

Under The
OZONE
HOLE



ROBOTS ON
Vacation

Under The Ozone Hole

Number Three - February 1993

Edited By John Willcox Herbert & Karl Johanson

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Send us your club news and info, fan news, convention news & reports, reviews, cartoons, fillos, address etc. If we publish something you send us, we can't pay you, but you'll get something better than money: **mega egoboo**.

Write us:

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V8Z 4G5	V0S 1N0

Why You Got This

- ☐ If you didn't, someone else would.
- ☐ Editorial whim. (You are way cool.)
- ☐ You sent us something. (yeah, right..)
- ☐ You *should* send us something.
- ☐ You didn't inhale.
- ☐ Candy gram.
- ☐ Robert Runte said we spelled his name wrong.
- ☐ You thought Stephen Lewis should be P.M.
- ☐ The lawsuit is pending.
- ☐ Nepotism, pure and simple.
- ☐ Skiff skiff wabbo nepno waboo. (?)
- ☐ Dale Speirs said we spelled *his* name wrong..
- ☐ Here fishie fishie fishie fishie.
- ☐ We spelled your name wrong, too. Sorry.
- ☐ Boo!
- ☐ If you don't \$end \$omething \$oon....

WARNING:

THIS IS A PURELY MATTER PRODUCT.

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Laura Atkins, David Gordon-MacDonald, John Willcox Herbert, Karl Johanson, Paula Johanson, Stephanie Ann Johanson, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Andrew C. Murdoch and Lloyd Penney.

Art

Karl Johanson, page 18

Stephanie Ann Johanson, pages 3, 4, 6, 10, 16, 19, 22

The Cover

Dwight Lockhart, whose work graced our first cover, returns to these pages with robots on vacation

The Editor's Opinion

by Karl Johanson

Who was it who said, "A zine's third editorial is always the hardest to write"? This quote, which I'm sure everyone knows I made up for a cheap gag, brings up the question of forced creativity: the juxtaposition of ideas into aesthetically pleasing or logistically intriguing combinations (and yes, I made up that definition, too).

So, do UTOH readers deserve a well thought out editorial, or is it fannishly ethical for me to plunk down in front of the word processor and brain dump until it's past bedtime for someone like me who starts work at 7:00 A.M.?

Should an editorial offer observations

of everyday items, thoughts or events in combination with examinations of great works of speculative fiction, conjecture about possible futures and analyses of historical events, carefully crafted into interesting prose? Should it be the type of editorial that people read and remember? An editorial to inspire and perhaps prevent gaffiation of fans who thought they would never again feel the spark of fascination? An editorial which would make people proud to be fans? Yes, it should.

But instead I must tell Robert Runté that it's not John's fault (see Robert's LoC). I told him you called me a sarcastic

sonovabitch (although I don't remember spelling it as such). It was at dinner on Saturday at BanffCon. I took it as a compliment (and I was being an SSOB (or to be fair to my mother, I was being sarcastic)). If I remember correctly, your comment was inspired by something I had said about fundamentalists. And our reference material on the correct spelling of your name was back issues of *New Canadian Fandom* and *The Monthly Monthly*. Both clearly show your name without the accent mark.

And finally Robert, we're sorry about all the apologies.

The Other Editor's Opinion

by John Willcox Herbert

Welcome to our third issue.

This issue is brought to you by a brand new 386 computer, and new and improved software. For instance, I can do this: **This does not compute.** Or this: **Wow Mar!** Or even this: ☺ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ ☹ But that would be a waste of time and paper, so I won't bother.

Okay, so the verdict is in: a number of you mentioned that you don't want to read another JFK article. (Someone even said, after reading Karl's article, that he wanted to read a really outlandish conspiracy theory (!). Would you settle for a recent tabloid headline? *Di in Love with JFK.*) I guess if no one wants to read the text of an FBI memo on the extra bullet recovered at the autopsy, if no one wants to know that only two of the three shells recovered from the sniper's nest could've been fired, and if no one wants to know that the paraffin test proved that Oswald did not fire a rifle on November 22, 1963, then there's no reason for another article on the subject.

In this issue, David Gordon-MacDonald presents a piece on the current state of comic books and Superman in particular, and local fan Andrew C. Murdoch

tries his hand at story writing. Laura Atkins returns to our pages after months of pleading from we lowly editors for another article. We even threatened not to let her drive us to Norwescon. Finally, after more begging and pleading, she gave us a piece called *"Serendipity and Reader Abuse."* We got what we deserved. (She also gave us a story and something more for next issue. Perhaps she figures she'll get some peace from us now until July. Not!) Karl wrote a piece about prime numbers, and I typed everything in at the last minute.

And speaking of Yankee Imperialism, Bush just couldn't resist a parting shot at Iraq. Far be it from me to defend the regime of Saddam Hussein, but here comes the USA's double standard again. So Iraq was in technical violation of U.N. resolutions, and the U.S. lead an assault to force compliance. Okay, that's fair enough, but what about the other nations where U.N. resolutions are ignored? A "no fly" zone is in effect over Bosnia, and I don't see much enforcement there. Israel is currently in contravention of over 100 U.N. and Security Council resolutions. Why isn't the U.S. bombing the snot out of Israeli military

targets?

That's all until next time, when we'll unveil issue four at V-Con 20.



The Question of Art

by Stephanie Ann Johanson

I recently found myself in heaven. Well.... it wasn't really heaven. It was a Chocolate Show at the Empress Hotel Conference Centre in Victoria.

For just five dollars, I wandered freely amongst the different booths of chocolate sellers while in my hot little hand I held five tickets for samples. Not one of those tickets would leave my hand until I knew all the choices.

I stood crammed among the mundane hordes, mesmerized before one of the Em-

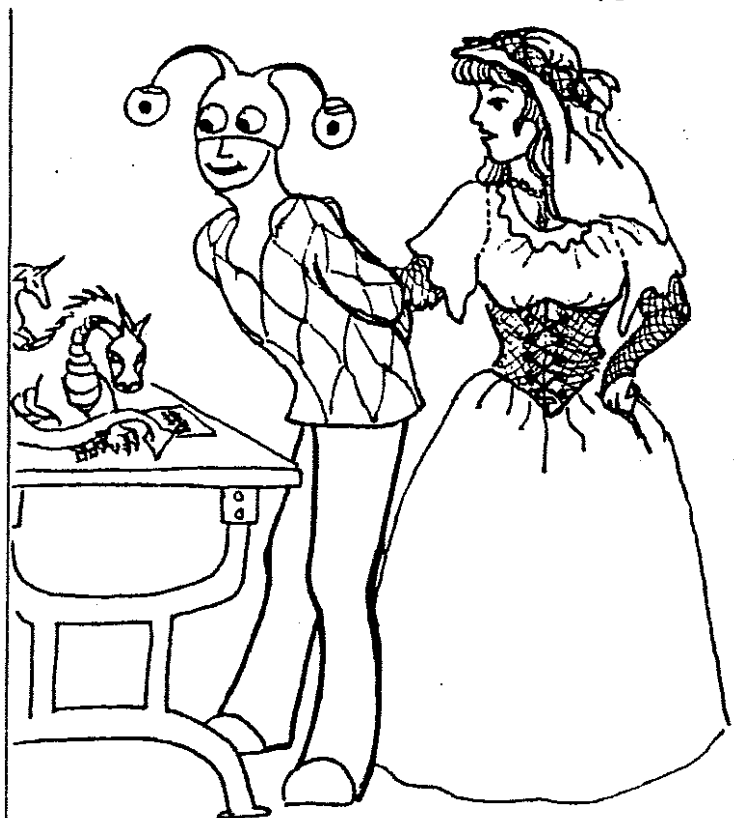
press chefs as he carved the Venus de Milo out of a two foot high slab of chocolate. I began to think Art, chocolate and science fiction/ fantasy. (Hey, I'm a fan.) Constantin Hiebner, V-Cons, and chocolate-dipped strawberries jumped to mind. (Con Hiebner makes chocolates you'd die for.) A white chocolate (died green) Yoda came to mind, but I pushed that thought quickly away.

Now considering that North America eats more than its fair share of the world's production of chocolate, why don't we see

more chocolate in s/f? Where are the dragons or spaceships carved in chocolate? Sure, there are stories that mention chocolate (*"The Chocolate Covered Manhole Cover"*), but I don't think I've ever seen chocolate in a convention artshow. Maybe the melting point is the problem. Chocolate is an art form that might never make it to the Artshow, but I hope it continues to make it to the convention parties.

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH CHOCOLATE DRAGONS. LET'S GO TO THE DANCE.

ART SHOW



THE BIG RED \$

By David Gordon-MacDonald

So Superman is dead. Again. The fanfare which has accompanied his passing has attracted a lot of attention, and dollars, but that's the point of the whole thing. The problem with the all-American hero is that his sales are lagging and everyone knows that low sales are deadlier than kryptonite. He's died before, but never before as part of such a blatant sales ploy.

In 1985 and 1986, two Supermen passed from our consciousness when DC Comics radically revamped their continuity. First there was the original Superman, the one who began his career in 1938 and was still active in his seventies, with just a bit of grey in his hair. He was the Superman that Shuster and Siegel created, and still had that 1930's sensibility which gave him a wonderful nostalgic flavour. The following year, another Superman bit the dust. This was the Superman of the Mort Weisinger era, which was at its peak in the fifties and sixties. Weisinger gave Superman more kinds of Kryptonite than you could shake a stick at, superpets, and a cousin, Supergirl. The cluttered world of Superman was cleaned up; Supergirl died and he again became the sole survivor of Krypton. The old planet-juggling kryptonian with his half-century of vision was wiped away for a new, more modern version of the character.

To be honest, the new Superman wasn't half bad; he fit in far better with the shape of the comic industry in the late 1980s and 1990s. All the character's interrelationships became more realistic, far better thought out than before. The Big Red S himself was much less powerful, and more frequently obeyed the laws of physics (or, as frequently as a flying man can). Yet, after John Byrne, the artist/writer who was half of the team who revamped him, left, the storyline wandered aimlessly for a while. Only in the last two years have the writers and editors managed to pull things together again and produce some excellent storylines.

But is it too late? Superman is competing in a market which favours insanely powerful beings, gun-toting vigilantes, and characters with knives built into their hands and a tendency to use them. DC Comics wants more of this market -- a market which consists of testosterone-driven adolescent boys on the violence inhabiting TV and video games. More and more often characters are revamped to conform to market demands, and titles are cancelled and restarted with ever increasing frequency to give collectors more "First Issue Collectors' Items." Low issue numbers on a cover are more valuable to collectors than something which (like Action Comics) has been

going for more than 600 issues. I guess I'm a four-colour Luddite who preferred comics when they had charm, not blood.

They say that Superman will be back in 1993, but will he resemble the character we know at all? Will this be a Superman who is once again a planet-crushing powerhouse, but now endowed with a hair-trigger temper? Will this *new* Superman, who last year finally made a mature commitment and became engaged to Lois Lane, break it off in order to avoid an area sensitive to a new hoped-for crop of adolescent male readers?

