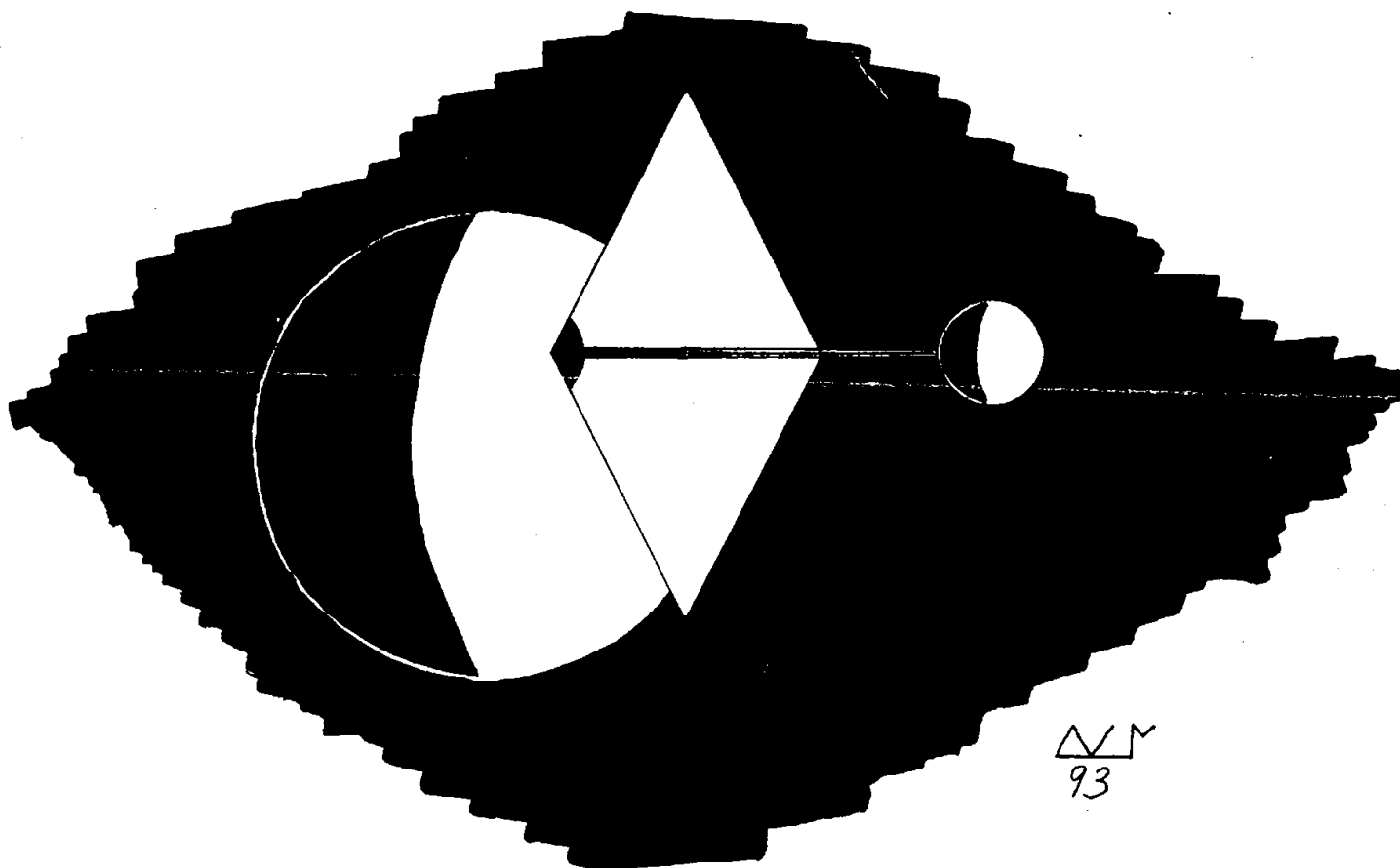


ZX

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93

JULY / AUGUST
1993

Edited and published bi-monthly by

Andrew C. Murdoch

Andrew C. Murdoch
(Way Cool Signed First Edition!)

ZX is available for two Canadian dollars per issue or the Usual
American money taken at par

ZX was produced on an Apple IIC computer, using the Bank Street Writer
and was printed on a Citizen 200GX printer using the "Roman" font

All rights to articles and artwork appearing herein are hereby returned
to their respective contributors

Are you paying attention? There'll be a test on this later.

