



January 2016

In this issue:

- Always planning ahead, so I'm not doing anything right now ●
- Slowly and painfully working out the surprisingly obvious
 - The Entrepreneur Bardo ●
- Things I learned while learning other things
 - What I Learned from Fandom ●

Colophon

Welcome to *The Art of Garthness* #9, dated January 2016, a personalzine from Garth Spencer at 4240 Perry Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA V5N 3X5. You can also contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com. This fanzine is available for contributions in the form of articles, letters, illustrations, or other fanzines in trade.

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Too Many Plans?



Instead of making resolutions, I make plans. Sometimes I even complete the projects that I plan. Maybe I have boiled down my activities to something I can handle? ... like, 12 or 15 or so?

After capturing all my electronic records and pushing them into directories by subject, I felt a lot more in control of my life; as though I had accounted for everything I have, and where it is; as though I knew what I'm doing, and why, and what my progress is.

What seem to be my major projects for this year ...?

My plan for this fanzine:

- To chronicle my ongoing progress in documenting our implicit, subliminal culture
- what some people meant by "common sense" – and how much contemporary urban practical life skills differ from their "common sense", and how much "common sense" turns out to be nonsense
- To figure out how much people are aware, or unaware, or informed, or misinformed about implicit culture

My plan for freelance work:

- To try and expand my client base for freelance secretarial services, as per the system of an entrepreneurial-minded friend; e.g.
- Posting ads on my own website, on Facebook, on LinkedIn ...
- Posting ads on campuses and in coffee shops
- Distributing handbills/business cards in coffee shops, bookstores, comic & gaming shops, record stores, etc. where students may circulate
- Pricing student papers for classified ads

My plan for my website:

- To review how to format and upload my files
- Welcome page – picture, introduce self, links to my other pages/categories
- My Resume
- Art of Garthness Services
- My Articles (make format consistent)
- My Amateur Fiction (maybe)
- My Favourite Links

My plan for BCSFA and other fannish activity:

I maintain BCSFA.net, which means I have to update the BCSFA event calendar monthly, and have a lot of catching up to do on the rest of the website – posting a new convention calendar especially.

Sometimes I have participated in VCON, to the extent of editing convention publications, and in other years I merely attended. (There may be a little interest left in fanzines, but maybe it's a fringe interest now, like ham radio.)

At present I am a Member at Large for WCSFA, the permanent committee that oversees each year's VCON committee. My work and Greg Neher's helped put together a calendar of upcoming conventions at which VCON can be promoted.

My plan for the Common Knowledge reference guide:

- First, acquire information sources (done), take notes, and consolidate them
- Current outline is three sections, Apprentice, Journeyman and Master levels
- Each section to be divided into Material Life, Social Life and Inner Life
- publishing and promoting, as per Author House's system

My Plan for Community Participation:

I've been living almost as hermitic an existence as you can, in a large city, and I know better. As a gesture towards contributing to my community I give blood regularly, but I really haven't done as much for others as they have done for me, either on statutory holidays or on less special occasions.

So I felt pretty wounded when someone pointed out my behaviour this Christmas/Yuletide was pretty thoughtless. I could say that I had no resources for Christmas shopping, or even sending out cards, and that would even be true, but it would still be an excuse. (Mainly I sent out email Christmas greetings.) There's more to my thoughtlessness, but that's the gist of it.

Now, my conscience has been bothering me for years about this; I have never been able to return as much hospitality and support as family and friends have given me, in Vancouver and Victoria and in points abroad.

What *can* I offer, or how much time and energy have I left over?

There are lots of community and public-service volunteer groups, of course. In a way I have already been involved with others, what with BCSFA and the SCA. Also ...

I wrote before about Asatru, the fringe interest group reconstructing the pre-Christian beliefs and practices of Germanic Europeans. As you might expect in any urban centre, there are some Asatru groups in BC, but I have been having a difficult time meeting them.

There is a regular annual gathering, however: Pagan Pride, held in mid-summer (and usually in Trout Lake Park). Similar gatherings are held in other cities. So I have volunteered to help support this year's Pagan Pride.

(The first step is a fundraiser to be held in March, and several steps have been taken to organize the event; details to follow.)

