

The Obdurate Eye #1

August 2018



WALKING DEAD ON A TRICYCLE

In This Issue:

*Where the Hell Have I Been? * What the Hell Have I Been Doing? *

*Really Dumb Stuff We All Do * News, Views, Reviews, and
Upcoming Boo-Boos *

Masthead

Welcome to *The Obdurate Eye* #1, dated August 2018, a personalzine distributed by Garth Spencer at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com. This zine is available for contributions in the form of articles, letters, illustrations, or other zines in trade.

Table of Contents

Time for a Confession	1
Local News	1
About Yvette	2
Paragon	2
Social Overload	3
In Search of Gorm	5
The Evil and Weirdness on Facebook	7
The World According to Garth	8
Thoughts of Chairman John	9
Letters	29
Calendar	30
Closing Remarks	31

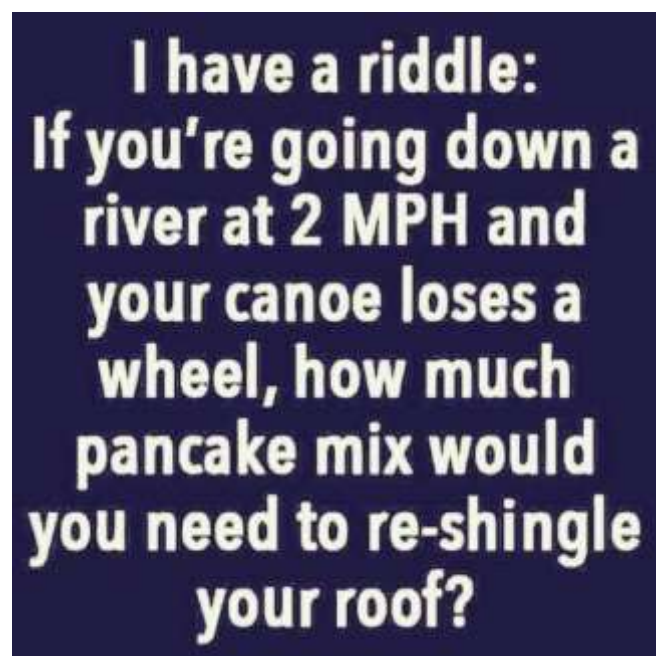
Pictures

Steve Stiles	Cover
Personal photos	pp. 1, 2
Internet illos	pp. 1, 3, 9
Brad Foster	pp. 5, 10
Tara Wayne	p. 29

Time for a Confession

It's time to admit what this exercise has taught me. Trying to cover any amount of news is not a one-man job.

Might as well retreat to what I can do, then: producing an irregular personal fanzine, and focusing on my real interest.



Local News

R. Graeme Cameron, whom some of you may remember, has moved from the Lower Mainland to Nanaimo, B.C. This seems to be a vast improvement for him.

Graeme served for several decades as an archivist for the B.C. Science Fiction Association, so of course he had a good deal of material to delegate. The editor of *BCSFazine* and I took on a lot of the archives.

One of my projects is to scan and upload fanzines to eFanzines.com, principally the back issues of *BCSFazine* and *The Maple Leaf Rag* that now exist only on paper. Or, partially, in scans on my computer.

##

Clint Budd, whom you may never have heard of before, asked me last fall to contribute the untold history of the Aurora Awards to this year's VCON, which will host the presentation of the awards. That requires a bit of explaining.

Back when I was editing *The Maple Leaf Rag*, my mid-80s attempt to provide a newszine for Canadian fans, one of the ongoing struggles was to find out what these Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards (the initial name) were all about. You see, in 1983 I just happened to see, accidentally, a nomination ballot for the awards ... a while after they were held. For the first few years, in fact, that's how well the awards were publicized.

The intent was good, but naïve. In 1979 some English teachers bethought themselves of founding a Canadian SF award. There were some initial problems that beset their project, mainly breakdowns of communication. (They were in the Maritime provinces, so of course they didn't know there were already French-language awards for French-language SF publications, in Quebec and other francophone areas. Because the Maritime fans are a bit far away and at least as isolated as other Canadian fan communities, of course the teachers didn't have very complete or current addresses for the fans they tried to contact.)

