by Daniel Say, which means that it is a unique and highly individual document. By this I mean that a straight-forward accounting of events is not what Say had in mind.

For instance, in reference to actual events in the course of the year, Daniel has only this to say: *"As you were here most of last year, you know most of what happened."* Undoubtedly this was true for the readership at the time, but for a contemporary historian-wannabee like myself, this minimalist approach is extremely frustrating!

The rest of the 12 page document consists entirely of Daniel Say's personal recommendations to the club executive. It is to be born in mind that Daniel was intensely energetic, both physically and mentally, and that sarcasm was but one of many rapier-like weapons his wit employed. Here are some of his suggestions:

*"RECOMMENDATION: That the General Chairman keep a most secret and personal file on the members so that we can get the most of their power relationships and knowledge."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: That we take over and/or change the Summer Session into the Summer Science Fiction Society." ( Beside this someone drew a clenched fist and the words "All power to SF Fen!" )*

*"RECOMMENDATION: How about we sign up some honorary members? Say people of stature in the SF world, like Isaac Asimov, Raquel Welch, and others?"*

*"RECOMMENDATION: That the Vice-Chairman be made responsible for the complete takeover of the UCC (University Clubs Committee) and assist in the takeover of the AMS (Alma Mater Society)."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: That the Vice-Chairman try to get as many of our members as possible onto the University Speakers Committee, the Special Events Committee and academic activities as possible with the purpose of making UBC one of the major ports of call of the SF writer and for the purpose of holding a Worldcon ( or a con with so many great stars of SF that it could be called the GREATESTCON )."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: An Annual SF film festival, with lots of publicity among the psuedo-sophisticates and therefore movie-symbolist members of the press..."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: That the Secretary act as archivist and keep a record of events and what happened, collect all accounts from the press and other fanzines and mentions on radio and TV about us and form an archives with lists of members and as many group photos as possible. These should be stored in yearly vaults and with a list of contents on the outside of the steel box..."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: The President should be able to recognize on sight every member of UBC SFFEN." ( In ink beside this is the note: "I hereby resign, Pres." )*

*"RECOMMENDATION: The Secretary should write letters to the editors of such rags as 'The Ubssey' complaining about the lack of SF in the paper, complaining that they have very little SF, complaining that they don't have enough SF, complaining that they should devote a whole issue to SF, complaining that they should change their name to the 'SF FEN WEEKLY NEWSLETTER'." ( He also suggests sending the papers "distorted pictures of small lizards crushing the life out of dolls...." )*

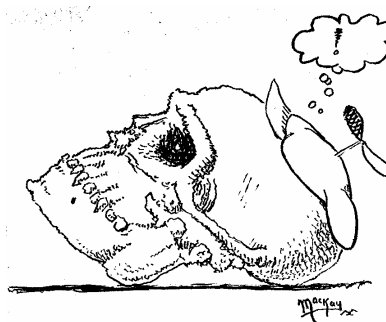
*"RECOMMENDATION: That the Librarian and a team of musclemen go to the domiciles of delinquent borrowers to get the books back and make sure the borrower regrets owing any books to the library and will never do it again."*

*"RECOMMENDATION: That as Vancouver will become the world centre of SF....."*

And concludes with: *"Good luck. You will need it."*

To be fair, there are lots of practical suggestions, but the above are samples of Say's style of humour which I suspect he was employing to tweak fellow members over various grandiose plans being bandied about. That his humour was, if anything, understated is shown by the plans drawn up the following year....

TO BE CONTINUED....





## **ASK MR. SCIENCE!**

*( As submitted by Al Betz, Corresponding Secretary for Mr. Science. )*

Mr. RGC, of Vancouver, B.C., asks:

**WHY, DESPITE THE WORLD'S RIVERS EMPTYING MILLIONS OF TONS OF WATER INTO THE OCEANS EVERY DAY, DOES THE AVERAGE SEA LEVEL ALWAYS REMAIN THE SAME?**

**Mr. SCIENCE:** The basic idea of the Earth having a molten core is correct, but the presumed liquid is not. The Earth's hollow core has been filling, not with molten iron, but with water. The remaining empty space is small, and calculations indicate it will be filled about the beginning of May, 1988. Sea level will then begin to rise. U.B.C. is high enough that V-Con 16 will not be affected, but V-Con 17 will probably have to be held at the top of Grouse Mountain.

Mr. SF, of Coquitlam, B.C., asks:

**ARE PERPETUAL MOTION MACHINES POSSIBLE?**

**MR. SCIENCE:** Perpetual motion machines of the 37<sup>th</sup> kind ( the first 36 kinds were all fraudulent ) have recently been constructed which weigh 50 kg., develop 160 horsepower, and work by extracting energy from vortices in the luminiferous aether through which the universe is moving. Knowledge of the existence of these machines has been suppressed by the International Oil Cartel, and they will be 'invented' only when the oil supply has dwindled to almost nothing.

## **FAN AWARDS**

### **TARAL WINS 2008 ROTSLER AWARD!**

Toronto-area artist Taral Wayne has won the Rotsler Award, given annually for long-time artistic achievement in amateur publications of the science fiction community. Established in 1998, it carries an honorarium of US\$300.

The award will be formally announced on Saturday, November 29, 2008, at the Los Angeles local science fiction convention "Loscon", held every year over the U.S. Thanksgiving Day weekend.

Taral's work is by turns serious, sexy, and satirical, with a fluent line and strong composition. At home with space equipment and strange creatures, he was also drawing anthropomorphic animals long before most in North America had heard of anime or manga.

The Rotsler Award is sponsored by the Southern California Institute for Fan Interests, a non-profit corporation, which in 2006 hosted the 63rd World Science Fiction Convention. The award is named for the late Bill Rotsler, a talented and prolific artist over many years. Current judges are Mike Glycer, John Hertz, and Claire Brialey.

The 2008 Loscon [ [www.loscon.org](http://www.loscon.org) ] will be the 35th. An exhibit honoring Taral's work will be in the Art Show.

For more about the Rotsler Award, visit: <http://www.scifiinc.org/rotsler/>

Taral is in very good company. Previous winners were: Steve Stiles (1998), Grant Canfield (1999), Arthur Thomson (2000), Brad Foster (2001), Kurt Erichsen (2001), Ray Nelson (2003), Harry Bell (2004), Marc Schirmeister (2005), Alexis Gilliland (2006) & Terry Jeeves (2007).

