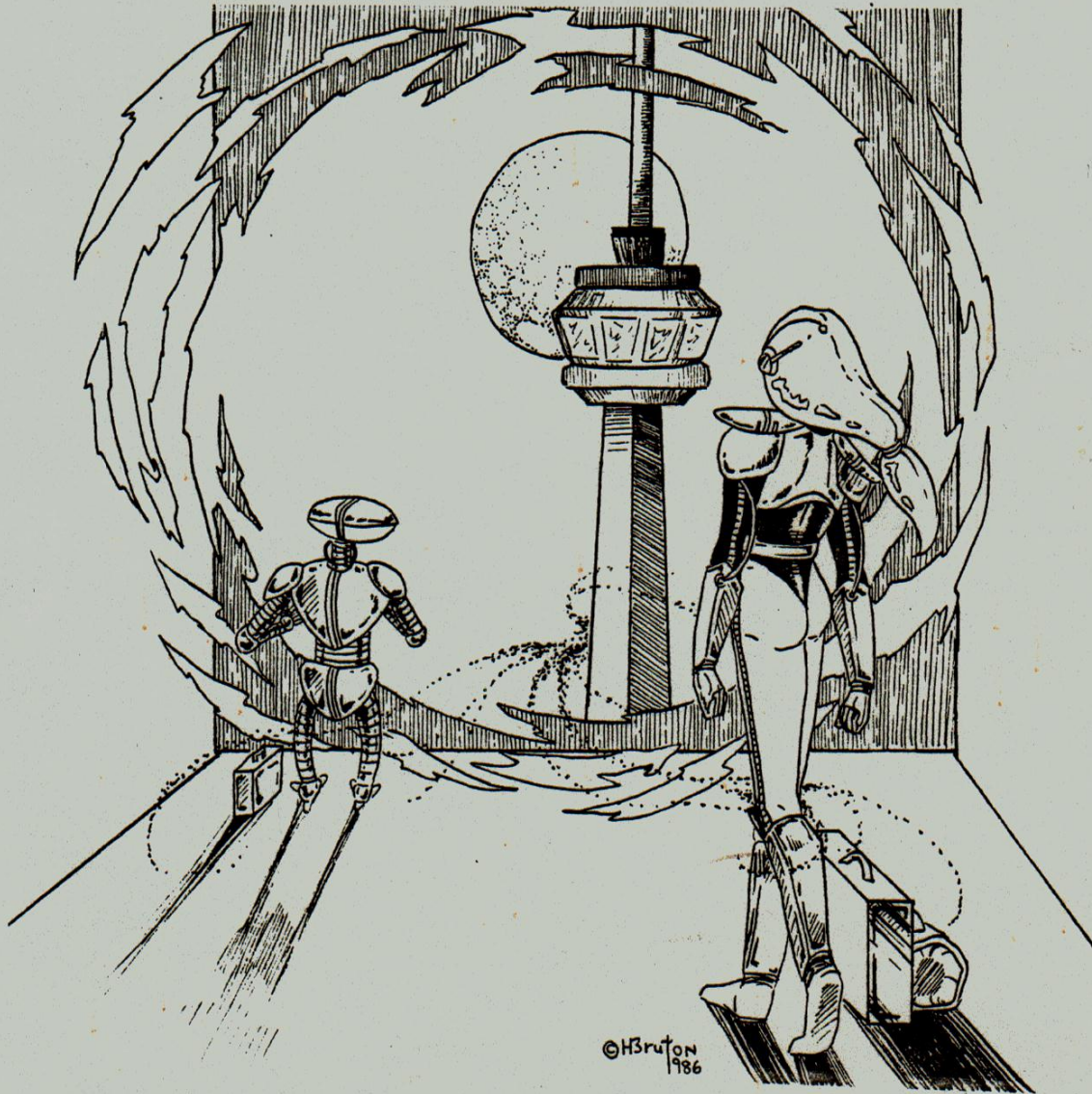


TORUS



JUDITH MERRIL

MIKE GLICKSOHN

GARTH SPENCER

KAREN WEHRSTEIN



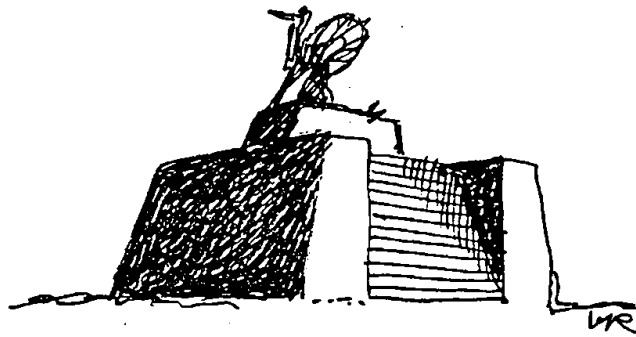
TORTUS



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

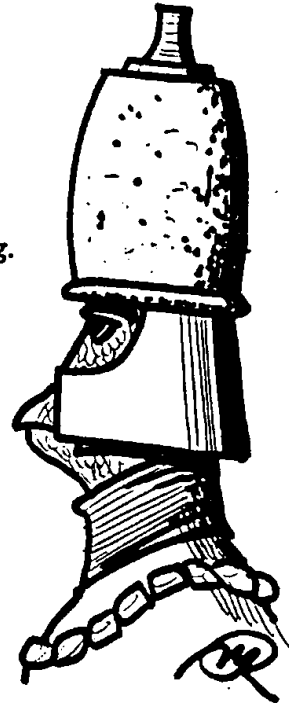
As is often said, it seemed like a good idea at the time. I'm not sure which one of us came up with the idea of doing a fanzine -- certainly the subject had come up in a number of conversations. Lloyd, Mike and I have all been involved with apas for some time so it seemed like a natural step. And there hasn't been that much fanzine activity in Toronto during the past few years. So, we thought we'd do an fanzine during the summer and have it out in time to take to the Worldcon in Atlanta. Well, I'm typing this on November 1

This issue was produced using MicroSoft Word and FancyWord, with pages printed on a Panasonic dot matrix printer. Responsibility for typos and paste-up mistakes, if there are any, is mine. The *next* time you can blame Mike Wallis because we'll probably do it on his new laser printer -- but this time it's my fault. And no, we will not apologize for not using mimeo.

Special thanks go out to Richard E. Geis for providing the Rotsler illustrations, to Judy Merrill for consenting to be interviewed and to Nancy Vindum for inputting addresses for mailing labels.
--Keith Soltys

WHY YOU ARE GETTING THIS

- You're in it.
- We hope you'll write something for the next issue.
- We hope you'll send us some artwork.
- We hope you'll send us a copy of your zine.
- You're a SMOF and deserve to get a copy of everything.
- We saw your zine and wanted to show you ours.
- We wanted to show you how it's really done.
- You slept with one of the editors.
- One of the editors wants to sleep with you.
- All of the editors want to sleep with you.
- Editorial whim
- None of the above



BICENTENNIAL CEREBRATIONS

by Mike Glicksohn

If you are reading this then it means that sometime during the 44th World Science Fiction Convention I handed Keith or Lloyd an article. (And, no, the title isn't a typo.) This would be an appropriate thing to do since the Friday afternoon of that gathering will mark my twentieth anniversary as an active fan and such times of small moment should be celebrated in some significant fashion. Besides, it was at Ad Astra back in June that Keith looked semi-squarely into my bleary eyes and said "Lloyd and I are going to do a fanzine Real Soon Now and how would you like to write an article for it, say on 'What Two Hundred Conventions Have Taught Me?'"

Confederation may not be exactly my two hundredth convention but it's pretty damn close and even a fan should learn *something* after repeating the same action ten score times. And there's always the chance that I can encourage one of you to take up tatting or the collecting of lead soldiers and thus save you from the sort of situation I now find myself in.

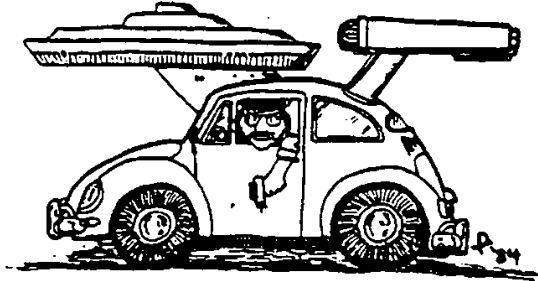
One of the first things I *should* have learned from con-going is that when a faned (or faned-in-training) approaches you after you've enjoyed several hours of truly excellent consuite indulgence and says "Will you write for my fanzine?" you say "No", not "What would you want me to write about?" I should also have learned that you don't then reach for another glass of superior homebrew and say "I'll see if I can do something along those lines" when the F.I.T. replies "How about a piece on what you've learned from going to two hundred conventions?" (The politically correct response is "No.") And when the same damned (sober) F.I.T. phones a week before the Worldcon to politely inquire how your article is going the required reply is "Fuck off and die" not "I'll try to get you something in Atlanta." But nobody ever said I was a quick study.

Which demonstrates one of the most important truths I've realized after a couple of hundred conventions: Fans Aren't Slans. (Well, actually, I recognized that after about four cons but the other hundred and ninety plus have reinforced the observation.) Fans *can* be extremely talented, extremely intelligent and highly charismatic. They can also be extremely obnoxious, extremely tedious and highly insensitive. Just like real people, come to think of it. Most of my best friends are fans but I'm forced to conclude that Will Rogers never met some of the fans I've encountered over that last two decades. Fans may be a little different than non-fans but they're no better and no worse because of those differences. And that was the thrust of my speech the time I was co-Guest-of-Honour with A.E. Van Vogt. Sometimes the things you learn attending cons *can* be put to good use!

Another thing I've learned after going to nearly two hundred cons is that it's damn hard to differentiate between nearly two hundred cons. The reason I don't *really* know if Confederation is actually my one hundred and ninety seventh

convention is that I only went to one con in each of my first three years as a fan so never developed that habit of recording what conventions I was at and what had happened (to me) there. It wasn't until after a few years of getting to seven or eight regionals a year that realized that it would have been very useful to know precisely *which* of the early '70s Lunacons I'd been to. Luckily, I keep just about *everything* so I was able to reconstruct

those early years from con membership badges but I'll never be completely sure I haven't overlooked a convention or two from those formative years. My advice is to keep as many lists as you can: write down the cons you attend, how you got there, who you roomed with, and what happened at the con itself. Keep track of the fanzines you produce and where your articles appear and, unless your name is Harry Warner, where your locs are printed. You never know when someone's going to ask you, twenty years down the line, to remember all that information. Then you'll be very grateful you read this article.