But in fact I mostly think of written or online projects to entertain myself, more than anyone else, which is why I haven't been able to interest other people in operating them as street theatre, or at least as new SF clubs:

- Lampooning Art – I'm open to suggestions, e.g. a fusion of original Japanese décor and fashion with the images and motifs of Pacific Northwest native art
- Lampooning Business – the Consolidated Amalgamated Independent Mutual Development Group Co. Inc. LLP (the fact that you can't tell if they offer any goods or services is precisely the point)
- Lampooning Military Forces – the Royal Swiss Navy (in the 1990s an excuse for me to play at setting up a Web page on the Vancouver CommunityNet server; I had hopes of inspiring my friends to make a fannish SF club out of it, maybe with public interest research as a theme, but either I didn't communicate at all well or I can't inspire three sailors to go to a whorehouse)
- Lampooning Politics – the Anarcho-Surrealist Party (So far I've set up two Facebook pages)
- Lampooning Race Politics – The Frong, an elective ethnic group registered under the Society Act, founded by the Witherspoon-Lis, an old Vancouver family that split off from the 19th-century eugenics movement and elected to seek out and marry spouses from a different ethnic group in every generation. (This never happens, right?)
- Lampooning Religion – the Secular Cult of Humanists Or Liberals And Rationalists (S.C.H.O.L.A.R.S.) (originally I called this the Liberal Secular Rational Humanist Cult)
- Lampooning Sports – promoting 43-Man Squamish (a Mad Magazine joke, a sport almost impossible to play)
- Lampooning Technophiles – Acme Widgets (2011) Co. (specializing in Rube Goldberg products that don't really work, or serve any need)
- Lampooning Technophobes – All-Natural Organic Holistic Biodegradable Eco-Friendly Products Inc. (like Consolidated Amalgamated, almost impossible to pin down what its catalog should contain)

My Plan for Employment Search:

At present my employment search skills are somewhat naïve – find secretarial/office clerical leads in newspapers, employment periodicals (one left in Vancouver), online newspaper classifieds and the websites of employment agencies; email my resume with courteous cover letters to the leads; follow up in about a week.

I have barely scratched the surface of the *What Colour Is Your Parachute?* guide from last year, and just barely started networking at all.

My Plans for Fact and Fiction Writing:

After this long I realize I am a compulsive writer, and a compulsive essayist. One of the things that gets me depressed is not having written, or worked things out in print, for at least a week; another thing that gets me depressed is not having the kind of social circle where friends and I can work out a subject that interests us, with a little information each of us has found and a bit of reasoned speculation.

Maybe that's a rare interest but it's the sort of thing I came to expect, after spending a few years at a university, and after perusing a fanzine library.

So I have written essays about the kind of things that keep cropping up in science fiction – world building, language construction, ancient runes and invented scripts, imaginary societies or applied psychohistory, crank theories, conspiracy theories, micronations, and the ambiguous lessons I learned about conrunning. (Canadian fan history is another subject I got into, but I will segregate that under the separate heading of BCSFA and other fan activities.)

Although it took me an effort to change gears, apparently I *can* write fiction. In fact I was recently surprised to discover how much fiction I have written (mostly about fictitious fans in semi-fannish settings). In years past – both before and after the rise of the Internet - I have compiled and collated SF, fantasy and horror market information from a number of sources, so I have some familiarity with the (current) markets and requirements.

Can I go on to write *saleable* fiction? And make a reasonable return on my investment of time?

My Plan For Secret Superidentity Powers And Practices:

Maybe some outsiders think every science fiction fan probably has his or her own crank theory; or yearns to be a mad scientist, or a superhero (or supervillain); or dreamed about being the witch or wizard, when hearing folktales. Just for a lark, I thought I would indulge myself a little in these fantasies.

If time permits, I could estimate the assets necessary – and available – to create a secret lair and equip a clandestine laboratory. As intelligence agencies are painfully aware, the capital costs for biological or chemical labs aren't outstandingly high, not compared to other technologies. The real stumbling block in Vancouver – famously one of the most expensive places to live – is the cost of land. Probably abandoned buildings are the best sites, if any are available.

If time permits, I could also estimate the assets necessary – and available – to create a magician's workshop. Like any other urban centre, there are multiple groups and individuals in the Lower Mainland interested in practicing occult activities. They have more Facebook pages than I know about. This may seem preposterous in the 21st century, but it was equally preposterous in the technophile industrial 19th century, and in the 20th century, and yet there has always been an occult subculture.