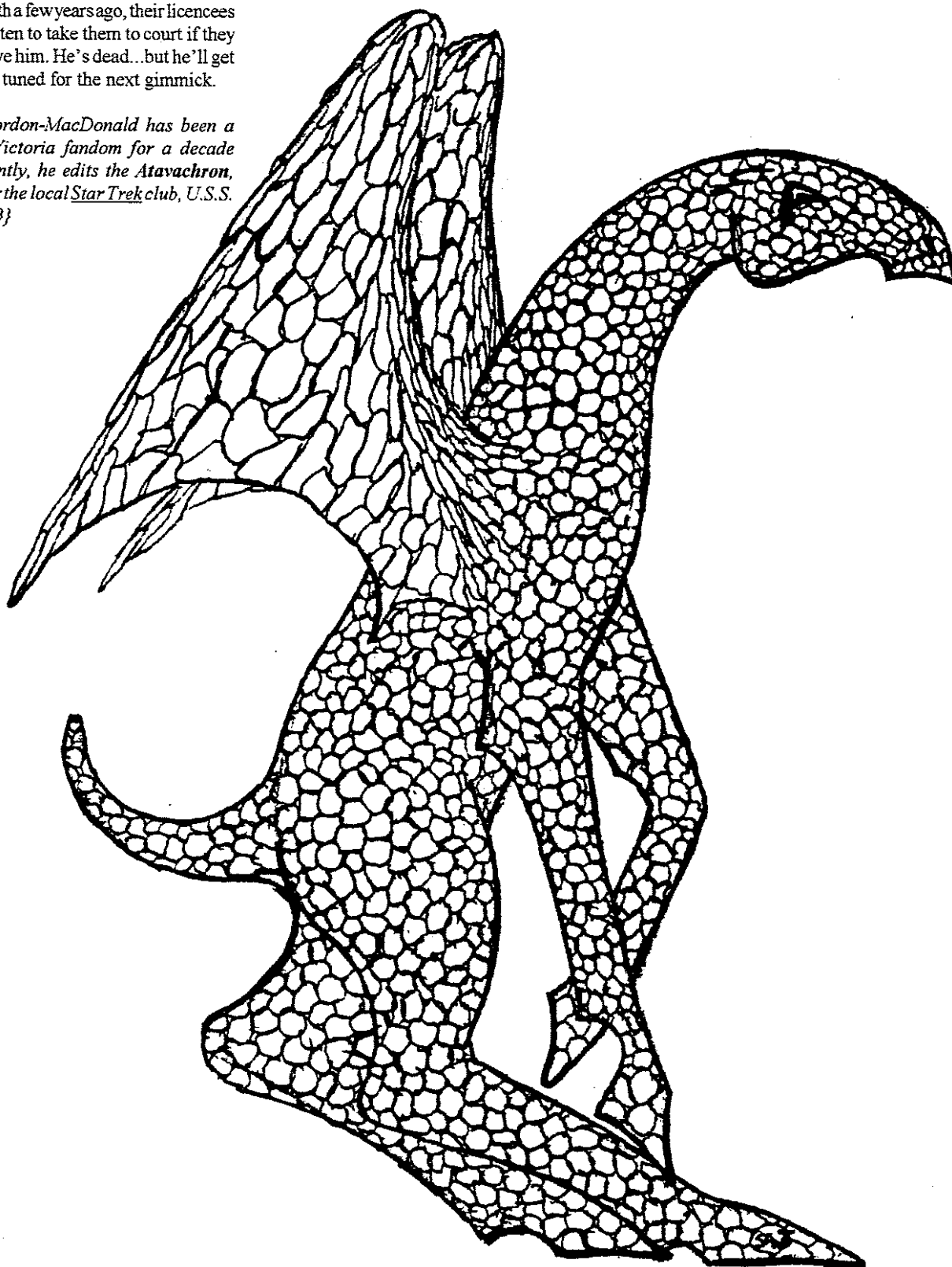
So far this marketing ploy has been successful. The issue in which he dies (*Superman #75*) has sold about three million copies, and the storyline which followed, "Funeral for a Friend," sold briskly. Copies of the death issue are already selling for \$50-\$75 each only weeks after the release. When you think about it, that's ridiculous for a bit of coloured newsprint. Older comics I could understand having higher prices, because toys and comics beloved in youth are so frequently sought (by men especially) as we get older. Some men will pay any amount to recapture their lost boyhood. But today's comics and sports cards are being produced in quantities thousands of times greater than ever before, and saved in plastic more assiduously than ever before. These comics and cards will never be as valuable as most of those produced in past decades. We have to face the fact that things like Comic Price Guides, which give us those exaggerated claims of value, exist purely to allow dealers to charge insane prices for bits of colourful paper.

For me, this is what takes the fun out of comics -- the aggressive mass marketing and price gouging. Who knows what they'll try next to boost sales? Even a comic character like the man of steel can only be killed noisily and brought back so often before readers give up on him altogether. Indeed, this ploy may well backfire on DC Comics. Superman is like Sherlock Holmes, Dracula, and Tarzan. He has ceased to be a mere literary character and has entered the realm of modern mythology. Ask anyone on the street who Dracula, Holmes or Tarzan is, and you'll receive an instant capsule answer. It doesn't matter what copyright conventions say, Superman really belongs to the reading public, and they may eventually show their disgust at sales ploys by ignoring the titles once again, and forever.

On the other hand, if sales figures remain strong after the hoopla has died away, then it might have been worthwhile for DC. Still, if they are trying to recapture readers like me who enjoyed the character

in their childhood, they are going about it the wrong way. The whole business of Superman's death has an overwhelming stench of desperate tawdriness, not excitement. There will be no surprises. We know he'll be back. DC has the character licenced up to the ears, and like the business with Robin's death a few years ago, their licencees would threaten to take them to court if they did not revive him. He's dead...but he'll get better. Stay tuned for the next gimmick.

{{David Gordon-MacDonald has been a fixture in Victoria fandom for a decade now. Currently, he edits the Atavachron, club zine for the local Star Trek club, U.S.S. Resolution.}}



LoCs

Dr. Professor Robert Runté, B.A., M.Ed.,
Ph.D., Esq.
Lethbridge, AB

1) I wish to protest most vehemently the libelous statements made against me in John's editorial in the November issue. (Pause while John scratches head, digs through pile of zines on desk to find relevant issue, rereads editorial while trying to remember having made any reference to me whatsoever.) To my certain knowledge I have never called Karl a "sarcastic sonovabitch" and greatly resent any such comment being attributed to me.

First, I would never use the term "sonovabitch" because it is (a) rude, (b) uncouth, and (c) misspelled. Indeed, I have never understood the logic of such insults in which the presumably justified hostility one feels towards an offending male is thus illogically transferred to his already long suffering mother. Such lapses in logic suggest not only an indefensible sexism, but also an adherence to either the confused concepts of eugenics or the Christian tradition of original sin, neither of which holds any appeal for me. Unless I were already familiar to your readers, it is quite probable that they would, upon seeing the term "sonovabitch" attributed to me, conclude that I am a sexist, fundamentalist Christian of working class origins, uneven temperament, and indifferent spelling.

Furthermore, I seldom confuse satire with sarcasm. As an unreserved fan of Karl's writing, I find it distressing that anyone should so misinterpret his accomplished use of irony to label it sarcasm, let alone that this display of ignorance and intolerance should be attributed to me. You have not only painted me as an uneducated, lower class ruffian, but as someone who is humourless to boot!

I therefore demand a complete retraction of, and full apology for, this slander in your very next issue!

2) And while I'm at it, how is it that this obviously sophisticated desktop publishing system appears incapable of providing my last name with the correct accent mark? It's Runté, not Runte. Better apologize for misspelling my name too!

{{ Well, thanks again, Robert. Yours was the first LoC we recieved for issue #2.

That's two for two now. Are you going for the record? On to your points.

1) *Oh, yeah? Oh, YEAH? Well, my lawyer's gonna call your lawyer and they're gonna do lunch and we'll get the bill, so there, nyah! Besides, shouldn't you yell at Karl instead? He's the one who claimed you said this allegedly libelous statement. And claiming that you said "sonovabitch" in no way implies that you are "a sexist, fundamentalist Christian of working class origins, uneven temperament, and indifferent spelling." I've read some of your work, and I know you can spell.*

2) *This issue we're using different software and I actually figured out how to do accents just a couple of days before your letter arrived. My first thought was that now I'll finally be able to spell Robert's name correctly! Don't you sometimes feel like poor John Bigbooté from Buckaroo Banzai?*

--J.W.H.}}

Lloyd Penney
Brampton, Ontario

You're living on the We(s)t Coast all right...I gather Vancouver's been hit by three big storms, and Toronto, which is usually under a few feet of snow at this time of the year, hasn't a flake of snow on the ground and the temperature is around 12°C. We're having a usual Vancouver winter...and vice-versa.

I finally saw some *On Spec* fliers at the Merrill Collection in Toronto. Unfortunately they don't seem to travel too much, and people (including potential contributors) in the eastern part of Canada still don't know about the magazine. Is there any way to vary the contents, and do profiles on writers that do not live west of Winnipeg? I am not the only person here who might refer to *On Spec* as the Western Canadian Journal of Speculative Fiction.

I can confirm Robert Runté's writing that Bill Shatner's novels were actually ghosted by Ron Goulart... two well-known fantasy writers who live in Ireland confirmed this for me, and said it's well-known in prodom. Shatner purchased all rights of the novels from Goulart, including the right to put his own name on them.

Since last letter...I'm not working in

Markham anymore. I'm not working. The search continues. **Bouchercon XXIII**, the World Mystery Convention in Toronto this past October, was a raging success, with it being the biggest Bouchercon yet, just over 1,000 people. Our stints as MCs with **Maplecon 13** during the Hallowe'en weekend was a blast, and Maplecon seems to have found the right hotel and the right combination of programming. Their only problem is a problem many concons have had these days...it's much tougher to find new staff for the concom. It's a problem I've got as Chairman of **Ad Astra 13**, and because of this problem, **Maplecon 14** is in jeopardy. Keep watching the OSFS Statement for more information.

Ad Astra 13's progress report should be ready Real Soon Now, and I'll try to remember to fire one off to you. That's probably it for now, and whatever info I can get to you (November and December have been quiet except for the usual fannish parties around Christmas and New Year's), I will do so ASAP.

And if I can't, I'll make it up and mail it to you anyway. So there. Take care and keep up the good fanzine.

{{Okay, I think I've solved the William Shatner problem. From now on, we'll list his books like this: TekBunnies, by William Shatner™©®.

Whattaya mean there's no Eastern news? 99% of the country is east of Victoria! Canada is such a funny country; everyone has their own separate ideas about its geography. I was talking to a fellow who just moved here from the Prairies and he was quite upset when some one here called him an Easterner. From Victoria, even Vancouverites are Easterners!

But seriously, let's face it: Karl and I live as west as you can get in this country. Most of our contacts/sources/friends are in the west. So naturally, most of our info is "west-related." We hope we can balance this out. We've never claimed to be "Canada's newszine," but "a Canadian newszine" and we do what we can. And your news items are thankfully appreciated.

--J.W.H.}}

Joseph T. Major
Louisville, Kentucky

"The solution to the problem of losing money is for cons to cut costs and boost sales." Okay, what is the solution to the problem of cons cutting costs and boosting sales? *{{Not spending too much, and selling more memberships. -- K.J.}}* Seriously, there seems to be a spiral of rising expectations; cons now must have some lavish near-meals in the con suites, scads of distinguished guests (well, distinguished to somebody), the latest in movies (not to mention anime) and so on and so on. At the same time these proliferating services seem to appeal to more disconnected people.

Remember, that was how ST fandom got its start; it was begun by sf fans who liked Trek, but soon drew people who knew nothing and cared less about general sf but loved ST beyond all measure. Fortunately, media cons became possible. (But maybe not so much now, given that I have heard that Creation Con has signed several Next Generation performers on exclusive contracts. Are they ready for Deep Space Nine?) One wonders if they are concerned about the vast spinoffs of media fan-fiction about non-sf series, which in turn grew from the media fan fiction about sf series and were started by mediafen who liked the other series, but soon drew people who knew nothing about the sf series but loved the non-sf series beyond all measure.

Well, for the past several years I have been hearing that the fission of conventions is imminent, with the gamers, the costumers, the filkers, and the like all going off to their own cons and leaving "genuine" sf people alone. You will note that such a diversion has been just around the corner for many years, and that the "superfluous dross clogging up a serious con" tends to vary according to the interests of the "serious congoer" explaining what "dross" is unneeded and will drop out.

As I said, nowadays fans expect more and there are more different kinds of fans who expect more in their own special interests. Not to mention that fans with varied interests seem fewer, but there are more interests with more fans as Dave Panchyk pointed out.

I just sit and watch the hordes of strangers pass by. I suppose most of them feel the same about me. *{{We've never thought of you as a horde of strangers. -- K.J.}}*

I have been told that true Trek fen, or Trek truefen, or however you put it, by now have totally given up on the commercial

novels, and have withdrawn to reading fan fiction. Given what has been done with the novels, I can understand that.

By the way, I tried the songs from "Touch Tone Tune Time" and the person I was calling said they were unrecognizable. Was it the telephone or the hearer?

{{The telephone. We forgot to mention that American phones have different tones than Canadian phones. If you are using an American phone (this can be determined by the lack of a CSA ((Canadian Standards Association)) sticker on your phone), divide each number in the "Touch Tone Tune Time" songs by three, then add two (unless the number contains a vowel, in which case you should add three). If the song is still unrecognizable, blame the hearer.}}

Just for fun, I asked a local bookstore owner which ST novels sell better: classic or Next Gen. He just shrugged and said neither. He used to order fifty copies a month, now he's lucky if he sells two of each new novel.

Finally, you forgot to mention that group of congoers who don't care about any of this stuff and just want to party.

--J.W.H.}}

The Honourable Don Mazankowski, P.C.,
M.P.
Ottawa, Ontario

The Prime Minister and a small leadership group of The 500 -- a prestigious group of generous Party supporters from across Canada -- have asked me to recommend several individuals for membership in The 500.

I consider it a special honour and privilege to recommend you, Carl Johanson [sic], to the Prime Minister.

The 500 membership is designed exclusively for key Canadian men and women who are leaders in their business and professional fields, as well as their communities.

You, Carl Johanson [sic], are certainly recognized as such a leader in Western Canada.

Members of The 500 are brought together because they share a special commitment to the philosophy, policies and leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

In fact, the Prime Minister has been a steadfast supporter of The 500 since it was launched in 1979. He deeply values the personal advice on current issues provided by 500 members.

Today, serving in The 500 is a unique

opportunity for you to join with our membership of over 1,500 dedicated men and women who play a prominent role in helping our Party, our Government and the Prime Minister advance our new agenda for economic renewal and progress.

These are challenging times for Canada. And the upcoming federal election makes this an especially important time to be a member of The 500.

The next election will truly shape the Canada of our future . . . the future of our children and grandchildren . . . so all of us who want to move forward to strengthen conservative fiscal policies and effective government must join together to ensure the continuation of a proven and responsible team to manage Canada's affairs here and abroad.

Our Progressive Conservative Government, under the leadership of Brian Mulroney, has had the courage and strength to lead us into a new period of economic growth and prosperity . . . without wasteful government spending and the ravages of out-of-control inflation.

With the election only months away, our Party and Government need the assistance and commitment of leaders like yourself to back our bold economic initiatives and help us prepare for the next election.