After four lustrous lustrums of going to everything from tiny houseparties to massive Worldcons I can also tell you that there is no such thing as a bad convention, there are only bad con committees. Because the real essence of science fiction fandom is the people that make it up, if a bunch of amiable, like-minded fans find themselves spending a weekend together then it stands to reason they'll have a good time if they wish to. The con committee can *improve* on that time by providing services and an ambience that enriches the weekend but they can't really ruin it (although, ghod knows, some have tried!) Conventions are groups of people with common interests and a common set worldviews (not all of which overlap) getting together to enjoy each others' company. In close to two hundred cons I've failed to enjoy perhaps four or five and I've always recognized that the problem was with me, not with the convention. A convention is what you make it; and if you make it miserable one wonders what you're heading for in fandom in the first place.

If I've learned anything at all from twenty years of steady convention attendance it's that fandom can be divided into two groups: those who enjoy working on conventions and those who are sane. Well, perhaps I exaggerate *slightly*. But I *have* learned that working conventions is not for me. I'm forever thankful to the hundreds of dedicated fans who put in thousands of hours every year so I can get together with my friends and the people I haven't yet met who will become my friends but I have no yen to become one of them. Oh, I've paid my dues and I've worked my conventions but nowadays I'd rather hang out in the con suite drinking beer or sit in the poker room ~~plucking pigeons~~ playing cards than perform the myriad

of essential but essentially thankless tasks that go into the successful running of even a medium sized con. And I'll tell you another thing I've observed over the years which you can attribute to egomaniacal arrogance if you wish: I'm better at what I'm currently doing than many of the people now working on conventions! Still, if they didn't do what they do, however badly, I couldn't do what I do, however badly; so ghu bless them every one and may their tribe increase!

(On the other hand, close to a gross and a half of -- often gross -- conventions has also taught me that the fan who has a high profile marketable skill is also the fan who has more money to spend in the Hucksters' Room, the Art Show or at the Poker Table, so by all means Become Visible. If you can contribute amusingly to a panel The Powers That Be will notice this. If you can auction artwork and not put the audience to sleep like ~~Jack Chalker~~ or ~~Jan Howard Finner~~ then you will find yourself In Demand. And in return for an hour or so of quite pleasant con participation you will usually get a free membership, a free drink or two and a free jolt of that pleasantly euphoric addictive substance called Egoboo. If there's anything more enjoyable than a good convention it's a good convention you don't have to pay for! And believe me, if I can go to most Worldcons free of charge so can most of you!

Two hundred fannish get-togethers have also shown me that no two gatherings of fans are ever quite the same and yet no two are really all that different. It's a cliché that there are as many different conventions as there are people at the con but all that really means is that sf fandom, although based on written and visual material, is primarily involved with the interaction of people. You may spend much of your time behind the desk in the art show or sitting listening to the panels of lounging around in the whirlpool or throwing plastic chips onto a cloth-covered round table or listening to a motley collection of people playing various instruments in a motley collection of ways or swilling down vast quantities of free alcohol but when a con weekend is over the majority of fans will most remember the *people* they were sharing their time with. For me that is the greatness of fandom for I have met many incredible people there and it's for the people that I keep going back, again and again. Free drinks are fun and egoboo is nice and autographs and new books are exciting and it's neat to get laid every now and then but what conventions are really about is people and the conversations and exchanges you have with them during the frantic and frenetic time-distortions of a typical fannish weekend. (And if you don't understand that sentence, you haven't attended enough conventions!)

Is that it? Can twenty years of feverish activity be distilled so severely. To put it simply: no. But I'm not ready to write my fannish memoirs yet. Fandom is all things to all fan; it is what you make of it and it can be as much or as little as you wish it to be. Nobody reading this will ever feel the same way about fandom as I do but many of you will have memories and experiences and feelings as intense as those I have. Fandom, as they used to say, has been very very good to me. But it isn't the awards and the freebies that I care about. It's the intangibles: the friendships, the shared moments, the memories. They have made these last twenty years -- half my life -- more than merely worthwhile.

What have two hundred conventions taught me? They've taught me that I'll be most happy if my *next* two hundred cons are as rewarding and enriching and enjoyable as my first two hundred. Because I'm sure I'll be around for the next bunch, and I hope some of you reading this will be around to talk to me then and tell me what *you've* learned after *your* first two hundred. We can exchange tales in a bar somewhere and, who knows, perhaps Keith and Lloyd will get another article out of it.



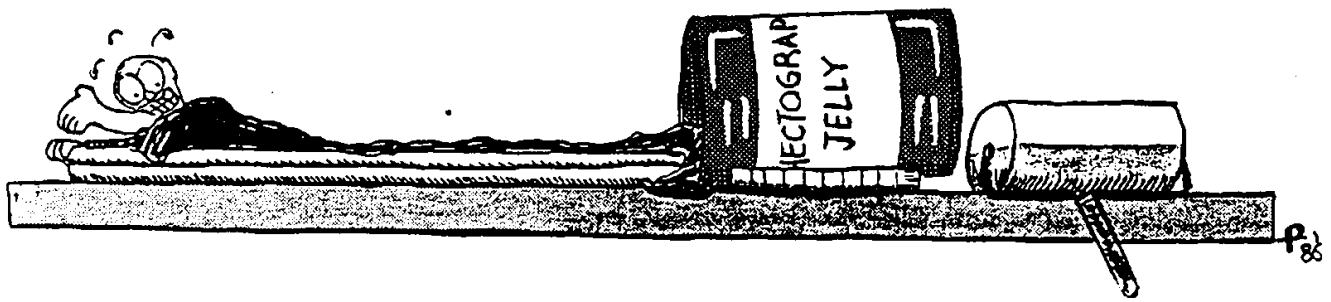
CANADIAN FANDOM

by Garth Spencer

In early 1982, a Star Wars fan in Western Canada blithely told some friends of mine that there were no Canadian clubs, or cons, or zines, or any fans except a few up north on the oilfields. My friends could name almost a dozen regular Canadian cons, between 10 and 20 clubs and zines across the Dominion, and scores of Big Name fans who were born and raised and living in the Dominion.

I think this incident is not unusual — Canadian fan groups have always been scattered, and not completely aware of each other. The rise of mediafandom and divergence of fannish interests since the 1960s only accentuates something that we already cope with.

Interestingly, there have been Canadian fans as long as there has been fandom — there are mentions of letterhacks and amateur publishers, such as Nils Helmer Frome in B.C., as far back as the 1920s and 1930s. Harry Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* makes it clear that Canadians formed a distinct part of the background of international fandom in the 1940s and 50s. One of the most prolific fanpublishers in that period was Leslie Croutch; one of the first attempts at a national newsletter, *Canadian Fandom*, dates from the early 1940s. The first Torcon was held in 1948.



And yet these fans were divided by geography far more than American fans. Canada is about the size of Siberia, but the population, even today is about that of California (24 million or so). Most Canadians, and for that matter most Canadian fans, live in cities within a few hundred miles of the American border; it's far easier to know and associate with American fans and cons than with some Canadian groups.

Taral, a fanpublisher and fanartist in Toronto, has done a lot to trace the fanhistory of Canadians, which seems to centre on Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. The Ontario SF Club, which only broke up into diverse groups recently, dates back to the mid-1960s; most of the current clubs and conventions across the Dominion began in the 1970s: the Halcon Sf & Fantasy Society, Maplecon, the Ottawa SF Society, the Edmonton Sf & Comic Art Society, the B.C. SF Association.

Other fannish institutions began in this period, such as *New Canadian Fandom* (another attempt at a national newsletter), *CANADAPA*, and the small but interactive fandom in Quebec, bringing together fans, pro writers and graphic artists in the francophone community. And as usual, Canadian fans were some of the best-known regular contributors to convention and fannish fandom, writing in, publishing their fanzines, participating in conventions.

The 1980s seem to have been a time of trials for Canadian fans and fanac; either that, or I'm too close to recent events. At any rate, Canadian clubs, cons and fanzines seem to have weathered the breakdown of a former consensus as to what fandom is, in the first place.

Item: One of *New Canadian Fandom's* first reports on a Halcon indicated that this isolated fannish community had some odd ideas as to what constituted a con. Don't get me wrong, Halcon is apparently quite a pleasant weekend, but at first the committee placed a lot of restrictions on what members could see and do. Contact with other fan groups had to be re-established.

Item: Since the late 1970s, when an Old Guard group formed in the Edmonton fan community, a few of its members became reluctant to let younger fans gain some experience at running ESFACAS or its convention, NonCon ... in Edmonton as in Calgary and Toronto, newer and younger fans have established their own cons, serving different interests at different times of year.

Item: From 1980 onward, strange things kept happening to the newly-established Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards. This fan-voted award for professional works by Canadian authors kept suffering from poor advertising and communications until 1985.

Item: *CANADAPA*, the cross Canadian apa, folded due to lack of support.

Item: *New Canadian Fandom* folded, and was eventually succeeded by *Maple Leaf Rag*.

The remarkable thing is not the mild problems we had in the early 1980s, but how Canadian fandom carried on and even grew in the meantime.

By now, 1986, Canadian fans are at least in some communication with each other, and usually aware of each other's existence and activities. More communication has been established with the dynamic French-Canadian SF and comic art community. The Canadian SF and Fantasy Award is on a sound footing. New fanzines, clubs, and conventions have sprung up, in Winnipeg, Calgary and Victoria.

Canadian fandom is about as divided, fractious and erratically informed as ever — which makes it, I suppose, quintessentially fannish.



AN EDITORIAL PLUG

Garth Spencer, along with Georges Giguere, has been doing yeoman service for Canadian fandom by producing *Maple Leaf Rag*, certainly the best fanzine to come out of Canada in a number of years. It's mainly a newszine, with a large and lively letter column, con and fanzine reviews and much opinionated comment by Garth and Georges.

If you're a Canadian fan and you aren't reading *Maple Leaf Rag* you are missing out on a vital part of fandom in this country. If you're not a Canadian you'll probably enjoy it anyway. Like all fanzines, *MLR* is a labour of love, and more than most it deserves your support. It's bi-monthly and is available for \$8 a year or the usual.

Contact Garth Spencer, 1296 Richardson St. VICTORIA, B.C. V8V 3E1.

