

The Interesting Times

Issue #4 * December 2016



Breaking News

LiveJournal is Now a Russian Property so Watch What You Say

(File770.com, December 31, 2016) “LiveJournal was purchased by a Russian company” (SUP “in 2007 but continued to operate on U.S.-based servers until this month. According to [Metafilter](#), ‘As of a few days ago, the IP addresses for blogging service LiveJournal have moved to 81.19.74.*, a block that lookup services locate in Moscow, Russia. Now users — especially those who do not trust the Russian government — are [leaving the platform and advising others to leave.](#)”

Since “the Committee to Protect Journalists earlier this month [called on Russian authorities to release a LiveJournal user who has been sentenced to 2 years in prison for a critical blog post](#)”, the concern does not seem unwarranted.

Contents

Ten Unpopular Opinions (G. Spencer)	1
The Case for World Government (C. Horst)	2
Corrections	3
Letters	3
Patient Observation (T. Wayne)	6
Big News	6
Classifieds	8
Little News	8
Freedom of the Press	10

Ten Unpopular Opinions

1. Modern civilization, or at least our economic mode of subsistence, is defined by claiming most land and water and food as someone's property, and by leaving most of the productive work to the least-rewarded people, leaving most of the paid work to more or less underpaid people, and reserving most of the rewards to those who do little or no work.
2. The main function of government is to act as a security blanket for people who need reassurance that life is, ultimately, under control. It may also absorb the attention of people who really want to be in charge, but they have to occupy themselves somehow.
3. Many of the popular causes that we call political, or economic issues come down to inventing excuses to create bureaucracies, just to invent administrative work to employ people.
4. Defining politics in terms of left and right wings is a clumsy 19th-century model that doesn't work any more.
5. Many of our problems come down to being trapped in paradigms or business models that prevent us from seeing life whole, or accurately.
6. Devoting your life to the accumulation of symbolic units of exchange which, really, don't have inherent value anymore, is by definition insane.

7. Armed violence is really just a worldwide sport, which doesn't accomplish anything and is not intended to accomplish anything; and neither its players, its fans, its distributors nor its sporting goods manufacturers will admit it.

8. Most of our concerns, such as sports, fashion, protests against industrial activity, condemning homosexuality, condemning abortion, or art are simply diversions from real problems that we don't feel we can solve.

9. Divinities don't actually care what you eat, how you dress, whom you poke or how, or how much you change your environment. That's not their jurisdiction.

10. If we were interested in surviving as a civilization, as an economy, or as people, we would work out what modes of subsistence our environments could support, and restrict ourselves to them; or create new habitable environments, and clean up polluted areas into the bargain. I don't expect that to happen.

resources is peaking. Entirely aside from this growing crisis, we have the chronic need for disaster relief, whether caused by drought, plague, flood, or earthquake; and the impending threat of global economic collapse.

So much is obvious to everyone.

The object of any government is, or should be, to provide the stable environment in which people can make a living, make a home, raise families, and improve their fortunes. This is the reason conservatives argue for law and order and national defense. This is the reason why liberals and socialists argue for social services, from education through medical insurance and old age pensions. This is the reason why radicals argue for taking down corrupt officials (and if that means taking down a whole government, let justice be done, though the heavens fall). Of course, different governments can command different resources; so global problems may require marshaling global resources.

Masthead

Welcome to *The Interesting Times* #4, dated December 2016, a propaganda organ of the World Government of Spuzzum. This local edition is a zine distributed by Garth Spencer at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com. Future editions may be made available in Esperanto, Welsh, and Chinook Jargon. This zine is available for contributions in the form of articles, letters, illustrations, or other zines in trade.

Pictures

This Is Not a Drill (Brad Foster) p. 1
Clipart..... pp. 2, 4, 6, 7, 10
William Rotsler..... p. 11



What is less obvious is that our established institutions – including not only governments, churches, recording and broadcasting companies, and above all multinational corporations (and let's not pretend they aren't vital institutions) – are

driven by worldviews and economic models, which are really what created many of our problems.

Face it: corporations are *legally obligated* to enhance shareholder value, and their executives are neither obligated, nor trained, to take any external demands seriously. And we are now at a point where many corporations have freed themselves from environmental or social obligations.

The Case for World Government

by Charles Horst, Chief Executive, C.E.O.

One of the reasons Sam Hill and the Mullah Kintyre and I decided to declare a world government is that our so-called civilization is on the skids, mainly because we don't have a global means of facing global threats to human life.

On the one hand, we have had several threats to the basis of human life – not only pollution, as in fracking, but overconsumption of ocean, land and freshwater resources – while on the other hand, global population and its growing demand for

Clearly we need to restore sanity, starting with the sense that corporate entities are part of the market they serve, not apart from it. Eventually we may return to the old-fashioned sense that all companies are within the communities they operate, not in control and not apart from their communities. But this is a social change, so it will take time.

How do we restore a sense of community to people who have no experience of community, and think it is a motherhood issue?