Probably the occult subculture should be no surprise to you, and neither should a science fiction fan transitioning from one paragraph about practicing mad science to another paragraph about practicing ritual magic. For reasons made perfectly clear by John Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, institutional science and technology can easily leave laymen disenfranchised, powerless (at least in their own minds), and longing for something that gives them equal power and control over their lives (at least in their own minds).

We would all like to find our own gimmick that works, I think.

Come to think of it: Little wonder that so many cranks go on about institutional science being all wrong, about some subject they claim for their own. I think it is, psychologically, a way of claiming some kind of territory.

I know what you're thinking. But all this keeps me out of trouble, doesn't it?

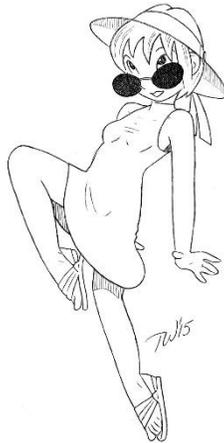
Small Satisfactions

As a half-assed response all the hospitality and support I have received, but have not been able to return, I sent out a belated Christmas present. By email. A collection of my amateur fiction. Titled, modestly, *Boring Mundane Stories*. Mostly stories that appeared first in *BCSFazine*, when I was trying to encourage others to follow this example. But some of the featured content was the first part of the “Jade Ring”, which was a parody of a convention fiasco I serialized in BCAPA (of celebrated and deplored memory).

It was curiously satisfying to do this; partly it was the same satisfaction I get from fanzines, or from simple manual crafts, and partly it was the satisfaction of recovering some of my old fiction and thinking “Hey, that isn’t as bad as I feared.”

Not that I didn’t get reamed out anyway by someone who cuts me no slack for such a lame Christmas gesture. Doesn’t matter what my bank balance looks like.

Another satisfaction was finally moving some archived issues of *BCSFazine* (on 3.5” disks) to the laptop I’m typing on. To my dismay, about a quarter of these disks were apparently corrupted. In that case, I saw no point in trying to recover the files from the 5.25” disks I have kept since WordPerfect 5.1 was a standard word-processing program. Well: now I can send the recovered clubzines to eFanzines.



The Entrepreneur Bardo

Since I do in fact want to do better financially, I have turned to some people who know money matters better than I do.

There was a fictional character in Canadian fiction, representing (I gather) an archetypal entrepreneur. I have now encountered at least three entrepreneurs who remind me faintly of this character.

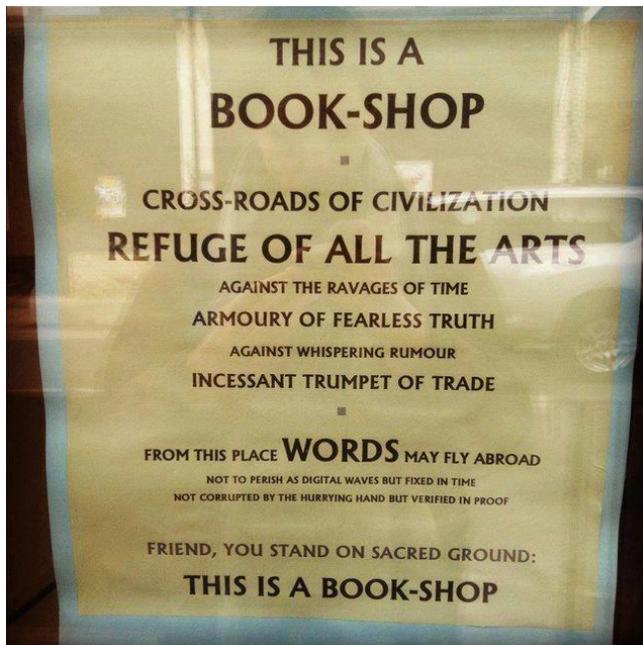
One is a longtime friend I know mainly through SF convention circles. It is still on my conscience that I never finished transcribing, at least in summary, the interviews we taped to find out people's attitudes and expectations about conventions: material which (eventually) was to shape another new convention in BC. This is someone who induced me (for a while) to attend a Millionaire Mind seminar and take part in a retirement savings fund. (Then disaster hit and I had to cash out my fund.)

Another is someone I had only emailed and spoken with over the phone, representing Author House, about my plan to compile and market a life-skills manual. (Yes, I know what a vanity press is. Yes, I am aware that self-published authors have to shoulder a lot of sales and publicity, not just publishing costs.)