## FILTHY PRO NEWS

# THE ONGOING SAGA OF PROMOTING ALYXANDRA J. SHAW'S FANTASY TRILOGY 'A STRANGE PLACE IN TIME'

*By The Graeme -- her husband*

*(The idea is that any beginning author, or readers interested in how authors get started, will find this blow by blow on-going account of her evolution from a fan fiction author to a professional author informative and possibly even inspiring. Just be aware it didn't happen over night. Alyx has put years of hard work into this.)*

The latest quarterly report is in from Torquere Press and the results are very encouraging. The first report stated Alyx sold 117 copies of the first book in the trilogy 'THE RECALLING OF JOHN ARROWSMITH'. The second report said a further 39 copies were sold, for a total of 156. A bit discouraging that, but we figured with the publication of the second book 'THE WHITE PALACE AWAKENS' interest in the first would pick up. We were right.

The third report states a further 42 copies of the first novel were sold by Torquere Press, and 62 copies through Amazon books for their Kindle download reader thingie, for a grand total overall of 260 copies. Meanwhile the second novel is off to a good start with 106 copies sold. Combined total to date = 366 e-copies sold. This electronic publishing is beginning to live up to our expectations.



Bear in mind that from a financial point of view, these 366 copies sold are easily equivalent to 4,000 or more paper pocketbooks sold, because a first time author of the latter would be lucky to get 2 or 3% royalties, whereas Alyx is earning 25% on the Kindle versions and 35% on the Torquere Press sales. Also take into account a first time author would be lucky to get an advance of \$2,000 to \$3,000 dollars, and many is the time they're told the book didn't sell well enough to earn the advance (which they're allowed to keep), let alone any royalties. Alyx, on the other hand, didn't get an advance, but she earns money on each and every copy sold. Further, most books have a shelf life measured in weeks, sometimes mere days, but Torquere Press guarantees (it's in the contract) each book will be available online for two years, and longer if it sells reasonably well. And if it sells really well by electronic publication standards, they'll print a paper version and sell that through Amazon and possibly other venues. So there remains all kinds of potential for further sales.

Meanwhile sales continue to move along, albeit slowly, for the Doppleganger Press version of the first two novels. Doppleganger is a small press specializing in expensive hardcover editions for book collectors who like handbound volumes with unusual covers (in terms of material & design), quality paper, and rarely used typeface. For example, 'THE WHITE PALACE AWAKENS' is "letterpress printed from photopolymer plates on Arches Text mouldmade paper and digitally typeset in Adobe InDesign using Poliphilus and Blado types" and is "quarter bound in Asahi crimson Japanese silk book cloth and handmade pastepaper using a French groove style binding structure". Before publication endpapers were sent to Alyx for signing so that each copy would have a unique author's signature (she chose silver ink). A price of \$260 US per copy is a sure indication this edition is aimed at serious book collectors (though several of her fans have shelled out for these deluxe editions).

The earning structure for Doppleganger Press is rather different. There are no royalties. Instead Alyx received a set fee for the entire trilogy, 50% paid as an advance, and the remaining 50% to be paid once the entire trilogy is sold out. Old fashioned quality publications of this type sell slowly, but they do sell, as there does indeed exist a niche market of readers whose hobby is to collect books not only for their content, but for the look and feel of them as well. And considering most mass market hardcovers these days are printed on cheap paper, are often poorly bound, and the publishers sometimes don't 'waste' money on proof reading, it's not surprising readers who can afford to do so collect books that are an exercise in nostalgia in terms of old fashioned quality of production. The earning potential of the Doppleganger Press editions is defined and set, but is quite generous, so is a nice compliment to the Torquere Press editions. Besides, the volumes are gorgeous, a pleasure to own.

And by the way, there seems to a persistent rumour going the rounds locally that these books are vanity press publications. This is BS, and whoever is spreading this can shove it. Alyx didn't pay one goddamned penny to have these books published, the publishers paid HER. Whoever believes the rumour obviously doesn't know a damn thing about publishing. Specialty press publishers have existed ever since Guttenberg got started, and online publishing is a modern trend which continues to grow. Hell, even the Christian Science Monitor newspaper is switching to online publishing only. If the internet dies, or is strangled (as assorted governments seem to be contemplating), then online publishing will die, but in the meantime it's a new but legitimate form of publication that is growing by leaps and bounds. All sorts of potential for authors.

Granted, nothing beats a hardcover hitting the New York Times Best Seller list, but as Pierre Burton once pointed out, 99.99% of authors in Canada depend on their spouse's pay cheque to survive. Realistically, a bestseller is as rare as winning the lottery. But Alyx is off to a good start and we hope that word of mouth, good reviews and her own promotional efforts online will lead to a steady increase in

sales. At this stage in her career it's important for Alyx to expand her fan base, and this she seems to be doing. So confidence remains high.

## AUTHOR HAPPENINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST

( New information highlighted in violet. )

**DON DEBRANDT** < <http://www.sfw.org/members/DeBrandt/index.html> >

Don has his 'Cyberjunk' website, which has not been updated in several years, **has recently begun renovations**. See his website under the name 'Donn Cortez' < <http://www.donncortez.com> > for a complete listing of books, stories, articles & comics under both names.

Don lives in the Lower Mainland area. His latest books include the mystery '*The Man Burns Tonight*' and the thriller '*The Closer*'.

Don has also written the four volumes of the CSI MIAMI series titled '*Cult Following*', '*Riptide*', '*Harm For The Holidays: Misgivings*' & '*Harm For The Holidays: Heart Attack*'. He is currently under contract to write three more volumes.

Don's classic SF novels are: *The Quicksilver Screen*, *Steeldriver*, *Timberjak*, & *V.I.*

**And then there's Don's unpublished novel STARRING, the first two chapters available on his website:**

*Every culture has its own mythology. In the twentieth century, popular culture has the mythology of the celebrity--names like Aphrodite, Ares and Gaea have been replaced in the modern pantheon by Madonna, Schwarzenegger and Roseanne. We treat them like they're more than human.*

*What if they were?... The Stars get their powers from aliens called the Linkers, who trade them in exchange for performances, videos, books ... because the Linkers are a race addicted to art. The surviving half of a symbiotic race, the Linkers actually get high from exposure to imagination. The more imaginative the art, the better the buzz ... but one particular form of art is so potent it's like crack to the Linkers, and has been banished from the planet. They just can't handle the surreality of cartoons...*

Currently Don is returning to his roots by working on a Sci-Fi trilogy, starting with his upcoming hardcover mystery/sci-fi novel '*Lucidity*', which is about two 'Ectives' ( emotive detectives ) in the near future where emotions can be read, implanted, bought, sold, and stolen.