That is why your decision to show your support by serving in The 500 is so important to the Prime Minister and to me.

I have already recommended your name to the Prime Minister for membership in The 500. Shortly, you will receive a formal invitation from him.

I hope you will decide to accept his invitation and invest in the future of our country through a strengthened and well-prepared Progressive Conservative Party.

On behalf of the Prime Minister and our P.C. leadership, I thank you for your consideration and your support.

{{I had no idea that an 11% unemployment rate was a "bold economic initiative." And isn't "moving forward to strengthen conservative policies" an oxymoron? So is "progressive conservative," isn't it? And does Brian really listen to the personal advice of The 500? I find this hard to fathom. As if he were in his office one day: "Well, Michael, before we go with this G.S.T. thing, let me call up some of my 500 buddies and see what they say. I value their opinion and if they say okay, we'll go for it." Not! End of sermon.}}

-- J.W.H.}}

{{What he said.}}

-- K.J.}}

Harry Andruschak
Torrance, California

Strange to read from Karl that conventions in Canada have been losing money the last couple of years. Last night, I attended the weekly Thursday night meeting of the LASFS, and it was announced that **Loscon 19** was a success. In fact, one of the reasons for this annual sf con held the weekend after Thanksgiving (U.S. version) is to raise money for the club. And this year it seems that about \$4,000 will go to the treasury.

However, most of that money will probably be spent on building repairs. The LASFS clubhouse is a constant money sink. So much so that it may result in the club reducing its funding for the monthly newsletter **DE PROF**. The current two editors of **DE PROF** are resigning....they want the newsletter to remain monthly.

I had volunteered to be the editor, but only if the club would continue to pay the money to keep **DE PROF** monthly, and expand the weight from one ounce to two ounces per month. I was told "NO" and that if that is what I wanted, I could pay for it out of my own pocket.

Alas, at the moment, he who steals my purse steals trash, and I already have \$800 on my credit card. If I have to lose money publishing, I'd rather it be money lost publishing my perzine *Intermediate Vector Bosons* since a clubzine should have 100% backing and financing from the club, in my own humble opinion.

Note to John: No, I have no desire to read a "serious" JFK article, any more than I have a desire to read a serious astrology article, a serious flying saucers article, a serious Bermuda Triangle article, or indeed anything to do with the lunatic fringe.

As far as conventions go, I am now in the final planning stages to attend **Norwescon 16**. Will you two be there? I have been able to get the time off from the Post Office for this long vacation (not an easy thing to do). I have been to AAA (not to be confused with AA) and obtained maps and Triptik. I will be driving up to Seattle in my car on the Pacific coast route. I'll spend some time visiting my mother and sister who live in Kirkland. In fact, I will be staying with my sister instead of the con hotel. This saves money. I'm cheap.

However, this will probably be all I can afford in 1993, so I have made no plans to attend **Worldcon** or **Westercon**.

Standard fannish pennance for misspelling zine titles is a warning for the first offence. For the second offence, you are locked in a room with nothing to read but the complete works of Barry Malzberg. You

have been warned. But since you are Canadian, we can be merciful and make it the complete works of Shatner.

Go ahead and make fun of my perzine and its comments on the colour of my urine, but remember that if you ever hike in the desert (and the Grand Canyon is desert country due to its lack of significant rainfall), you are hiking in dangerous country. Dehydration has killed a lot of unwary hikers who did not pay attention to the colour of their urine. Too many Americans, and probably a lot of Canadians, have been spoiled by the "Disneyland Effect" into thinking that the wilderness is a user-friendly place. It isn't. That Israeli woman that I rescued could have been another sad statistic in about another half-hour. She was far gone, as witness by the fact I put two quarts of water into her without her having to pee.

That is all for the moment. I have a huge backlog of other zines to LoC.

{{I was the medic for 100-odd artillerymen at Shilo, Manitoba for a month during the summer of 1984. I told them to watch the colour of their urine because of the heat. Even so, I had to evac one of them when he collapsed into shock from the heat (well, the heat and the sight of blood on another's wounded leg).}}

--K.J.}}

{{You can't threaten us with the complete works of Shatner: the death penalty is outlawed up here. Phew.}}

--J.W.H.}}

Alexander V. Vasilkovsky
Kiev, Ukraine

Thank you for sending me your very nice fanzine, **Under the Ozone Hole #2**. I found its title very close to the one of our **Chernobylization** in its ecological content. So, it will be quite natural to trade zines.

I haven't seen **UTOH #1**, but what I've seen in issue 2 is rather impressive. Combination of news, reviews, interviews (and what else can I add to rhyme with the previous three) is something that's rarely seen today in fanzines. News column was very interesting for me. SF&F magazines are unavailable here (at least the ones you have there), so we can learn the news of the sf&f field mostly from fanzines. It happened so that the award news had already approached us though other kinds of news you have included into issue 2 are really new to us.

The most interesting item in issue 2 is Robert Charles Wilson's interview. In November I was able to read three of his books

and they impressed me a lot. I started from his debut novel, *A Hidden Place*, and it exceeded all my expectations. To start with such a good work is a sign of great potential abilities, ain't it? Then I read his latest novel at that time, *A Bridge of Years*, and it also impressed me but in somewhat the other way. To write a novel which sells well is certainly one of the signs of maturity though not the only one. Fortunately, Robert Charles Wilson shows the other signs of writer's maturity, elegant style, deep concerning of mankind's ecological problems, a sense of history (or a sense of time and place when he writes about 1962 New York City). Beside that, the plot is masterfully constructed, and it's simply impossible to put the book aside. I wonder why *A Bridge of Years* was not nominated for a Hugo? After this one, I read *Gypsies*, which is not as good, but interesting to read. I'm eager to read his new novel, *The Harvest*.

I'd like to review *A Bridge of Years* in **Chernobylization 6**, due out by the end of winter. It will be your first issue, by the way. Please help me to contact with Robert Charles Wilson. I'd like not only to send him a copy of our zine with his books reviewed, but to contact him on a professional basis. Maybe you've learned from some fanzines which printed Boris' and my LoCs that now both of us work in the publishing business. There is a proverb, "Pro ain't nothing but fan misspelled," so already being professionals we go on with our fannish project, **Chernobylization**, which already became de facto the Ukrainian sf&f newsletter for foreign readers.

The names in your LoC column are the same as in any other self-respecting fanzine, and it will be great to be in such company in **UTOH #3**.

{{I love Robert Charles Wilson's work, too, and have no idea why he hasn't been up for major awards either. He lives over in Vancouver, just a 90 minute ferry ride from us, and we'll see if we can pass your message on.}}

--J.W.H.}}

Lorna Toolis
Collection Head
The Merrill Collection of Science Fiction,
Speculation and Fantasy
Toronto, Ontario

Thank you for sending the two issues of **Under The Ozone Hole** to the Merrill Collection, where staff and Canadiana fanatics have read and enjoyed them. In issue no. 2 in your interview with Bob Wilson he

says that he will have seven books out with the forthcoming publication of *The Harvest*. You list six titles, including *The Harvest*; do you happen to know what the seventh title is?

In the "Canucks Writing Books Dep't." you might want to note that *Tesseract* 'was edited by Lorna Toolis and Michael Skeet. The Dorsey/Truscott misattribution was published in *Locus* and will probably outlive me.

{{Oops, sorry about that, chief! A mighty fine collection it is, too. Everyone go out and buy it. Regarding Robert Charles Wilson's book count, I know only of the six we listed (all from Bantam). Either he miscounted, or there's another book out there that no one knows about. But I double-checked the tape and he does say seven. Go figure.}}

-- J.W.H.}}

David Gordon-MacDonald
Victoria, B.C.

Compliments on another excellent issue of one of the most varied and informative zines around. Any zine that features a review of a Dread Zeppelin record gets my vote. Also *UTOH* is the only zine that I've ever heard of to run articles on artists and their materials, such as Stephanie A. Johanson's interesting article on soapstone.

In regard to Karl's unusual (well, unusual for anybody else, normal for Karl) reply to John's ongoing fascination with the Kennedy assassination, I think Karl rather concisely, not to mention weirdly, put the cap on the subject. Oliver Stone's film, its imitators and all the profit-seeking tie-ins have saturated the media for several years now, and most people have just about had it up to the yinyangs with this subject. Yes, it is a fascinating and confusing mystery to try and untangle, with lots of spicy attributes (the Mob, CIA, etc.) but people crave mystery. Mystery novels usually outsell SF and fantasy, and "Ancient Mystery" books continue to have a considerable market, no matter how slim the evidence for what they propound. Occam's Razor is beloved of scientists, but largely ignored by the general public. Instead, they prefer the most complex explanation. In other words, if a mystery is not readily available, people will make one up. Besides, Conspiracy Theories are comforting things; they reassure us (deceptively) that fearful events cannot occur to us randomly, but only as part of some huge machinations: i.e. as the work of men. However, people don't just crave mystery,

they also crave someone to blame for their problems. When a rogue psychotic like Oswald commits a murder as shocking as was that of Kennedy in 1963, people look for scapegoats, and large, mysterious organizations like the CIA and the Mob are very handy for attributing culpability. These organizations may or may not be involved, but fingers will always be pointed in their direction; they are far too tempting targets to ignore. Perhaps like Kennedy himself.

Finally, John's comments on my rather harsh reviews of the Clarke/Lee "Rama" books are well taken. My review column appears first in the zine which I edit, *Atavachron*, and is often the very last thing to be typed in for the issue, right at deadline. Those of you who have edited any publication in your spare time will know that this often entails some loss of sleep in order to meet deadline. As I lose more and more sleep, my attitude and world view do tend to undergo a considerable change. In short I become a grumpy ba-- that is, person of irregular birth, and this can creep into my writing. As a curative, I shall attempt to think pure thoughts, watch *The Sound of Music* twice a week, and tack a picture of Anita Bryant to the wall above my desk.

Now guys, let's see some more good smeg in the next issue.

{{The not-so-well-known antithesis of Occam's Razor is: for every complex problem, there is a simple and elegant solution -- and it's wrong. However, analyzing complex events with catch phrases is like trying to eat spaghetti with a lawnmower (or something like that).}}

There is evidence that a conspiracy to kill the president existed. There is also proof that a cover-up of information took place (e.g.: the unavailability for many years of the Zapruder film to the general public, or rewrites and deletions of testimony to the Warren Commission, including the deletion of Jackie Kennedy's testimony). Two separate conspiracies: one conjectural, one a historical fact.

I'm neither a conspiraphiliac, nor a conspiraphobe. My satirical piece was not intended as proof that a conspiracy to kill Kennedy existed. I wrote it to lampoon the type of person who decides on the truth about an issue, then dogmatically denies valid evidence which might show them wrong.

Many people have concluded that Oswald was a murderer who acted alone. (There never was a trial which established the lack of reasonable doubt. Gee, what about presumed innocence?)

There are many people who for years

believed in, or denied, such things as Stalin's killing of millions of Russians, U.S. military intelligence knowing of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in advance, or the CIA testing the effects of torture and LSD on Canadians during the 1950s. The fact that some people like the idea of conspiracies and some don't, doesn't affect the truth or falsehood of these or any other occurrences.

-- K.J.}}

{{The greatest single factor which I feel proves at the very least a government sanctioned cover-up, if not outright participation, is the fact that in 1979 the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that President Kennedy died as the result of a conspiracy and urged the Justice Department to investigate further. No such investigation has been done. Now think about this!!: the American government admits that the perpetrators of the single greatest unsolved crime in American history, the murder of a President, are still walking the streets as free men, and yet the American government refuses to investigate!!! So much for truth and justice -- the American Way carries on.}}

Many who say Oswald was the lone assassin say that much of the "conspiracy hoopla" thrives because it is easier to believe that great, dark secrets were involved and that would then give Kennedy's death more meaning than the wanton act of a "lone nut." Well, that's very true, but there's one thing the Warren supporters seem to forget:

It's also much safer to believe in the "lone nut."

-- J.W.H.}}

We Also Heard From: Dale Speirs (Geez, Dale, you can have your zine spelled correctly, or your name. You can't have both!); Stu Charles, marketing for Keycon 93 (thanx for the bookmarks!); Garth Spencer, Colin Hinz; and Mark E. Crouse, Con Coordinator for Wolfcon 6/Convention13 (thanx for the kind words!).

Reviews

Between The Covers by David Gordon-MacDonald

The Futurians
Damon Knight
John Day. New York, 1977.

Temps
Devised by Neil Gaiman and Alex Stewart
Roc (Penguin Books). London/Toronto, 1991.

Six Science Fiction Plays
Edited By Roger Elwood
Washington Square Press/Pocket Books.
New York, 1976.

Gladiator
Philip Wylie
Alfred A. Knopf Inc. New York, 1930.
Reprint: Hyperion. New York, 1974.

Sherlock Holmes and The Mark of The Beast
Ronald C. Weyman
Simon and Pierre Publishing Co. Toronto, 1989.

Sherlock Holmes and The Ultimate Disguise
Ronald C. Weyman
Simon and Pierre Publishing Co. Toronto, 1991.