For some intense egoboo, send your subscriptions, letters of comment,
articles, reviews, fiction, artwork, convention listings, convention
reviews or trade 'zines to

2563 Heron Street
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
V8R 5Z9

Contributors

Andrew C. Murdoch
Paul Vander Heiden
Veronica Vander Heiden

Cover Artwork: Andrew C. Murdoch

Why did I send you this 'zine?

- ☒ Because I felt like it.
☐ Because you paid for it.
☐ Because you sent something.
☐ I'll trade you!
☐ By the way, this is your last issue.

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My Two Cents' Worth or What The Hell Am I Doing?

Andrew C. Murdoch

The title says it all. ZX. Zine Experimental. Yes, this 'zine is a grand experiment. Perhaps, then, I should explain why I'm experimenting and what I hope to accomplish.

I was exposed to fanzines soon after coming out of the fannish closet. The first I ever laid eyes on was the Atavachron, the club newsletter and fiction 'zine of the U.S.S. Resolution, Victoria's Star Trek fan club, of which I was a member (and am now vice-president).

Soon after I discovered that other people (not just clubs) also produced 'zines of their own, representing a wide range of styles, topics and views.

Since then, I've had what can only be described as a smoldering yearning to edit and publish my own 'zine, whether or not it was for a club.

Alas, there came discouragement. Looking at the 'zines of today, the overwhelming majority are produced using the latest in computers and software. The typical 'zine is laid out using Pagemaker or some equally expensive desktop publishing program, on an IBM, Amiga or Macintosh computer (neither of which are cheap) and, after adding frills like artistic computer-drawn titles, are printed out on highly expensive printers that give unnaturally high resolution. I was worried that, should I try to produce a 'zine on my own equipment, it would merely be passed over, unread.

Then, a thought occurred to me. Fanzines are nothing new. On the contrary, they've been around for decades. The earliest 'zines didn't have such frills. They didn't even have the benefit of five-cent photocopy stores such as the ones today's 'zine editors take for granted. They were typewritten onto stencils, with any artwork painstakingly etched out, and then the whole thing was mimeographed (nightmareish machines compared to the average Xerox). This realization of the simplicity of early 'zines (in design if not execution) gave me the drive to damn the photon torpedoes, ahead Warp Factor five.

Of course, all of the above thoughts came to me while I was lying in bed, well past midnight, trying to get to sleep. Such inspiration rarely comes to me at a decent hour of the day. It's always while I'm trying to fall asleep that it comes and haunts me by tempting me to think it through, and then be so wound up after thinking it through that there's no recourse but to start working on it immediately. So here I sit in front of the computer in the middle of the night typing this.

And here it is. The great experiment. To see precisely how well a 'zine can be done using an antique (by computer age standards) Apple IIC computer, the Bank Street Writer, brain sweat and elbow grease. If nothing else, it'll be great practice for the day, long in the future I'm sure, when I can afford a better computer.

Zine in Passing

ATAVACHRON

Edited by Alistair Craig

Published by: the U.S.S. Resolution

P.O. Box 6501, Depot 1, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, V8P 5M4

CDN \$18 or US \$ per year (four issues) or the Usual

COMMENT: Volume 7, Number four contains the usual great stuff from Victoria's oldest and (still!) only Star Trek club. Included is Star Trek, SF and animation news, reviews of episodes, movies and books, the conclusion of the epic Trek story "Everything Old is New Again", and the computer programmer's diet. An excellent read.

BCSFazine

Edited by R. Graeme Cameron

Published by: British Columbia Science Fiction Association

P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V7X 1A2

CDN \$24 per year (twelve issues)

COMMENT: One of the longest running Canadian clubzines around, and always an entertaining and thought-provoking read.

Issue #239 features Mr. Science's column, unlocking the mysteries of the universe (like how a wormhole can be used for space travel à la Star Trek: Deep Space Nine when they're only a few centimetres wide and follow a long winding path in the ground). The Leather Goddesses of Phobos offer their advice to the desperately hopeless, the Hot Gossip Stop churns out all the dirt about the depravity at NorWesCon XVI, and the God-Editor himself, R. Graeme Cameron, sums up society in the fifties through analysis of the food of that decade, and sums up Vancouver fandom in the early seventies through analysis of the early B.C.S.F.A. Sean Stewart, author of the Aurora-winning novel *Passion Play* is also featured in an interview. Rounding out the issue, as always, are the LoCs from beyond.