A MODEST PROPOSAL

by Heather Ashby

For the first time next year, Toronto's Ad Astra is hosting the Convention. Naturally, all Torfandom is getting hot and bothered about the creation of a suitable and striking design for the CASPER award. This is considered to be of burning importance because some fen are pushing to set a permanent form for the award. Traditionally, the physical nature of the CASPER has been left up to the discretion and financial capacity of the individual committee overseeing the process. To gain national acclamation, a permanent CASPER award design should be distinctive, reasonably priced, available from coast to coast, and naturally, symbolic of the spirit behind the CASPER. If possible, some of the traditional variety should also be retained.

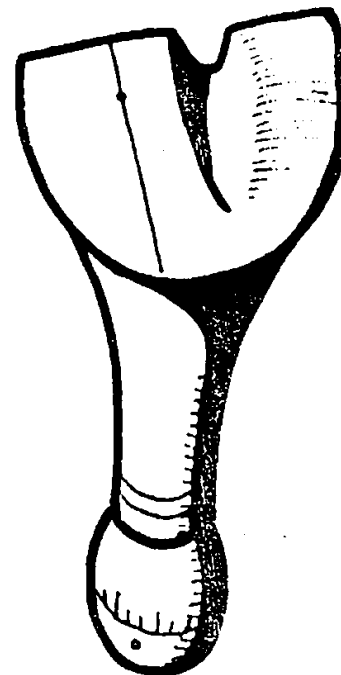
This being the situation, I would like to propose a likely candidate for the CASPER: a little item (easily stowed in suitcases or knapsacks!) from the Consumers Distributing catalogue. It's affectionately known to staff and their families as the 407-122, and it fits to perfection all the above-named requirements for a permanent CASPER award.

First of all the 407-122 has a simple but elegant and readily identifiable outline. It has a shape, moreover, that captures all the stimulating excitement of mankind's thrust into space. Admittedly, it is similar to the shape of the Hugo, but it is also easily distinguished from that award.

One of the more attractive features is the cost. The 407-122 retails for a mere \$2.99. This modest sum is surely within the reach of even the most hard-pressed Convention budget.

The third selling point of the 407-122 for the CASPER is its ready availability. It can be found in abundance at any Consumers Distributing outlet, as it is one of the company's best sellers. It is, therefore, available from Victoria to St. John's, wherever in Canada the Convention might be held.

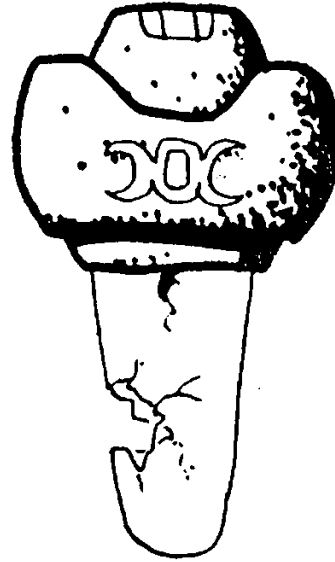
The traditional variation in the award's form could be preserved simply by leaving the shape and composition



DEVICE - ROTBLER205

of the base up to the taste and financial resources of the administering committee involved. Any material from pine to marble to coprolites might be used.

Most important, perhaps, are the symbolic connotations of the 407-122. The CASPERS are awarded by true Canadians to true Canadians for truly Canadian efforts in the fields of SF and fandom. Could there be a more appropriate symbol for this than a 407-122 proudly erected on, say a tasteful birch pedestal? Could there possibly be a more appropriate symbol for an act of tasteless self-gratification than a personal vibrator? Batteries not included.



DEACTIVATED DEVICE

CR

SEE YOU IN LEO

by Christopher Coggon

It's October 12th 1992, exactly 500 years to the day since Columbus discovered America. At seven in the morning tourists are boarding their flight, excited and talkative as usual. As they enter the cabin, stewardesses escort them to their seats and help with the safety straps. Soon, all twenty passengers are readied for flight. Everything seems normal. But this morning is different and these people aren't on an airliner. They are the first space tourists, awaiting launch into Earth orbit.

Their spacecraft has flown 53 times before, but this is the first time that paying passengers are on board. Only as tall as the tail of a jumbo jet, the ship's single stage is powerful enough to fly into orbit without boosters or external tanks, and is completely reusable. The cabin is a spacious twenty feet wide, with a galley, toilet facilities and a sea-level environment. All surfaces are padded for quietness and protection when floating around in zero-g. Each seat has its own window and video display that shows views from around the ship.

The countdown proceeds rapidly. The 48 combustors that ring the domed base of the ship ignite and build up thrust. There is no giant nozzle spewing huge quantities of smoke and fire. This engine uses the aerospike principle where aerodynamic forces themselves create the nozzle of the rocket as it flies. Burning dense liquid oxygen and slush hydrogen, the craft leaves the simple launch pad. It thrusts vertically into the morning sky leaving a trail of steam.

In their comfortable couches the passengers experience a fairly gentle acceleration of 3 gravities. The sky quickly turns black as the ship leaves the atmosphere behind. After seven minutes the engines shut down and the passengers experience their first taste of weightlessness.

Drifting by once every 90 minutes, the glories of our world lay spread below. The filigree of snowy mountains, the rust and gold of deserts, and silver moonlight on the ocean parade slowly past. Soft music plays as night suddenly explodes into the colours of a space sunrise. Gourmet meals are served. Africa drifts into India. Arctic ice glints sharply, replaced minutes later by the Amazon carving its way through the deep jungle green. The ever changing panorama hypnotizes and enchants. Pity the early astronauts in their cramped capsules with little time to waste looking through a porthole.

After eight orbits the ship makes a retro-burn, halfway around the globe from the launch site. As re-entry begins a salmon pink glow is all that can be seen outside. The ship sweats a film of water through hundreds of tiny holes in its skin, to carry away the heat of re-entry. The passengers feel three times their weight as the ship decelerates. At thirty seconds out the aerospike engine fires and the landing legs extend. Slowly the craft settles to the ground, hovers, and touches down.

This is no flight of fancy. Trips exactly as described are now in planning using the proposed Phoenix E spacecraft. You can make your reservation today, for an upcoming flight, simply by filling out a few forms and opening an escrow account. Under the auspices of Society Expeditions of Seattle WA, Project Space Voyage will allow 20 tourists to depart for 8 Earth orbits every Thursday morning from the Society's Space Resort. Famous as a travel and expedition cruise company, the Society specializes in all-inclusive lecture tours to remote locations. Tours offered range from Antarctic cruises to a private 727 jet going around the world in 30 days. The Society currently takes more than 5,000 people a year to all continents and oceans.

On arrival at the Space Resort clients are welcomed to first class accommodations with luxury facilities. Three days of orientation and briefing in a specially prepared training centre near the resort complex allow everyone to get the most out of the flight. The fifth day is the Big One, followed by two days of relaxing after having travelled 200,000 miles in 12 hours. Anyone in reasonable physical condition can participate in the expedition. By the late 1990s the Society expects up to 5,000 people will take the tour annually.

Last October a \$200 million charter contract was signed with Pacific American Launch Systems of Redwood City, California. This contract calls for Pacific American to finance, build, test and operate two Phoenix Spacecraft for five years, carrying the Society's clients into space. Options will allow Society Expeditions to purchase an additional 10 Phoenix ships.

This revolutionary spacecraft is the first practical design for a single stage to orbit (SSTO) rocket vehicle. Previously, it was thought that SSTO's were impractical because payloads would be too small to be useful. Recent developments

in fuel and materials technology have made it possible to construct an SSTO with a useful mass fraction. This fraction is a ratio of propellant mass to launch mass. Usually the ratio will be 1.0. The Phoenix is able to achieve the high mass ratio of 0.925, due to several new innovations.

Today's rockets use liquid oxygen and hydrogen that are near their boiling points. For the Phoenix these high energy fuels are supercooled and become 15% denser, so smaller, lighter tanks can be used. By varying the mixture and constantly controlling the throttle with altitude, the engine comes extremely efficient. The Phoenix itself is made of aluminum and high-strength composite materials like Kevlar to lighten the airframe. Finally, because the Phoenix integrates the aerospike, engine weight is significantly lower.

The aerospike was developed under Air Force and NASA sponsorship during the later 60's and early 70's. Forty-eight combustors weighing 20 pounds each ring the domed base of the ship, providing 640,000 pounds thrust. Exhaust gases from the fuel pumps pressurize the centre of the ring to form a plug and aerodynamic forces alone then form the nozzle through which propellant gases impart thrust. By throttling the engine as altitude is gained, the shape of this air-formed nozzle changes for optimum performance. Pressure and heat on the ship's base are moderate.

The Phoenix can carry more than tourists. In various configurations it can launch small or large satellite payloads, be an automated fuel tanker, and with refuelling even go to high orbit or land on the Moon. It can save fuel coming back from high orbit by aerobraking through the atmosphere to slow down. It is fully reusable and can launch and land in any weather. Payloads of up to 50,000 pounds and 15 feet wide can be orbited, although smaller loads of 20,000 pounds will be the rule. Normal missions will be unmanned and 48 hours long but the Phoenix can stay aloft as long as a month with endurance kits. A Pilot Module is added for manned missions.

Ground facilities are minimal and could be located near airports. A small water cooled concrete pad with a swing arm jetway is all that is required for launch. Propellants can be on site or trucked to the pad for loading. Loading areas are equally simple. A 300 foot diameter glassphalt paved circle accommodates the vertical touchdown. Hangar, payload checkout and control buildings complete a typical operation. Even manpower needs are low. Twenty people can launch, land and refurbish a Phoenix vehicle. As most flights will be unmanned, one controller can supervise several flights simultaneously. Computers are everywhere, assuming most of the workload. If necessary, a Phoenix can land in the morning and launch again that afternoon. The entire launch complex, depending on location and number of pads, should cost about \$25 million.



Flexibility of airline style operations, coupled with the ability to reach low orbit on one reusable stage and high orbit with refueling, make the Phoenix a versatile transportation system. Phoenix makes cheap space access a reality. According to the *Commercial Space Report*, Phoenix can be developed for an estimated \$200 million, and send a pound to LEO for \$100 or less!