Well, after several months of obnoxious persistence I pieced together the story, and it was about as cack-handed and unimpressive as you might expect. I learned things about the self-defeating, counterproductive things that fans do to their projects, awards and conventions included. But my effort did pay off: in 1986 some Toronto fans supporting Ad Astra won their bid to host the awards, and they put the award on a sounder procedural basis.

There have still been problems, but not so much with the awards themselves. There are problems that SF conventions and committees are prone to, no matter whether they host awards or musical bands or, I don't know, the Flying Karamazov Brothers. But that is another story.

I think the Aurora Awards needed to be professionally promoted, *themselves*, if they are to highlight Canadian SF. Mainly, because the awards have proliferated into many categories in accordance with fan activities, they now serve to acknowledge the several fandoms that meet at a general-interest convention, such as VCON.

Probably *The Maple Leaf Rag* and the Aurora Awards both played a part in inspiring SF Canada, an organization specifically for SF and fantasy writers in Canada. Their website includes some member information, news of members' publication credits, SF market listings, and links to Web pages about awards, market news and writers' tips.

About Yvette

I received a kitten as a gift early in 2017. More and more, Yvette turns out to be a blessing for me. It makes a difference, having a little life to look after and to come home to. Now I just have to teach her not to jump on furniture, not to climb the difficult north face of my shoulders, and not to play with rubber bands and electrical cords. She has her own Facebook page.



Paragon

Some of Yvette's fans are a sort of writers' group who meet at my place, and we have a story universe we're elaborating. The object is eventually to produce online videos, and in effect create a screen series on a shoestring. Being the oldest guy in the group, I still tend to think in terms of writing stories, rather than screenplays, but at this point it scarcely makes a difference.

##

Much less of my time has been devoted to science fiction fandom, in the past five years or so, partly because this hobby group is not as intellectually satisfying as I was led to expect. But then, very few things are. I have a lot of hobby projects, as touched on elsewhere; but now that I think about it, they're remarkably solitary and print-focused, compared to anyone else's leisure activities. I should get some exercise.

##

My real interest is in gathering interesting ideas, and if possible, sharing useful ideas and information with people when they need them. Not that I often get to be such a middleman.

It would have been really great to find a community of people with the same enthusiasm for interesting ideas, for working things out and generating ideas, and doing neat things, maybe playing with inventions and solving problems. If this sounds a lot like adults playing with children's construction toys, you're quite right. But I left the academic environment where you might expect that kind of community. The science fiction groups I joined were not that kind of community.

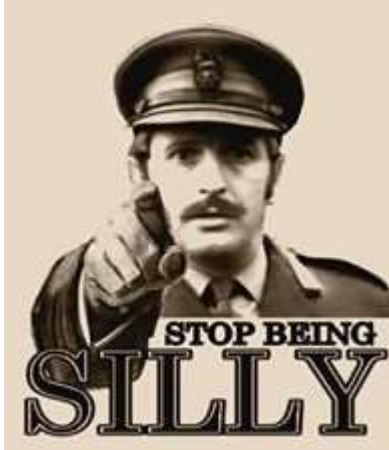
How do you turn people on to playing with ideas? I don't know, I tried and became so exhausted that, instead of inspiring people, I became very negative and pissed people off.

Perhaps the best anyone can do is to find a group of congenial correspondents and trade jokes and stories and amusing articles and bits of news with them. Which is, come to think of it, about what good fanzines amount to.

In fact I had seriously wondered for a while whether there was any point in going to VCON this fall, if the con and I don't offer anything to each other. (This led to another spirited thread, and I wound up sending the Programming Director the following suggestions ☺ “Concrete pretzels. Anarcho-Surrealism. Why Asgardia is another micronation that probably will end up like Sealand. How the sasquatch got its name (and why “skookum” fell out of use). How Ayn Rand poisoned libertarianism and caused the evil that now grips the American Republican party. Why bright new developments in energy generation, do-it-yourself manufacturing, reclaiming the world from pollution and desertification, and the upcoming Singularity are not getting popular attention. You can come up with other topics. (I will explain concrete pretzels whenever you want.)”