Number 240 contains more advice to the lovelorn from the Leather Goddesses of Phobos, part two of the interview with Sean Stewart along with the Hot Gossip Stop and a retrospective of V-Con III. Sidney Trim's Space Report, Steve Barclay's Disbelieve It or Not and the Vituperator himself, Stan G. Hyde put in an appearance as well.

THE TAI-PAN

Published by the Tai-Pan Project

P.O. Box 203, 20575 Wildwood Street, N.E. Indianola, Washington, U.S.A., 98342

US \$15 per year (three issues)

COMMENT: This is a thick, spiral-bound, fictionzine for fans of anthropomorphic SF. Writers create characters for themselves to serve on a starship in a universe they make up as they go along. In issue five, the pirate vessel *Iktome*

goes after dinner, the fighting pits of the planet Appolyon become the scene of a comic-style story and the freighter *Tai-Pan* is haunted by a ghost, and only the ship's mascot knows who it is.

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE

Edited by John Willcox Herbert and Karl Johanson

Published by The Spuzzum Press and Nuclear Cheese Wuncle Press

4129 Carey Road, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, V8Z 4G5

CDN \$12.50 per year (four issues) or the Usual.

COMMENT: "Admiral" Robert Runté and his harem of lovely ladies grace both the cover and the pages of this 1993 Aurora Award winning 'zine's fourth issue. John and Karl tell ex-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and She Who Would Be Prime Minister Kim Campbell where to go, and offer a special coupon for page seven. Along with the 'zine's legendary "Why you got this 'zine" column are reviews, news, convention listings and lots of LoCs. Also, there are V-Con XX Programming Changes (not!!), David Gordon-MacDonald's look at racism in Disney's Aladdin and Laura Atkins exposition of her Impossible Battle Bikini, which caused dozens of cases of whiplash and dragging jawbones at NorWesCon XVI. Always a blast to read.

FUTURE WARS

Edited and published by Herb Barents

17187 Wildemere, Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., 48221

US \$19 per year (six issues, make cheques payable to Herb Barents)

COMMENT: This eye-catching 'zine started out being devoted to the role-playing game *BattleTech* and is starting to branch out into other RPG's. The main focus of every issue, however, is still *BattleTech*. Issue 31 discusses how terrain should dictate how your forces are deployed, and a special section on aerospace fighters in *BattleTech* views tactics in space. Also present are some articles on *Silent Death*, *Star Wars* and *Star Strike*. As always, this issue includes reader-created *BattleMech*, fighter, vehicle and DropShip designs, two of which are by yours truly. An excellent resource for *BattleTech* players.

OPUNTIA

Edited and published irregularly by Dale Speirs

P.O. Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7

CDN \$1 per issue or the Usual

COMMENT: In issue 12.1, Dale reviews 'zines. Lots of them. 'Zines on every subject imaginable are here, from perzines to genzines to prozines to underground sampled music cassettes to a 'zine purely about the art of dishwashing. Some LoC's round out this issue.

In issue 13, Garth Spencer chronicles the origins of the Aurora Awards, Dave Panchyk gives a tentative and tenuous Saskatchewan fan history, and Robert Runté boldly suggests that fandom NOT get organized. The LoCs this issue deal with recent economics and other trends.

PROTOCOLTURE ADDICTS

Published by Ianus Publications

#211-2360 de LaSalle Avenue, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H1V 2L1

CDN \$22.47 or US \$18 per year (six issues)

COMMENT: This Canadian-based prozine deserves mention because it grew from a fan magazine dedicated to the Japanese-animation series "Super Dimensional Fortress Macross" (better known as "Robotech" to North American audiences). Now, however, it focuses on all Japanese animation and includes synopses, news, reviews, character backgrounds, fan art, Japanimation Convention reports, and a hilarious regular column called "Anime Gossip"! PROTOCOLTURE ADDICTS can be had either by subscription or it can usually be found in comic shops. This is terrific stuff for those into Japanimation, and it's Canadian to boot (better yet, it's not printed in Japanese). Check it out!