When launch costs are brought down to \$99.95 a pound, it will be embarrassing to operate the Shuttle with its subsidized \$1000 a pound charge. The Phoenix represents a solid challenge to the manufacturers of rocket vehicles. In undercutting the monopoly of government launchers and pads, vehicles like the Phoenix will also force the aerospace industry into headlong competition to produce reliable, reusable SSTO ships at fair prices. When private industry achieves this, the Air Force can be just another customer, for spacecraft or for payloads. NASA will finally be able to devote its full energies to research, as its mandate requires, free from military and commercial encumbrances. Corporations will operate fleets of ships for one hour fractional orbit flights between London and Tokyo. The Space Age really begins when you can buy a ticket.

The need today for reliable, cheap launchers is greater than ever. Private companies that are engaged in getting us into orbit are in almost a perfect position to make the dream come true. With the decline of the national space program, and no flights at all for at least a year, the time is right for private industry. There is profit to be made Up There for launching satellites, processing labs, Space Station components, orbital hotels, and resorts and power satellite arrays.

If a fleet of 5 Phoenix craft lifts 100,000 pounds a week, over 2000 tons of cargo will enter orbit annually. Much of this will be fuel, but it is feasible to think in terms of a 1000 ton Space Station. A manned Mars expedition, a lunar base and the first orbital city can now proceed as needs arise. However, all our wonderful plans for space come to nothing if there is no affordable access to orbit.

In the national debate following the space disasters of 1986, we should be seriously questioning our whole approach to spaceflight. Are we doing, or just studying? Should we in fact build another Shuttle when for the same price we can develop the Phoenix and build a fleet of several ships? Or should we continue to let the government handle things? Obviously, with its present facilities and manpower, NASA can not cope with the number of payloads that are projected for the coming decades. Orbital opportunities can be fully exploited only with the aggressive competition that drives the private sector. America can assume the leadership in space once again. The pioneers have gone before blazing a trail to the stars. The settlers are needed now to tame this new ocean for the benefit of Earth. The first orbital tour is leaving soon, and so am I. The line forms to the left.

ANOTHER EDITORIAL PLUG

Chris Coggon also publishes an excellent book about the Space Shuttle, *The Space Transportation Systems Reference*. It's available from Apogee Books, 37 Hawthorne Ave. Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., P6B 1C6. Cost is \$24.95 in U.S. dollars (or Canadian equivalent).

PINK FLAMINGOS CROSS THE PRAIRIES

by Michael Skeet and Lorna Toolis

September, 1985: Lorna Toolis and Michael Skeet, Edmonton fans and all-around Neat People, pass through the city and metropolitan area of Toronto, on the Drunken Dragon 1985 Cross-Canada tour -- a three week regional eating binge thinly disguised as a vacation. The temperature is 34C, the apparent humidity 187 per cent. Fish float through the atmosphere before the tourists' very eyes, complaining about how sticky it's been lately. Skeet and Toolis agree that no sane human being would ever live here. By mutual consent, they terminate their stay after two and a half days (and six restaurants), vowing never to return.

February, 1986: Lorna Toolis and Michael Skeet are informed that, after a cross-Canada search, Lorna has been chosen as the new head of the Spaced Out Library -- in Toronto. In a state of shock, they prepare to move to the mysterious East.

* * *

Moving has been a way of life for us, Michael especially (13 moves in the past 11 years). But nothing in our previous experience prepared us for the dubious joys of a cross-country fannish move. What, for example, were we to do with our two cats? In previous moves, they'd been sequestered either in bathrooms or automobiles until the ruckus died down. As the cross-country bathroom has yet to be invented, a new method would have to be devised.

What about the books? Lorna *likes* to collect books. She has close to seven thousand of them to prove it. Could they be left to the tender mercies of the movers? (Lorna insisted on packing them herself.) Would the rather large boxes the movers provided be equal to the task, or would 60 of those cartons, each weighing upwards of 25 kilos, put a permanent sprain in our relationship with the movers? (We ended up filling nearly 100 smaller boxes -- and the movers complained that the quantity of lighter boxes was worse than the individual weight of the heavier ones.)

Could we cope with a three-week separation? In her untrammelled pleasure of going to a new job (not to mention leaving the old one), Lorna promised SOL that she would be at work in mid-March. That left Michael to finish the packing, cope with the movers, drug the cats and hijack them onto a plane, say good-bye to everyone in Edmonton and swamp out the old house before driving his weary way East.


Lorna, meanwhile, would have to cope with three weeks in a (very) strange city, camping out on an acquaintance's couch without benefit of home, hearth and book collection. This posed a different kind of problem. Lorna reads quickly -- no,

make that alarmingly quickly. It is nothing for her to go through a half-dozen 400 page tomes in any given evening. Without the presence of her loving husband to -- um, distract her, it was conceivable that even this pace would be exceeded. When Lorna is away from her books and wants to read, she simply buys more books. It was entirely conceivable that the end of three weeks apart would see Lorna greeting Michael from behind a stack of some 200 new volumes. Contrary to popular belief this was not a cheering thought.

One by one, though, the problems began to unravel themselves. The first difficulty to resolve itself concerned our house in Edmonton. The lease we had signed had no transfer clause, and didn't expire until the end of May. We were not in the slightest looking forward to paying what amounted to a \$1200 penalty for leaving before the lease expired. Fortunately, a solution presented itself, we were evicted.

The bank that was our landlord decided, in its infinite wisdom, to put all of its rental properties up for sale, to take advantage of Alberta's "rebounding" economy. Accordingly, only a few weeks after we found out that we would be moving, we received an eviction notice. We were to leave the house at the end of May, but the notice gave us the moral leverage needed to negotiate an impromptu transfer clause. We were free of one obligation. (Scant weeks later, the bottom fell out of the international oil market and Alberta's economy collapsed faster than John Turner's reputation. It took the bank months to sell the house -- it was generating no revenue the entire time -- and for a presumably depressed price. Serves the *batards* right.)



ALLEN BUREAUCRATT


Flying from Edmonton to T-O to take up her new post and begin the house search proved to be, for Lorna, and ordeal of positively Dante-esque proportions. When all the stalling, delaying and general obfuscation went through, it took Pathetic Western Airlines over eight hours to make the three-and-a-half hour flight. Upon arriving, Lorna discovered that Toronto was having a slight housing shortage, in the same sense that Pompeii and Herculaneum had a small air pollution problem. (We have, in our early 30s, reached that quaint stage of life where we are no longer able to look at squalor as being anything but squalor: No more do we view dry rot as being a manifestation of "personality" in a house -- whatever the hell that is.)

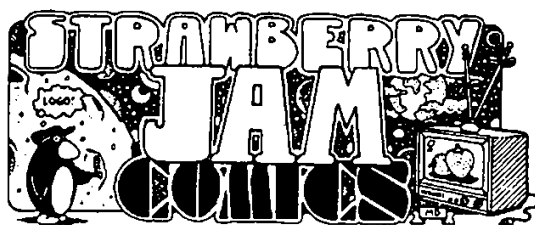
The only house in Toronto itself that were even vaguely affordable (\$1000 a month or less) and met our requirements (accept cats, provide one room for us, one for vide/stereo/computer and three for books) all smelled as if they had been used for years as public toilets by a number of the lower species. So we ended up in Unionville, which is north of Toronto and just south of Hudson's Bay, and if the commuting time to downtown Toronto is only marginally shorter from Unionville than it would have been from Edmonton, at least it's safe to draw breath, and we don't have to worry about the cats being carried off by roaches.

Meanwhile, Michael -- having with great difficulty performed the tasks outlined previously -- departed by highway for Toronto at the beginning of April. The trip would have been uneventful -- the usual last meal in Canada's Best Chinese Restaurant (Calgary's Regency Palace); visits with friends and family in Calgary and Winnipeg -- had it not been for the untimely intervention of Canada's national sport.

Michael arrived in Thunder Bay tired after what should have been an easy seven-hour drive from Winnipeg. Rather than press his luck, he decided to stop for the night and give himself a treat by staying in a modern, nicely appointed hotel. The large numbers of children roving about the lobby of the chosen hotel did not disturb him, fatigued as he was. The fact that there were almost no females, defying all statistical probability, did not impinge itself on his depleted mental faculties at all. It wasn't until after he had registered and was walking to his room that he discovered that the hotel was full of loud, exuberant, minor hockey players and their frequently inebriated adult chaperones. As it developed, Thunder Bay had been taken over by not one, but two major hockey tournaments. The hotels, the restaurants -- even the streets -- were full of screaming kids. The bars and liquor stores were full of their alcohol-sodden tutors and guides.

Michael requested a 4 a.m. wakeup call, hoping that the rigorous demands of sportsmanship would lead to an early bed-time for the hotel's other residents as well. In fact the little buggers kept at it until well after midnight. To show appreciation for this consideration, Michael let the telephone ring at least a half-dozen times when the desk called at four. Then, disgusted with hotels and being on the road in general, he drove from Thunder Bay straight through to Toronto, kept going by hot coffee and oldies programs on the radio. He arrived at our new home at ten on a Saturday night while it absolutely pissed with rain. It seems to have been raining ever since.

Word of our coming seems to have spread: there was a pair of pink flamingos on the lawn when we arrived to move in. (Michael was not offended, Michael *likes* pink flamingos.) But, on the whole, we're happy in our secluded hideaway. It's a quiet neighbourhood, there are always three cars parked in front of every house but ours, but no evidence at all that people actually live in them. We're having a bit of trouble staying in touch with Toronto fandom, it's true. It seems the physical separation between Toronto and Unionville is just as great between Toronto and Edmonton. But *that*, as they say, is another story.



The Comic Book Company, The Myth, The Legend
by paul Stockton

If anyone had told me two years ago that I would be living in Toronto, and acting as president of a comic book company with people in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Regina, Berkeley, and Dubuque I would have said they were certifiably insane. But here I am.

What strange events led up to this you ask? Well, I wouldn't be sitting here writing this if it were not for Dave Sim, and his comic **CEREBUS**. In the letters page he would print these demented little letters from this Mike Bannon guy in Dubuque, Iowa; letters which generally had nothing to do with **CEREBUS**, but which were hilarious. After this had gone on for some time, he printed letters from Derek and Rob McCulloch, saying they were starting a Mike Bannon Fan Club.

Shortly after that, I was at NonCon 6 in Calgary, when, observant guy that I am, I spotted a name tag that read "Derek McCulloch". I asked him if he was, indeed, the Derek McCulloch from the letters page in **CEREBUS**. He said he was, since he doesn't often lie, and asked if I wanted to join the MBFC. Sucker that I am, I said, "Sure". He also said he was CM of a comics apa called **GALACTUS**, and gave me a spec copy. I joined **GALACTUS**, and it changed my life.