**DAVE DUNCAN** < <http://www.daveduncan.com> >

Dave lives in Victoria, B.C. His latest books: '*The Alchemist's Apprentice*', & '*Children of Chaos*' ( the latter winning the 'Best Long-Form Work in English' Aurora Award at Convention 27/VCON 32 which he was happy to accept in person from presenter Peter S. Beagle).

'*Alchemist's Apprentice*' is available in trade paperback, & mass market paperback from ACE..

'*The Alchemist's Code*' has been released by Ace in trade paperback & the third book in the series, '*The Alchemist's Pursuit*', will be published in 2009.

'*Mother of Lies*' ( presently available in hardcover ) is now released by Tor in mass market paperback.

In August 2008 '*Ill Met in the Arena*' was released by Tor in hardcover.

Dave has sold '*Speak to the Devil*', the first book in his new swordsmen & sorcerers series '*The Brothers Magnus*', to Liz Gorinsky at Tor Books. It will be published in 2009.

Many of Dave's books, including long out of print volumes, are available for e-download at < <http://www.ereads.com> > .

Dave writes on his website: *AT LONG LAST (after several years of waiting) I welcome the reissue of several of my long out-of-print books in Print-on-Demand format from Lightning Source. These are available on [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), and should be available on special order from any bookseller.*

This includes 'THE SEVENTH SWORD' series about which he says: *Wally Smith, having died on Earth, finds himself reincarnated as a swordsman in another world and entrusted by the presiding goddess with a mission that has no appeal for him at all. Goddesses can be very persuasive. . . This series is still my most popular work. I often wonder if that is because the first version of it was written solely for my own amusement, before I ever considered trying to get it published. Perhaps the sense of just-having-fun stuck to it through all its many rewrites.*

**WILLIAM GIBSON** < <http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com> >

Bill lives in Vancouver. Check out his web site for his Q&A interview 'Across the Border to Spook Country'. His latest book: *'Spook Country'*.

**In his blog Gibson writes on November 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

*My daughter and I are in Nantes, preparing to return to Paris after attending Utopiales, Nantes' extremely pleasant international festival of science fiction, now in its ninth year.*

*Yesterday we visited Les Machines de l'Ile (Island Machines), which surely must be the single most exquisitely steampunk site on the planet, and rode the [Grand Elephant](#).*

*This morning, as my daughter called me for breakfast, I woke from a dream in which someone was enthusiastically comparing the (in my dream) triumphant Obama campaign to the Grand Elephant and its forty-some tonnes of moving parts (party-mascot irony evidently being lost on the logic of dream).*

**MATT HUGHES** < <http://www.archonate.com/> >

Matt lives on Vancouver Island. His first Henghis Hapthorn novel 'Majestrum' is now out in trade paperback from Nightshade Books. The second novel in the series, 'The Spiral Labyrinth' is available from Nightshade Books in hardcover.

The complete Guth Bandar saga is now published as a novel titled 'The Commons' from Robert J. Sawyer Books.

**On his Website Matthew writes:**

*Charles Tan, the Philippines-based blogger who [interviewed me for the Nebula Awards site](#) has posted another [review](#), this one about Majestrum. He says, "Majestrum is recommended if you're looking for that adventure-mystery hybrid that's full of fun and excitement yet different from the usual sword & sorcery fare. Hughes successfully juggles tribute and originality while still telling a compelling story in his own unique style."*

*Peter Heck has given my Guth Bandar novel, [The Commons](#), a warm [review](#) in the December issue of Asimov's Science Fiction, saying, "Hughes has taken what in other hands might have been just a cute idea and turned it into something considerably richer. His exploration of the various archetypes of the collective unconscious is thought provoking as well as amusing."*

**EILEEN KERNAGHAN** < <http://www.lonelycry.ca/ek/> >

Eileen lives in the Lower Mainland area and attended VCON 32. Check out her latest books: 'Winter on the Plain of Ghosts: a Novel of Mohenjo-daro', 'The Alchemist's Daughter', & 'The Sarsen Witch'.

In her Blog Eileen writes: *I'm pleased to announce that my fourth young adult historical fantasy, Wild Talent: a Novel of the Supernatural, is now available at in stores, including Vancouver*

*Kidsbooks, White Dwarf Books, and most Chapters outlets. You can also order it online at [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and other online bookstore sites.*

*Wild Talent: a novel of the supernatural* imagines the meeting, in late Victorian London, of three extraordinary women. In 1888 and 1889 Madame Helena Blavatsky, head of the British Theosophist movement, known to her friends and many admirers as HPB, was living in London's Holland Park. Fashionable and artistic London flocked to her Saturday afternoon salons. Also residing in London, as a student of oriental languages and religion, was twenty year old Alexandra David. In later life, as Alexandra David Neél, she was to become widely known for her travels in the Himalayas and her many books on Buddhist mysticism. Given Alexandra's fascination with the occult, we can be fairly certain that she was familiar with Madame Blavatsky's eccentric household at 17 Lansdowne Road.

In her London journal of 1888 Alexandra mentions that she has engaged a young girl to help her practice speaking English. In *Wild Talent* this anonymous *jeune fille* is given a name -- Jeannie Guthrie -- a history, and her own strange story to tell.

**CRAWFORD KILIAN** < <http://crofsblogs.typepad.com/> >

Continues to teach at Capilano College in North Vancouver. His latest books: *Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy* ( 1998 ), & *Writing for the Web* ( 1999 ). See E-address above for his blog. He is currently working on another novel, plus "a couple of nonfiction books and articles for online journals." Both of the books mentioned above are available from Self Counsel Press; < <http://www.self-counsel.com/ca/> >

In a recent blog, Kilian writes:

*I just ran across a Spanish website called [elclerigo!](#) that deals with a lot of web issues, and there was a post on [how to write for the web](#), based on the Spanish translation of my book.*

*The examples given were by Spanish students, dealing with Spanish subjects. This cheered me up.*

*When I first read Escribir para la Web, I realized at once that the examples and links were those of the English version. Native Spanish speakers would be likely to find my links irrelevant to their own needs. (The translator, however, did an extraordinary job of echoing my writing style...it was pleasant but odd to read myself in such fluent Spanish, when my command of the language is really pretty weak.)*

*Well, I'm glad that the teacher and students found the book useful, and it's given me more food for thought about the fourth edition. And I'm adding this site to the Foreign-Language Resources list.*

**DONNA MCMAHON** < <http://www.donna-mcmahon.com/> >

Lives in Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast. She won a 2001 Aurora Award for her book reviews published in Tomorrow SF, BCSFAzine & other publications. Check out her novel *Dance of Knives* which is set in Vancouver in the year 2108. The sequel *Second Childhood* is pending publication.