Yet another is a gentleman who invited me to a free breakfast/seminar on entrepreneurial startups, and on self-promotion.

Also some members of my family are real estate agents.

Knowing that I lack their self-promotional skills – and motivation – nevertheless I think I could stand to learn something from all of these people. And maybe, just maybe, I have gotten over my terror of attempting something far outside my known range of competence.



Building a Digital Library

Like William McCabe, I have found myself insensibly adapting to 21st-century digitized life. When I was preparing to move it seemed only sensible to restrict my library to e-books as much as possible. I didn't know it at the time, but it turns out over half my library is in formats I can't read now.

Can someone tell me what formats the following filename extensions signify: PDB, PRC, RAR?

Letters

Cathy Palmer-Lister

(January 6, 2016) Hi, you don't mention *WARP*, did I forget to mail you the link?
<http://www.monsffa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/WARP-93-LR.pdf>

(January 7, 2016) We are up to *WARP* 93, now working on 94. For *WARP* (generally):
http://www.monsffa.ca/?page_id=148

WARP is only published 4 times a year, and sometimes I don't get the 4th one out. I have all the WARPs on the website, no password anymore. When I send the link to the members, I also send to the faneds we trade with, but lately I have not been hearing from some.

We used to trade with LASFS, a club in Australia and another in South Africa. I don't get *Opuntia* anymore either. I guess they figure we can download from e-fanzines, but then it's not so easy to share with the membership. That's the inconvenient part about going electronic. Members used to browse through the paper during meetings.

(I see your point, but I'll raise another. BCSFAzine is formatted for email distribution in the first place, although print copies are distributed for consignment sales. Is it really so expensive in Ottawa to print documents? Aren't there low-cost quick copy services, or a helpful member with a computer and printer? I would have thought you could cheaply print off at least a few copies of your clubzine, to pass around at meetings ...)

When Berny gafiated, we lost our \$2 an issue printer – Berny had a deal with his boss. Now it is costing us from 3-5\$ an issue depending on number of pages, so we only print for members who request it.

I don't know if the news has travelled out to your side of the nation, but *La Presse*, Quebec's most important newspaper, is now only on tablet, paper only on the weekend. The world is passing me by.

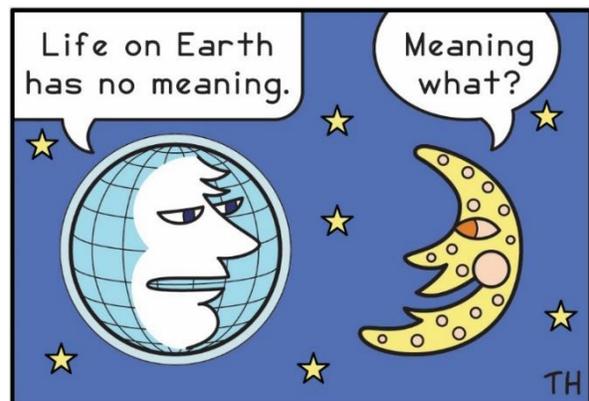
(Is printing so expensive in Ottawa, or is it so troublesome to access the Internet? Doesn't Ottawa have a FreeGeek chapter where you can get a low-cost reconditioned computer, and a Freenet where you can get a low-cost email account?)

Dave Haren, January 8, 2016

(Why we live): [*Finding*] Incentive to live, eh. Consider yourself from the perspective of the Bristlecone pine. You are as ephemeral as a mayfly, with so little time left it is ridiculous; deciding to shorten it is a waste of the time you have left. Your brain is not capable of holding onto an emotion on a long-term basis; *ergo*, making decisions with long-term consequences is not the way to do things.

All you have to do is endure a while – the world will supply an incentive to move on to better circumstances. Now you have the major secret of life equal to 42!! That comes from the free advice sold here department.

(Why the USSR fell): Here's your reason for the crash of Russia. Quite simply, they had put into effect a rigidly controlled economy which scheduled everything by remote decisions, which became disconnected from local realities. Most of their productivity was wasted; half of their crops rotted in the process of waiting for, or being transported. Add on a large military budget, and [*they*] suddenly wake up to the reality of [*the*] Chernobyl reactor fail[*ure*], which showed them what the contemplated nuclear exchange with USA was going to be like. The Rus should be commended for abandoning an idea because it wasn't working. Whether any of the so-called free world is smart enough to do the same is highly debatable.