Derek also managed to get Mike to join **GALACTUS** in the same mailing. It turned out this Bannon guy had real talent. He drew his zine in comic book format, and it was fantastic.

Two years ago I had just graduated from the University of Regina, with a degree in computer science. The place where I was working couldn't meet their August payroll, so I was laid off. I took this as a sign to go to L.A. for Worldcon. Two days after I got back from L.A., I had to fly out to Toronto for a job interview. I got the job, which meant I had to move to Toronto, since I couldn't afford to commute from Regina every day.

Two weeks after I moved to Toronto, NonCon 7 was held in Edmonton. This is more or less where Strawberry Jam Comics was born. Mike had been trying to break into the comics and newspaper syndication fields, but no one would publish his stuff. He'd been running it through **GALACTUS**, and it was great.

Derek, my brother Brian, Gerald Saul, and I were sitting around in our hotel room, writing a one shot (it's McCulloch's law that whenever any two apa members who are not related by marriage get together, they must write a one shot), and we were talking about how great it would be to be able to publish Mike ourselves, to exploit him before someone else did.

Upon returning to Toronto, I resumed my secret identity as a mild mannered computer programmer. I talked to my boss about the idea at lunch one day. He used to work in publishing for a computer magazine, and he said we should publish Mike ourselves, since it only costs a few thousand dollars to print up a magazine.

So I wrote a note to Derek, saying we should publish Mike ourselves, and that I could front the money, and Derek could do all the work. A few days later I got a call from Derek, asking if I was serious. I said, "Uh...well...yeah...I guess so." And thus Strawberry Jam was born; to right wrongs, fight injustice, and maybe even make a buck.



The name Strawberry Jam Comics was chosen because it had become a running theme for us at NonCon. Derek, Rob, Saul, Rick Wilson and I were sitting in the hotel coffee shop, and Derek had ordered toast. When it came, there was no strawberry jam at our table, so Derek reached over to the next table to grab some. At the same time Saul grabbed some from the table on the other side. At this Derek quipped, "You realize, of course, that strawberry jam is the most popular jam in the world."

After that, we used strawberry jam in the one shot **WHAT ARE WE DOING IN paul's ROOM?**. The cover of the one shot featured a jar of strawberry jam used as a comic book company type logo, along with the phrase "Strawberry Jam Forever". So, when Derek suggested it as the name for our company, it seemed like a natural.

We decided our comic would be called **TO BE ANNOUNCED** and that it would be and SCTVlike parody of television. This is something Derek and Mike had been wanting to do before I came along with the money. Derek had always wanted to create a tv show called **TO BE ANNOUNCED**, and a movie called **CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS**, just to confuse people reading the tv listings or seeing the theater marquee. Since we were doing a television parody comic, **TO BE ANNOUNCED** was the natural title to use.

And it has been a good title for confusing distributors and comic shop owners. They see **TO BE ANNOUNCED** on the order form from the distributor, and figure the comic is going to be announced at a later date.

Derek wrote the script for the first issue, which Mike drew. It was finished in January 1985. Meanwhile, Derek was looking after getting us incorporated. I became president; Derek, publisher; Mike, Vice President Penguin Promotion, Coordination and Management; Rick, Vice President Editorial; and Ron Turner, Vice President Arty Pretentiousness. Rick wrote the backup story and edited the book, and Ron drew the backup story. Later, we made Brian Vice President Cement Mixers, Saul, Vice President Theology, and Rob Vice President Heckling.

Next came the task of trying to sell the book. Fortunately, there is an extensive direct sales market that has grown up in the last few years. There are several distributors in North America that publishers sell comics to on a non-returnable basis. The distributors then turn around and sell them to comics speciality shops, again on a non-returnable basis. This system is better than the old newsstand distribution system, where the covers of unsold copies are ripped off and returned for a refund. Because you sell the comics outright, you can give a greater discount to the distributors, because you won't have to worry about paying back refunds. Without this direct distribution system, small independent publishers probably couldn't survive.

We got the addresses of distributors from other comics and comics publications, and sent them a xerox copy of the first issue, asking them how many copies they wanted, and then waited for the orders to come in.

And it worked. We got orders from all the distributors we originally contacted, except for Andromeda here in Toronto. The first issue contains a story called *Sesame Street Blues*, which is a cross between **SESAME STREET** and **HILL STREET BLUES**, as well as a piece using **PEANUTS** characters. Andromeda wouldn't pick up the book because they were afraid of the legal implications of our use of copyrighted characters. Later, when we solicited orders for #2, which doesn't contain any copyrighted characters other than our own, Andromeda ordered it as well as #1.

About the time we were trying to get distributors, Derek went around to all the comic shops in Edmonton. He asked them who their distributor was, expecting it to be Styx or Andromeda, the two biggies in Canada. But they all got their comics from Comex, an Edmonton based distributor we had never heard of before. So Derek set up an appointment with them. While Derek was at the con (as bartending guest of honour), who should he meet, but the head on Comex. So they sat down in the con suite and made a deal.

TBA #1 was finally printed in July at West Web in Edmonton. They liked working with us, because we weren't so serious, like most of the companies they did printing for. There was a problem with the first issue, because West Web didn't print at the standard comic book size. It is slightly wider, so it won't fit in a standard comic bag. I've gotten a lot of complaints from dealers about that. Also, they cropped the bottom of the cover, so one caption was left off (it said "Funny Humor?").

Derek got them all set to send off to the distributors. He was going to get a ride down to the States so he could ship the copies to the American distributors by UPS. But first he phoned Customs to see if there were any regulations regarding this. He found out that the books have to say "Printed in Canada" in them. Ours just said "Printed in Edmonton", which isn't good enough. So he bought three rubber stamps, and he and Rob and his mom stamped 2000 comics.

We were hoping to come out bi-monthly, but the Fates have conspired against us. First we had to wait for the distributors to pay us so we could afford to print up the next issue. Then we had to wait for Ron to finish the artwork for the backup story. And then the printers kept delaying.

In the meantime Derek decided to move down to Berkeley to be with his girl friend, Liz Schiller, who he met through the pages of WAPA. After all the delays at the printers, they finally delivered TBA #2 a half an hour before Derek had to go to the airport to meet Liz. So they spent the weekend boxing up comics to be shipped to the distributors. But hey, I'm sure they didn't have anything better to do.

After that, we decided to find a new printer, because of the problems we had with West Web, and because Derek was in Berkeley. Derek was going to try to find a printer down there, but after I talked to Peter Hsu, who does **QUADRANT**, we decided to give Preney Print and Litho in Windsor a try. They publish most Canadian comics, and also a lot of American ones, including Renegade Press and Army Surplus Comics, both based in California. They started by printing **CEREBUS**, and are now probably the largest printer of black and white comics in North America. They also seem to be the cheapest. They will also do your shipping for you, and since they are just across the border from the States, they can pop across and ship UPS to the American distributors fairly cheaply.

With all of us spread out so far, it makes it harder to put the issues together. First Derek writes the script, possibly incorporating pieces of script that others of us have sent him. Then he mails the script from Berkeley to Rick in Edmonton for editing. Rick sends it back to Derek, and then Derek types up a good copy of the script, which he forwards to Mike in Dubuque. Mike draws the book, and once it is complete, sends the original artwork to Derek. Derek, meanwhile, is busy putting together the text pages, such as my Presidential Address, the letters pages, Derek's Afterthinks, and getting them typeset. Also at the same time, Ron is working on drawing the backup story in Grande Prairie. Once Derek has all the pieces in, he ships it up to Preney in Windsor, and one month later, Preney has it printed and ships it out. The post awful and phone company must love us.

And so, the third issue, featuring *The Dead Guy, the Man, the Myth, the Legend* hit the stands in April. Issue four will appear in September, so as you see, we're still not quite bimonthly.

In the meantime we have a second book coming out, entitled **NIGHT LIFE**, which will be a contemporary urban fantasy. This was something Derek proposed last summer, but we didn't start thinking about it seriously until last fall at NonCon 8 in Red Deer. Ron is drawing it, and the idea will be to have several different writers, although Derek has written the scripts for the first four issues.

So that's where we stand now. Each issue has sold a bit more than the one before. The dealers I've talked to say we have a "small but loyal" following. We're getting good reviews in the comics fanzines. And maybe one day we'll make millions and I'll be able to retire. The Dead Guy t-shirts alone should make us rich.

And then maybe we'll finally get to meet Mike.

THE RISE AND RISE OF THE BUNCH OF SEVEN

by Karen Wehrstein

First of all, to clarify things, let it be said that the the Bunch of Seven has nine members. I know it must seem inaccurate and confusing for a writers' group called the Bunch of Seven to have nine members, but there it is. We had seven members when we gave ourselves the name (an inspiration of Terri Neal), but by the time we had grown to nine it had stuck, and to edit it to the Bunch of Nine (ecch!) would eliminate the original joke meant to celebrate our Canadian-ness. Besides we have precedent. The Group of Seven, our namesake, had anywhere from seven to forty members at various times. So there.

Let it also be said (with regret) that the Bunch is no longer taking new members. Nine is almost too many already for our mode of function. There is, however, at least one other writers' group we know of germinating in the city that may pull together in September. Call Lloyd Penney (416-232-0294) for information. Or you could collect any fellow scrawlers you happen into and start your own. That's what we did.

According to Tanya Huff, Lloyd Penney walked into Bakka Books (where Tanya works) and said something along the eminently quotable lines of "Hey, why don't we start a writers' group?" They each went into the bushes to beat out whatever amateur writers they could find. Tanya found Steve Stirling while Lloyd rousted out Terri Neal and Louise Hypher; then Steve dredged up Shirley Meier and me. On March 27, 1985, the as yet unnamed embryonic group, nervously smiling and clutching precious manuscripts, held its first meeting in a Ryerson library seminar room (neutral territory). Ask us about it at parties. At the time Steve alone had sold work individually, and Shirley in collaboration with Steve.

Several meetings later Lloyd dropped out. During the summer we acquired new members. Shirley and I were introduced by Nancy Bruce to Fiona Patton. On the strength of her story *Roses at Midnight* (I mention the title for a reason; stay tuned) we invited her to join. At Ad Astra Five Marion Hughes sought out the Bunch on behalf of a friend and ended up joining herself instead. Mike Wallis had intended to join from the start but had been prevented until now by other commitments. Those interested in writing should know: it takes a colossal amount of time. If you can't make time, if your schedule is already full and you refuse to give anything up to write, forget it. Writing full-time means just that: writing. Full-time. It's just too much work unless you enjoy---not the fame, not Being a Writer---but doing the work itself.