(excerpt from *Dance of Knives* describing Vancouver)

**THE WEST END**

*The decrepit towers were enveloped in vibrant green life. Planters projected precariously everywhere, balconies and windows spilled vines and blossoms into the air, and bird netting draped everything. Shafts of morning sunlight fell between the jungled buildings, sending up plumes of steam from the kitchen gardens and a cacophony of sounds: traffic, voices, music, chickens, goats, babies. Klale looked straight down. She was on the fifth or sixth floor of the Klondyke, she decided; the only naked concrete tower in the area. She looked along the street, trying to get her bearings, and caught a glimpse of blue harbor and mountains to her right. That was north.*

*The street itself was a dirt and gravel trench, half choked with vendor carts and sheds. It ran between old buildings and piles of quake rubble overbuilt with crude shanties. Klale remembered the cooking fires last night with a thrill of strangeness. In Prince Rupert the Collapse was ancient history, but here she felt as if she'd been thrown back fifty years--as if the '62 quake had just devastated Vancouver, and the sea level was still rising quickly around the island...*

"I'm Canadian. I write a kinder, gentler future urban hell." – Donna.

**NINA MUNTEANU** < <http://sfgirl-thealiennextdoor.blogspot.com> >

Lives and teaches in Victoria, B.C. You can order her Sci-Fi novel 'Darwin's Paradox' by Dragon Moon Press from Amazon.ca ( release date was November 15, 2007 ), and her short story 'Virtually Yours' is to be found in 'The Best of Neo-opsis Science Fiction Magazine' anthology published by Bundoran Press and unveiled at VCON 32.

Nina contributes frequently to the blog site. Recent articles include: "The Novelist: Common Pitfalls of the Beginning Writer – Part One", and "Aeon Flux: Motion Picture & Animation."

In her blog Nina raises some interesting points:

*Today, our world is populated with robots. Two million personal robots were in use worldwide in 2004, and seven million more will be installed by 2008, according to Scientific American (May 2008). Robots are widely used in manufacturing and assembly like car production, packaging, electronics, medical surgery, transportation, surveillance, space exploration, weaponry, laboratory research, and automated guided vehicles, just to name a few.*

*Robots are starting to enter our lives in much more personal ways than ever before. Robo-vacuums like Roomba are easing housework; digital pets like Tamagotchis and the e-dog Aibo serve as electronic companions. In Scientific American Robots (May 2008) Bill Gates describes how "A Robot in Every Home" will greatly transform domestic life. He reminds us that "some of the world's best minds are trying to solve the toughest problems of robotics, such as visual recognition, navigation and machine learning." We can expect robots in the future to execute 100 trillion instructions a second and eventually surpass human intelligence (at least certain kinds of intelligence). As robots acquire more human attributes, people are also adopting electronic implants to improve their own performance. Who are the robots?*

**SPIDER ROBINSON** < <http://www.spiderrobinson.com/index2.html> >

Spider lives in the Lower Mainland area. His book: 'Variable Star', (Tor), has the first 8 chapters are posted on the site <http://www.variablestarbook.com/>.

For info on, 'The Lifehouse Trilogy', a reissue of 'Mindkiller', 'Time Pressure' and 'Lifehouse': see < <http://www.spiderrobinson.com/books.html> >

The first two books of [THE STARDANCE TRILOGY](#), the omnibus of his collaborations with Jeanne, based on their Hugo- and Nebula-winning novella (STARDANCE, STARSEED and STARMIND), have been released as [Blackstone Audiobooks](#).

And then there's the exciting Stardance movie project slated to be produced in Imax format by James Sposto. For more information go to: < <http://www.stardancemovie.com> > and to Jeanne's blog at < <http://stardancemovie.blogspot.com/> >.

Also check out Spider's latest podcasts at: < <http://www.spiderrobinson.com/podcast.html> >

Spider's newest book < [VERY HARD CHOICES](#), > the sequel to VERY BAD DEATHS, is available at bookstores or at < [www.baen.com](http://www.baen.com). >"

"As a special, once-in-a-lifetime offer, we are proud to present sample columns collected in *The Crazy Years: Reflections of a Science Fiction Original* (Benbella Paperback, November 2004). This special posting is the only chance readers will ever get to see exactly what Spider wrote, with no intervening vision and no changes or cuts at all—a rare intimacy between reader and writer."



See < <http://www.spiderrobinson.com/crazyyears.html> >

Read Spider's review of *Erratic North: A Vietnam Draft Resister's Life in the Canadian Bush* by Mark Frutkin on the website of the [Literary Review of Canada](#). Direct link [here](#).

Read Spider's Guest Editor column "The Missing Audiobooks" at [Audible.com](#). Direct link [here](#).

Exciting news! Callahan's the game has been rediscovered! Download it free for PC from [The Joystick](#).

**ROBERT J. SAWYER** < <http://www.sfwriter.com/> >

Robert lives in Mississauga, Ontario ( but who is out here on the West Coast so often we view him as one of our own ).

Rob is currently in the middle of writing a new trilogy about the World Wide Web gaining consciousness, under a six-figure deal jointly with Ace Science Fiction (a division of Penguin USA) and Penguin Canada.

The three volumes have the working titles of *Wake*, *Watch*, and *Wonder*, and collectively will be known as the *WWW* trilogy. Read all about the deal in [this entry](#) in Rob's blog. Unabridged audio books of all three volumes of the trilogy are forthcoming from [Audible.com](#).

ABC has definitely committed to film a TV series pilot based on Robert J. Sawyer's novel *Flashforward*. David S. Goyer and Brannon Braga have written the script, which David will direct; Rob is serving as consultant.

IDENTITY THEFT AND OTHER STORIES now published!

"A collection of great stories; highly entertaining and thought-provoking. This book has something for almost any science-fiction fan." —*Quill & Quire*

*Identity Theft* is now out from Red Deer Press! Robert J. Sawyer's second & final collection of short fiction, with an overall introduction by Robert Charles Wilson and RJS's own notes on each story.