MECHA PRESS

Published by Ianus Publications

#211-2360 de LaSalle Avenue, Montréal, Québec, Canada, H1V 2L1

CDN \$29.96 or US \$25 per year (six issues)

Sample issues available for CDN \$6.42 or US \$5.75

COMMENT: The sister 'zine of PROTOCOLTURE ADDICTS, MECHA PRESS delves into a more specialised realm much adored by fans of Japanimation: Mecha! All the dope on any animation or game containing the giant robots so elegantly portrayed by the Japanese can be found within these pages. Typically, each 'zine focuses on a different robot-wielding animation series or movie and contains character backgrounds and plot synopses, along with specs on the mecha in it. Each issue also contains garage kit modelling tips, news of upcoming animations from Japan, and gaming news. Plus there are reviews and alternate rules for all the major games involving mecha, like *BattleTech*, *Mecha*, and *Mekton*, including game adaptations of famous animation mecha. Some terrific art and layout also make this 'zine a lovely eyeful to read. Again, this is a magnificent Canadian 'zine that is a definite must for modellers and gamers alike.

DIMENSION

Box A-13, 1720 Douglas Street,

Victoria, B.C., Canada,

V8W 2G7

Edited by Don McCaskill

Published by Falcon Entertainment

CDN \$17 per year (4 issues)

COMMENT: News and fiction 'zine, also acting as a forum for Victoria clubs.

A small 'zine I can empathize with!

ENLIGHTENMENT

P.O. Box 912, Station F

Toronto, Ontario, Canada,

M4Y 2N9

Published by the Doctor Who

Information Network

CDN \$13 per year (6 issues)

COMMENT: For the serious Whovian! Great art and articles, with news and fiction.

Reviews

Decision at Thunder Rift

William H. Keith, Jr.

Penguin/ROC, 1992. (Originally published by FASA Corporation, 1986)

Review by Andrew C. Murdoch

Imagine being stranded on a planet light years from anywhere. Your family and friends are either dead or long gone, and no one trusts you because you're an offworlder. Hostile military personell pursue you at every turn, wanting arrested or at the very least dead. Now imagine this planet fell under attack, and the weapons the enemy uses are giant death machines that walk through buildings like a man through matchsticks.

ROC has recently republished *Decision at Thunder Rift*, the first novel ever published in connection with the military-SF role-playing game *BattleTech*. In the *BattleTech* universe, mankind has gone to the stars and taken his prowess at waging war with him. However, the ultimate weapons of the thirty-first century aren't tanks, or fighters or even nukes, but BattleMechs, twelve-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 "Death" 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. Then, when politics and a second invasion from an even more powerful force threaten both him, his planet, and his fledgling unit of captured 'Mechs, he has to make the 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're a *BattleTech* player or not. The glossary in the back of the book gives definitions of commonplace expressions in 'MechWarrior circles, and illustrates 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!

(If you like *Decision at Thunder Rift* you might want to read its sequels *Mercenary Star* and *The Price of Glory* by the same author. - A.C.M.)

The Science in Science Fiction

Edited by Peter Nicholls
Michael Joseph Limited, 1982

Review by Andrew C. Murdoch

This is not a new book. By its own scientific standards, its publication in 1982 has made some of the information in it dated. Nevertheless, *The Science in Science Fiction* should be required reading for anyone even contemplating writing science fiction.

Virtually all the aspects of modern-day science-fiction, and all that came before it, are covered here, referencing classic works of science fiction and explaining the realities of technology, physics, warfare, alien life forms and possible futures of our planet and society. In addition, there is a chapter devoted to science fiction's most famous scientific blunders, from the idea that Earth is hollow to the physically impossible manoeuvres executed by Star Wars X-Wing fighters.

This is the definitive work in explaining, in layman's terms, the scientific principles underlying many works of science-fiction, expressed so imaginatively by authors like Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein and Niven. It's a pity the book is no longer in print. If you should happen upon a copy in the local library or second-hand bookstore, snap it up! So much good science fiction could indeed start just by reading this book.

Letters of Comment

Okay, I lied. Since this is the first issue, there are no letters. Instead, I'm going to put down, for the record, my policy on the printing of letters sent to ZX.

I believe LoCs are an important aspect of any 'zine. Since the writing of a good LoC can be just as demanding as the writing of any other article in a 'zine, an editor who edits the LoCs he receives could be damaging the content, views and points in the LoC.