Let's put it this way, if you don't mind me going off on a personal tangent: I work part-time as a typesetter to pay the rent. This means I have to go into a room with no windows owned by capitalists richer than any typesetter (or most writers) will ever be, sit down at a machine which is ruining my eyes, and type at

as hair-raising a speed as I can thumbscrew out of my fingers while making as few mistakes as possible, hopefully none of the kind so easy to make in type-setting which will screw up the whole job, necessitating that you do it all over again. This while bosses or salesmen or people from paste-up are leaning over my shoulder bugging me with jobs due yesterday and complaining about jobs done yesterday



which were due the day before. I also take karate, which involves non-stop running up and down stairs, knuckle pushups, sit-ups, piggy-back races and other tortures contrived to work the body into that sublime state of exhaustion in which it will best internalize the technical lessons whose endless repetitions immediately follow: in other words, two hours of enough exertion to make people who aren't used to it throw up or start to black out.

Yet both these things seem a relaxing break from writing. I often secretly crave them as excuses to do something easy for a while (after all, I have to pay the rent and stay in shape, don't I?) I only write because—well, because something in me produces novels, and they sort of insist on being written. Hey, but do I complain? The point is that writing, if you intend to make a living at it, it is a very, very heavy commitment.

It also involves brutal wear and tear on the ego. Though this defies all laws of logic, it is known among writers that one bad comment or review generally makes ten raves all look meaningless, and one editor's rebuff throws you into a tailspin deeper than the ecstasy of one sale (unless it's your first, which is true ecstasy). Imagine riding horseback through the Himalayas and you'll get an idea of the ups and downs. Imagine you're the horse with the editor on your back spurring and reining you at the same time (as they ask you to rework in three days the manuscript they've had lying on their desk for nine months) and you'll get a true sense of how your career will progress. Ask us about it at parties. Steve Stirling has published one and a half novels, almost sold another and sold a slew of stories, but the first story he sold has yet to come out! (Hopefully it will before we all pass on to the Great Slushpile in the Sky.) The most extreme example I know is that of a fellow I met at Maplecon whose novel manuscript was rejected forty-seven times, and read by the forty-eighth editor only because it happened to be the most cleanly-typed one on his desk. The title: *Lord Foul's Bane*, by Stephen R. Donaldson. (Moral #1: Never give up. Moral #2: Type cleanly!)

But I digress. The Bunch does what all writers' groups do: submit our work to each other for comments, criticism and suggestions. This happens at our meetings, which are roughly every three weeks. We have no leader, no one person whose wisdom is valued above the others', a recommended structure for a writers' group.

(The Minnesota Scribbles, the group on whom the Bunch is somewhat based and which has got all seven of its members into print, also works this way.) I personally think an egalitarian structure leads to more openness, and therefore deeper and more probing criticism. I could go on about this. Ask us about it at parties.

We also hold Bunch weekends, in which we all hide away together in some remote spot to do more of the above plus an activity which is entirely unique to us. I have begun to hesitate calling it role-playing because this gets it mixed up with gaming, which it isn't; there are no dice nor is there a written system. It is based somewhat in games but also in Gestalt psychotherapy, martial arts, high school drama improv, and (we aren't ashamed to admit it) the old children's game of "Let's pretend." Simply, a member trying to write a problem scene casts the rest of us (and sometimes him or herself) as characters in it, explains roughly how it is supposed to go, and we play it.

The results are dramatic, often hilarious, sometimes tear-inducing, and generally full of enough new insights into the scene and characters (tone of voice, body language, facial expression, etc. as well as plot) that the author will osmose them slaveringly, taking notes or transcribing from tape, and use them in the text. Now and then, to the delight or chagrin of the author, the scene will take unforeseen and spine-tingling twists, which then may or may not be used. We choreograph fights, using wooden weapons when needed. Classic lines issue regularly. We do it because it's useful, of course. Choke, gasp, okay... We also do it because it's a heck of a lot of fun. Ask us about it at parties.



Sometimes we pass around our manuscripts to each other outside meetings for detailed style editing, usually by not more than one other member. This started happening without being planned, and seems to be shaking down into pairs: Marion and Terri, for example, or Shirley and me (easy: we're room-mates). We've been known to slave for hours over each other's works. (The aforementioned Scribbles, we found out, always photocopy their manuscripts for each other instead of doing readings. There's pros and cons to both ways--like try photocopying costs. We are planning to do an end run around that through the Marvels of High Tech: almost all of us have computers now and we plan to get modems and form a network so that we can just zap stories to each other over the phone. Not that this is going to replace our meetings. Neither at 300 baud nor at 1200 can a hug be uploaded.)

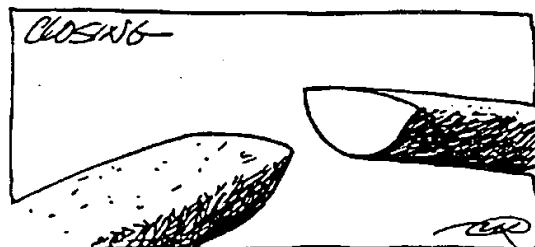
The first collaboration was of course Steve and Shirley; now there's also Shirley and me (two novels in the works), Shirley and Louise, Tanya and Fiona (also roomies), Steve and me (it had to happen) and Steve, Shirley and me ("Gimme that keyboard!"). It was inevitable, I suppose, that we would enter into the grandest collaboration of all: a shared world anthology. Despite initial hitches of group dynamic, (not all of us were interested, so the "Taoh committee" became a separate entity) background work is now proceeding apace on Taoh: Toronto, fifteen hundred years after the Holocaust, with the level of Lake Ontario risen 150 feet. Ask us about it at parties. Bob Hadji, the editor of *Borderland* (the dark fantasy magazine, not the punk elves anthology) is providing major help. A publisher has expressed interest, and so have two of the Canadian sf/fantasy writers we've invited. (No names yet, sorry!) One story has been completed so far (by yours truly), with others in various stages. I don't dare predict when it will come out, but for sure not in 1986. (If you're a new writer, your book won't come out for better than a year—after you've given them the complete, final draft manuscript! Hate to say it, but that's how it works.)

So. All this hustle and bustle and creative activity: where, the gentle reader will ask, has it got us? (Pant, pant. Is this where I get to brag?)

We started, as you recall, with two members having sold work. After a year and a half of existence, we now have six.

Tanya was the third, with the story *Third Time Lucky* in the November issue of *Amazing*. (Out in August—go get it!) She has since sold two more stories and is a hair away from the sale of a novel. Fiona sold the aforementioned *Roses at Midnight*, a powerful vampire story, to Bob Hadji's *Borderland*. My first sale was also to Bob: *I Have Seen The Enemy*. (Proximity helps.) These should both come out sometime early next year. And finally, Marian (who didn't even think she could write fantasy) sold *Muter of Magic* to the *Magic in Ithkar* anthology. We've scored all sorts of success in *Ithkar* (maybe we should emigrate?) with Tanya in #3 (*What Little Girls Are Made Of*), Shirley in #4 (*Trave*), Steve in #5 (*Parsae's Deck*) and Marian also in #5. Somebody'd better write a story for #6. (Now what was that idea again...)

The Bunch Collection (sf and fantasy works in print) include: *Snowbrother* by S.M. Stirling, *The Sharpest Edge* by S.M. Stirling and Shirley Meier, (novels), *A Hero Named Harold*, comic series in *Warp Graphics Fanta-Sci* magazine, by S.M. Stirling and artist Kevin Davies; *Third Time Lucky* by Tanya Huff, November '86 *Amazing*; *Cops and Robbers*, by S.M. Stirling in *Far Frontiers Vol. IV*. I think that's it.



We brag and we boast, we reminisce and we glow, but most of all we all marvel and are continually grateful for our good fortune, instinctively recognizing one fact: when it comes right down to it, the success of a writer's group is very much dependent on plain dumb luck. The luck of the draw, that is, in how talented and motivated those who join it are, and whether they are compatible enough to produce the right chemistry. Lucky writers groups can be incredibly good for all their members' careers. Unlucky ones can be incredibly bad for all their members' careers (We've seen both in action, or inaction). This is the benefit, and the risk. So far we have rolled sevens (so to speak), so we crow about the benefit; we have also wrestled with the risk, and, so far, proved to be harmonious, sensible and careful enough to avoid serious group dynamic trouble. There are occasional tears and hair-tearing, but there is also enough love and strength to overcome them. We are not only a writer's group: we are also friends, and like all friends we've had our ups and downs, we've fought and made up, so that we could, so far, stay friends.

For all those out there starting groups: If your need is as great, may your luck be as good.

Works Out or Coming Out by the Bunch of Seven

Snowbrother (novel) by S.M. Stirling.

The Sharpest Edge (novel) by S.M. Stirling and Shirley Meier.

Cops And Robbers (short story), by S.M. Stirling, in Volume 4 of *Far Frontiers*, edited by John Carr and Jerry Pournelle.

Third Time Lucky (short story) by Tanya Huff, in *Amazing*, November '86.

A Hero Named Harold (comic series), by Kevin Davies and Steve Stirling, in *Fanta-Sci* magazine (ongoing).

What Little Girls Are Made Of (short story) by Tanya Huff, in Volume 3 of *Magic In Ithkar*, edited by Andre Norton and Robert Adams (out in October '86).

Trave (short story) by Shirley Meier, in Volume 4 of *Magic In Ithkar* (out in spring '87).

Parsae's Deck (novella) by S.M. Stirling, and...

Muter Of Magic (novella) by Marian Hughes, in Volume 5 of *Magic In Ithkar* (out in fall '87).

Who Is Joah? (short story) by Tanya Huff, in *Amazing* (out in summer '87).

The Lonely (short story) by S.M. Stirling and Shirley Meier, in *Borderland* magazine (out late '86 or early '87).

I Have Seen The Enemy (short story) by Karen Wehrstein, and...

Roses At Midnight (short story) by Fiona Patton, in *Borderland* (out sometime in '87).

Necessity (novella) by S.M. Stirling, in Volume 1 of *Warworlds*, edited by John Carr and Jerry Pournelle (out in summer '87).