Since this is a book review column for SF not associated with TV or film, what better volume to start with than Damon Knight's *The Futurians*. No, this isn't the comic book of the same name; it isn't even fiction, though it definitely has much to do with science fiction. Here we have a history of the landmark New York city SF fan group of the 1930s and 1940s whose members became (for the most part) SF literary institutions. In total The Futurian Society of New York, which existed between 1938 and 1945, produced ten novelists, a publisher, two literary agents, four anthologists, and five editors (with some overlapping of roles). Writers in this group included Fred Pohl, Judith Merril, Cyril Kornbluth, James Blish, and Isaac Asimov. The editors and literary agents such as Robert Lowndes and Virginia Kidd are, perhaps, less well known, but the late Donald A. Wollheim, publisher of DAW Books, has his name all over the bookracks still.

Who could resist a book like *The Futurians*? Here is a history of the very earliest years of SF fandom, some of its most active fans, and how many of them became successful literary professionals of various kinds. Damon Knight, the chronicler of the group's history, was a member of the Futurians from 1941 - 1945, and at the time its youngest member. Knight covers the beginnings of SF magazines and fandom in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and describes the background and origin of each of the long-time members. Since it existed during the depression and wartime, The Futurian Society boasted a lot of impoverished members for most of its existence. Most of the poverty was completely involuntary; however, one or two were psychologically unfit to hold a job (one even died as a result of his mental instability). These were a group of highly aggressive New York city fans. Their fan politics were intense and occasionally violent, character assassination was a way of life, and so was sleeping around. This group lived by the dictum, "Change partners and dance!" Many of the members have been married and divorced two or three times, entirely within the group. As evidence of the raise hell attitude that predominated among these imaginative troublemakers, just look at how the society was formed. The Futurians were formed when the founding members became tired of invading, taking over, and dissolving other peoples' clubs - especially those sponsored by Hugo Gernsback, with whom they were feuding. Futurians were always outsiders. They were the *other* group of writers (as opposed to *Astounding* SF editor, John W. Campbell's group). Only Asimov made it into Campbell's circle, but he drifted away from the Futurians as he completed his education and went to work as a government scientist.

In *The Futurians* we see the origins of many things that survive in 1990s fandom, such as backbiting politics, poverty among fans, slan shacks, fannish language, joke religions, and a fondness for booze. Some of these traditions have been moved into the background as fandom has changed over the years, but they still exist, in memory if nowhere else. There is also an awareness, in this book, that something like the Futurians could only happen again under very unique circumstances. The society's members were products (mostly) of hard times and poverty. Nearly all were products

of single parent households, and a recurring theme of catastrophic illness runs through their personal histories. Either the members themselves or their families suffered from one of the diseases rampant in the early part of this century that are now conquered.

Whether a group like the Futurians will ever exist again is seriously in question. Fandom is graying. Literary fans are getting older and a decreasing number of young people are joining straight SF clubs. Clubs like the Futurians were science interest as well as SF clubs, and were practically the only outlet for people with such interests. Nowadays there are computers, video games, SF movies and television to interest young people. Also, the sciences are much more pervasive in our society than they were sixty years ago, and access to science education is much easier.

Knight's *The Futurians* is an unsentimental and straightforward history of the early days of one part of fandom, and deserves a place beside such works as *Hell's Cartographers*, *All our Yesterdays*, and Pohl's *The Way the Future Was*. Strangely, it is also a rather comforting book. You see, in their youth the very first fans were helpless, hapless dweebs, but they still made a name for themselves in the professional literary world as they grew to maturity. It fosters a strange germ of hope, doesn't it?

It's a weird concept, it's twisted, and often as downright stupid as an old turnip. What? Fan politics? No, the concept of super-powered characters in the "real" world. It is a concept that belongs in comic books and is ruled there by the peculiar logic common to the medium. The problems with comic book logic are many and varied, not the least of which is the idea that justice can realistically be dished out by super-powered vigilantes in tight pajamas. It plays hell with some of those funny wee ideas we have about a just society, such as the Rule of Law, and Due Process. ...And how the hell does a chap with a secret identity testify in court?

Many revisionist versions of traditional super heroes have addressed problems of realism in recent years, with varying degrees of success (the finest comment on the subject being, of course, Alan Moore's and Alan Davis' graphic novel, *The Watchmen*). SF has always had a place in comics; even non-SF titles have often used the

trappings. Since the mid-1980s, however, the reverse has been going on — comics have been invading SF. The most successful example has been George R.R. Martin's *Wild Cards* series, now on its thirteenth volume and still going. However, this genre has had its own British Invasion in the form of *Temps*, devised by the extremely twisted Neil Gaiman and Alex Stewart. Gaiman is the writer of DC's *Sandman*, perhaps the most literate comic on the stands, and the co-writer, with Terry Pratchett, of *Good Omens*, the story of a misplaced Anti-Christ, in which Lucifer is trying to hold a nice orderly Armageddon, and the whole thing goes to hell. The same sort of humour abounds in *Temps*. The cover depicts a flying Swiss Army Knife, quite appropriate for superhero fantasy with a cutting edge and a knife-sharp wit. In the grand tradition of *Beyond the Fringe*, Monty Python and *Red Dwarf*, *Temps* depicts the lives of part time paranormal agents of the British government (Temporaries, or Temps for short). This first volume in what I hope will be a series is evenly divided between screamingly funny satirical pieces and dramatic character stories of extraordinary depth. If anything, *Temps* deals more realistically with the subject than *Wild Cards*, even in pieces such as Marcus Rowland's weirdly funny "Frog Day Afternoon." The character development in stories such as Roz Kaveney's "A Lonely Impulse" is as good as you'll find anywhere, in SF or mainstream writing. *Temps* is superb and thought-provoking, and at times a cautionary tale for those who wish to be more than human. Hopefully we'll get more in this vein from Gaiman et al., and soon.

The next book I looked at for this column came close to breaking my self-imposed rule that this section should be for non-media material (i.e. no TV and film tie-ins allowed). The problem is that *Six Science Fiction Plays*, edited by Roger Elwood, is a book much sought-after by *Star Trek* fans because it includes the original, unaired version of Harlan Ellison's *Star Trek* script, "The City on the Edge of Forever." This is the version of *City* that didn't get aired because Roddenberry didn't like it. The script is rife with those wonderfully overdone touches for which Ellison is at once condemned and forgiven by his readers, but featured two items that especially raised Roddenberry's ire. The first was the presence of "the jewels of sound," a type of narcotic telepathic gem which one crewman deals to others in the time honoured fashion. The second point of contention was the murder of another crewman by the drug

dealer. In 1966 the network (NBC) would not allow anything concerning drugs to be broadcast before nine o'clock, so this ruled out the "jewels;" however, it was Roddenberry who was especially peeved by the murder, because he envisioned a well-balanced crew, without substance abuse and incapable of violent transgressions. Ellison and G.R. might have settled their differences had it not been for the fact that each could be described politely as a gentleman of strong opinions (and impolitely, as a stubborn bastard). For many years Ellison lived up to his reputation of being a screamer when his writing is tampered with, and engaged in a long-running war of words with Roddenberry. Eventually, the two settled their differences but probably not because Ellison mellowed with age. Perhaps Ellison realized that in light of the way *ST* evolved, some of the rewrites were actually necessary. For instance, in addition to the drug dealing and violence, the original script has been criticized for diverging from the established character histories of Kirk and Spock. Criticizing this, though, fails to take into account that at the time the script was written, there were no established character histories, only a flimsy set of guidelines and a pilot script by Samuel Peeples. The characterizations presented in the original script of *City* are quite faithful to those two early sources, and even make some interesting extrapolations. It just happens that Roddenberry, Shatner and Nimoy developed the characters in a different direction once production actually started. In the end, the episode as rewritten by Roddenberry became a fan favourite, and Ellison's original script won a Nebula Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America for the year's best dramatic presentation.

All of this can tend to unfairly overshadow the other pieces in the book. Altogether, this is an excellent collection. As well as "The City on the Edge of Forever," there is an amusing creature-feature script by Tom Reamy entitled "Sing!," a poignant time-travel story by John Jakes called "Stranger With Roses," a space drama for the stage called "Contact Point," by Theodore R. Cogswell and George Rae Cogswell; a wonderfully complex unaired teleplay from the 1950s, "The Mechanical Bride," by the late Fritz Leiber; and Paul Zindel's absurdist short, "Let Me Hear You Whisper." This varied collection is an extremely worthwhile read if you can find a copy in a used book store.

Gladiator, by Philip Wylie, is a novel which is little known despite the fact that it inspired a modern American icon: Super-

man. Two kids named Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, who were living in Cleveland at the time, read *Gladiator* in the early 1930s and it started them thinking. Eventually, in 1933, they designed The Super-Man, an idea they were not to get into print until 1938 when Sheldon Mayer (the creator of Sugar and Spike, among other characters) persuaded National Comics to take a chance on this strip. It was Mayer who cut up the strips and pasted them into comic book form for publication. Superman turned out to be the first in a long line of costumed superheroes, but at the time it was quite revolutionary. Siegel and Shuster had been working together for National Comics since 1935, but until Superman's debut they had managed to get only adventure or detective characters of various types published.

In *Gladiator* there may be inspiration for Superman, but Hugo Danner, the title character, is no Clark Kent. Instead of a superscientific planet inspired by H.G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come*, Hugo Danner was produced by an eccentric scientist father who injected his pregnant wife with a serum designed to produce a superman. Danner's life is not easy; he is made to feel shame for being different, and spends much of his life isolated figuratively or literally. Here is a superman filled with self doubt and every human failing. Hugo Danner is a superman denied his destiny, each attempt to be the superhuman saviour is thwarted by fate. Again and again he is confronted by the realization that great things are far more likely to be done by ordinary humans acting in concert than by a so-called superman. Whatever his abilities, the novel argues, one man is of little overall importance in the scheme of things. The novel ends suddenly, and rather unconvincingly, as Danner dies achieving the realization of his insignificance in a kind of morbid *satori*.

The story is set in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and works in that context. Those were simpler times; things like superhuman ability could still be hidden by getting on a steamer and going to South America. The trend towards revisionist superheroes in books and comics shows in a variety of ways what it would be like to be a superhuman in The Information Age. What would the world want to do to, and with, you and what effect would you realistically have on the world around you? *Wild Cards*, *The Watchmen*, DC Comics' *Breath taker* and others make it quite clear that those with superhuman abilities are as likely to be hated and feared as celebrated. If the recent sales ploy of killing Superman shows anything, it is that the 1930s style goody-goody superhero who makes it his

business to save the world, belongs in the depression and WW II, not in the 1990s. Philip Wylie was the first to write about a realistic superman, even if it did become a rather demeaned fantasy character in others' hands. Today, those with an interest in superheroes are returning to the type of portrayals which Wylie pioneered more than six decades ago. Like Wylie's other SF (e.g. *When Worlds Collide*) *Gladiator* is a riveting read. The 1974 Hyperion edition has an excellent introductory essay by Sam Moskowitz excerpted from his 1963 set of biographies of SF writers, *Explorers of The Infinite*.

Ronald C. Weyman is one of only three Canadian authors I know of who have written tales of Sherlock Holmes. Weyman is a retired producer and writer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and has a fine grasp of the Holmes lore and characters. Few of the authors who have attempted Holmes stories have successfully captured Watson's literary voice, something which is essential for an authentic style of story. Fortunately, Weyman's writing speaks with that true voice.

The Mark of The Beast and *The Ultimate Disguise* are the first two parts of a planned trilogy which covers the years during which Holmes allowed himself to be thought dead. This is a time period which has also been elucidated by other well known Holmes authors such as Nicholas Meyer and Michael Hardwick; Weyman tackles the subject with no less skill than Meyer or Hardwick but takes a different slant by bringing Holmes and Watson to Canada. *The Mark of The Beast* is a fascinating romp involving the first submarines and Fenians (Irish-American radicals). *The Ultimate Disguise* is a neat little murder mystery involving a woman who may well be Irene Adler's equal, and therefore that of Holmes. Both of Weyman's volumes splendidly capture the atmosphere of nineteenth century Quebec and Ontario; New France does not seem so very far in the past, and the landscape is peopled with hardy and colourful pioneers come to build a country.

Even better, there is more exposition about Watson's past than we have seen in most Holmes stories, even those by Conan Doyle. *The Mark of The Beast* shows us some of Watson's nautical past and his seamanship, placing great emphasis on his competence. I'm always glad to see this. The Rathbone/Bruce films have left a warped idea in the public's mind of Watson as an idiot. Holmes did not suffer fools gladly; he would not have suffered one as his foil and companion. More than once in

the Doyle canon Holmes states his gratitude to Watson for his contributions to the investigations, particularly his unique viewpoint and his humanity. Without the other, each is a lesser being. Both *The Mark of the Beast* and *The Ultimate Disguise* are worthy additions to the Holmes literature, and offer a uniquely Canadian view of Holmes and his adventures, a long overdue Canadian view.

That wraps up this edition of *Between the Covers*. Next time we'll have a look at several extremely intelligent and lyrical historical horror novels plus Heinlein's *Last Ravings*.

* * * * *

Decision at Thunder Rift

by William H. Keith, Jr.; Penguin/ROC

Imagine being stranded on a planet light years from anywhere. Your family and friends are dead, long gone, and no one trusts you because you're an offworlder. Hostile military personnel pursue you at every turn, wanting you arrested, or, at the very least, dead. Now imagine this planet is also suffering from an invasion, and the invaders are 12 metre-tall death machines that walk through buildings like a man walks through air.