That concept thoroughly lodged in my mind, this is how I am going to treat a LoC, or any other written submission, sent to ZX. I will not edit any LoC I print, except for spelling (using the Queen's English) and grammar (should there be a confusingly phrased passage). I will either print a LoC completely and unabridged, or not at all. This is an all or nothing LoC policy. Of course, there are drawbacks to this. It may mean, unfortunately, that a lengthy LoC will not be printed due to space limitations, so a short and sweet LoC stands a better chance of seeing print in these pages (but I'll try my damndest to print all my LoCs). So send me your views, speak your mind, and tell it like it is to all who read this 'zine.

Conventions

WESTERCON 46 2-5 July 1993

VENUE: Bellevue Red Lion Inn

WRITE: SWOC, P.O. Box 24292, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., 98124

PHONE: (206) 742-8943

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$55 at the door

GUEST OF HONOUR: Greg Bear

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR: George Barr

TOASTMASTER: George Alec Effinger

CONVERSION 10 16-18 July 1993

VENUE: Calgary Marlborough Inn, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

WRITE: Conversion, P.O. Box 1088 Station M, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2K9

MEMBERSHIPS: ?

GUESTS OF HONOUR: L. Sprague and Catherine Crook de Camp

VIKING CON 14 13-15 August 1993

VENUE: Western Washington University Campus, Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A.

WRITE: Viking Union 202 Box V-1, Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A., 98225-9106

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$18 until 31 July 1993, US \$25 afterwards

GUEST OF HONOUR: Vernor Vinge

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR: Timothy Bradstreet

EDITOR GUEST OF HONOUR: Kristine Kathryn Rusch

DRAGON FLIGHT 27-29 August 1993

VENUE: Seattle University, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

WRITE: P.O. Box 417, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., 98111-0417

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$30 until 10 August 1993

COMMENT: Northwest regional gaming convention.

CONFRANCISCO/WORLDCON 51 2-6 September 1993

VENUE: Moscone Convention Centre, ANA Hotel, San Francisco, California, U.S.A.

WRITE: Confrancisco Registration, 712 Bancroft Road, Suite 1993, Walnut Creek, California, U.S.A., 94598

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$125 until 15 July 1993

GUESTS OF HONOUR: Larry Niven

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR: Alicia Austin

FAN GUESTS OF HONOUR: Tom Digby and Jan Howard Finner

TOASTMASTER: Guy Gavriel Kay

LATE GUEST OF HONOUR: Mark Twain

MOSCON 15 17-19 September 1993

VENUE: Best Western, Moscow, Idaho, U.S.A.

WRITE: Moscon, P.O. Box 8521, Moscow, Idaho, U.S.A., 83843

PHONE: (208) 882-0364

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$22 until 15 July 1993, US \$25 until 1 September 1993, US \$28 at the door

GUEST OF HONOUR: Barbara Hambly

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR: David A. Martin

SCIENCE GUEST OF HONOUR: Dr. Victor R. Baker

FAN GUEST OF HONOUR: Steve Fahnestalk

Battlestar Galactica Fifteen Yahren Reunion 15-17 October 1993

VENUE: ? (Somewhere in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.)

WRITE: Galactica Reunion, P.O. Box 31892, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

MEMBERSHIPS: US \$60

GUEST OF HONOUR: Richard Hatch (Additional guests to be confirmed)

CONADIAN/WORLDCON 52 1-5 September 1994

VENUE: Winnipeg Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

WRITE: Canadian, P.O. Box 2430, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3C 4A7

MEMBERSHIPS: CDN \$95 (?) until 30 September 1993

GUEST OF HONOUR: Anne McCaffrey

ARTIST GUEST OF HONOUR: George Barr

FAN GUEST OF HONOUR: Robert Runté

TOASTMASTER: Barry B. Longyear

COMMENT: The first World Science-Fiction Convention to be held in Canada in over twenty years! As of March, there were 2700 paid attending memberships from around the world, including Israel, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and Germany. This will truly be a convention to remember.

Changed Your Balls Recently?

From the Newsletter of the Victoria Mac Users Group, October 1991

Contributed by

Veronica Vander Heiden

This really is an excerpt from an IBM service manual on IBM mouse maintenance. You may not believe this after you have read it, but I typed this from a photocopied page of the manual:

"Mouse balls are now available as Field Replacement Units. If a mouse fails to operate, or should perform erratically, it may be in need of a ball replacement. Because of the delicate nature of this procedure, replacement of mouse balls should be performed by trained personnel only.