Includes the Hugo finalist "Shed Skin," the Nebula finalist "Identity Theft," the Aurora winners "Biding Time and "Ineluctable," and 13 others. < [More about Identity Theft and Other Stories](#) >

Unabridged audiobooks of Robert J. Sawyer's science fiction novels *The Terminal Experiment*, *Calculating God*, *Hominids*, *Humans*, and *Hybrids*, plus the Hugo Award-nominated short story "Shed Skin," are all available through < [Audible.com](#). >

In her Oct 29 blog, Nina Muntineau writes of Robert:

*In a room packed with rapt would-be, beginning and established writers, [Robert J. Sawyer](#) ("the dean of Canadian science fiction"—*Ottawa Citizen*) gave a great last workshop at the SIWC: "Show and Tell" (okay, that was telling, wasn't it, Rob?). Every creative writing teacher (and Chapter T of *The Alien Guide to Cool Writing*) will tell you that "showing is a lot more effective than telling". But do they SHOW it? LOL! Rob did, with panache and humor.*

*One of Rob's most effective ways of illustrating the benefit of "show" rather than "tell" came through his humorous and dynamic interaction with his audience. He engaged directly with someone in the front row (take note) to demonstrate different ways of greeting someone and used his own physique to give an example of "show" and "tell":*

*Tell: "Rob is bald."*

*Show: "the light shone off the top of Rob's head."*

And here's some useful advice from Rob:

*I was recently listing what I think are the four must-read books for fiction writers, and observed that agent Donald Maass wrote two of them. One is the amazing *Writing the Breakout Novel*, and the other is the best book on being a commercial-fiction writer ever written: *The Career Novelist*.*

*And now, Don has made that book available for free as a PDF download. [Grab it here](#), read it, and follow its advice.*

*(The other two must-have books for SF writers are both by Orson Scott Card: Characters & Viewpoint, and Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy, both from Writer's Digest Books.)*

**ALYX J. SHAW** < <http://alyx.wozupdoc.net/> >

( See also her live journal at < <http://alyx-j-shaw.livejournal.com/> > )

Lives in Surrey. Her novels *The Recalling of John Arrowsmith* & *The White Palace Awakens* ( Books One and Two of her trilogy 'A Strange Place in Time' ), are available from online publisher Torquere Press: < [http://torquerebooks.com/zencart/index.php?main\\_page=index](http://torquerebooks.com/zencart/index.php?main_page=index) > in electronic download PDF format for **only \$5.95 US**.

'The Recalling of John Arrowsmith' is also available at the online publisher 'All Romance eBooks' for only \$5.95 US at < <http://allromanceebooks.com/> > ( search title 'A Strange Place In Time' to find ), and in Kindle electronic book download at Amazon Books for \$4.99, for which see:

< <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0019VTTFG/shelfari-20> >

'The Recalling of John Arrowsmith' ( Book One of her trilogy is also available in hard cover for \$150 US ( red Japanese book silk cover, French-style sewn on cord binding ) by mail order from Doppelganger Press: < <http://doppelgangerpress.com/> > and now also book two, 'The White Palace Awakens' is available "for \$260 plus \$5 shipping and handling for US addresses. International buyers please add \$30 extra shipping for orders."

The illustrations in the second volume are by Eveline Koeppen of Leipzig, Germany, with front piece by S. H. Desjardins. "The book design is by Laura J. Thomson of Doppelganger Press with the assistance of Steve Miller and Anna Embree of the University of Alabama Book Arts Program. The main edition was quarter bound in Asahi crimson Japanese silk book cloth and handmade pastepaper using a French groove style binding structure. The edition was signed by the author and number seventy-five with twenty-five printers proofs."

Note: 'A Strange Place in Time' is a completed trilogy. Both publishers have contracted to publish all three novels 'The Recalling of John Arrowsmith', 'The White Palace Awakens' and 'The Merry Executioner Returns' in due course.

Also available at Torquere by Alyx is *Taste Test: Love Saves The Day*, a 3 story sampler of her fiction ready for download for only \$2.49. Under 'authors' in the green section upper left hand corner of the website, select 'Alyx Shaw', click, and both works will come up.

In the near future both German and Czech language versions of some of her short fiction will be available for free download from her 'Welcome To Somewhere' web site at < <http://alyx.wozupdoc.net/> >

Note: Alyx J. Shaw is also a regular contributor to 'Forbidden Fruit' online magazine which is updated quarterly.

**LISA SMEDMAN** < <http://www.lisasmedman.topcities.com/> >

Lives in the Vancouver area and attended VCON 32 as the Gaming GoH. Her latest novels (on the 'Lady Penitent Trilogy': Book 1 'Sacrifice of the Widow', and Book 2 'Storm of the Dead', plus upcoming later this fall, Book 3 'Ascendancy of the Last'.

Lisa has also had a number of short science fiction and fantasy stories published in various magazines and anthologies, and has had three of her one-plays produced by a Vancouver theatre group.

Lisa was one of the founders of *Adventures Unlimited* magazine, which provides scenarios and tips for roleplaying games. She has designed a number of adventures and written short fiction for the Advanced Dungeons & Dragon roleplaying game's Ravenloft and Dark Sun lines, and has designed gaming products for Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Cyberpunk, Immortal, Shatterzone, Millennium's End, and Deadlands.



Her original games include [\*Valhalla's Gate\*](#), a tabletop skirmish miniatures game drawn from Norse mythology and runic lore and [\*Scrapyard 500\*](#), a tabletop road racing game.

After working for more than 20 years as a journalist, Lisa now splits her week between her job as an editor at the [\*Vancouver Courier\*](#), a weekly newspaper (for which she writes the column *History's Lens*) and writing fiction. She lives in Richmond, B.C. with her wife, their son, four cats, and two pugs.

In addition to her journalism diploma, Lisa has an anthropology degree. She is fascinated by history and archaeology, particularly the Bronze Age.

An avid gamer, Lisa belongs to the [\*Trumpeter Wargaming Club\*](#).

*Vancouver - Stories of a City*, a volume by Lisa Smedman now available from the *Vancouver Courier* (\$44.95), "expands upon a 12-part series of cover stories published in the *Vancouver Courier* newspaper in 2006 and 2007. In this award-winning series, journalist Lisa Smedman explored the history of our city, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. More than 300 pages long and packed with historic photos, maps and illustrations, *Vancouver—Stories of a City* tells the tales of the Royal Engineers sent from England to police the gold rush, the real estate barons who made backroom deals to bring the CPR railway terminus to Vancouver, and the immigrants from Europe and Asia who came by steamship, stage coach and CPR train.