ROC has recently reissued *Decision at Thunder Rift*, the first novel ever published in connection with the military-sf role-playing game, "Battletech." In the world of Battletech, mankind has gone to the stars and taken its prowess at waging war with him. Except the ultimate weapons aren't tanks, fighters or nukes, but Battlemechs; 12-metre tall humanoid robots piloted by a human, powered by a fusion reactor and bristling with all manner of lasers, particle beams, missiles and cannons.

The novel centres around Grayson Carlyle, the son of a Mech unit commander who finds things getting decidedly hot when a pirate invasion destroys his father's unit, his Mech, and his life. Grayson goes from wealthy warrior to bum on the street, desperately seeking the means of revenge...a Battlemech. When politics and a second invasion from an even more powerful force threaten him, his planet, and his fledgling unit of captured 'Mechs, he has to make his divided unit come together before a victory can be won.

The real beauty of *Decision at Thunder Rift* is that it's a good read for anyone, whether you are a "Battletech" player or not. The glossary gives definitions of commonplace expressions in Mechwarrior circles, and has pictures of the mammoth war machines themselves. The plot is gripping from the start, with plenty of twists, turns, betrayals, firefights, and raids hindering the hero's overpowering quest for revenge.

Also present are some occasional quips of humour, such as the jailbreak scene: "Quickly, sir! The Sarge's [Battlemech] is parked illegally upstairs!"

For anyone who is into heavy-duty military sf, *Decision at Thunder Rift* will give you the heavy-metal read you want — 55 tonnes of it!

-- Andrew C. Murdoch

Far-Seer

by Robert J. Sawyer

June 1992; Ace Books; \$5.99

The emerging talent of Robert J. Sawyer is apparent in his new book, *Far-Seer*. He has given his characters a pilgrimage and a quest for knowledge with all the appeal of the adventures of Columbus so topical at this five hundredth anniversary of the European "discovery" of the new world.

Sawyer's world is simply and carefully described — we are even given an estimate of its dimensions as worked out by the protagonist, Afsan. The characters are described as well, in sufficient detail that it becomes natural to understand the lives and struggles of people who are sentient dinosaurs similar to the *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. The emotional stresses of Afsan as he moves from adolescence to maturity are powerful, as are the territorial instincts that each of his people must struggle with every day.

Afsan's pilgrimage to view the Face of God gives him the opportunity to learn truths about the world and the planets, truths which his master and the priests do not want to face. For speaking about what he has seen and experienced in his travels, Afsan is accused of blasphemy. But there are those who listen, and inquiring minds will not be quiet.

In a few hundred days, Afsan's knowledge of astronomy grows phenomenally. From estimating the circumference of his world as our ancient Greeks did, Afsan becomes able to discuss and calculate tidal stresses on moons within the Roche limit of a gas giant, a leap of insight encompassing all the knowledge of Archimedes, Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, Cassini, Herschel and Percival Lowell. But can he handle people half so well as ideas?

Far-Seer is a galloping good read, an adventure that quickly reaches a breathless pace and does not disappoint as Afsan finds resolution for his disturbing knowledge. The book has general appeal, but will be enjoyed most by those who demand adventure and prefer science to be applied with minimal, hands-on technology.

-- Paula Johanson

Highlander

This new series was eagerly awaited by many fans, but I feel it falls somewhat short with its lack of original script ideas and a sketchy (at best) pilot episode.

Set several years before the events of the first film, the show centers on Duncan MacLeod, the "younger brother" (by 50 years) of his more famous kinsman, Conner (played in the movies by Christopher Lambert). Like Conner, Duncan also owns and runs an antique shop, with his artistic wife, Tessa, and a streetwise teen named Ritchie. Conner was the mentor of his little brother, and his appearance in the first episode was about the only high point of the pilot, which tended to skip over a lot of the details to the point where some of the MacLeods' motivations became unclear. Most episodes since have largely concerned themselves with Duncan facing off against another immortal.

To the series' credit, the actors are excellent, scripts have improved since the pilot, some originality is being shown the main adversary is not always another immortal, the series retains Queen's theme music and (rejoice!) the series has drawn strictly from the first film for its background material.

The series has a lot of rough spots to iron out, and will have to do it soon. In anticipation of that, however, I'm going to keep watching.

-- Andrew C. Murdoch

Space Rangers

Another new sf show is CBS's Space Rangers, about a motley crew of law officers out on the frontier. We have the standard stock characters here: the disillusioned yet macho hero, his butch female first officer, the gun-happy rookie, the prissy bureaucrat, the prisoner who'd rather kill himself than talk, the ugly weird-talking smuggling bad guys, and the robot which self-destructs when faced with something illogical. And of course, the know-it-all, see-it-all, zen-spouting alien (who actually said in the first episode, "Captain, I sense danger!") Combine this characters with the now-overused Aliens look (grimy, gritty, dark lighting, big guns), and the patented "Battlestar Galactica Take-off Tubes™," and you have a show that should be avoided at all costs. Okay, so there a couple of dim sparks: when the engineer hits a piece of faulty equipment in frustration, a computer voice replies, "Please don't strike the equipment;" and the sfx involving an alien that could disassemble itself were very good. (They killed this alien, who had an

ultraviolet radiation nervous system by the way, by shooting it.) Pen Densham, responsible for that recent pseudo-epic Robin Hood - Prince of Thieves, created this mess. The only cast member of note is Linda Hunt who plays our heroes' commander. She spends most of her time looking lost and befuddled.

Go out of your way to avoid this.

-- J.W.H.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine - "Emissary"

The Cardassians have withdrawn their Bajor occupation force, leaving their trashed space station, Deep Space Nine behind. The provisional Bajoran government has asked the Federation for help, and Starfleet sends a complement of officers, led by Commander Ben Sisko, to take control of the station. Sisko's wife was killed by the Borg (led by a Borgified Jean Luc Picard) at Wolf 359, and he is deeply scarred by the event and reluctant to accept this posting. But Sisko discovers a stable wormhole near the station, and aliens who live inside it, and he finds himself in command of what will become Starfleet's most important station.

Avery Brooks shines as Ben Sisko, a character who is put through the emotional ringer in this episode. Nana Visitor also did

well as Major Kira. In fact, all the cast was very good (although I thought Terry Farrell did come off occasionally flat as Lieutenant Dax, but pretty good for the most part). All the actors have a tight grip on their characters, something that was lacking for the first season of The Next Generation. Patrick Stewart was great in his guest starring role as Picard, particularly in the scene where Sisko and he meet for the first time.

The story was good, and introduced plenty of items to be explored in later episodes. If there is any complaint, it is that Sisko's encounter with the wormhole aliens did seem to drag a bit.

The special effects are stunning, particularly the opening sequence recounting the battle with the Borg at Wolf 359. Odo's shape-shifting sequences are also well done, if nothing spectacular.

Deep Space Nine looks to be another fine addition to the Star Trek canon.

-- J.W.H.

Laser Disc Corner

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick, Peter George, Terry Southern

Based on the novel Red Alert by Peter George

Produced and Directed by Stanley Kubrick

The Criterion Collection's recent release (in glorious black and white) of 1964's Dr. Strangelove on laser disc is a beautiful version of one of my all time favorite movies. The suspense-filled plot (an American B-52 bomber is mistakenly sent to bomb the Soviet Union) is twisted into manic farce by Kubrick's cronies: Sterling Hayden as the mad General Jack D. Ripper of Burpleson Air Force base who orders the strike because the commies are destroying our precious bodily fluids through fluoridation; George C. Scott as General "Buck" Turgidson, who sees the accidental attack as an opportunity to finally get rid of those damn commies; Slim Pickens as Major "King" Kong, commander of the ill-fated B-52, Leper Colony; and, of course, Peter Sellers in three different roles -- Group Captain Lionel Mandrake who tries in vain to talk Ripper into calling off the attack, President of the United States Merkin Muffley who opposes Turgidson's plan, and the enigmatic and exaggeratedly German scientist, Dr. Strangelove. This black comedy nails the military mentality that brought us the cold war and the arms race right to the wall, as when Turgidson discovers that Soviet mine shafts are deeper than American mine shafts and declares that there is "a mine shaft gap!"

Bonus material included with this set include civil defense pamphlets and films (including the ever-popular Duck and Cover), plans for building bomb shelters, the history of the bomb, a music video ("My Teenage Fallout Queen"), and the original theatrical trailer. Also included is an early draft script which compares itself against the final version, e.g.: MAJOR KONG (with quiet dignity): *Then this is it. becomes MAJOR KONG* (putting on cowboy hat): *Well, this is it. Nucaler [sic] warfare toe-to-toe with the Russkies!*

Yes, the end of the world is nothing to laugh about, but if ya gotta go, why not go with a smile? *Mein Fuher! I can walk!*

--J.W.H.

Canadian News

Prix Aurora Awards 1993 Nominees

BEST LONG-FORM WORK IN ENGLISH -

MEILLEUR LIVRE EN ANGLAIS

A Song for Arbonne, Guy Gavriel Kay
Blood Trail, Tanya Huff
Children of the Rainbow, Terence M. Green
Far-Seer, Robert J. Sawyer
Passion Play, Sean Stewart

BEST SHORT-FORM WORK IN ENGLISH -

MEILLEURE NOUVELLE EN ANGLAIS

"Ants," Allan Weiss
"Blue Limbo," Terence M. Green
"Couples," Eileen Kernaghan
"Farm Wife," Nancy Kilpatrick
"Hopscotch," Karl Schroeder
"Seeing," Andrew Weiner
"The Toy Mill," David Nickle & Karl Schroeder

BEST OTHER WORK IN ENGLISH -

MEILLEUR OUVRAGE EN ANGLAIS (AUTRE)

Ark of Ice, ed. by Lesley Choyce
Northern Frights, ed. by Don Hutchinson
On Spec, ed. by Marianne O. Neilson
Prisoners of Gravity, TVOntario
Tesseract's, ed. by Lorna Toolis & Michael Skeet

MEILLEUR LIVRE EN FRANÇAIS -

BEST LONG-FORM WORK IN FRENCH

La Taupe et le dragon, Joël Champetier
Le Cercle de Khaleb, Daniel Semine
Chronoreg, Daniel Semine
Chroniques du Pays des Mères, Élisabeth Vonarburg

MEILLEURE NOUVELLE EN FRANÇAIS -

BEST SHORT-FORM WORK IN FRENCH

"Base de négociation", Jean Dion
"Le pierrot diffracté", Laurent McAllister
"Le Projet", Harold Côté
"Pluies amères", Daniel Semine
"Revoir Nymphae", Alain Bergeron
"Suspend ton vol", Élisabeth Vonarburg

MEILLEUR OUVRAGE EN FRANÇAIS (AUTRE) -

BEST OTHER WORK IN FRENCH

Bibliographie analytique de la science-fiction et du fantastique québécois (1960-1985), Aurélien Boivin et al.
"Chronoreg ou le spectacle du sang", Guy Bouchard
imagine..., Marc Lemaire, réd.
Solaris, Joël Champetier, réd.

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT - ACCOMPLISSEMENT ARTISIQUE

Sylvain Bell
Lynne Taylor Fahnestalk
Tim Hammell
Martin Springett
Henry Van Der Linde

FAN ACHIEVEMENT (FANZINE) - ACCOMPLISSEMENT FANIQUE (FANZINE)

Alouette, ed. by Robert J. Sawyer
BSCFazine, ed. by R. Graeme Cameron
Communiqué, ed. by Jean-Louis Trudel
CONTRACT, ed. by John Mansfield
Temps Tôt, Christian Martin, réd.
Under The Ozone Hole, ed. by John Willcox
Herbert & Karl Johanson

FAN ACHIEVEMENT (ORGANIZATIONAL) - ACCOMPLISSEMENT FANIQUE (ORGANISATION)

Adam Charlesworth, *Noncon* 15
Mark Crouse, *Wolfcon* 5
Annette Ing, *Wilfcon* 8
Lloyd Penney, *Ad Astra* 12
Yvonne Penney, *Ad Astra* 12
Karen Wehrstein, *Ad Astra* 12

FAN ACHIEVEMENT (OTHER) -

ACCOMPLISSEMENT FANIQUE (AUTRE)
Mary Ann Bramstrap, for contributions to Canadian fandom
Dave Clement, for music/filking
Martin Hunger, Not the BBC Props Dept.
Louise Hyper, SF² show
Larry Stewart, for contributions to Canadian fandom

Judith Merrill Tribute

On October 15, Harbourfront paid a long overdue tribute to Judith Merrill. A full issue of *Aloud*, the Author's Festival newspaper, was dedicated to her, with pieces written by numerous writers and friends (Ballard, Candas Dorsey, Phyllis Gotlieb, to name a few among almost twenty). Some of them (Columbo, Delany, Moorcock, MacLean, Pohl, Spider Robinson, Vonarburg) were invited to play it again, Sam, live, and they did, giving a packed auditorium some interesting, touching or amusing snippets of information about the tributee who was modestly hiding somewhere in the dark. After an on-stage inter-

view by Susan Crean, of WUC, Judith Merrill, having survived the whole ordeal with her usual wit and grace, thanked her tributers and concluded: "I have always wanted to be at my funeral to hear all the wonderful things people would say about me - and to think: Hey, I did fool them! And now, the good thing is I don't have to die." Later, at the well-attended party taking place at the Judith Merrill's Collection (ex-SOL), everybody heartily drank to that.