John Bartley added: “May I then submit a modest proposal that you convene a panel to speculate of social changes caused by solar panels costing 1/10 what they do now, and likewise for battery-like power storage? Because that's where China's tech base is headed. Also consider the changes made by safe neighborhood 100MW thorium molten salt reactors for power. Another panel idea: Geoengineering to install a thermostat on the planet. How do you do it, and if it works, who has the key to it? Should you, assuming no other bad effects, warm it up for Canada and the rest of the Northern Hemisphere, or chill it down for the Third World, and why?”

Social Overload



A number of stories and complaints about hospitals, and utility companies, and public services, and Internet service providers have made me wonder: are all the vital organs of our society overloaded?

A number of stories and complaints about earning a living wage, and supporting a family, and owning a home, or building a business have made me wonder: is the definition of a citizen now “someone overloaded with licensing fees and taxes and appointments”?

Several encounters, at work and online and struggling with tax forms, have made me wonder if life is just getting too complicated. Not for me, not simply for some personality types, but objectively, over all. Is there a study of complexity, and

maybe a science? Not only in computer-science terms, but in terms of how many steps, and interactive factors, we have to cope with in the 21st century?

Of course I know there is such a thing as system theory, and complexity theory, and even chaos theory if you want to take it that far. In fact, I really think the major advance of the 20th century will turn out to be the conception of system theory. But I don't want to get deeply into it; I just want to know why I keep getting confused by the office procedures at one place where I have worked part-time *for years* – a trademark agent's office – while the office procedures seem significantly simpler at, say, an insurance adjusters' office.

In fact, I know there was such a thing as General System Theory, inspired as early as the 1930s by the observations of cell growth. Look up the name “Bertalanffy” if you want to pursue this further. Dr. Bertalanffy observed that even if a developing embryo was cut, let us say along the spine, and an obstacle introduced, cells would proliferate around the obstacle to grow a working spine. At least that's the kind of example I remember. His conclusion was that, for reasons as yet undetermined, an embryo was a system with a persistent tendency to fulfil its biological destiny. There are other examples of complex systems that display behaviour you can't deduce from the mechanical or chemical components.

Nowadays, of course, this is old news. But the idea of complex systems we can neither entirely predict nor control seems to have grown out of ecological and, even more, atmospheric studies. Now, we normally think of complex systems when we think of economies and societies. Nobody hears about Bertalanffy.

Of course all I really want is a way to gauge the complexity level of things before I get involved, whether they are SF conventions or paying jobs or, well, relationships. I think I am handling about as much complexity as I can; but that is an impression, not something I can prove with facts and figures and symbolic logic.

##

Several times, while reading science fiction from the 1950s and 1960s, I have been struck by the cheerful-Charlie attitude some writers showed, as if they were quite confident that one event or process didn't affect another. H. Beam Piper seemed to think that the weather would be the same on parallel Earths, for example, regardless of the difference in population density or level of agriculture or amount of industrial heat and waste produced. He also seemed to treat radioactive fallout as inconsequential, perhaps just because it didn't fit his purpose of producing fiction. There was at least one story (*Space Viking*) in which he treated the introduction of a domesticated species from one planet to another as simply good long-term business thinking.

To his credit, Poul Anderson outlined this worldview succinctly in his novel *There Will Be Time*. On the other hand, he kept returning to the theme of the world narrowly averting ecological disaster only by experiencing nuclear disaster.

##

I recall some of the steps that led us from a cheerful-Charlie worldview to our current worldview.

One step was the proliferation of bad B-movies that turned on the idea that a nuclear explosion could cause a plague of mutant predators, transform a single mother/veteran/ mad scientist into a monster that threatened to destroy Albuquerque, or simply kill us all. Illiterate as they were, they seem to have embodied the fright that nuclear power gave to people used to electrical and mechanical physics, at most; every decade or so discovered some new unexpected side-effect of real nuclear explosions and radioactivity. Prompt radiation was expected, but not fallout. Radiation burns and sterility, perhaps, but not cancer or inherited mutations.