The Waters Of Knowing (novella) by S.M. Stirling, in *Fantasy Tales* (out sometime!)

Peacock Eyes (short story) by Shirley Meier, in Volume 1 of *Tales Of The Witchworld*, edited by Andre Norton (out sometime in '87).

The Grass Sea (novel) by S.M. Stirling, Signet, (out late 1987).

JUDITH MERRIL

An Interview

Judith Merrill moved to Toronto from the United States in the late 1960's. She has been an important part of the literary and science community here, working as a writer, broadcaster and consultant. Her donation of her personal science fiction collection forms the nucleus of Toronto Public Library's The Spaced Out Library, now one of North America's largest reference collections of science fiction.

Although she has written many fine stories (some of which are collected in *Daughters of Earth*, McClelland and Stewart, 1985), Merrill is probably best known for her Best of the Year anthologies which appeared from 1956 to 1969 and which had a major influence on the science fiction field. In 1985 she edited *Tesseract*s (Press Porcepic, Victoria B.C.), an anthology of contemporary Canadian science fiction and her twentieth anthology. The interview was conducted in her cluttered office at The Spaced Out Library. --Keith Soltys

TORUS: It's been a year since *Tesseract*s came out. Do you think you accomplished what you set out to do? Was it a success?

MERRIL: Well, what I set out to do was a reasonably current anthology of Canadian science fiction which would be of a high quality. I was surprised, I think everyone was surprised, that we got as much quality as we did, and without having to reach too far back in time.

TORUS: If you were going to do it now would you do anything differently?

MERRIL: Undoubtedly. (Laughter) But that's all I can say. I've never done anything the same way twice. I hope to do it again some year.

TORUS: You won't be doing the second one?

MERRIL: No. It's a very demanding thing and takes up a lot of time, even the way I was working in which I was spared all the donkey work. All the correspondence, all the keeping track of manuscripts and so forth was done at Press Porcepic. So it was down to a minimum of time consumption, but still, I read slowly.

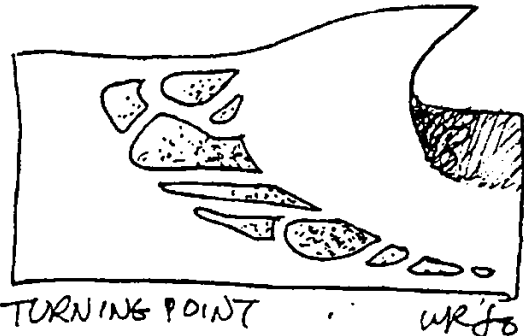
TORUS: I was surprised when I read the anthology. I was expecting something closer to the the mainstream sf represented by magazines like *Asimov's* or *F & SF*. But my impression was that it had a much more literary tone than what you'd get in an average best of the year anthology, for example. Do you think that's a valid feeling?

MERRIL: Well, I hope it is. I would like to think that this was true of my anthologies in general. Certainly my personal taste is not for the adventure science fiction

story but for the extrapolative science fiction story: that is, one that's seriously trying to look at where we are and where we're going -- what is sometimes called social science fiction. And my literary standards are, I hope, fairly demanding. So rather than use stuff that did not meet my personal standards I would have gone farther back to some of the material that John Colombo used in **Other Canadas** and some other things that had come up in between.

TORUS: When **Tesseract** was launched last year at the Author's Festival some of the science fiction stages out-drew the regular readings. And the sf seemed to be getting serious attention in the media. Do you think that sf is more respectable here?

MERRIL: Well of course it's more respectable *everywhere* than it used to be.



TORUS: Do you think there's more academic acceptance in Canada? Science Fiction Studies, for example, is published in Montreal.

MERRIL: I think in Canada it shares some of the greater respectability that it's always had in Britain as compared to the U.S. Literary science fiction is a tradition in Britain and it's always had some respectability. Huxley, Priestly, Lessing, they're not exceptions. But certainly in the U.S. and in Canada academic acceptance has increased and has spawned a whole critical industry.

There's hardly a university in North America now that doesn't have at least one science fiction course going. There are courses in a great many of the community colleges, a lot of the high schools. Any Pop Culture conference or anything of that sort has its mandatory science fiction sessions. A great many social science conferences, academic ones, will have sessions on science fiction. I was asked to participate in a panel at the American Psychological Association conference a couple of years ago on Science Fiction Treatments of Aging. So it certainly has achieved, if anything, a little more respectability than is good for it.

TORUS: Why do you say that?

MERRIL: Because I think it has a depressing effect on the freedom of imagination that people exercise. When we were a despised literary ghetto there was no reason not to do the silliest ideas you had or to take them as far as they would go. And therefore there was a great deal more innovation than I seem to see now.

TORUS: If that's the case do you think it's affecting the younger writers who are coming out now, like the people you were working with in the writer's workshop you did this summer?

MERRIL: The people who submitted to *Tesseracts* and particularly the new people I hadn't heard of before, who were operating on a high literary level, most of them were not people who had been involved with the science fiction field at all. They were people who wanted to write and were writing and some of their writing was science fiction without it being a special thing for them. So I think certainly this is part and parcel of the new respectability. On the other hand their ideas are sometimes a little more fresh because they're not tied into the field the same way. Sometimes it means that they come up with ideas that are familiar and that they don't know are familiar. Sometimes it means that they're doing some thinking that is just out of the mainstream in the field.

TORUS: How did the writers' workshop in Peterborough work out?

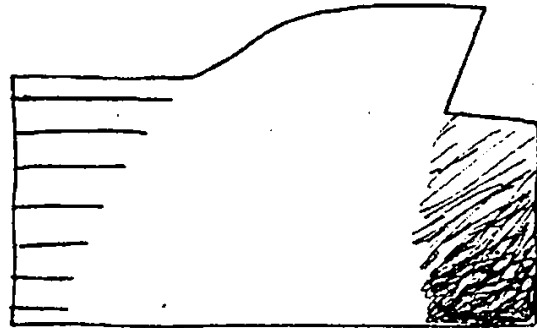
MERRIL: Well this particular workshop was based, not on the Clarion model, but on the Milford model. Milford may have changed as it started traveling around, I don't know, but it was originally a conference of professionals. There were no teachers, there were no leaders. It was a writers' conference and then a writers' workshop on a completely horizontal level where we were criticizing each others' work and talking about the problems that any of us might care to raise as professionals. And you could not attend if you were not a published professional. The only government that it had was a committee, a sort of directorate, that was initially Jim Blish, Damon Knight and myself, and later just Damon Knight by himself, simply to determine whether a person was qualified to attend if they asked to. Occasionally someone was invited who had not yet been published but whose work at least one of us had seen: usually someone we knew had already sold even though it wasn't published yet. In one or two cases there may have been people who had not sold but whose work was, in our opinion, absolutely on the same level.



Clarion set out to be a teaching workshop and was run initially at a university in Pennsylvania, State College. Robin Scott Wilson was in charge and he was on staff at that college so it was an official venture of the school. They funded it. He engaged writers to come for one week each, for the six weeks, and he and the visiting writers jointly conducted the workshops.

What I wanted to have here, and what I hope this workshop will become, is a conference on the Milford model. This first year was slightly different in that I was there as a resource person and not as a workshop member. That was mainly to show people how it's done, but also because the group we had was at a marginal

level: all except one person had been published but not all had published science fiction, and about half of them had been only marginally published. What's happened with it now is that the members who were present this year have taken the conference over and are arranging to continue it next year. I believe they plan to do it without a full time resource person, but will probably invite some established writers to come in for a day or two, or something like that.



ADVANCING ADVERSITY: W/87

TORUS: That sounds like the structure used by the Bunch of Seven writers' group here in Toronto, where you don't really have a leader and everybody operates on the same level .

MERRIL: The methodologies are quite different, but yes, as far as the concept of a horizontal group. that's quite true.

TORUS: In a workshop like that do you think it's more important to teach the techniques of science fiction or the techniques of writing in general?

MERRIL: I was not trying to *teach* anything and I don't think of a workshop of this sort as a teaching situation. So what people learn has to be what *they* are seeking and what they may give each other, whatever that may be. I wouldn't attempt to decide before hand what the people who were there were going to need most or wanted to get most. I think what actually happened during that week was much more concerned with the development of story telling techniques than anything else. Most of the people had a good command of language and literary techniques, most seemed to have a reasonably good notion of what they were wanted to write and what they were thinking about and their science fiction themes. The problem that arose most frequently is demonstrated by the T-shirts that we got printed up at the end that said: "I really like this very much but I'm not exactly sure what was happening." (Laughter) The phrases were repeated over and over again in the critical sessions.

TORUS: If you were advising someone who was reading this would you say that the story telling ability was more important than the literary ability?

MERRIL: No, I would have to read what the person was writing to know what was lacking.

TORUS: Do you read much current sf, specifically, non-Canadian sf?

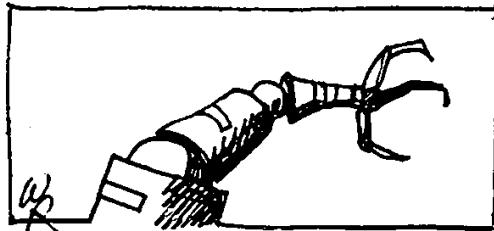
MERRIL: It's variable. I go months without reading any science fiction at all and then do a batch of catch-up and it may be almost anything. At the moment I'm preparing a review essay for a magazine called *Waves* which will be a look at the last couple of years of Canadian science fiction book publishing. That's mostly what I've been reading recently.

TORUS: Is there much Canadian sf publishing and does it have a future?

MERRIL: Do you mean specifically Canadian book publishing as distinct from U.S. or British publishing?

TORUS: Yes, specifically Canadian --- a book being published by a Canadian publisher like McClelland and Stewart as opposed to selling it to Ace and having it sold in Canada.

MERRIL: Well, there have been quite a number of books published in Canada that are science fiction. The shelf behind you (gestures to a shelf holding about 3 linear feet of books) holds most of the titles I'm working on now. One is Clarke Irwin, one is Arbor House which is U.S., one is General which is Canadian, ... (about 1/2 of the titles turn out to be by Canadian publishers) so it isn't by any means entirely from outside the country. But any Canadian author who has a book to be published would certainly be foolish to have it published only in Canada. Canadian books also have, with any luck, American editions and British editions. The myth that we have here in Canada is that when a Canadian publisher distributes an American or British book it is thereby a Canadian book. In some cases it actually is printed and bound here but in other cases the American or British copy is simply distributed here but it will have the name of the Canadian publisher on the jacket.