Before ordering, determine type of mouse balls required by examining the underside of each mouse. Domestic balls may be larger and harder than foreign balls. Ball removal procedures differ, depending on the manufacturer of the mouse. Foreign balls can be replaced using the pop-off method, and domestic balls replaced using the twist-off method. Mouse balls are usually not static-sensitive, however, excessive handling can result in sudden discharge.

Upon completion of ball replacement, the mouse may be used immediately. It is recommended that each servicer have a pair of balls for maintaining optimum customer satisfaction, and that any customer missing his ball should suspect local personnel of removing these necessary functional items."

Told you you wouldn't believe it.

Twenty Years of Parties and Beers

V-Con XX

Andrew C. Murdoch

It's hard to believe, but V-Con is the longest running convention in Canada, celebrating its twentieth full-blown bash at its traditional UBC venue.

The theme of this year's convention was "Twenty Years of V-Con" and included panels dedicated to previous V-Cons. The program book also reviewed every V-Con (as well as both the WesterCons Vancouver has hosted) and recapped the Elron Awards given out to SF's most memorable mediocre moments.

Of course, there's another side to every V-Con: the parties. Friday night, after the alcohol stopped flowing from the dance and Hospitality suites, congoers flowed to the U.S.S. Resolution's traditional V-Con fling to sample their galaxy-infamous Spook's Blood and dance until the wee hours. Always a good time, this year proved to be no exception as the party finally wound down at 4:30 a.m. Among the illustrious people attending was Don H. Debrandt, author of *The Quicksilver Screen*. John Dalmas also made an appearance, politely asking them to turn down the music, as he could hear the party from his room, two floors up. My favourite memories of this party were of singing Queen's "Fat Bottomed Girls" at the top of my lungs with two fellow imbibers and of being elevated to the status of minor deity after bestowing a foot rub to a grateful starship captain.

Magnificent milkshakes poured from Hospitality on both Friday and Saturday, allowing partakers to finally sample one of Red Dwarf's famed beer milkshakes (or any other concoction one has in mind).

After Saturday's panels, including the banned episode of Ren and Stimpy, an overview of the Soviet Union's disasters in space, a discussion of conspiracy theories (where everyone sat with their backs to a wall) and a display of Starfleet Uniforms over a period of 120 years, the parties started up again. The Science Fiction Association of Victoria held its guzzle and gab festival until 7:30 a.m. Sunday morning! The Merchants of Deva set its latest (and last) record for the imbibing of a metre-long glass of Romulan Ale at Demolition Drinking III (congratulations, I think, go to Garth Spencer) and the U.S.S. S'Harien, the Vancouver-based offspring of Victoria's U.S.S. Resolution, held its blast. For the more sedate, Hospitality filked 'til dawn.

Finally, on Sunday afternoon, after panels on the social responsibilities of authors and the production of fan publications, the U.S.S. Teacup (NCC-24-T) hosted Tea Trek II: The Wrath of Scone. Trekkers from all over sipped hot Earl Grey and sang classic tunes from Monty Python, such as "Knights of the Round Table", "Brave Sir Robin", "Every Sperm is Sacred" and "Sit on my Face", with Red Dwarf's "Tongue Tied" thrown in for good measure.

Of course, a Con is the traditional place to meet people. I personally met many people including Don DeBrandt, John Dalmas, R. Graeme Cameron (God-Editor of BCSFazine), William Gibson, Robert Runté and a young lady who convinced me that her home town of Ladner, B.C. exists on a different plane of reality from the rest of the universe. Among the other guests were Spider Robinson and Charles de Lint, just to name a few.

When all was said and overdone, Chair Steve Forty and his ConCom did a

magnificent job of putting on the convention and adding to the legends. Kudos to them all for providing Vancouver and Northwest fan with yet another memorable good time.

The Programmer's Diet

Paul Vander Heiden

Breakfast:

- 1/2 Half a grapefruit
- 1 slice whole wheat toast
- 8 ounces of skim milk

Lunch:

- 4 ounces lean broiled chicken breast
- 1 cup steamed zucchini
- 1 Oreo cookie
- Herb tea

Mid-Afternoon Snack:

- Rest of the package of Oreos
- 1 Quart Rocky Road ice cream
- 1 jar hot fudge

Dinner:

- 2 loaves garlic bread
- Large pepperoni and mushroom pizza
- Large pitcher of beer
- 3 Milky Way chocolate bars
- Entire frozen cheesecake eaten directly from freezer

Diet Tips:

- If no one sees you eating it, it has no calories.
- If you drink a diet soda with a chocolate bar, they cancel each other out.
- When eating with someone else, calories don't count if you both eat the same amount.
- Food used for medicinal purposes never counts, such as hot chocolate, brandy, toast and Sara Lee Cheesecake.
- If you fatten up everyone around you, then you look thinner.
- Movie-related foods don't count because they are simply part of the entire entertainment experience and not part of one's personal fuel, such as Milk Duds, popcorn with butter and Junior Mints.