Another step was the appearance of *Silent Spring*, by Rachel Carson, and other polemics such as *The Closing Circle*. They directly challenged the cheerful-Charlie belief that industrial chemical processes didn't have side effects, and bodies of water would simply absorb and cleanse the effluent.

Several steps in realizing our actions will have consequences – and so will actions we can do nothing about! – came as a result of simulating the atmospheric effects of an exchange of nuclear weapons; or simulating the effects of a major meteoric strike, as appears to have happened repeatedly; or experiencing the effects of *one* major volcanic eruption. Toxic ash and smoke, air traffic called to a halt, a cold summer or two and poor harvests ...

No wonder people experimented with sealed, self-maintaining environments.

In Search of Gorm

By now, I have worked out a rough idea of what it takes to live live these days. Maybe I should write a self-help book, although inevitably it would be somewhat dated if and when it reached publication. Finally I decided it would have to be cast in the form of a satire on self-help books, while still containing useful, even vital material.

Nowadays, I know that if I have lived like someone who grew up in a sensory isolation tank or a remote rural cult until I was 20, that was mostly my fault. There was actually some benefit in approaching life as if I were investigating an alien planet. The orientation I wished I received as a teenager would have been severely out of date; many changes to life took place while my family weren't looking, and profound changes are still taking place in my lifetime.

##



This month's adventures included a series of tests to see if my vision, hearing, and ability to process speech were compromised. They aren't.

Once, I had myself tested for autism-range conditions, because I strongly suspected I had Asperger's. Apparently I haven't, but then the tests seemed better suited to screening for schizophrenia than autism.

It now appears that my communication problems at work are either a matter of "receptive and expressive deficit", which I would have to pay a speech language pathologist to test for ... or else there really is something about my trademark agent friend's directions that is objectively hard to understand.

Or I permanently lose faith in someone's coherence if they ever confuse me, even once.

##

One side of my family has had several clan gatherings, partly conceived as a way to save an historic family home in Australia, and we had a smaller gathering recently here in Vancouver. I am glad it was smaller – a maximum gathering of the clan would be enough to populate a town larger than some well-known communities in British Columbia.

One side-effect of the gathering was to confirm an impression about the branch of the clan in B.C. Apparently they were in a subculture of castaway bluebloods in rural B.C., the kind of people who considered themselves temporarily embarrassed gentry, well into the 1960s and 1970s. There may still be pockets of these unreconstructed Edwardians in odd pockets of the English-speaking world to this day. It consoles me to have confirmation that there was something very wrong-headed about my family. I wasn't hallucinating after all.

##

My family and friends have enjoyed (or endured) a number of adventures this year, but on reflection it isn't my place to talk about their business. I could talk about my own misadventures, but the financial and employment stories would sound like whining, and so would the stories about one housemate who has moved out. In summary, the worst is past.

We could say volumes about how the Powers that Be are mismanaging the world (to borrow a phrase from a writer I enjoy), but if I have learned anything by now, it is that we are not a research group – and nothing less than a public research group is enough, to get the facts about the state of the world. (This is why my personalzine hasn't come out since last April.) Until otherwise informed I will stick to my hypothesis that we no longer live in reality, but in a virtual simulation that has been getting more and more surreal since, oh, about 1985.

So what have I learned, or what has happened in my neighbourhood? For one thing, I learned I can support myself as a freelance secretary. It isn't full-time work, but I keep the wolf from the door, mostly. I could improve on this.

For another thing, my skills base, my social environment and my pastimes have changed. At different offices the ways to get things done have shifted from paper to digital production. I am not very impressed with some of the programs involved – Amicus Attorney, for one, seems to be over-structured and far more focused on purely legal, rather than allied office applications – but the MS Office suite has become rather more usable, as witness the pictures and cropping/sizing functions applicable here. There are continuing challenges simply to remember all the online accounts and passwords in my life, starting with online banking and ending with my personal website; I am still baffled as to how contemporary Apple products work, or how to use Wordpress, but I'll figure it out.