One of the several ways that community is formed is by sports. Unfortunately, contemporary sports

are commodified and turned into spectator industries, themselves.

Therefore I propose, as endorsed by the Acting Board of the World Government of Spuzzum, that we declare 43-man Squamish to be the global sport of the world.

Below, we present

The rules of 43-man Squamish

Each team consists of one left and one right Inside Grouch, one left and one right Outside Grouch, four Deep Brooders, four Shallow Brooders, five Wicket Men, three Offensive Niblings, four Quarter-Frummerts, two Half-Frummerts, one Full-Frummert, two Overblats, two Underblats, nine Back-Up Finks, two Leapers and a Dummy — for a total of 43. The game officials are a Probate Judge (dressed as a British judge, with wig), a Field Representative (in a Scottish kilt), a Head Cockswain (in long overcoat), and a Baggage Smasher (dressed as a male beachgoer in pre-World War I years). None of the officials has any authority after play has begun.

Squamish is played on a pentagonal field, or Flutney, and the game is divided into a period of 15 minutes, known as an Ogre. Most squamish games consist of seven Ogres, unless of course, it rains. In that case, they are to play eight Ogres. Competitors wear gloves, a helmet, and flippers. They pursue the Pritz (or ball), which is 3-3/4 inches in diameter, constructed from untreated ibex hide, and is stuffed with blue jay feathers. Each player is equipped with a Frullip, a long hooked stick very similar in appearance to a shepherd's crook that is used to impede opponents.

Before any game, the Probate Judge must first flip a coin, usually a new Spanish peseta, while the Visiting Captain guesses the toss. If he guesses correctly, the game is cancelled immediately. If not, the Home Team Captain must then decide if he wishes to play offense or defense first. Play begins after a frullip is touched to the flutney and the recitation "Mi tío es enfermo, pero la carretera es verde!", a wise old Chilean saying that means, "My uncle is sick but the highway is green!" Penalties are applied for infractions such as walling the Pritz, icing on fifth snivel, running with the mob, rushing the season, inability to face facts, or sending the Dummy home early.

The offensive team has five Snivels to advance to the enemy goal. Carrying the Pritz across the goal line is a Woomik and scores 17 points; hitting it across with the frullip counts as a Durmish and only scores 11 points. Except in the 7th Ogre (and the 8th, if it rains), only the offensive Niblings and

Overblats are allowed to score. In such cases, the four Quarter-Frummerts are allowed to kick or throw the Pritz, and the nine Finks are allowed to heckle the opposition by doing imitations of Barry Goldwater.

The teams must play a sudden-death overtime to break a tie, unless both Left Overblats are out of the game on personal fouls. If this is the case, the tie is settled by the teams lining up on opposite sides of the flutney (inherently difficult on a pentagonal shape) and shouting dirty limericks at each other until one side breaks up laughing.

When an insufficient number of players precludes a regulation 43-Man Squamish match, a simplified version may be played: 2-Man Squamish. The rules are identical, except in 2-Man Squamish, the object is to lose.

(from Wikipedia, Dec. 30, 2016, after Mad Magazine #95, 1965, by Tom Koch)

Corrections

The alleged "ancient Chinese curse" actually originated when Frederic R. Coudert, a Trustee of Columbia University, cited the phrase "*May you live in an interesting age*" in his opening remarks at a meeting of the "Academy of Political Science" in 1939. He claimed to have it from a letter from Austen Chamberlain, half-brother of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, for introducing him to the curse. He also said that Chamberlain learned about the curse from a British diplomat in China. The phrase was subsequently used by Eric Frank Russell in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1950, writing under the name Duncan Munro.

Letters

Brad Foster, jabberwocky2000@hotmail.com, December 1, 2016

Got *Interesting Times* #3 this past week. Got to admit, much of the news of the general world was just kind of skimmed over. Either had already seen it, or just nothing of interest to me. (Hmmm, guess the title of the zine can, depending on who is reading it, also be ironic?)

((One of the reasons for the news summary is that I have muttered for years about doing an independent news organ – like I.F. Stone's Weekly, but in the form of a fanzine – with a view to

gathering the news from several sources, establishing facts for a change, and having a basis for informed voting and participatory citizenship. Another reason is to determine, if there were a world government, what would be its proper areas of responsibility? Also, I'm trying to see the hilarity in the ways we are destroying ourselves.))

More fannish/genre stuff caught the eye, and I appreciate the notes on new small markets. Checked out the *Unnerving Magazine* site: looks closed to submissions right now, but maybe they will be looking for artists later. Will try to remember to check back there.

Speaking of art, now that you have moved from *Art of Garthness* to *Interesting Times*, am re-sending the last fillo I sent you for that, since it may have gotten lost in the exchange, for your use in the new IT.

((Excellent!))

On my own news: Been living without an eye-patch over the left eye for past couple of weeks. Had it on for close to three months, and evidently it will now take my brain a couple of weeks to re-coordinate the two different images, laying the good stuff from the right eye over the blind areas of the left. Kind of wonky right now; notice I keep shutting my left eye to be able to focus in on things. But, it IS a bit better than was two weeks ago, and the doc said, although it might take a month or so, my brain should get everything coordinated again. Hope so.