The Family Honour

Andrew C. Murdoch

An interesting idea posed by more than one work of science fiction is the concept of interstellar government reverting back to something resembling a monarchy. This concept was probably best illustrated by Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* and its sequels, but it's also cropped up elsewhere, such as in the SF role-playing game *BattleTech*. The idea is that the problems of interstellar travel and communication make this system more effective than other systems.

Feudalism of the ancient Earth variety went like this: Communications were possible only by horseback, which was extremely lengthy. Just to ride from London to Canterbury (the most travelled route in feudal England) took a full day. Travel times were just as long. In order for the monarch to maintain control over his domain, he appointed numerous nobles to act in his name over increasingly smaller areas of land. Serfs and peasants paid taxes to the barons, who paid taxes to the counts, who paid taxes to the viscounts, and so on until the tax money finally got to the king. Wealth was the sole basis of a noble's power. It was this wealth that could be used to raise armies, erect castles, garrison them with troops, and then invade a neighbouring country in order to appropriate new sources of wealth. Back then, it all boiled down to the Golden Rule: "Whoever has the gold makes the rules."

Since nobility, along with wealth, was passed down from one generation of a family to the next, nobles usually had plenty of reasons to be proud of their ancestors. So-and-so did such-and-such and so on. Not only did this heritage and these stories get passed down from one generation to the next, but so also did the family's emblems, coats of arms and the like, which would be used to identify a person's family or possessions. In an age where few could read, especially among the peasants, such symbolic rather than written identification was crucial. Such symbols often represented great deeds of past ancestors, illustrated family legends or depicted facets of a person's life and career.

All of the above, of course, is what is repeated in *Dune* and elsewhere, for the same reasons but under different circumstances. Lengthy and/or costly interstellar travel and communication methods make governing a realm of two or more star systems difficult. The same difficulties would be encountered to a lesser degree in our own solar system today. So, a nobility system is set up to maintain control over provinces, continents, or even whole planets. And the cycle goes on from there.

In recent decades, however, the actual power of the modern nobility has dwindled. With the Royal Family themselves effectively reduced to figurehead status, lesser nobles suffered the same fate. Many have even lost the power of their wealth, leading to a recent outcry by the British House of Lords when a Toronto businessman purchased the lordship of an English town. Such a trade in titles is big business, with English titles going for as little as eight thousand dollars.

Regardless of what tragedies may befall the individual nobles, however, they still have family and genealogy to distinguish themselves. Some of these genealogies stretch right back to the Norman invasion almost a thousand years ago, and are impressive by their length alone.

Yet, the science of genealogy, the tracing of your ancestors, remains

argely ignored. Even though the average "peasant" is on a financial par with any nobles, few people today take up such studies. Many people's family trees can be just as impressive as a noble's, if you take the time to research them, and with the resources available today, such as mandatory government records, census results, genealogy clubs, the Mormon church and, increasingly, computer bulletin board systems, there is little reason why anyone today should not know the last hundred years of their family's history and members in great detail. And there are numerous organizations where such histories can be registered and kept on file for all to see and read. Aiding this is the fact that Canada as the first Commonwealth country to be granted by Royal patent the right to grant coats of arms, through the Canadian Heraldic Authority, on Her Majesty's behalf.

Of course, it is entirely possible that little information will be found, or that the information you find will not improve your view of past generations, but genealogy is not merely a science for yourself. It is also a unique and eternal gift to your descendants to remind them of that which came before them. Who knows? Another thousand years into the future, your many-greats grandson, sitting upon the ducal throne of some far distant world, may be very grateful for your efforts, and for the distinction it affords him.

For more information, the Canadian Heraldic Authority can be contacted at his address:

Chief Herald of Canada
Canadian Heraldic Authority
Rideau Hall
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A1

If you live in Canada, then your taxes have already paid for the booklets you'll receive, so you might as well check it out.

AMERICA

REPORT