TORUS: Let's talk about current sf for a minute. I was at a panel at the Worldcon where they were trying to make a comparison between what's being called cyberpunk, "novels in the style of William Gibson", as someone put it, and the New Wave sf of the sixties. Do you think there's a valid comparison there?

MERRIL: Well I don't know what sort of comparison they were trying to make but I certainly see a connection between what attracted me in the British work and what attracts me to Gibson --- that is an attempt to find language and language rhythms and vocabulary and structures which are more suitable to the future oriented or extrapolative material than the traditional pulp styles.

TORUS: That's interesting, because in the panel Gibson said he was trying to write what he called "eyeball" sf because it was very visual. It was a reaction, not so much to the future, but the sensory overload that we see around us in the present.

MERRIL: Well, I said earlier "what is happening or is going to happen". Most science fiction, certainly most adventure science fiction (like most of all fiction) is not written about the present but about the past, even when it sets itself in the future. There are very, very few authors who are actually writing about the real world that we all know we're living in. There's a tendency to use the pastoral myths as a base for so called realistic literature. Most science fiction goes along with that convention. The idea that people live in nuclear families, the idea that nations control their destinies, the idea that the planet is basically sound and healthy and full of rolling green and beautiful rains — all of these are pastoral myths. They no longer exist. We don't live in these conditions. You get first rate science fiction, as far as I'm concerned, when it manages, by being bizarre in certain ways, to describe the present time, and you get even more interesting science fiction when its description of the present time manages to indicate some possible direction in which things might be going. Gibson does *both* of these things.

TORUS: Are you an optimist about the future?

MERRIL: Am I an optimist? (pause) My usual answer to that is that if I weren't an optimist I would surely be dead. I certainly wouldn't be writing or talking. That is to say if I *believed* what I *know* I would have given up long since. So I am a cognitive pessimist and an emotional optimist.

TORUS: I think a lot of us are. That almost seems to go with reading science fiction in some respects.

MERRIL: Well in my case it goes with being a mother and a grandmother. I am not prepared to give up on the future. Not until the last rotten scream.



LAST WORDS

Well the worst fears of all fanzine editors have come to pass and I'm left with a blank page at the end of the issue and no copy to fill it

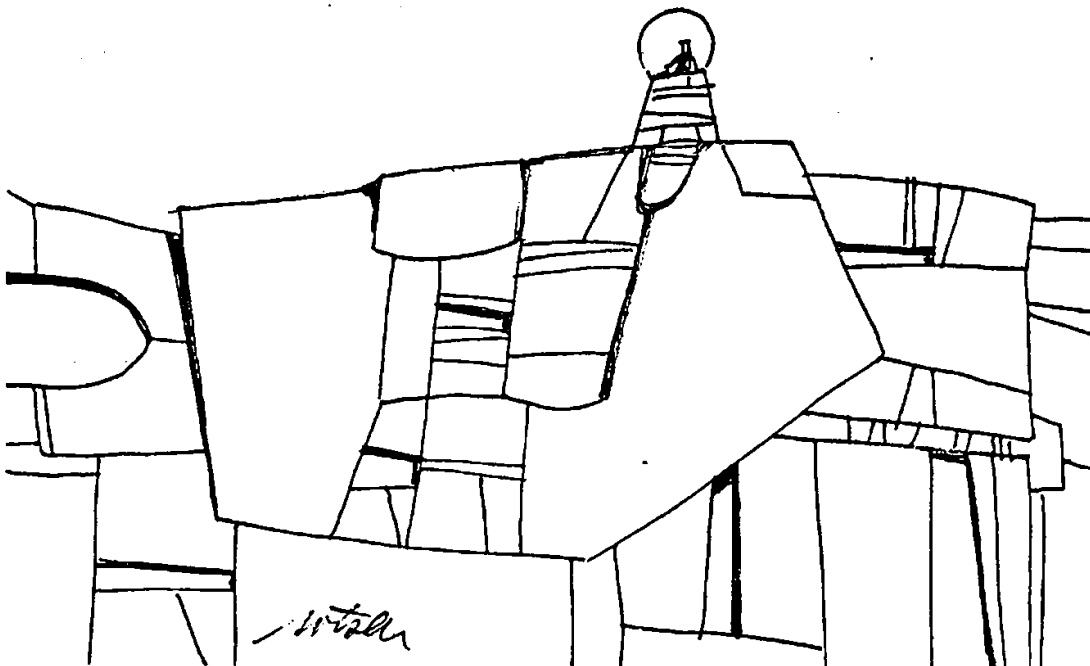
I'm not sure that any of the three of us could say **exactly** what we were trying to do with this issue of TORUS -- probably because we all had different ideas about it. One of our main goals was to provide a showcase for some of our local writers. Most important, I think, was just to produce a readable, good looking fanzine that a wide variety of people would enjoy reading. If you've got this far it means that we probably succeeded -- but we'll never know unless you let us know. Please write and tell us what you liked, or didn't like about this issue, so we can try to make future issues even better.

Yes, there will be future issues -- time, money and God willing. Two issues per year looks about right now, though we would like to pick that up a bit. Look for another issue around next April.

And yes, we are looking for contributions; letters, articles and art. We plan to feature Toronto and Canadian writers in future issues -- but TORUS will by no means be limited to either category. If it's good we'll try to publish it.

In looking over first two pages I see that I didn't mention how you can get TORUS (other than us sending you a copy). It will be available for the usual terms; loc, article, art or a cash contribution of \$2.00.

And that, at last, is it.



HOTEL

Once again we're at the **HOWARD JOHNSON'S AIRPORT HOTEL**, 801 Dixon Rd, Toronto, Ontario M9W 5L6. For reservations call (416) 675-6100. Room rates are \$68 Single/\$73 Double (in cheapo Canadian \$\$). The hotel features a pool, sauna and three restaurants. By car, take Hwy. 401 to Dixon Road, and go west about a mile. It can also be reached by public transit.

CANVENTION 7

Ad Astra 7 will also be the 7th Annual Canadian National SF Convention. We will be offering some French programming, host the **CASPER Awards Ceremony** and run the **CSFFA Business Meeting**. We will also count the 1987 Site Selection ballots.

PROGRAMMING

Ad Astra will be expanding its programming by adding a second major panel room and a gaming room. As in previous years there will be SF, Writer's, Fannish and Science tracks. If there is a panel that you would like to see (or do) contact Ian Wilson at the convention PO box.

MASQUERADE

We've made some changes for this year's masquerade, including the creation of senior and junior categories. We will also have a static display room for Worldcon class costumes, and the return of our popular Costumer's Workshop.

CON SUITE

How can we improve on what Mike Glicksohn (veteran of 200 cons) called "... probably the best con suite I've been to ..."? How can we improve on our selection of bheer and unusual foods? We added **TWO MORE ROOMS**, for a **FULL FOUR ROOM CON SUITE!** At last, an out-of-this-world class con suite!

DEALERS' ROOM

Sorry, folks. The Dealers' room is booked solid with the usual diverse selection of hucksters.

ART SHOW

Artists should contact Elizabeth Pearse for information regarding hanging fees, auction procedures and Customs quirks. Her address is 218 All Saints Cres., Oakville, Ontario L6J 5M9.

CHAPBOOK

We are planning another Chapbook, a limited edition, signed and numbered book with stories and art by the GoHs. Proceeds go to the convention charity, The Epileptic Foundation.

RUMOURS

We will be offering a new T-shirt for sale. We may move the Dance to Friday night. We may move (or drop) the Film program. All this and more is still up in the air. If you have comments on any of them, why not drop us a line. We love to get fan mail.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is \$12 until 30 Nov 86, then \$15 until 15 May 87. We will NOT accept mailed memberships after 15 May. The At The Door rate is \$20. There is also a Supporting Membership of \$5 for those unable to attend the convention, but who want to vote for the **CASPER Awards** and the 1987 Convention Site Selection. (You can convert from Supporting to Attending at any time by paying the difference in memberships **AT THE TIME OF CONVERSION.**)

AD ASTRA 7

PO Box 7276, Stn 'A', Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X9

Toronto

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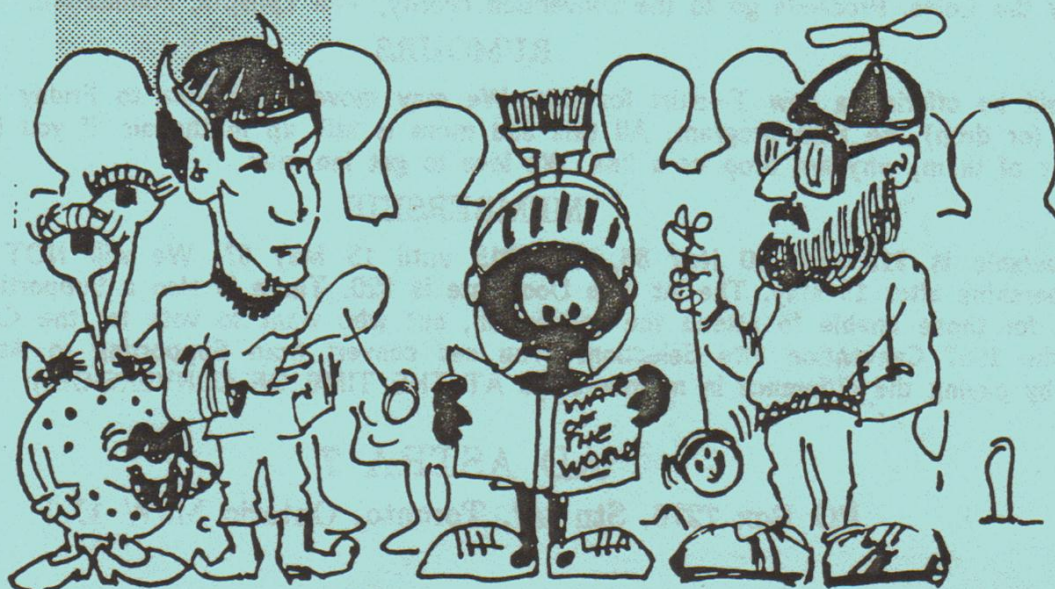
C J Cherryh
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Pro Guests of Honour

Diana Gallagher-Wu

Fan Guest of Honour

June 12-14, 1987



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