((Way more excellent!))

2016 was a bad year for many reasons, not least of which was having the lowest output of art I've created in a long, long time. Hoping for a much better 2017!



Lloyd Penney, penneys@bell.net, December 30, 2016

Thank you for *Interesting Times* #3. I am now going to see how many locs I can write before the end of

the year so I don't look too far behind in things. And, your zine is up!

I hope Canada looms large in American headlines in 2017. I am not happy with the idea of pipelines, but like any technology, they have to be improved for them to work as wanted; and these pipelines may make it into American news consciousness. Also, I expect the new President-elect to insult and make fun of our Prime Minister as he continues an admirable change from petroleum to less-polluting sources of energy. I sincerely hope that those in America who also champion wind and solar power will show the Canadian government as a fine example of what is needed to be energy sufficient in the future.

((I found it interesting that if pipeline opponents ever pointed to available energy alternatives, I never saw it. I also found it interesting that nobody noticed the jokes in the news coverage in my last issue. Guess I have to be more obvious.))

Just about anything that comes out of a Conservative's mouth in this country seems calculated to offend someone. Perhaps we should encourage those views – in order to ensure that the Conservative Party never holds power in Canada again. Meanwhile, what the NDP espouses is excellent, but we have found that they end up being a conscience for the Liberals while they [*the Liberals – Ed.*] are in power. Elizabeth May's Green Party does that, too. Fortunately, Justin Trudeau seems to be a good listener. I hope they will continue to serve as Justin's conscience, to prevent Harper-style tactics, such as what was done with the Canada-EU Trade Agreement.

As much as I enjoyed them in the past, we don't attend Worldcons anymore. They have become too political, as shown by the Puppies' attempt to seize the Hugos, and the enforced Code of Conduct. Too expensive is the reason too, but that's too obvious.

Dystopias ... Canada was looking dystopian until the election in 2015. Australia looks dystopian right now, the UK somewhat as well, and the US ... well, again, that's too obvious. I believe the president-elect has a trial to go to in January, having been charged with child rape. I believe he also has other trials to attend to in the new year. How on earth did he get elected? The word 'dystopia' may have to be redefined. And, I agree with John Purcell, we are living in a dystopia, and I would think that escapist literature, like science fiction, would be more popular than ever.

To John Purcell ... my own apahack days were before I got into fanzines. I know, I did things in reverse. I really do not have the time for apas any more, either.

I think the average citizen has to put down the game controller and the six-pack, pick up his TV remote, and change the channel to news. The problem is, what do you trust? Most American media is owned by companies with their own agenda. My training was in journalism, and right now, I will not trust a single American source of news. I have some trust in the CBC and BBC, but they have a little bias because they are partially funded by the government of the day, which is usually musing about cutting those funds, no matter the leaning of the party in power. Even community newspapers are suspect these days. Where I live, in the Etobicoke part of Toronto, I cannot receive the local paper because they are convinced that anyone who lives in an apartment building is itinerant, and therefore, not interested in what's going on within the city. We've been living on Eva Road for nearly 20 years now, and in that time, the Etobicoke *Guardian* has eliminated sales in local stores, and corner paper boxes. They have effectively made sure that only people who live in houses can receive their paper, and in so doing, they have denied service to approximately half the population of Etobicoke.

Rant ends, step down from soapbox...and I think I am done. Thank you for this issue, and I hope there's will be more. We hope your Christmas was wondrous, and may 2017 mean fun, joy and employment for us all. Need the money to afford the joy and fun. Take care, and see you next year.

John Purcell, askance73@gmail.com, December 30, 2016

Well Garth, you've managed to get another issue posted to efanazines, so I'm on it like flies on... Oh, never mind.

Asgardia seems to be managing to survive in this crazy, mixed-up world as well as any of the real existing countries, so I'm wondering if they are willing to accept exiles from America? I'm multi-degreed with a lot of teaching experience at the college level; plus, I play guitar and am pretty darned gifted at grilling dead animal flesh. What else does the Asgardia National University require? I await your response with semi-bated breath.

((Like I would know? I'm just reprinting any weird and wonderful news that doesn't seem to show up in mainstream media. I'll have to ask them.))

In his last month in office, President Obama has been flinging executive orders around like dead fish, including one banning oil drilling in the Alaskan tundra and offshore, plus naming new National Monuments to preserve historical and

cultural sites important to native Americans and endangered wildlife and their environment. Needless to say, the GOP and Trump are throwing hissy fits, but this is all expected. Every lame duck president does this just before leaving office. Even so, I am enjoying the show.

((Oh what a giveaway. Yes, this is obviously a performance, for all the people who mistake the news for reality. Me, I think we've been living in a badly-run virtuality for decades. You can tell there's no continuity control because things have been getting more and more absurd. But I said this before.))