**NOTE:** Most of the novels mentioned above are available at **White Dwarf Books**, 3715 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V6R 2G5. Phone (604) 228 – 8223.

E-address: < [whitedwarf@deadwrite.com](mailto:whitedwarf@deadwrite.com) > Web site < <http://www.deadwrite.com> >

## MEDIA MADNESS

### RETRO FILM REVIEW:

#### IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA (1955)

*By The Graeme*

This 1955 film has a nifty monster realized through the special effects wizardry of Ray Harryhausen, but more than that, as is so typical in many films of this era, the relationship between the hero and heroine is a hoot. Before you die, you must see this film.

We begin with the usual 'Voice of God' type of narration over footage of the launching of an atomic sub. "The mind of man had thought of everything, except that which was beyond his comprehension." Yeah? So? To state the obvious is to state the obvious.

Then we get fake waves -- huge bubbles reveal the scale -- tossing about beneath the credits, and the audience groans, thinking, another lousy effects movie. But no! In this film the effects are good, but not yet revealed.

"Man's knowledge of nature has so increased that any upheaval of nature would not be beyond his belief." What's that mean? The more we know, the more credulous we become? Nobody is paying attention anyway, what with the rush to buy popcorn before the REAL action begins.

Cut to the cramped interior set of a small WW11 sub. "Quite a bit of difference between this and the old iron lung, eh Griff?" says Commander Pete.

Replies sidekick Griff, fighting off an attack of claustrophobia, "Roomy by gosh, like a ballroom." This is the tiniest sub interior I've ever seen. Where do they get off pretending they're inside a giant atomic sub? Either the film's makers think no one will notice, or, bizarrely, they're suggesting the officers of an ordinary diesel sub fantasize about commanding nuclear subs when they're at sea. Hmmm.

Something's obviously wrong with Griff at least, he complains about the crew, "All they do is eat and sleep, or press a button, there's no work to be done." Well, excuse me, Captain Bligh wannabe.

Pete deftly changes the subject. "Listen to that music." They're piping Hawaiian music over the intercom, you see.

"All we need is champagne and dancing girls," says Griff wistfully, "Shall I have Chief change the record?"

"You'd better before we start chasing mermaids." Okay, we get the point, women-hungry crew.

A mysterious blob shows up on sonar. "Scans bigger than a whale, even bigger than a sub." comments the sonarman. Evasive manoeuvring and increasing speed achieves nothing. The object closes in.

"What happens when it catches up with us?" asks Griff, rather reasonably under the circumstances.

"When you're Captain of 55 million dollars worth of submarine, you don't take chances. Stand by to take her deep." But something gloms on to them anyway.

"Where's that radiation coming from?" demands Pete, also a reasonable question.

"From outside the hull," replies a seaman who must have very, very good instrumentation.

"All ahead full!" Pete commands.

"Aye sir," replies the engine room chief over the intercom.

"But we're standing still," complains Pete.

"That's not the engine's fault, sir," replies the chief. Guess who won't be getting any shore leave soon. No sarcasm allowed on this sub, by gosh!

They decide the bow planes are fouled and request Mac, a sailor who has hit his head on a pipe and may be too confused to refuse, to swim outside and free the obstruction. "You're not afraid of a little radiation are you?"

Well, Mac may have a fractured skull, but he's quick to reply, "I've heard it prevents you from having children. I just got married...kinda counting on having children..."

Before Pete can get mad, the mysterious blob leaves. They surface and send two divers to look at something stuck in the stern diving planes. They climb on deck and report. "Chunk of stuff caught in the stern diving planes." But Pete already knew that.

"What kind of stuff?"

"Rubbery stuff."

"What's it look like?" yells an exasperated Commander Pete.

"Like a fish", says one diver. "Like a barrel" says the other. No doubt disgusted with the draft standards that produced divers like these, Pete decides to head into drydock where "that will be the end of it."

"But that was just the beginning!" the narrator quickly assures us. "The defence department found itself confronted with a problem beyond the scope of navy men....a substance so strange, so inexplicable, so alarming that the best minds of the nation had to be called in to solve the problem." Yes, horror of horrors -- civilians!

We see a laboratory with a large fish tank and three figures in radiation lab suits. "For the first time in their lives, three people met." What, they put on their suits in separate rooms? Weren't introduced? Anywho, one is Pete, another is Professor John Carter (of Mars?) and the third is Lesley Joyce, a woman by gar! About time too. "What is it?" inquires Pete.

"Don't know," says John, "but all that came from one creature."

"There's more?" replies Pete, astounded. Had he already forgotten it was bigger than his sub? Guess so.

Pete requests them both to work for the navy. Joyce refuses.

"Do we need her?" Pete asks John.

"Yes, she's the leading expert in Marine Biology." In which case, what do they need John for?

Pete asks Lesley to stick around. Again she refuses and starts to walk away. He grabs her arm and pulls her back. "I feel like I'm being drafted," she complains.

"You are," he says. Subtle, isn't he?

The narrator leaps into the fray. "For twelve days and nights nothing was certain." That's a long time in a lab. No sleep breaks?

"You people work hard," says Pete. Compared to himself, all he's been doing is watching them and phoning Admiral's to say 'Nope, nothing yet.'

"Trying to apologize?" asks Lesley. She points out he needn't bother because her mind isn't attuned to discussing things on his level.

He snaps back with "I read your book on your plankton theory on tracing surface currents." This impresses her.

"When you're down in that Atomic sub, do you have much time for romance?"

He laughs. "Where would I get the opportunity? You know women aren't allowed aboard atomic submarines."

"Poor boy, I thought the Navy was equipped for every emergency."

Well, all good banter must come to an end. John figures out what the gunk in the tank is. Does he tell us? No. We must wait till the admirals gather. Then he proudly displays an octopus in a tank. "This, gentlemen, is your villain."

The Admirals are dubious. "Take an enormous number of those to disable an atomic sub," says one.