Le 15 octobre dernier, Harbourfront a rendu à Judith Merrill un hommage mérité depuis longtemps. Un numéro entier de *Aloud*, le journal du Festival, lui était consacré, avec des textes écrits par une pléiade d'auteurs et amis (Ballard, Phyllis Gotlieb, Candas Dorsey, pour en nommer quelques-uns parmi près d'une vingtaine). Certains d'entre eux (Columbo, Delany, Moorcock, MacLean, Pohl, Spider Robinson, Vonarburg) furent invités à un bis en direct, ce qu'ils firent, offrant à une salle bien pleine des détails intéressants, émouvants ou divertissants sur l'invitée d'honneur, tandis que celle-ci se dissimulait avec modestie dans l'obscurité. Après une entrevue sur scène avec Susan Crean de la Writers' Union, Judith Merrill, ayant survécu à toute l'épreuve avec sa grâce et son humour habituels, remercia ses laudateurs et conclut: "J'ai toujours voulu assister à mon enterrement pour pouvoir entendre toutes les belles choses qu'on dirait de moi et me dire: Ah, je les ai bien eus! Ce qu'il y a de bien, maintenant, c'est que je n'ai plus besoin de mourir." Plus tard, lors de la réception à la Judith Merrill's Collection (ex-SOL), tout le monde répéta ce toast en levant son verre avec conviction.

-- Élisabeth Vonarburg

I-Con 3, postponed from last fall in Victoria, has officially been cancelled. Losses from the first two I-Cons could not be overcome, and Victoria is conventionless once again.

The January 9, 1993 issue of *T.V. Guide* featured a report on the "Klingon Assault Group Kanada" as part of their *ST: DS2* coverage. Member Al Vezina says the club has 100 members in Canada and 650 worldwide. The article mentions the key

ingredients needed to be a Klingon: an intimidating amount of leather, studs, and stilted boots. No address was supplied.

Toronto Trek VI lost nearly \$6,500. However, previous profits have made this amount relatively easy to swallow. Preps are on for **TT VII**, and guests are still being firmed up.

— Lloyd Penney

The Void, a Trek/sf zine is back in production and looking for original fiction and art. Write c/o T. Turner, Box 171, 7231 - 120th Street, Delta, BC, V4C 6P5.

The October 5, 1992 issue of **Newsweek** listed 100 of the "Cultural Elite" and mentioned William Gibson as someone to watch. "[He] sees the creepy

future and it is here." Gibson also spoke on Virtual Reality and gave a reading from his new novel, *Virtual Light*, at the University of Victoria on January 8, 1993.

Garth Spencer needs your help. He's writing a history of the Victoria fannish community and is looking for stories, chronologies, anecdotes etc. Write him at: 1 - 930 East 8th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 1T8.

In award news, Élisabeth Vonarburg's novel *In the Mother's Land* has been nominated for the Philip K. Dick Award (to be presented at Norwescon in March.) Also, Robert J. Sawyer's *Far-Seer* is on the long list for the 1992 Nebula Awards.

Sean Stewart sold *Passion Play* (re-

cently published by Beache Holme) plus an untitled book to Ace. (**Locus #383**)

A Change in the **Ad Astra 13** listing... Anne McCaffrey has cancelled all of her convention appearances for 1993. Her daughter is getting married, and lengthy recovery periods for jet lag have led to her decision. Frederik Pohl has been lined up as her more-than-able replacement.

— Lloyd Penney

Tesseracts 4 editors Lorna Toolis and Michael Skeet were among those who celebrated the books publication at Bakka Books in Toronto on December 11, 1992. (**Science Fiction Chronicle #159**)



THE GREAT LIBRARY

FICTION BY ANDREW C. MURDOCH

Silently he drifted down the corridor. With only microgravity to hinder him, a gentle push was all he needed to send him to his favorite viewport. Gazing through the plexiglass windowpane, out across the blackness of space, his eyes came to rest on the shimmering sphere that was the Earth. The blue of its oceans, the green and brown of its continents and the white of its clouds all melded to form a bright tapestry against the monochrome of space. It looked so vibrant, so peaceful, so alive.

Yet so dead.

This death was no great surprise. It had been headed toward this state since the late nineteenth century. It was the whole reason this space station was here, anchored by gravity at LaGrange point one between the earth and the moon.

The Great Library, this station had been called. True, a library was its original purpose. Science, history, culture, languages, music, literature could all be stored within its vast archives of compact discs. All of this had been available for all mankind to see. At least, all mankind with access to a computer terminal linked by modem to a ground dish antenna station. It was the ultimate resource of knowledge ever constructed.

Odd, he thought, that none of this knowledge seemed to soak into the people. It didn't matter that they knew better, people were still treating Earth like Homo Sapiens' personal trash heap. But when the planet's ecology started falling apart faster than government legislation could keep up (granted, it always was) and more and more species became extinct, another use was found for the Library.

It never ceased to amaze him how governments could freely spend so much money that they didn't actually have. Nonetheless, the Library got the funds it needed to ferry new cylindrical modules to LaGrange One. Tens of thousands of additional cubic metres were added to the station to accommodate tens of thousands of liquid-nitrogen filled containers, each holding tens of thousands of frozen cells from tens of thousands of different animal and plant species. Now, it seemed, humanity had bought itself some time. Time to clean up the planet without risk of losing any more species or worrying about the long-term effects of the disaster that seemed almost certain to come.

Yet as this was going on, no one seemed too worried about where the disaster might come from. In the end, predictably, it came from man himself, in particular from a group of crazies intending to hold the world at ransom.

Nobody knew how they did it, or even that they were doing it, until they broadcast their demands all over the globe by tapping into one of the major satellites. Three trillion Eurocredits were to be transferred into an anonymous Swiss bank account or every major volcano on Earth would erupt. Just to prove that they meant business, a nuclear explosion detonated over Killimanjaro as they broadcast their ransom message to the world.

If no one else would, he mused, he had to give credit to the United Nations. They had Peacekeeping forces on every volcano in twenty-four hours flat. Unfortunately, it didn't help anyone. Someone must have panicked about going on trial for crimes against humanity and blew Mt. St. Helens wide open. All the others took it as a signal and detonated as well. One by one, all over the world, the volcanoes were activated: Krakatoa, Vesuvius, Maui, Fuji-san, Kick 'em Jenny. The Pope himself declared it Armageddon. His Holiness wasn't disappointed.

Initially, he had felt sorry for those buried under tonnes of ash and debris, but on reflection, he felt they were probably better off. They were spared what followed. The billions of tonnes of ash thrown into the atmosphere blotted out the sun, beginning three years of unrelenting winter. Food became scarce when crops couldn't grow. Animals that could have been hunted died out through poaching and starvation. Fish became the only staple of the world's diet.

Needless to say, anarchy reigned supreme. He felt glad the Library had been built in space rather than on the battlefield of the surface.

It was the first time Jamaica had ever recorded snowfall, let alone six feet of it. At least, the Jamaican Olympic Bobsled Team was happy.

Excusing his own joke, that was only the tip of the iceberg. The world would have been better off if the ash never settled. When it finally did, the survivors faced the full onslaught on a sun unfettered by ozone long since destroyed by the chemicals trapped above the ash. Temperatures soared hellishly around the world, melting the polar ice caps. Sydney, Vancouver, Rome, Venice, Tokyo, New York and hundreds of other cities disappeared under the ocean. People flocked to Siberia and northern Canada because it was too hot to live anywhere else. Baffin Island became a beach resort. Whatever had been spared during the harshness of winter didn't last long the following summer. It either dried out to a cinder or died of cancer.

One final move was made by the governments of the world. A few more containers of frozen embryonic cells were ferried to the Library. Human cells — Orientals, Indians, Aborigines, Negroes, Caucasians — all types of people, all free of genetic diseases, each type representing a tremendous diversity of inherited traits.

Being the last director of the Library, he, of course, was asked to take on his shoulders the monumental burden of rebuilding humanity.

What was he to do? Say no?

As for the fringe group of greed-driven fanatics...a fat lot of good three trillion Eurocredits would have done them.

Earth was passing out of view now. Time for him to go back to work, what little of it there was.

Traveling back down the corridor, he stopped to inspect the mechanoids nestled in their berths. These robotic monstrosities had been designed for use in space or on Earth, wherever a little extra muscle was needed. Massive things, these mechanoids, with spherical bodies a metre in diameter and sixteen multi-function limbs. Only a small dome housing two camera eyes gave them any degree of human

aesthetics. Already legions of the things were following their pre-programmed instructions and preparing the cities of the world for the return of mankind. Rather, one city – London.

He'd never been there.

Drifting on toward the command centre, he came to rest at his usual terminal. Lazily, he flipped through the station's status information and automated reports. He paid little attention; he knew what they said.

It was a shame London wasn't going to be the way he anticipated. Whenever he'd thought of going before, he'd always imagined himself watching the Changing of the Guard in front of Buckingham Palace, listening to children playing among the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, watching the trains pull out of Paddington Station, hearing the political commentary *du jour* in Hyde Park or attending a musical in the West End.

It wouldn't happen now.

It wouldn't happen again, ever.

No, he had been given the task of bringing humanity up again to the point where they could do it themselves.

Still, there was room for improvement.

For instance, he could simply choose to rebuild humanity from only the Negro cells and ignore all the rest. There goes racism.

And religion? What good was it? If it wasn't causing wars or giving people an emotional crutch or shoveling money into the pocket of televangelists, it was keeping people from living enjoyable, fulfilling lives. How many people, he wondered, had so enthusiastically looked forward to their eternal reward in Paradise that they became disconnected with their lives at hand? What a waste.

Crime could be curbed from birth, conditioned out of impressionable minds.

Governments would finally be able to achieve a true form of communism, one where everyone benefited because nobody skimmed off the top. No hunger, no poverty, no homelessness. Altruism would abound.

And no one would be so unnecessarily prudish about something about something so natural as nudity and sex.

At last, so much was possible.

But there are always doubts. What right did he have to arbitrarily eliminate Oriental or Caucasian or Aboriginal people? What of all the diverse cultures lost forever, save for what was written of them on a disc in the Library? What would become of the masses brainwashed against criminal activity, would they be unable, perhaps, to show any individuality in thoughts, ideas, or methods? What of the literature no longer readable because of the ideas it contained? Doesn't that suggest tyranny and fascism? Wasn't he trying to see to it such things never happen again?

The final status indicator flashed upon the screen. In large, simple letters it said:

Estimated Time To Global Ecological Stability: 117 Years, 287 Days

The moral issues could wait.

Turning, he drifted down the corridor past the mechanoids, returning to the viewport where Earth was again emerging from orbital obscurity.

He did not look at it immediately. He continued to gaze ahead, not into open space, but at the pane of plexiglass itself, at his reflection on it.

Often he had read the idea that man created his gods in his own image. Would this new humanity's god look like him? Would they, in the millennia after he had ceased to be, come to worship a round, sixteen-legged idol?

For no reason in particular, he ran a diagnostic of the electronic circuits that now carried his once human mind.

Steadying himself on twelve of his appendages, he shifted his camera eyes to look upon Earth.

*KARL'S
KARTOON!!!*



SERENDIPITY & READER ABUSE

by Laura Atkins

So I says to him, I says, so you want me to write another article for Under the Ozone Hole? So you know what he says to me? (Pause while you insert the words, "No, what?" like a dutiful reader.)

He says "yes." Can you believe it? And me with this terrible pain in all the diodes down my left arm. (No, I don't care in the least that you recognized this Douglas Adams misquote. Go back to your kennel.)

Anybody who writes stuff on demand knows that evil bloodthirsty haggard-eyed demon that lives on an empty page (I know I wrote this on the computer, so shaddup), the one that reaches up into your cortex and sprays it with Niloder, Lysol, and anything else I can think of intended to neutralize unpleasant things. Presumably the generation of ideas for a fanzine article is included in this category.

Oh sure, you're probably sitting there on your butt, going "I never have any trouble thinking up stuff to write for fanzines." But that's because they didn't ask *you*, smeghead! I assure you that the privilege of being asked to contribute to a fanzine, and moreover, a fanzine which has just been nominated for an Aurora, is quite sufficient to stun the creative synapses. However, you'll never know, so take my word for it, awright?

So anyhow, not only did he have the *nerve* to ask moi (shaddup, I was doing that long before Miss Piggy. Okay, I'm lying, but I didn't adopt it from her and you shouldn't've been allowed to stay up late enough to watch The Muppet Show anyhow) to write an article, but he wanted it by *this weekend*. This weekend, right, like I don't have a basement to clean before my parents get upset.

(Pause while I twirl my hair around my finger, adjust my Spandex and handkerchief, lick my keyboard in quiet contemplation, and continue.)

How much am I getting paid for this? Hmm.... <insert seven beeping and booping sounds here>

"Karl? How much am I getting for writing this article? <pause> *Nothing?!?*"

Oh well, the ringing in his ear should go away in a few days. I didn't slam the receiver, which, those of you with propellerhead tendencies should note, should technically be called a transceiver, down that hard anyhow.