Meanwhile the Dakota Pipeline protest is ongoing as well, despite the onslaught of winter. My heart and admiration for these protestors grows by the day, and I dearly hope that a peaceful resolution to this controversial issue happens very, very soon.

We Also Heard From:

José Sanchez, Graham Charnock (*"Is this [a] fanzine? What a mess. No colophon, followed by political rants, and meaningless reprinted bites from various media. It is certainly Times but not at all interesting"*), David Malinski (*"I'd like to see more from Shitgibbon"*), Ed Meskys (*"read and enjoyed"*), Eileen Kernaghan (*"absolutely the best publication to come out of Spuzzum"*), and Neil "Swill" Jamieson-Williams (*whose email server always says it failed to receive what you sent, even when he did receive it*)

THE GELDED AGE

"... in the late '40s and early '50s the United States was supplying virtually the entire non-communist world with 80 to 90% of the consumer and industrial products the world needed. Today, the bulk of such products are produced outside of the United States. Consequently, the era of booming production and steady jobs for everybody in the States, of working class people earning middle class incomes, is gone for good. There may be exceptions, where certain types of skilled workers are temporarily in demand, but, overall, I think bare subsistence income will be the norm for most people. Especially when automation trends kick in. In other words, I believe the wealthy in the United States are seeking to devolve America back, not to the 1950s, but to the 1890s, when the primary function of the Supreme Court was to secure property rights, the Government approved of any action designed to prevent worker's rights, and the average working person was dirt poor. Back to the so-called "Gilded Age", when Robber Baron Industrialists ruled the roost, and it was a very, very good time to be rich.

In essence, back to a population consisting of the very rich and the very poor, with darned few in-between. I believe this to be the conscious goal of modern conservative wealth and power, and not just in the States.

It will take perhaps the entirety of Trump's first term to determine if my theory is correct. In the meantime I'll ignore him and get on with my life."

(R. Graeme Cameron, The Canadian Science Fiction Fan #45, January 2017)



Patient Observation

Taral Wayne

About a year ago, shortness of breath and a hammering heartbeat whenever I made any effort drove me to my general practitioner, who found I had a lung full of fluids, and water around the heart as well. I was in the early stages of congestive heart failure. A lot of blood tests, echograms and diuretics later, she managed to dry me out and establish that no permanent damage had been done. Nonetheless, it was prudent to keep an eye on my condition. I have been doing follow-up echograms, regular blood tests and frequent visits to a variety of doctors ever since.

Along the way, it was discovered that I have sleep apnea due to some degree of COPD, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, which is a fine how-do-you-do for someone who has never smoked, nor spend much time in close quarters with other contributory factors. So now I sleep with a CPAP machine, which I loathe, purring away next to my bed. Sometimes it helps me get to sleep, but the effort and discomfort doesn't seem to result in a particularly good sleep.

Be that as it may, things seemed to remain fairly stable over the following year. But then about six weeks ago, I began to notice shortness of breath again ... and, just as the CPAP was beginning to be of some help, I experienced serious insomnia

again. Also, I noticed one leg swelling up, edema being a sign of both CHF and COPD. Fortunately, I was due for a routine appointment with my GP, and her examination quickly spotted the return of fluids in my chest. I was given a choice of going to the emergency ward at St. Joe's for tests, or having them done by the neighborhood clinic while staying at home. I opted for staying at home. "It causes less panic on Facebook when I don't mention 'emergency ward' or 'hospital,'" I explained. The doctor agreed, but directed me to begin a new round of diuretics immediately, and to undergo new blood tests in two or three day's time. I've also had my chest newly x-rayed again, and another appointment made with my cardiologist.

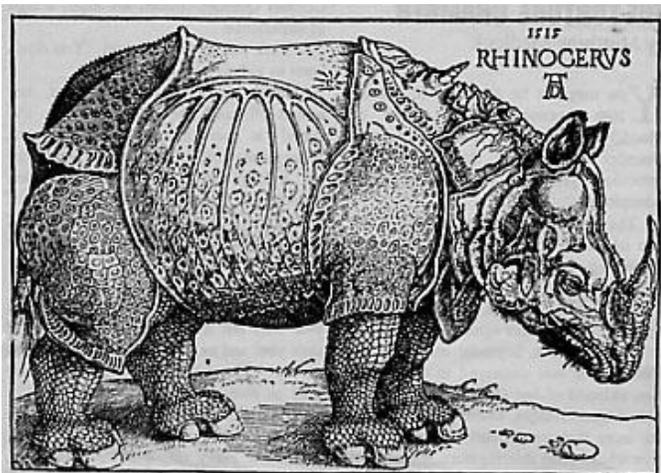
Now that it's beginning to get cold, I don't like all this travel out of doors. But necessity is a back-seat driver that I can't ignore.

So that's where everything stands at the moment. Stable at present, but with a degree of uncertainty about the future. Will this mean diuretics will become a regular fixture among my already rather lengthy list of prescription meds? Likely, it will. I don't like diuretics much, since they send me to the toilet more often. And my bladder seems less obedient as well, giving me the feeling that I'm up to my belt in a swamp. Still, it's a small price to pay for the ability to get out of bed without passing out from lack of oxygen.