"Just ONE of enormous size," explains John, obviously annoyed they had spoiled the moment of revelation by missing the point. He and Lesley go on to present an elaborate theory, that a giant octopus living at the bottom of the Mindanao Trench in the Pacific had become radiated by H Bomb tests, was no longer able to sneak up on its normal prey -- giant fish who happen to possess natural Geiger counters and can detect its approach and skedaddle before it catches them -- and had consequently surfaced to drift along the Japanese current searching for a "higher form of life" to feed on. As proof, they offer the fact that "Siberian seal fishing was reported unaccountably bad."

Oddly enough, the Admirals seem even more dubious. "Who knows what's really happening in Siberia?" asks one with a shrug. What? The military doesn't know what the Russkies are up to? Sounds subversive to me. Who wrote this movie anyway? Some guy on the '50's blacklist? Get the House Unamerican Committee in on this! ... oops. Sometimes when getting into the '50's spirit the better to appreciate these films I get carried away.....

We are treated to a spectacular effects sequence where the tentacles of the giant octopus emerge to clasp a freighter and pull it under. It's a heck of a lot more impressive than the Nautilus/squid fight sequence in Disney's "20,000 Leagues Under The Sea" released the year before.

Meanwhile John, Pete and Lesley are having a farewell dinner in a nightclub on the beach in Hawaii. Will the giant octopus attack them? No such luck. They argue. Pete seduces Lesley by ordering lobster. They kiss. They dance. She announces she's going to the Red Sea with John anyway. This angers Pete.

"Mind if I make a mental note on the nature of women?" he growls, leaving the table. But another officer arrives to announce that "a tramp steamer Honolulu-bound from Vancouver has been lost at sea. This dampens dinner spirits even more.

Surviving sailors are reticent to attribute their troubles to giant Octopii having observed how quickly they are introduced to 'Doc down the hall' at the navy hospital. So Lesley plays Mati Hari. "My turn now," she says, taking off her sweater. She strides into Doc's office and asks the sailor where Doc is.

"What do you want him for?"

"Well, that's kinda personal. Besides, I don't think you'd believe me."

The sailor notes she's not wearing a sweater (still got a shirt on tho, albeit somewhat unbuttoned) and says, "I'd believe anything you told me." She sits down, switches on the intercom so the people in the next office can hear, and hefts up her skirt to expose her shin. Drives him wild. Been at sea a long time.

"I saw the strangest thing," she says.

"Doc'll make out your sick in the head," he replies.

"Why would he do that?"

"He thinks I am."

"Have you been seeing things?"

"Sorta. What sorta things you seen?"

"I asked you first." Gotcha! He describes the attack, and the Navy is convinced. What does the Navy do?

The narrator comes to the rescue. "In the weeks which followed, the North Pacific was closed to all shipping. Sea trade between 3 continents came to a standstill. Hardly a nation in the world failed to demand through its government and press the reason for such drastic steps. It was officially announced that the U.S. Navy was engaged in secret manoeuvres..." Just a slight credibility gap here. Still, I accepted the premise when I saw the film as a kid. Made me awestruck at the power of the US. Hmmm, the film is subversive!

Poor Pete is reduced to investigating the disappearance of a family at a beach 14 miles south of Astoria, Washington. He finds sucker marks around their abandoned car. He and Lesley promptly go swimming to see what else they can find. Not me! I wouldn't go swimming in the ocean to look for a giant octopus. I might find it!

John is flown in so the three of them can have an argument. Pete begs John to help convince Lesley she should leave.

"What does she say?" asks John.

"What difference does that make?" Pete replies.

"Look, Pete, There's a whole new breed of women who feel they're just as smart, just as courageous as men, and they ARE. They don't like to be over-protected, and they don't like their initiative taken away from them."

Pete stares, openmouthed. Lesley joins in the attack. "A) you want me to miss the opportunity to see this specimen which may never come again, B) you keep making up my mind for me, and C) I not only don't like being pushed around but you underestimate my ability to respond in a crisis."

"Didn't take me long to lose that argument, did it?" grouses Pete. The Octopus shows up to swat a local sheriff with a tentacle. How does Lesley respond in a crisis? She claps her hands to her mouth and screams. Then they all pile in a jeep and drive away.

They join naval defence quarters in San Francisco. A mine field is laid outside the harbour entrance, a submarine net hung from the Golden Gate bridge, its metal mesh capable of transmitting thousands of volts, and to top things off, a secret weapon is prepared.

Lesley and Pete show reporters a propellorless torpedo -- it's jet propelled! Lesley explains how she came up with the idea. "I spent all yesterday at the Seamen's institute talking to retired Whalers. This is the result. A warhead patterned after a harpoon is encased in the nose. Instead of exploding on contact it's designed to penetrate and remain fixed in the monster's flesh. We set off the explosive electronically once we're sure it's on target." Another credibility gap! To design and construct a jet-propelled harpoon torpedo in less than a day? Come on!

The monster comes slithering in through the mine field. The exploding mines don't do the trick. The monster touches the net. A sailor on the bridge flicks a switch to send electricity surging through the net and -- hopefully -- the monster. Instead of repelling, it attracts! The giant octopus climbs up the bridge tower and starts tearing things apart in a genuinely impressive effects sequence. The sailor aboard the bridge is informed he "should abandon post at once and do not sacrifice your life needlessly." I'm sure the thought never crossed his mind! He runs, leaving the electricity on. John volunteers to drive out on to the bridge to throw the switch. He succeeds. Pete rescues him. The monster subsides into the water and disappears.

Next we see a shot of stevedores at dockside playing cards. From the other side of a wharf jutting into the harbour we see a tentacle rise high with a boxcar in its curled grasp. The stevedores run. The monster hauls itself atop the San Fran harbourside market building and sends its tentacles thrusting through the streets like so many hungry snakes. They poke out a lot of windows and smear the pavement with many humans.

Meanwhile John and Pete are lounging about the conning tower of a sub as it putters about the harbour. John is worried. "How can you torpedo it with all these ships in the way?"

"This is a submarine, John," replies Pete smugly, "if it can go underwater it can go under the ships."

Meanwhile the army shows up, or at least a bunch of flamethrower equipped troops transported by fire trucks. I guess that makes sense. They drive the tentacles, and the rest of the octopus, back into the water. The sub launches the torpedo, but gosh darn it, the octopus gets excited and grabs the sub, so they dare not set off the explosive, though I doubt the octopus had thought this through clearly. Pete volunteers to swim out and stick a harpoon with a small explosive in the octopus. This accomplishes nothing, except to get him knocked senseless. John swims out to rescue him, and explodes the critter's giant eyeball. It lets go of the sub. They blow up the humongous beast leaving "no trace of 'im." You'd think a blast capable of doing that would flatten Frisco! And that's that.