It is possible for any system to lose the Mandate of Heaven (a Chinese term for the general indifference of the populace to the central circus acts known as governance).

(Romany *vs.* Romania): The Rom were originally from India [*and*] wound up as itinerant workers in Egypt along with the Jews; once Santorini blew, the Egyptians expelled both groups to reduce their population level to what they could feed. This is detailed in Exodus with a large amount of spin to attribute it to a testy demi-urge. [The] Ancients had very little understanding of Vulcanology and the civilization most effected had been wiped by a tsunami event so they weren't talking about it. Romania [*however*] got its name from being a Roman Empire colony so Romany are not Romanians.

((Wow. I thought the Romany only appeared – having left India, for whatever reason – in the Middle Ages. And I thought, naively, that everyone made the connection between the Roman Empire and Romania, as they must have made the connection to the names of Provence, of Cologne, of the many English place-names ending in “caster”, or of that obscure Swiss language called Romantsch.))

(To my request for a definition): Meritocracy is the system which assigns the position of an individual in it according to their level of competency. The lazy and incompetent go to the bottom right along with those who wish to dissemble their lack of real merit.

[The] World War Two US Navy being a classic example: The ships had one person each who had been in the Navy when Pearl Harbor was attacked; the system that was in place enabled it to put an end to an empire who had already crippled it in 1941.

Link [*below*] is one of the favorite underground heroes of the world, [John] Gatto:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_2mZXXK6zcU

((Upon viewing, I discovered this was not an independent comic, but an iconoclastic pundit. Very well.

((Dave, at some point we've got to talk about Strunk & White levels of style – standard vs. Dave-Haren punctuation, standard versus Dave-Haren phrasing, and standard versus Dave-Haren paragraph breaks. I face daily problems making myself understood, in person and in print, and I'd like to remove that burden from you as much as possible.))

Lloyd Penney, January 23, 2016

Got another *Art of Garthness* from you, issue 8 this time. And, it's time to make some comments, and clear up the regular pile of e-zines on my desktop.

I have a stuffed toy at home, a pink pig with wings. Yvonne brought it to work some years ago, because one supervisor used that phrase far too many times. Shut him up, shut him down...

Few of us learn to control our tempers, and I'm not so hot in that department, either. If we were so predictable, we probably wouldn't be very interesting to each other. We all need an owner's manual so that others will know how to deal with us.

How we celebrate Christmas varies from person to person, family to family. We have let much of Christ out of Christmas, but the way we do it today, presents on the 25th of December contains ideas Christ would endorse...happiness, joy, and families together. I know not everyone can celebrate it that way, and for many, it is a bad time of year because of being alone or not having any money, or manufacturers making

enormous loads of money. Myself, I am tired of the commercialism, the demand for us to spend and run up huge credit card debts, and the carols in the mall that seem to start as soon as Hallowe'en is done.

I don't do bucket lists, for I know I'd be disappointed in myself for not being able to do all I want to do, mostly because of a lack of money. We have been saving for the past five years, and have decided to go to England to be a tourist, and be a fan of both Harry Potter and steampunk. We will be going for the last half of August. That's about as buckety as I get.

America needs more choice in the parties they can vote for. Republican? About as vile as you can get. Democrat? A better choice, but every party has a stiff, unyielding structure, and there must be other platforms available. All that's needed is more parties. There are other parties, like the Libertarians, who have little exposure. Something new with lots of cash behind it is what's needed. Civilized countries? What are those? We live with a veneer of civilization that gets thinner and more translucent every year. Civilization is on back order.

Has anyone heard from Paul Carreau re CUFF? I might have heard something about him not being able to travel, and he has repaid the fund. Staging FRED again is a good thing. Our own Pubnites are still going, although attendance is still low.

Hello to Allan Burrows! After Orthodox Christmas, there should be Orthodox Boxing Day. Like we need more sales...

My letter...still no job, and I haven't even had an interview. Not a good sign, but the folks at Humber Community Employment Services remain optimistic, so I am too.

I have read online that an American court may be soon deciding whether cosplayers and costumers may be violating copyright if they copy a costume from their favorite show and wear them at conventions, as many do these days. I can see the current version of fandom taking a big hit here, should that decision be made for the entertainment conglomerates.