So how long is it supposed to be? Guess I better not call Karl and ask.... <seven more beeping and booping noises, different ones>

"Hi, John, this would be me. How many words am I supposed to put in this fanzine article? <pause> You must be jok-

ing, do you know how long it's been since I cleaned the basement? <another pause> Yes, but there's two different Star Trek shows on tonight. <more silence on my end, apart from the subtle sound of grinding teeth> Okay, but you have three cats and I gave away my ferret, besides which I just broke up with my boyfriend and my eyelids are too swollen to type. <sounds of mocking laughter now issue from the mouthpiece of the transceiver, along with a spate of words to the effect of "So don't write the article, do you think we really care?"> Oh yeah? Oh *yeah!?!?* Well, your mother was a typewriter and your father wears gumboots to bed!" <slam>

Probably some of you have noticed by now that you are feeling a certain lack of sympathy with your protagonist, namely moi. Do you think I care? It's not like I'm getting money for this, you know. It's not like *you* moved out of your parents' basement *either*. It's not like anyone really genuinely *cares* about reader response to one's hard-earned gems of wisdom and pithy aphorisms and deliciously ironic phrases, all being proffered free, *gratis*, and without reimbursement. It's not like I can think of an ending for this article.

How many words is this? Am I done yet? Shaddup, I wasn't asking you. 649. 650. Whatever. 652.

{{Laura Atkins refuses to say where she works on the grounds that they don't deserve to take any credit for hiring her and don't appreciate her true brilliance either and who asked you to be so snoopy anyhow?}}



Zines Received

ATAVACHRON

Volume 7, No. 4, Winter 1992

P.O. Box 6501, Depot I, Victoria, B.C.,
V8P 5M4

Published quarterly by the U.S.S. Resolution

edited by Alistair Craig

Available for \$18/4 issues, or The Usual.

Yet another darn good issue of the *Atavachron*. Lotsa news and reviews, the final two chapters (by Willie Rimshot and Alistair Craig respectively) of a seven-part serial, some sf ("K.K. and The Voices" by A. David Moncreiff), and even a letter. Another fine issue.

— J.W.H.

FTT

Number 14

5A Frinton Road, Stamford Hill, London,
N15 5GN, UK

Edited and Published by Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas

Available for The Usual or £1 in coin or stamps.

FTT evolved from the zine *Fuck the Tories*. Now the zine carries a different title each issue. Number 14's title is *Fatuous Turgid Toads*.

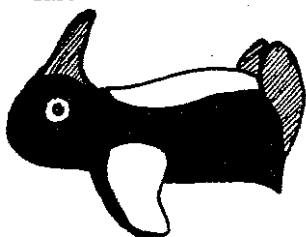
FTT describes itself as "a science fiction fanzine which like most such never mentions the stuff at all, and is concerned with history, politics, and travel."

FTT 14's editorial berates persons who address letters only to the male editor and not to both. A satirical (I think) attempt is made to make all males feel some form of guilt about this.

One of the letters, and the editorial reply to it, mention the implications of space colonies, which sounds like they're treading close to the line of mentioning sf.

If you like to read intricate, well thought-out political opinions which you won't necessarily agree with, then FTT is probably worth a read.

—K.J.



LAST RESORT:

A ZINE OF COMMENT

642 Ingersoll Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba,
R3G 2J4

Edited and Published by Steve George

Available for \$1.00 or The Usual

Hey guys, a new zine! In his "obligatory first issue editorial," George explains his reason for starting his perzine. Because he's tired of seeing his LoCs edited in other zines, he became an editor.

Within *Last Resort*'s eight pages we see comments on zines, LoCs to other zines and George's ten favorite sf&f books. He also addresses the question of what constitutes a Canadian author, primarily by commenting on some of Dale Speirs' published opinions.

— K.J.

OPUNTIA 10

Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2E7

Edited and Published by Dale Speirs

Available for \$1.00 or The Usual.

In this issue, Dale lists some ideas for genuinely Canadian sf novels and alternate histories. The bulk of the zine is taken up by part three of Garth Spencer's fan history of Vancouver. Garth's behind-the-scenes look at various Vancouver cons will hopefully be of some assistance to every concom. Even if they aren't, there's some interesting reading here.

Topics such as "the value of fan histories," "what to do with your zine collection when you die" and "fandom as a mosaic rather than a melting pot" fill up the lettercol.

—K.J.

OSFS STATEMENT

#187, January 1993

Box 6636, Ottawa, Ontario, K2A 3Y7

published by the Ottawa Science Fiction Society

edited by Lionel Wagner

Available for \$16.00/year or The Usual.

The zine starts out with listings of upcoming meetings, readings, videos and the like. The president's report contains similar listings, as well as retrospectives of past OSFS events. These sections, as well

as club minutes, make this zine of primary interest to people from the Ottawa area. However, "Hollyweird" news, book reviews, masquerade photos, commentaries on *ST: TNG*, LoCs, and con listings keep it interesting for out of town readers.

— K.J.

STET 7

17 Kerry Lane, Wheeling, Illinois, U.S.A.,
60090-6415

Published by Dick Smith

Edited by Leah Smith

Available at editorial whim (The Usual ?)

YAMZ (Yet Another Mimeoed Zine). Actually, *OOTLMZ* (One Of The Last Mimeoed Zines) might be appropriate. The thick mimeo paper combines with the large page count (92) to produce a hefty zine. Fortunately the zine packs a good bit of quality along with its quantity.

A quick scan of *Stet 7* reveals numerous colour illos and cartoons, some of which seem to have been done with the bright orange mimeo ink I sent them.

The editorial, "No Promises," mentions Leah's and Dick's *DUFF* (Down Under Fan Fund) nomination. Several pages of "we've been doing this" and Leah's extensive fannish resumé make me wonder if "editorial" is the right description for this part of the zine.

Page 11 contains a pasted in piece of multi-coloured hectographed art. I haven't seen hectography since Kathleen Moore-Freeman's oneshot from *Westercon 44*. The art, a waterfall drawn by Marilyn G. Zeldes, is interesting although my colour vision can't tell the blue ink from the purple ink.

A short section entitled "The Letterhack Primer" is amusing and is an interesting foreshadow to the extensive LoC section. The LoCs are from all over the world and many are from persons I haven't read in any other zine, making them of particular interest.

Primary topics of comment this issue are misuse of contractions and discussion of what was the most influential discovery in the last 50 years. There is also some discussion on whether BBSs (or electronic chatter as one LoCcer calls it) should be eligible for the Hugo.

—K.J.

TALE OF THE YOUNG AND SLOTHFUL

FICTION BY LAURA ATKINS

I woke up this evening and noticed that it had gotten dark out, which was hardly surprising at 8 pm. I'd only been asleep since six or so, but I have a theory that it's best not to bother the stomach while it's digesting, as it tends to act rather like a dog defending a bone: "That's my blood supply! Don't you dare take it or I'll make you *real* sorry!" Much the best thing to sleep dinner off, therefore, and not disturb the one part of my body that works hard on a regular basis.

There's something so discouraging about returning to reality after sleeping. It's so . . . full of unwashed dishes. However, I've nearly achieved my goal of being able to completely ignore my unvacuumed floor by the simple expedient of covering it with unpaid bills and dirty laundry, so that helps. A little tip for those you who think this sounds like a good system: it's necessary to have some sort of path to the bed, shower, toilet and door. Store your jacket, shoes and clothing somewhere on the floor beside this path, and keep a large supply of garbage bags nearby in which to throw the takeout food containers. Then you're set. You may wish to create a secondary path from the door to the couch and VCR if you feel the need for entertainment in between naps, but if that's too much work, just put the VCR at the foot of the bed, beside the stereo and bookshelf.

If you are now trying to ask this page such foolish questions as "What about the oven/ironing board/closet/kitchen sink?" then you obviously do not comprehend the full depth of the slobbery I'm talking about here. Being slothful is an *art form*, dearie, and not one to be attempted by the naive or weak of stomach. It requires an infinite capacity to ignore mould (at least until it's up to the level of your mattress and tickling your face when you sleep), dust (in itchy balls the size of small dogs), and general grime — we're talking your whole apartment has a bathtub ring, get it?

Anyhow, I woke up tonight and realized with extreme dolour that I was going to have to go back out to work to write some newsletter articles. As my supervisor would doubtless not understand my attempts to bring some lightness and laughter into the lives of our readers, it seemed it was going to be a long and dreary night, the sort where you wish you could inject the caffeine as so to save the energy you were presently expending by drinking the stuff.

However, I need a regular salary to finance my fast food habits, so I got out of bed — I don't know what squeaked when I stepped on it, but I'm quite sure it won't do it again. I tugged on the clothes which I had left neatly rumpled on the floor at the foot of the bed, shoes and jacket same idea, and managed to make it out the door without more than one or two tendrils caressing me on my way past the kitchen. And so on, all the long mundane way to work.

My office is not as messy as my apartment, since it's near the reception desk and hence regularly subjected to public scrutiny. And my editing and typography are distinctly anal-retentive in the level of attention paid to all small details, so I do in fact earn my pay without any of my colleagues (I love that word, it sounds just like I'm a professional) realizing that I'm the reason bubonic plague and typhoid will probably strike Victoria some day.

So I can always see the floor and at least two square feet of desk. The clutter is neatly stacked into piles, and I mark some of the folders "To Be Done Today" to convey the impression that there is a system somewhere in the teetering piles of dead-tree stuff. And my keyboard, my mouse and pad, my beloved two-page gray-scale monitor, and my cherished computer and external hard-drive are always kept most lovingly free of gundge, mouse droppings, and other forms of disrespectful non-worshipful matter.

Tonight, however — *something* was different. I paused at the doorway and glared suspiciously before stepping in. And then it struck me — the office was *clean*. This, in the immortal words of Bugs Bunny, meant war.

I collapsed on my chair to let my knees stop simulating tympani while I mumbled enraged and incoherent obscenities to my clearly visible filing cabinet. How could some BOWDLERIZED idiot do this to me? And . . . uh-oh . . . what if they discovered what I *really* had in those neatly labeled file folders?

Well, only one solution for it. Obviously I was going to have to track them down, mince them into collops, and make myself a six-month supply of long-pig stew. Even if it did mean having to clear a path through my kitchen — I was sure I could borrow a machete from someone.

I was sitting there, engaged in surly contemplation of how hard it was going to be to find a recipe for stew that didn't use onions, when I heard a sort of peculiar noise, one I seemed to recall from my childhood, and looked up to a tall, solemn, pale man standing in the doorway of my office. It was immediately obvious from his appearance what the sound had been: the quiet shishing of clean trouser legs brushing against each other while the wearer walked, rather than the noise I generally heard, a sort of greasy squishing.

"Where the CENSORED did you come from?" I blurted out. "And are you the DELETED who cleaned up my office?"

He nodded gravely. Obviously someone had told him he was the strong silent type when he was a young lad, and he had internalized it instead of laughing uproariously in their face and heading out to shave the cat in the manner of a sensible, normal child.

"Well, what the REMOVED BY EDITOR did you do it for?" I screamed politely. "Do you know how long it took me to get this office properly arranged? Do you know what's going to happen when my supervisor asks me for those printing budget estimates tomorrow and I have to say to him, 'I'm sorry, Mr. Dinglephwap, they got lost when some EXPURGATED idiot cleaned up my office and tidied out of existence all the notes I had written on torn-off corners of old reports?' Do you realize what this could do to my career? Do you do you hunh hunh hunh?! You TAKEN OUT BY PRINTER!!!!"

Then I slumped on my chair and burst into tears while covering my face with my hands. I thought it might make him lower his guard, so I watched him carefully from between the forced trembling of my fingers while thinking about how much this was going to save on my grocery bill this month. However, he simply stood there as before, playing strong, silent, and — in my humble opinion — more than a bit stupid.

I sighed wearily. So much for whipping off those articles in a trice. "Look, just tell me why you did it. I can't figure this out. Do you

have some sort of hatred for me? I can't see why, since we've never met, but I can't see any other reason either. So -- why?"

He finally spoke, in a voice that made me want to cover my ears. It was so . . . well-bred. Reasonable. Polite, even.

"I'm your alter ego. I've come back to help you."

I squinted at him. His pupils weren't dilated, so presumably he wasn't on drugs. Wait a minute -- something he just said -- "Come back?"

"Yes," he answered in that same annoyingly rational voice, "I've been on holiday for the past twenty years."

"Oh," I said, quite calmly in the circs, I felt. "Naturally. I mean, everyone . . . rich . . . goes on extended . . ." I drivelled to a stop. This still seemed completely implausible. Could prolonged exposure to mould spores induce madness?

I briefly considered genuinely bursting into tears, but decided that this would be counter-productive. Besides, ghod only knew where he had tidied the Kleenex to. Lessee, lessee, alter ego -- no wonder he was stupid. I mean, let's face it, I'm somewhere on the scale between darned bright and certified genius. This guy should be a cinch to outsmart. I squinted at him again and scratched my . . . ahem.

"So, Mr., uh, Mr. . . ?" I smarmed at him.

"Mr. Atkins," he answered politely. "Lorne Atkins."