The Evil and Weirdness on Facebook



A lot of my time has been absorbed by Facebook, one of the modern timesinks. So far I have been making smartass remarks on about a dozen Facebook pages, and have created at least a dozen more, with titles like Alien Abductees Anonymous (for those who feel like abducted aliens), the Anarcho-Surrealist Party, the Society for Preservation of Classical English, the Royal Swiss Navy, and the World Government of Spuzzum. Some people are amused.

I have lost track of how many Facebook groups I set up, but now I think this list is complete:

Alien Abductees Anonymous – for aliens who have been abducted and confined on Earth

Anarcho-Surrealist Party – because conventional politics is so boring and unimaginative

The Art of Garthness / Stop Press – because if I'm going to compile anthologies, or write fanarticles the length of some pamphlets, on worldbuilding and constructed languages and whatnot, I might as well make a few bucks out of it

Canadian Fan History – because this crap ought to be out there where people can correct, complete and extend it

Common Sense – because it's about frigging time we defined what this category includes

Creative Politics – because anarchists can't do it alone

Digital Life Is Too Damn Complicated – well, because it is!

The Julian Assange Fan Club – I forgot I started this!

Mad Science Forum – already covered by Makers

Members of e-APA – that's us, guys (and who can we invite into the club, hint hint?)

More Common Sense – because I generally make two Facebook groups or accounts when I try to set up one

Paragon – two or three other guys recruited me into a sort of brainstorming group, for an online contemporary-fantasy video series

Revive the Heilige Vehmgericht! – because a harmless vigilante group might be just the ticket

The Royal Swiss Navy – remember this gag? Because the world needs a worldwide humorist network to combat worldwide terrorists

Second Reformed Anarcho-Surrealist Party with a Hot Tub in the Backyard Society Inc. – because every fringe political group needs a splinter group

Secular Cult of Humanists or Liberals and Rationalists (SCHOLARS) – or, Liberal Secular Rational Humanist Cult – because we need one, don't we?

Society for the Perpetuation of Fannish Fandom – this was perhaps the most popular and successful Facebook group I started

Society for the Preservation of the English Language – because the more contemporary language I hear, the more it sounds like “Anglic” as Jerry Pournelle and S.M. Stirling conceived it, and less and less like English

World Government of Spuzzum – because it’s about time

Yvette of Vancouver – featuring my cat

##

Now, I suppose you’re thinking ... “What a way for a grown man to waste his time!”

Mostly, though, I have used Facebook to pose smartass questions and implicitly challenge people. Questions like:

- Is economics a version of astrology?
- How do you define "lady" or "gentleman"?
- Guerrilla semioticians: an idea whose time has passed? Discuss.
- Why hasn't the European Union adopted Esperanto or something like it as a working language? (I suspect I know why, but I could be wrong.)
- And another thing: if even TV writers know the difference between Turks and turkeys, why don't they know the difference between Romany and Romanians?
- How much can free speech or free assembly cost you these days? Your family? Your job? Your home? Your reputation? Your liberty? Your life?
- How many Americans would support finding their country mentally incompetent and putting it in the care of a nurse, like, say, Canada? (NO!!! DON'T DO THAT!!! DON'T YOU DO THAT!!!)
- What Frequently Asked Questions sheet about life skills would you like some underinformed people to receive?
- Should crimes against information be considered capital crimes? Should judges who issue death sentences be required to carry them out? What does "should" mean?
- Why is fandom so white? (This led to a rather spirited thread, after which I concluded:) Okay, I was wrong. Fandom is not overwhelmingly white. Only my experience of it has been so segregated.
- Concrete pretzels.
- Why are the laces on sneakers usually too long?