It's a Saturday night, and here I am at home, writing to fanzines. Some might call that sad...I call it doing something constructive, in a warm home, late at night. Works for me!, and there you are. Off I go to see who else I can respond to. Take care, see you next one.

We Also Heard From:

Do-Ming Lum ("What kind of photography (other than Aurora Awards shots) do you publish?"), R. Graeme Cameron, Taral Wayne, John Thiel, David Thayer and Steve Stiles

Why Last Issue Covered Basic Copyright Information

I have been very remiss, in previous decades, about handling other people's illustration and article rights. Taral Wayne has corrected me about this, and so have other people. I had invited Taral to write about the fannish standard practice but, as he put it, asking permission first to reprint text, or keeping track and not re-using art, was "The Whole of the Law."

Things I Learned While Learning Other Things

FRED, the long-missed Vancouver fannish gathering, will be revived started 7:00 pm on the evening of February 6, 2016 at the ABC Country Kitchen, a family restaurant in Richmond. (Michael “Fruvous” Bertrand, February 1, 2016)

VCON 41 (Sept. 30 – Oct. 2 2016) will be held at the Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel in Surrey, BC. (R. Graeme Cameron, January 30, 2016)

POLAR BOREALIS magazine coming in 2017 – R. Graeme Cameron writes:

“Here is the first issue of my semi-professional paying-market SF&F fiction magazine POLAR BOREALIS offering beginning Canadian writers a chance to make their first sale, with some pros present to serve as role models. (February 3, 2016)

Background:

“After an inspiring luncheon conversation with Lynda Williams, President of SF Canada, I’ve decided to launch a semi-pro SF fiction magazine circa January 2017. Semi-pro because it will pay less than SFWA rates, but at 1 cent a word (for stories 3,000 words or less) it will still be a paying market.

“Contributors will be paid on acceptance prior to publication. I want to put together a ‘Proof of Concept’ demo issue sometime soon, so I am currently open to story submissions and poetry submissions. However my finances are not yet in order, so for this demo one-time-situation payment will have to be deferred till later in the year. But if you're willing to trust me...

“What will make the zine unique is that I want at least 2 to 3 stories per issue to be first sales for beginning authors. Consequently unpublished writers submitting stories will only be in competition with each other and not with pros.

“How am I going to pull this off? I have a clever business plan ... Going to be different, that's for sure.”

What and Why

The primary purpose of this zine is to encourage beginning writers in a given issue of *Polar Borealis*, and make it available online to anyone who wants to read it for however long I choose to host said issue.

Availability: The first “regular” issue is planned for January 2017. *Polar Boreal* will be free to anyone who wishes to download it or receive it via E-mail subscription. At no time will any reader be charged in any way. *Polar Boreal* is 100% free, and in that sense is of amateur status. The only reason it can also be classified as semi-pro is the fact that all contributors will be paid.

Submission Guidelines

Who can submit: Contributors must be Canadian, or at least resident in Canada. “Any Canadian (must be Canadian – going to be a narrow-niche kind of zine) short story writer, poet, or artist.” Stories by authors not yet published will ABSOLUTELY be considered. “I want to publish at least one or two per issue, maybe more. But it would

also be nice to publish stories from experienced professionals to serve as inspirational examples of what to aspire to.

When to submit: Will probably open to submissions for that issue Nov/Dec 2016 once other projects (like chairing VCON 41) are over and done with. Not to mention saving up some money so I can afford to pay people.

How & Where to submit: “Send an MS Word document (*not* a PDF) to < rgraeme(at)shaw.ca > and be sure to include “PB Sub” in the E-mail heading.

Everyone submitting should include a short, one paragraph bio which confirms Canadian status, publication status, and makes you appear quite the character.

Include info: Are you still waiting for your first sale? Or have already been published? People submitting MS. should indicate whether they’ve never been published or mention a couple of things already published so that I will know what’s what.

Genre Requirements: Short stories can range from hard science to whimsical to Lovecraftian. Looking for Science Fiction and not fantasy, though of course SF can include fantasy elements, so I’m flexible. Surprise me. Nothing obscene or ultra-violent. Idea-driven combined with character-driven would be ideal.

Particularly interested in beginning writers who haven’t made a sale yet. I welcome experienced authors but will judge unpublished writers as a separate category so they won’t have to compete with pros. Ideally at least two to three first-sale stories will be in every issue. Be sure to mention whether you have been published or not so I’ll be sure to place you in the proper category.