Except that Pete and John and Lesley meet for another farewell dinner. A TV set in the restaurant announces "We all thank our army, gallant fleet and fire department, but there are three others who must not be forgotten...." -- Pete, John and Lesley raise their glasses to toast each other -- "...the city defence volunteers, the crossing guards and street workers." Not a bad touch, that. They laugh.

Pete proposes (to Lesley, I hasten to add), and she replies "How'd you like to collaborate with me on a book, 'How to catch a seabeast?'" and kisses him.

"Say doctor," Pete comments to John, "You were right about this new breed of women." End of film.

There are a number of famous stories about this film, such as the octopus model possessing only six tentacles to save time and money when animating, and the fact the city of San Francisco refused permission to film, so that background shots had to be filmed from cameras hidden in bread trucks and the like. But the best story to be told is simply that the film is well worth seeing, if only because Harryhausen's effects are excellent and the movie is a lot of fun. One of my favourites.

## UPCOMING NIFTY FILM PROJECTS:

**FORBIDDEN PLANET** by is being remade by Silver Pictures for Warner Brothers. Babylon 5 creator J. Michael Straczynski is writing the script! My favourite SF film! Monsters from the Id!

**I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE** (1943), **THE BODY SNATCHER** (1945) & **BEDLAM** (1946) are three Val Lewton RKO classics set to be remade by Roseblood, the horror division of the modern RKO.

**WAITING FOR GORGO** is a 15 minute film by M.J. Simpson about an obscure British Government dept where two elderly bureaucrats remain ready to lead Britain's defence should the British 'Godzilla' Gorgo ever return. A satire.

**BUBBA NOSFERATU** is a sequel of sorts to Don Coscarelli's **BUBBA HO-TEP**, only this time instead of dealing with a Mummy, Elvis is up against the bloodsucking undead! Colonel Parker helps. Sounds great!

**DEAD SNOW** is a Norwegian horror/comedy about frozen Nazis thawing out and plaguing northern Norway in zombie-like fashion. By the same director of the **KILL BILL** spoof **KILL BULJO**. Scary Nazi Snow Zombies!

**A TOWN CALLED PANIC** is a film version of the hit Belgian TV show featuring cardboard sets and stiff plastic toyset figures (cowboy, Indian, horse, etc) animated to hilarious effect. Low tech but off the wall humour.

**FUERA DE CONTROL** is a Mexican animated short film by Sofia Carillo. Very dark film featuring characters best described as dead dolls. Very creepy and unsettling. Not sure what it's about but trailer visually impressive.

## LOCS (LETTERS OF COMMENT)

From: **LLOYD PENNEY**, October 11<sup>th</sup> 2008

Dear Graeme:



Many thanks for the newest issue, WCSFAzine 14. I will ask the question right now...how was VCon? I saw something you wrote elsewhere that you were coming down off a VCon high, so it must have been good fun. Comments on the zine at hand commences.

The cover...I haven't seen artwork from Roldo in many years. I gave you the set of Carefully Sedated...I know Roldo created the cover to at least one of those issues.

So, The Space Cadet Gazette will return permanently! Looking forward to it. It's been such a long time since I published my own zine, I am putting it together, bit by bit, and I will figure it all out again at some point. Once you get some numbers of BCSFAzines onto eFanzines, I'll be able to check (without having to dig up my collection and get the right Bankers' Box) with what issue I started receiving BCSFAzine. I can't remember who the editor was at that time, either.

The Hidden History of VCon 3 proves one thing I think most of us know...the press is not your friend. You can't ask them to write what you want, or promote your event, or expect you'll get a good spin from the article they write or the photo they take. They will do as they please, and they will usually write a funny article or take an embarrassing photo. I've mentioned the photo the Toronto Star took some years ago at Toronto Trek. The reporter there was to write an extensive article on the convention, and took several rolls of film, but all that appeared was a Klingon eating a hot dog in front of the convention hotel. Sad coverage, and all the reporter did was make the con look silly. My own recommendation is to no invite the press at all. There are other ways to promote the con.

With your report on Ditto 8 in Seattle, think you might try it again with Corflu Zed (26) in Seattle next year? I'm sure you're tempted. So am I, but I can't justify the cost of flying across the country just for a weekend convention.

I don't think I ever met Mike Hall, although he might have been at the single Torque I attended. I have a few copies of The Monthly Monthly and The Bimonthly Bimonthly somewhere in my collection.

I think Rob Sawyer might as well be living somewhere out west with all his commitments in October in Surrey, Edmonton and Calgary. At least he's keeping his visibility high. He'll be in Las Vegas next year at a new convention called Xanadu.

I attended Word on the Street in Toronto on September 28, and it was a fine time, very literary, but more and more, there was the feeling that many booksellers were putting their trash and unsellables out on the tables. There were a lot of people around, too many to see what's on each table. Many organizations who were there last year passed on it this year, too. Broken Pencil, the magazine about zines, announced that Canzine will happen on October 25. I had thought that this event had died long ago, but found that Canzine East still takes place in Halifax, and Canzine West in Vancouver. I went to talk to the organizers at the Broken Pencil table, but before I could, they had already insulted one questioner and were ignoring others, obviously not cool enough to garner attention. I may or may not spend my day and \$5 to see Canzine, not sure yet. Some time spent on the Broken Pencil website showed me that the only familiar current zine title reviewed was Opuntia, and their reviews were uniformly bad, calling Dale Speirs' zine dull, boring and pedantic.

I have a couple of bits ready for Arcade, but I just need to contact people for artwork and articles. Interested? As much as I like QuarkXPress, I think I will go with Word and its flexibility, and see where it takes me.

Still working at Southern Graphic Systems, so far, so good. I just want to stay in one place; I'm tired of having to find something new and either work to the end of the contract, and find something else, or take on a job, and hope they keep me longer than three months, and they haven't. Help me 6/49, you're my only hope. It shouldn't be this hard to make a living.

I hope for next issue, I will have a Con\*cept report for you, and I have a new feature to offer fanzines. Contact me if you might be interested. Maybe we can trade articles, and you can give me an article for Arcade 1.

I think I'm done for now. We leave for Montréal on the 17th very early in the morning, and we take the train from Union Station and relax on the trip. Let us know how VCon went. Take care, say hello to Alyx, have yourself a very happy Thanksgiving, and see you with the next issue.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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