My last couple of months have not been very productive. I've not shared much art or written as much as normal in that time. I frequently nod off at the keyboard. Even basic chores, such as laundry and cleaning up around the apartment, have suffered. Part of the explanation lies in the number of appointments and other business that has taken me out doors, effectively using up half the day. But I wonder if low energy hasn't also been part of the problem. My blood oxygen levels have been hovering around 88% for weeks, and it ought to be closer to 96%, if I understand correctly.

But I haven't been totally unproductive, either. I've been getting some drawing done, usually something spontaneous rather than something I had to get done. Why no-one has seen it yet is because I haven't felt the urge to spend days scanning into digital format and tweaking the files.

I will scan the new art, including finished pages of *Callahan's Island* ... but I won't risk my credibility by predicting when. You'll just have to be patient with the patient.



Big News

Market News

(ANSIBLE 353, DECEMBER 2016) “*Analog* and *Asimov's* are switching to bimonthly publication as of January 2017. Issues will be 16pp longer than double numbers in the current regime of 8 singles and 2 doubles per year.”

(AURORAN LIGHTS 20, NOVEMBER 2016) “**49th Parallels: Alternative Canadian Histories and Futures** - An anthology to be edited by **Hayden Trenholm** of **Bundoran Press**

“We will open for submissions to a new science fiction short story anthology on December 15th, 2016 (Close – February 14, 2017 at 11:59p.m EST) “Please do not submit prior to the opening date – stories will be deleted without reading.

“In honour of Canada’s 150th birthday, Bundoran Press Publishing House will publish an anthology of short science fiction, entitled *49th Parallels: Alternative Canadian Histories and Futures*. Stories will be sought from across Canada and around the world exploring what might have been – or what might yet be. The anthology will be edited by two-time Aurora winning editor, **Hayden Trenholm**. Publication is planned for October 2017. As always, 49th Parallels only seeks science fiction (no supernatural creatures or events of any kind) but for this anthology, it might include steam or diesel punk. Stories must be set in Canada or involve Canada and Canadians as the principal subject operating in the larger world (or beyond). Stories may be historical (back to 1867) or futuristic, but whatever creates the alternative past or possible future must take place prior to 2017. The causal factor may be scientific, technological or as a result of major political or social change. We look forward to *seeing* how both Canadian and non-Canadian writers explore this question. We are seeking

original English language stories (first world rights - print and digital) between 1500 and 7000 words. Reprints will ONLY be considered for English translations of stories originally published in FRENCH. A limited number of short poems (less than 100 lines) may be accepted. We are particularly interested in indigenous and multi-cultural voices. Payment rates will be determined by the success of our crowd funding campaign and will be posted here as soon as the campaign is complete (after November 30). Payment on publication. Please submit in .rtf, .doc or .docx format. In the title line of e-mail put: SUBMISSION 49th:“Title of your story.” Include a brief cover letter in the body of your e-mail giving us the title and word length of your story and any writing credits you wish to share with us. Do not summarize your story.

“Email your attached document to: **Hayden Trenholm.**”

Get-Up-and-over Fan Fund

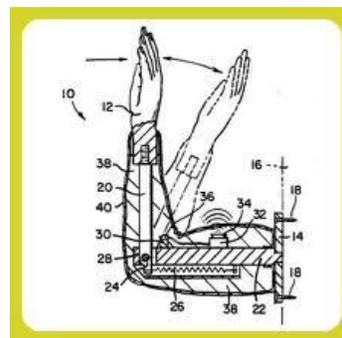
(ANSIBLE 353, DECEMBER 2016) “*GUFF* candidates for the 2017 race to Worldcon 75 in Helsinki are: Donna Maree Hanson, Sam Hawke, Belle McQuattie and (jointly) Alexandra Pierce and Alisa Krasnostein. The voting form is awaited at the Australian Fan Funds site: ozfanfunds.com/?page_id=6.”

Down Under Fan Fund

(FILE770.COM, DECEMBER 31, 2016) “Paul Weimer has [announced his candidacy for the Down Under Fan Fund](#).”

Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund

(JOHN PURCELL, LOC OF DECEMBER 30, 2016): “... although I am sure you are aware of it, I am one of the three candidates running in the TAFF 2017 race to go to the Helsinki WorldCon. If I win, my wife and I are already researching and planning a three to four week excursion to Europe visiting fans in assorted countries and taking in some sightseeing and going to art museums. Stay tuned. Go to www.taff.org.uk for the official ballot.”



Classifieds

Contact Garth Spencer for advertising information at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

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e-APA, the electronic Amateur Publication Association

is open to new members! Contact Garth Spencer for a copy of the submission guidelines, or see the "Members of e-APA" Facebook page! Deadline for mailings is the first of every month. You can contact Garth Spencer at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

Anarcho-Surrealist Party – the original Facebook group for those who can't believe in one-dimensional politics anymore and want to do something creative. Search Facebook or contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

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Heathen Geeks meets up semi-quarterly. Mead! Shieldmaidens! Operetta auditions! Mead! Authentic Viking tabletop games! Rituals featuring mead! See our Facebook page or contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

Second Reformed Anarcho-Surrealist Party with a Hot Tub in the Backyard Society Inc. - The iconoclastic and original splinter group! Contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

Bavarian Illuminati (Local 391) – We know how to get things done! Bury \$3,125 in your backyard and one of our underground agents will contact you.

Little News

Europe

(MARK MACKINNON, OTTAWA *GLOBE AND MAIL*, DECEMBER 31, 2016) "The lines linking the U.S. election to the German one [in 2017] are the same ones that connect the French and Italian votes: anti-immigrant populism, and allegations that it's the Kremlin that benefits as the anti-establishment candidates rise."

(WGS International Security comments: "No one has established any connection yet to the worldwide underground Cult of Kali that has generally worked through unconscious agents such as terrorist groups and ladies' altar guilds; we recommend continued monitoring.")

Israel

(LAURA STONE, OTTAWA *GLOBE AND MAIL*, DECEMBER 30, 2016) A UN Security Council resolution last week condemned Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem as a "flagrant violation" of international law. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has strongly denounced Israeli settlement-building in disputed lands, while President-elect Donald Trump has expressed unqualified support for Israel. The Canadian government has reiterated its support for a two-state solution, for Israel coexisting with a Palestinian state.

(WGS correspondent "Nosy" Parker adds: "Every day the two-state solution seems increasingly difficult to achieve. I have suggested that Israel federate with Canada and extend the Indian Act to tie up the Palestinians in red tape, and let some third party like Icelanders or Japanese run Jerusalem as a tourist trap; didn't you get my memo?"

(File annotated: "refer to counsellor")

Iran seen from here

(DOUGLAS TODD, VANCOUVER *SUN*, DECEMBER 31, 2016) Douglas Todd reports, "I have kept running into Iranian-Canadians who readily admit Baha'i are being unjustly arrested in the Islamic Republic of Iran and harassed by some non-Baha'i Iranians in Canada." But, he adds, it is almost impossible to get an attributed quote. Iranian-Canadians fear reprisals from the Iranian regime if their names are attached to any stories critical of the regime.

An exception is Ramin Mahjouri, a North Vancouver artist and publisher of [Paivand](#), which is one of eight Farsi-language publications in Metro Vancouver. Despite the views that some Iranians hold about Baha'is, Mahjouri has editorially defended Metro Vancouver halal restaurants that have hired Baha'i as cooks.

(GS notes: "Didn't I read something like this about LiveJournal and Russia?")

Meanwhile, in Canada:

Unaffordable Housing (in Vancouver, as elsewhere)

Like major cities throughout the world, Vancouver (Canada) is plagued by rental and real estate prices that increased over the last four decades beyond the reach of most wage-earners; and both Employment Insurance and Social Assistance allocations are preposterously low compared to rental rates, even in the adjoining municipalities. Over the same decades, trading in real estate has been touted in print and online publications as a way to make your fortune.

(DOUGLAS TODD, VANCOUVER SUN, DECEMBER 30, 2016) As early as the mid-1970s, when Gordon Soules' *The Housing Crisis* was published, his contributors cited the rates of immigration, foreign investor speculation, and property taxation as the factors out of balance. It is of interest that the contributors included former mayor Art Phillips, former alderman (and later NDP premier) Mike Harcourt, and subsequent Social Credit premier Bill Vander Zalm – not, to put it mildly, people of the same political stripe.

Todd reports that in the 1970s, unaffordability – expressed as the “ratio of real-estate prices to local earnings — was about 3 to 1. By 2016, it had expanded to 13 to one.”

How have different levels of government responded? In 2016, the B.C. government imposed a 15% tax on foreign buyers. (There is argument available that despite popular belief, domestic speculators, rather than foreign buyers, were the major force in inflated housing prices.) The province also now provides interest-free loans to first-time home buyers, which is rather less popular, being denounced as inflationary and a pay-off to political contributors in the real-estate industry. Also, Todd writes, “The City of Vancouver, meanwhile, began imposing a tax in 2016 on empty houses, and most suburbs increased zoning density. And the federal government made moves to close the loophole that

allows Canadian lawyers to launder illicit cash. Ottawa is also instituting a “stress test” to make it harder to obtain mortgages.”

The foregoing factors, plus the elimination of social housing under Paul Martin's federal budget, resulted in a current acute shortage of affordable housing, and overburdened utilities and services in the Lower Mainland.

(WGS Agent “Special Ed” speculates that an evil sinister covert agency is trying to force the general population to go north and settle the hinterland. Agent “Social Norm” finds nothing to comment on. GS thinks the various governments have no long-term plan, and in fact no coordination.)

Fentanyl Deaths in Vancouver

(DOUGLAS TODD, VANCOUVER SUN, DECEMBER 30, 2016) One of the breaking stories of 2016 was the exponential rise in deaths related to fentanyl use in Vancouver. As Douglas Todd reported on December 30, 2016, this street drug killed 374 people in B.C. between January and October 2016 alone. One of the least-reported aspects of the story, also appearing in data compiled from the B.C. Coroner's Office by researcher Kerry McCowan, is that 4 in 5 of these deaths were young males. (For whatever reason, as Todd reports, “every media article or broadcast I have seen that purports to show the “Face of Fentanyl” has been a profile of a female”.) Todd raises the question, are young males facing unrecognized challenges?

(CANADIAN PRESS, DECEMBER 30, 2016) In order to prevent drug overdoses, more overdose prevention sites are opening around British Columbia, as reported in the Canadian Press. For example, mental-health worker Sarah Blyth opened a fifth (unsanctioned) facility in a trailer in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The function of these sites is to provide safe spaces for addicts to take drugs while being monitored, and places to provide naloxone to respond to overdoses.

(WGS International Security suspects this is another ploy by the underground Cult of Kali to reduce world population by pollution, poverty, disease and drug overdose, all in the name of Kali. Charlie Horst is quietly refilling their medical prescription.)

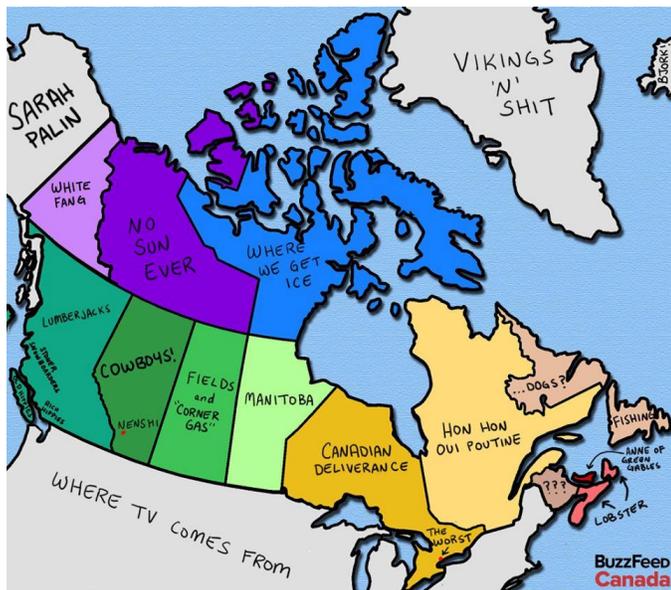
BC elections: NDP versus harassment incident, and the Liberal Party

(BETHANY LINDSAY, VANCOUVER SUN, DECEMBER 29, 2016) Georgia Collins, a community activist in the

Cowichan Valley, has withdrawn her candidacy from an NDP nomination race for the BC riding, citing the sexist harassment of a campaign member. The New Democratic Party is investigating.

(LINDSAY KINES, VICTORIA TIMES-COLONIST, DECEMBER 28, 2016) The NDP currently holds 11 of 14 seats on Vancouver Island, since the Liberals swept the province in 2001. The Liberals hope to make gains in 2017 with a new platform, but NDP leader John Horgan thinks the Liberals continue to misread the Island's concerns.

(GS wonders who that campaign member was actually working for?)



Calendar

January 2017

January 9: Remembrance for Raud the Strong

Jan. 13-15: **OrcaCon**, a gaming convention in the Holiday Inn Downtown in Everett, Washington. Rooms \$82/night with direct code ORCACON2017. Memberships \$55 USD adult, \$65 at the door. For more information see www.orcacon.org.

Jan. 13-15: **Rustycon 34** at the Seattle Airport Marriott Hotel. GoHs: Author Robin Hobb, Costumer Bill Doran, Artist Michaela Eaves. Rooms: \$115 USD/night. Memberships: \$50 USD. Mail: Rustycon, attn: Membership, PO Box 68215, Seattle, WA 98168-8215, USA or see rustycon.com.

Jan. 15: **deadline for contributions to N'APA**, the APA of the National Fantasy Fan Federation.

January (into February) – **Sol-manuð** (Cake Month). Cakes were baked for the Gods at the full moon of Sol-manuð. *Saxon calendar*

Full Moon/ **Thorrablót**, sacred to Thor and the Frost Giants.

Jan. 25: **Robbie Burns' Nicht**. For more information look up the "Selkirk Grace", and recipes for haggis, tatties and neeps.

Jan. 27-29: **Conflikt 10**, a filk convention at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel near the Seattle Airport, Washington. For more information see conflikt.org. (Yes, L before i.)

January 31-February 2: **DISTING (Disablót)** (Charming of the Plow) / Feast of the Mother, sacred to Disir, Frigg & Nerthus. Honor motherly energies. Honor the Asynjur (female Aesir) as providers and protectors. Time to count your wealth and make plans for the next financial cycle. Charming of the plow (blessing of your work tools). Toast with milk. Offer honey and biscuits (grains).

February 2017

Warning: Somewhere around this time, earth scientists including geologists and volcanologists expect an increase in minor earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest, specifically from Puget Sound through Vancouver Island.

Recommendation: Probably you just need to see that cabinets and shelving are securely fastened to walls; but update and complete your earthquake kit anyway!

February 9: Remembrance for Eyvind Kinnrifi

February 13: **BC Family Day**

February 14: **Valentine's Day**. Folk etymology has led to this day being called 'Feast of Vali' in modern Asatru, or Feast of Love, a Blót to Freyja as goddess of love and sexual desire. Exchange cards (or stones) inscribed with runes to loved ones. Time to renew vows, and a good time for marriages/handfastings. Recommended lore: Poetic Edda, *Svipdagsmál* (lay of Svipdag)

February 17-19: **Radcon** at the Red Lion Inn in Pasco, Washington; apparently entirely a dealers' room. "This event showcases products like Games, Books, Comics, Figurines, Handcrafted Jewelry, Jeweled Accessories, Gem Stones, hand-dyed fiber and yarn, fine woodworks, Graphic Novels, Toys, Games, Sterling, Pewter, Crystal, and Bug. Watches, both pocket and wrist, Furs, Leather Goods, Handmade Clothing, Boots, Knives, Swords, Goggles etc. in the Apparel & Clothing, Gems & Jewelry, Gifts & Handicrafts, Sporting

Goods, Toys & Games industries.” For more information go to <http://10times.com/radcon-scifi-fantasy-convention>

February (into March) – **Hred-manuð** (Hreða’s Month). Hreða is a Goddess and her name means “Glory.” Sacrifices are performed to Hreða during this month. *Saxon calendar*

March 2017

March (into April) – **Ostar-manuð** (Ostar Month). The Dawn Goddess Ostar.

March 9-12: **VancouFur**, a Furry Convention) at the Executive Airport Plaza Hotel, Vancouver, BC. [[visit site](#)]

March 21: **spring equinox / Ostara**, sacred to Freya, Idun, Sunna & Landwights. Awakening of the vital powers of nature. Renewal. Stay up the whole night before and hold blót in morning once sun raises. Read the ‘hail to day’. Have fresh cut flowers on harrow. Honor the Gods and/or Landwights with seasonal offerings. The arrival of spring heralds bitter greens, early flowers, and milk and eggs. Also, an end to the near-starvation of the long, dark winter months. Celebrate with a feast of new greens, eggs, milk and cheese, and other spring produce like asparagus, leeks, and/or radishes. If meat eater, spring lamb would be another good addition. In all things, go for local or regional foods, especially if you are honoring the landwights. Grimm (German Mythology p.75) states that the Saxons lit fires on Ostar, not Liða. Ostar is celebrated with a festival on full moon commemorating the first day of summer. Festivals to Ostar during this month. *Saxon calendar*

March 28 – Ragnar Lothbrok’s day

Freedom of the Press

Ansible® 353, December 2016, from David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. The sardonic fan and pro news zine of trans-Atlantic fandom.

Auroran Lights 20, November 2016, from R. Graeme Cameron at rgraeme@shaw.ca. “The Official E-zine of the Canadian Science Fiction & Fantasy Association” features everything of interest to Graeme and me – not only news about the Aurora Awards, not only news about other Canadian SF awards, but news by for and about SF/F/H pros generally, including market news; also, articles such as his observations about editing *Polar Borealis*.

Christian New Age Quarterly 22:3&4, Summer/Autumn 2016, PO Box 276, Clifton, NJ 07015-0276, USA; info@christianwage.com. A special double issue in order to accommodate Robert Price’s extended essay “Proto-Mark: A Conjectural Reconstruction.”

Mimir’s Well, November 2016, “official magazine of The Asatru Community Inc.” inquire at tacmagazine@outlook.com. Kaity Hanson, editor-in-chief. Everything you should expect from an organization’s newsletter: a calendar, news of member and parallel groups, runelore, a recipe, kids’ cartoons, an essay about frith. January issue’s theme will be Myths and Sagas.

Polar Borealis #3 (November-December 2016), a magazine of Canadian speculative fiction from R. Graeme Cameron at rgraeme@shaw.ca. This self-financed semipro zine (128 pages in this issue) features stories, poetry and art from new and long-established writers and artists.

Vibrator 33 & 34, a personal/genzine dated November and December 2016, from Graham Charnock, 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD UK, graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk.

#33 combines a meditation on mortality; this issue’s instalment of “America the Damned”, on the Sacco & Vanzetti trial; and letters of comment from fans and pros. Also, Nic Farey on the adventures of driving a taxi in Las Vegas.

#34, “The Bloody Issue”, starts with a cover illo of a dialysis machine and goes sideways from there. John Nielsen-Hall explains dialysis machines, and all the amusing impacts on life that they entail. This issue’s instalment of “America the Damned” covers Lindbergh’s progress from flying across the Atlantic to his child’s kidnapping. Rounded out by letters, and more automotive sagas from Nic Farey.

OPINION POLL

Should I use a desktop-publishing program and jazz up this rag?