Pay rates: Payment on acceptance – preferably by PayPal - for (non-exclusive online periodical rights)

- short stories, one cent a word.
- \$10 for one thousand words or less.
- \$20 for two thousand words or less (but reasonably above one thousand).
- \$30 for three thousand words or less (but reasonably above two thousand).

Not interested in any story over three thousand words in length.

Poems: Currently open to Poem submissions as well. Payment (regardless of length): \$10

Art: Not currently open to Art submissions just yet. OR Cover art consisting of black & white line illustration with maybe a bit of shading (so not too time-consuming for artists to create): \$40. Interior art (B&W line illustration) to illustrate a given story: \$15. Interior art (B&W line illustration) fillo: \$5.

Meanwhile I want the author or artist to be free to sell it anywhere else they like whenever they like, be it in print form, audio, visual, cuneiform mud bricks, touchy-feely 4-d, or whatever. In other words, I don’t want to hinder the authors or artists from earning further income or distributing their creation as widely as possible. The whole idea is to promote them and their work, after all. There must be some kind of accepted “rights” format that allows this. ... contributors will be paid on acceptance prior to being published.”

(R. Graeme Cameron, Facebook, January 5, 2016)



What I Learned From Fandom

1. Practically any hobby, leisure interest, art or craft will eventually attract enough people to start local clubs. Sooner or later someone inevitably starts a publication, and in the course of time, regional conferences or conventions.
2. Any hobby, leisure interest, art or craft will attract people with ulterior motives, or at least emotional baggage, and compulsions, and some unfounded impressions of the group. Some people want to be big fish in little ponds, of course. Others want the group to be something they expected, and thought they had a right to: a community of friends, or a society of particularly intelligent people with interesting activities, or a specific fandom focused on a specific show, or a paying market for their wares.
3. Trying to keep any voluntary group on track and focused on one goal is like herding cats. This is the real reason you don't find many large, or ancient, or well-resourced, or widespread conspiracies, or truly secret societies, and none that are large *and* old *and* well-resourced *and* ancient. (Any organizations that could be described that way have some financial, commercial, military, artistic, or religious motivation and are neither secret nor conspiracies.)
4. The really telling difference between various human interests and activities is how much they *motivate* people. Food fandom, model-building, fanzine publishing, filking, indie comics, conrunning, costuming, screen art and special effects, websites, blogs, robotics and fabricating inventions of your own have all waxed and waned in popularity.
5. There are alleged people who will agree to take part in activities and then do nothing.
6. There are conversations at cross purposes, when each party thinks something different is going on. I suspect this is the real reason Convention lapsed for a couple of years, early in its history – one person mistook another for a convention organizer and thought they were agreeing to host it, when the other

was uninvolved in the convention under discussion and simply agreed it would be a good idea.

7. There is no arguing with people if they're simply not interested in your project, club, or amusing ideas. Maybe there was a time when simply offering an idea for an activity would galvanize fans into activity. This is not that time.
8. Some of us have no charisma points.
9. Motivation levels also differ in different decades, of course. On the evidence of fanzines from the 1960s and 70s, a good many people were still inclined to *make their own* entertainment, even among TV children. On the evidence of club and convention activity from the 1980s onward, a visible plurality of fans had little concept of active entertainment. According to the cry of it, some fans also had little concept of volunteerism and expected some kind of goodies in return for voluntary activity. Motivation is at a premium.
10. Fanzine publishing only requires one person per title, as opposed to conventions. Likewise, a fan news website only really requires one enterprising fan.
11. Nothing ensures that a motivated fan exists, to maintain a newszine or a website.
12. There is no teaching some people if they don't care to listen to what you have to say. I remember one fan who was frightened by a lawyer talking about liability, but who seemed never to grasp that she could register a society to protect her convention committee from financial liability, or register a convention name as a trademark to protect it from misuse. I remember other fans who were so intense on such grandiose convention plans that they would not hear of scaling them down realistically. To this day I don't know any fan groups who protect their enterprises adequately from the inevitable, occasional lunatics. Comprehension is at a premium.
13. Convention relationships are like cruise ship relationships.
14. Fans are not slans.

Fanzine Reviews

It's already February 3rd, I should get this out on the Internet, let's do fanzines next issue. And a review of *Polar Borealis*.