Jeez, this guy really had a thing about being my alter ego, didn't he? That made him dumb and male, yes, but also tolerant, patient, sincere, illiterate, socially ept, well-mannered, a chef, not given to bursts of uncontrollable rage, sexually uninteresting, and one heck of a tidy person, as I already knew. The other thing was that if this guy stuck around, he was going to drive me bugfu-- buggy. I *had* to get rid of him.

"Go away," I said. "I don't want to deal with you."

He took the hint. No rage, no pulling of sharp objects from the pockets, no glint of evil plots behind his astoundingly placid eyes. And he turned and left. The nerve of the man, taking me at my word and actually leaving without further circumlocation.

"Wait a minute," I screeched after him. "What do you mean, help me? Help me how?!"

"I'll tell you when you're less busy and distraught," he called back gently.

Oh, *swell*. He was *understanding*, too. What gall.

I shrugged. Scratched my unmentionables. And set about messing up my office.

PRIME NUMBERS

by Karl Johanson

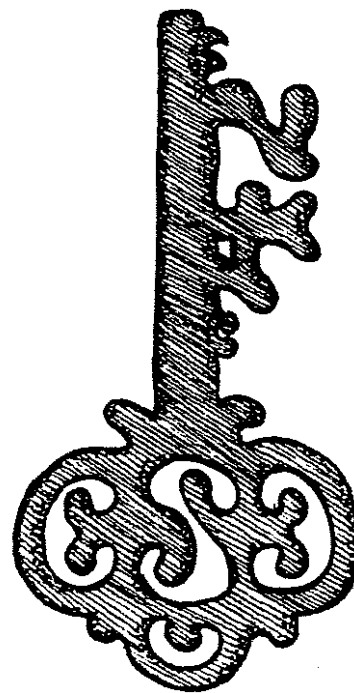
I needed a new typewriter about a decade ago. I bought a Colecovision Adam instead. Like the urban legend bunny with the infinite power pack, my Adam is still going, and doing some of the things I want it to.

One day, after a 45 minute staring contest with Adam's word processor program, I loaded Basic and started playing around with prime numbers (it was either that or play Jumpman Junior). My first experience using computers was typing a prime number program onto paper Holerith cards at high school. At the end of the week we took all of the cards to UVic and shoved them into one of their computers. I got back five pages of printout paper with hundreds of lines of "3 is not a prime number." Having your own computer which does things right away is a nice change, let me tell you.

Now, I know what you're thinking at this point. You're thinking, "Hey! If the NSA has thirteen acres of computers using hundred digit prime numbers for encryption thingies, how could Karl find out anything of interest about prime numbers on his virtually obsolete Adam? Maybe I should just skip the rest of the article and go on to the next page." Well, those of you who read no further are destined to go through life not knowing one of the most useless bits of prime number trivia ever to grace the pages of a Canadian sf newszine.

My prime number conjecture (evidence for which was first calculated on my Adam),

is that the number between prime number pairs, such as 41 and 43, or 239,429 and 239,431, are always evenly divisible by 6. I'm currently working on methods of exploiting this hypothesis financially so I can afford a faster computer.



Conventions

RUSTYCON 10: Bleah, I mean Review

The three of us, Karl and Stephanie Johanson and I, trundled off to **Rustycon 10** in January in my trusty car Cerulean. We reached the Radisson Hotel, right beside SeaTac Airport, even before we had finished eating the beef jerky. Heck, we were there so early that registration wasn't set up yet, and Security was still setting up signage.

So we adjourned to our hotel room to unpack and relax. This was aided by the fact that I was able to park right outside the window, so we formed a chain and passed the luggage in thataway -- much better than lugging it through kilometres of hallway.

So far, so good. Except . . . the hotel room was cold. We chased out the penguins without much trouble, but found the decor of icicles and frost-rime a little garish. We optimistically cranked up the heat, and I changed into my new costume.

Being the sort of person who is condescendingly referred to as a "hothouse flower," I found that the bits of bare skin . . . well, okay, *expanse*s of bare skin, if you want to be precise . . . revealed by my costume had, after ten minutes, developed goosebumps so large I expected them to actually hatch out geese at any second. I went back to the room after registering and sadly changed back into my flannel shirt and bluejeans, hoping that I might have the fortitude to try a different costume after dinner.

Ah, that dinner. We were seated in the hotel restaurant by a hostess -- I use the term in its purely technical sense -- who seated us at a table as if we were at the same evolutionary level as toilet-bowl scrapings, and ungraciously brought me a cold cup of rank coffee with no cream. Our waiter did acquire cream for me, in a waterglass that dribbled rather than pouring, and he also brought me hotter coffee, but omitted to give me a spoon. I realized at this point that they were unused to supplying spoons since they generally served carefully cooled coffee, thereby allowing their clients to stir with their fingers instead. But the lack of cream jugs remains a mystery to me.

The other difficulty I had with the Radisson's restaurant staff was with allergies, for all of you who suffer from food allergies and hence have a tedious time ordering food in restaurants. While the server understood about my allergy to on-

ions (among other foods) since he also had allergies, the chef evidently did not, since I received a steak with the onions scraped off. This is only a digestive annoyance to me, but could kill someone else.

The Radisson's restaurant never had that hostess on again, fortunately, and the serving staff were friendly though sometimes not effective. But we eventually resolved all such problems by going to the nearby Denny's for our meals, which proved optimal.

Unfortunately, the hotel never truly warmed up -- too many exits constantly in use in cold weather. To me, this marred a great deal of my enjoyment of the Con, since I tended to prefer to watch television under the covers (er, the tv was on the entertainment unit; I was the one under the covers) rather than attending panels and so forth. Likewise, the dances -- one of the reasons I go to Cons -- never really occurred, but got transmuted into discussions and such.

I did enjoy the dealers' room, and saw some truly outstanding examples of leatherwork and jewelry. The art room had some superb art as well, but seemed to me to have a higher proportion than usual of badly-drawn drivel. Yes, art is an individual preference, but very few pieces of anything sold, even of the good work. It appeared to be an apathetic Con for art.

However, I give the **Rustycon** staff credit for doing their best to run a smooth and entertaining Con. I think much of the problem lay in the sprawling physical layout of the hotel, which did not allow for a "heart" anywhere.

The one point on which I wish to stomp the ConCom into the ground is for choosing Phil Foglio's artwork for the cover of the Con booklet. I have no doubt at all that Mr. Foglio's work is popular with many, though it is not to my taste. However, I feel that a booklet cover that shows impossibly built, scantily clad females being carried off for sexual purposes by male aliens -- with some of the women appearing to enjoy this -- is at best not appealing to female Con-goers, and at worst a piece of purest crap induced by testosterone poisoning, which further reinforces some of society's most dangerous stereotypes: a) that women actually enjoy rape; b) women should all follow a certain body type to be considered attractive; and c) women should dress in a way that is sexually provocative and utterly brainless and then behave in a manner that matches their

attire.

I am not arguing that Mr. Foglio's work is not art, please note, and it is often difficult to define the line between erotic art and sexually abusive art. What I am objecting to is the use of it for the cover of the booklet. As a female fan, I strenuously object to a cover so powerfully gender-biased. The same sort of bimbo appeared on the badges, but at least there she was not being carried off for purposes of sexual violence. If we must have scantily-clad people -- and I will strongly defend the right of fans to wear little bits of nothing at a Con (but I'll save that for another article) -- please let us have both genders . . . and let us not promote rape and xenophobia. 'Nuff said.

-- Laura Atkins

Convention Flyers

I'd hoped to avoid this, but I'm about to provide a serious suggestion to Concoms for getting more people out to cons. Have a close look at your con flyers. Most of them are fine for passing out at cons to fans who already know what a con is. Now think back to your neo days and read the flyer again.

I've seen numerous con flyers which never once mention that they are a science fiction convention or that members of the general public are invited.

Picture, if you will, a poor neo picking up a con flyer at the Laundromat. This person sees that it's some kind of con and wonders if it that implies some form of criminal activity. He sees who the GoHs are and wonder what the @#\$% a GoH is. He sees that there is a video room and thinks "whoopy thrill cakes" because he has his own VCR. he reads about the games room and perhaps think of Snakes and Ladders, Monopoly and Pop-A-Matic Trouble. He sees that the SCA will be at the con and is happy that some people are interested in preventing cruelty to animals. He reads about the whos, wheres, whens and how much of the con, but not the what, which is the most important part. So we have yet another neo who should be scribbling down the con's phone number, instead scanning the rest of the bulletin board and having his interest stolen away by a hand-made ad for a used roto-tiller.

--K.J.

Convention Listings

1993

WOLFCON VI / CANVENTION 13

March 12 - 14
Old Richard Inn
Wolfville, Nova Scotia
GoH: Gordon R. Dickson
Wolfcon VI, Box 796, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, B0P 1X0

ST CON '93

March 12 - 14
Ramada Inn
Calgary, AB
GoHs: Ronald Moore (TNG producer), Tanya Huff, and Michelle Sagara
ST Con '93, 44 Senic Rd. NW, Calgary, AB, T3L 1B9

NORWESCON 16

March 25 - 28
Bellevue Red Lion
Bellevue, Washington
GoH: Betty Ballentine; Art GoH: Janny Wurts; SciGoH: Janietz Trisler, PhD.; Fan GoH: Jane Hawkins; Volunteer GoH: Teresa Janssen; Toastmaster: Bonnie Baker; Special GoH: Anne McCaffrey
Norwescon, P.O.Box 24207, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. 98124

FILKONTARIO 3

May 7 - 9
Holiday Inn
Mississauga, Ontario
GoH: Michael Longcor
FilkOntario, 302 College Ave. W, Unit 20, Guelph, ON, N1G 1S8

CAN-CON '93

May 14 - 16
Ottawa, Ontario
Delta Hotel
GoHs: Karen Wehrstein, Shirley Meier, Robert Sawyer, and Bink
Can-Con, Box 105, 220 Woodridge Crs., Nepean, Ontario, K2B 8G1

KEYCON '93

May 21 - 23
Marlborough Hotel
Winnipeg, Manitoba
GoHs: Roger Zelazny, Fred Saberhagen, Bob Eglington, Linda Ross-Mansfield
Keycon 10, Box 3178, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 4E6

V-CON 20

May 29 - 30
Totem Residence, U.B.C.
GoH: Charles deLint; Toastmaster: Michael

Coney; Art GoH: Rob Alexander
V-Con 20, P.O. Box 48478 Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., V8V 1W4

AD ASTRA 13

June 4 - 6
Sheraton Toronto East
Toronto, Ontario
GoH: Frederik Pohl; Special GoH: Dave Duncan; ArtGoH: Robin Wood
Ad Astra 13, Box 7276, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1X9

WESTERCON 46

July 2 - 5
Red Lion Inn
Bellevue, Washington
GoH: Greg Bear; ArtGoH: George Barr; FanGoHs: F.M. & Elinor Busby and Wally Weber; Toastmaster: George Alec Effinger
Westercon 46, Box 24292, Seattle, WA, 98124 USA

MONTREAL SCIENCE FICTION FESTIVAL

July 3 - 4
Pointe-Claire Holiday Inn
Pointe-Claire, Québec
GoH: Robin Curits; MC: Larry Stewart; FanGoH: Scott Aldred
P.O. Box 311, Station B, Montréal, PQ, H3B 3J7

CONVERSION 10

July 16 - 18
Marlborough Inn
Calgary, Alberta
GoHs: L. Sprague and Catherine Crook de Camp
Conversion 10, Box 1088, Stn. M, Calgary, AB, T2P 2K9

RHINOCON 3

July 17 - 19
Radisson London Centre
London, Ontario
Rhinocon, Box 1451, Station B, London, ON, N6A 5M2

TORONTO TREK 7

July 23 - 25
Regal Constellation Hotel
Toronto, Ontario
GoH: George Takei; Author GoH: Barbara Hambley
Suite 0116, Box 187, 65 Front Street West, Toronto, ON, M5J 1E6

WILFCON IX

August 14 - 15
Kitchener, Ontario
69 Donald Street, Unit 6, Kitchener, ON, N2B 3G6

CONFRANCISCO

51st WORLD SF CONVENTION

September 2 - 6
Parc 55, ANA Hotels, Moscone Convention Centre
San Francisco, California
GoHs: Larry Niven, Tom Digby, Alicia Austin, Jan Howard Finder & Mark Twain (dead GoH)
ConFrancisco, 712 Bancroft Rd #1993, Walnut Creek, CA, 94958, USA

CON*CEPT 93

October 15 - 17
Montréal, Québec
P.O. Box 405
Station H, Montréal, PQ, H3G 2L1

MAPLECON 14

October 22 - 24
Chimo Hotel
Ottawa, Ontario
P.O. Box 20235, 390 Rideau Street E, Ottawa, ON, K1N 9P4

1994

CONADIAN

52nd WORLD SF CONVENTION

September 1 - 5
Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba
GoH: Anne McCaffery, Artist GoH: George Barr, Fan GoH: Robert Runté
Non-presupporting Attending Memberships: \$95
Conadian, Box 2430, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4A7

1995

INTERSECTION

53rd WORLD SF CONVENTION

August 24 - 28
Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre
Glasgow, Scotland
GoHs: Samuel R. Delaney, Gerry Anderson
U.S. Address: Theresa Renner, Box 15430, Washington, DC, USA, 20003
U.K. Address: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH