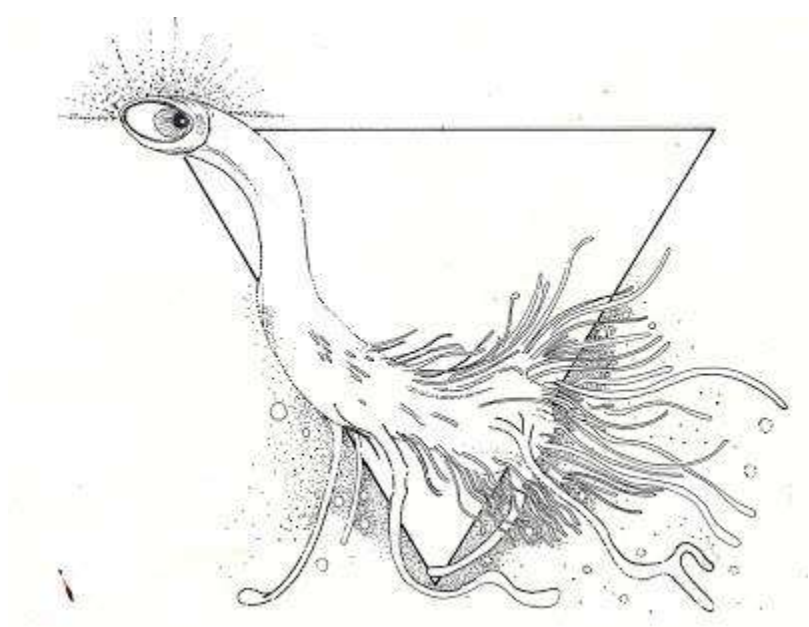
The World According to Garth

Finally, I am buckling down and revising my personal website. This is a crude little collection of Web pages at the local Freenet (www.vcn.bc.ca/~gartho) which is where I archive my fanwriting. Once I recover some energy I hope to add some new articles, including revised Canadian fanhistories.

Now, a question: is there any point in posting some anthologies of faanfiction I put together?

Sometimes I have put together collections of amateur fiction, either archived on my website, or distributed at Christmas as my gesture towards a home-made present. Now, I find myself looking critically at my website contents, partly in order to update my articles and conform to a consistent style, and guess what? I have lost some of the contributions to *Confabulation*, my

collection of other people's fiction. While I have reconstructed a second edition of *Confabulation*, I have to ask - do some of you have old copies?



Thoughts of Chairman John

Collected observations of John Mansfield

A Short Biography: John Mansfield, one of the oldest continuously active fans in Canada, is a Canadian Forces veteran with a wide experience of many fan communities and conventions in Canada and abroad.

Mr. Mansfield entered fandom in the mid-1960s in Oromocto, N.B., when he heard of the Tricon. He was on the executive of the Ontario SF Club when it formed in Toronto in 1966, and (as noted in */Con-TRACT/* 5:3, May/June 1993), started his first fan publication that year, a gaming newsletter titled */Signal/*, which continued for five years and 180-plus issues; Mansfield writes that he and his wife have been constantly producing fanzines since, being nominated four times for the Charles Robert Award. He was also in the Ottawa SF Society at its founding in 1977. In 1988, when he was stationed in Edmonton, he founded */Con-TRACT/* with Brett MacDonald, a bimonthly listing of upcoming SF and gaming conventions, now in its ninth year of publication. */Con-TRACT/* has also attempted to solicit and disseminate brief, useful reports and tips and references on conrunning. In the late 1980s, John Mansfield headed the winning Winnipeg bid for the 1994 Worldcon.

John Mansfield is noted for his unique perspective on Canadian fan activities, due to his frequent travels for his gaming business; his economical, not to say cryptic prose style; and his innovations even in spelling. (In respect of his style and opinions, "Thoughts of Chairman John" reproduces Mansfield's writing verbatim. We cannot do justice to his revolutionary layout procedures.) In 1991 he began his language reform campaigns, first to promote "sercon" from an adjective for a

humorless fan to a noun for a convention category, and later to rename Con-Version in Calgary to "Conversions". Some of his acquaintances attribute this to his background in the military, but even the military cannot account for one of our most remarkable individuals.

Only John Mansfield saw the excessive proliferation of conventions in 1989 in the Calgary area and the losses of a few conventions in Canada, and perceived these problems were general across the Dominion. Only Mansfield, starting in the summer of 1990, drew attention to the dangers inherent in scheduling Ontario and Alberta or B.C. conventions on the same weekend. Only Mansfield has monitored the varying fortunes of Creation Con in Canada.

My own grasp of his dry, subtle humour grew slowly. One of our first communications was a note on the cover of /Con-TRACT/ 2:6 (Dec. 1990): "Dear Garth, thanks for the reviews in BSFA-zine, pity I cannot get a copy of it." At the time I contributed some fanzine reviews to /BCSFazine/, the monthly clubzine of the B.C. SF Association. Eventually I understood that he was not getting copies of /BCSFazine/. Reporting on the Aurora awards for Canadian SF at ConText (Edmonton) in 1991, he wrote, "We again noted, like Calgary [l]ast year, that fandom does not exist east of the Alberta border ..." (/Con-TRACT/ 3:4, Jul/Aug 1991.) This humour is vanishingly subtle, like many of his indirect statements, in fact most of them; if you were unaware of the unsung labours performed in Winnipeg, John's remarks might be interpreted as complaints, as snide put-downs, as simple observations, as demands for response, or as a neurotic's whining about you're not sure what. Mansfield's cryptic style is a salutary workout, challenging to some of the finest minds in fandom.

John and his wife Linda Ross-Mansfield (former editor of /Northern Lights/, a fan newszine in the early 1980s) have worked hard to promote and publicize the Canadian SF and Fantasy Awards, and the Canadian Unity Fan Fund, through /Con-TRACT/. After a period of some apparent national apathy, Linda was pleased to report in late 1996 that the fan fund had a winner in Rene Manning of Montreal, who is the new administrator.

In supporting these national institutions, and in soliciting and disseminating convention information generally, the Mansfields have been hindered by poor or late contributions by many fans. For instance, while reporting on Westercon 44 in Vancouver, John asserted that this convention's losses came about because UBC Conference Services induced the Westercon to pay many back bills, and because the program book went well over budget, rather than because of the chair's overspending.

Again, after questioning whether Canada really needed more than one organization to promote SF (SF Canada, the Conference on Canadian Content in Speculative Fiction, and the Canadian SF & Fantasy Foundation), John belatedly discovered in early 1993 that the Conference was in fact Can*Con, the literary/print SF convention begun not many years ago in Ottawa. He may or may not have mentioned his discovery that SF Canada was in fact an association for Canadian SF and fantasy writers.

Despite his being given a Canadian SF and Fantasy Award for his work on the Worldcon bid, John's enthusiasm for fandom has been tempered by the realization that his contributions have been misinterpreted as an ego trip. He particularly perceived a lack of Canadian fan support for his Winnipeg Worldcon. It was a subtle comment on the CSFFA nabobs that their events at ConAdian (the 1994 Worldcon in Winnipeg), particularly the Aurora award presentations, were not held on site or integrated with the ConAdian programming.

Today, John Mansfield is owner and proprietor of Pendragon Games in Winnipeg. He and his wife are founders of the Winnipeg SF Association and Keycon, and are still "grey eminences" in the Senate that directs Keycon affairs.

On Finding Workable Procedures: "Silence on the Front"

This year I have or will be attending conventions in the UK, Holland, France, USA & Canada. Some I will be attending as a member and others as a member of the Con Committee. The experiences, the novel ways that various conventions have of handling very common problems should be passed on. This I do try to do. Usually on a one-to-one basis, as very few gatherings wish to talk about other cons.

Thus it was no surprise in the middle of an actual program item on cons in Liverpool, England that I came across a comment from an European fan that had just returned from an Eastern European con tour. He said that besides all the ego problems, power trips and first time/last time problems, the biggest problem is the "NIH" attitude.

His comment, is that if the idea is "Not Invented Here", then it must not be a good idea. As the con leader must lead by example, then ideas other than the chairs are an attempt to overthrow its position.

Then there was a comment by the SHERATON AREA rep at a con in Tacoma, WA, USA. Con chairs are picked in SF Cons on the basis of their ability to keep everyone happy. Since they are used to that, if the hotel puts any pressure on them, they will bend over in an effort to keep their position. Hence, contracts are guidelines only.

Comments??

/Con-TRACT/ 2:3, June/July 1990

Potential attendance: "The Shrinking of Fandom"

Having talked to several concons, it now seems that fandom is shrinking. The majority of con's experienced either a fall in the actual attending memberships or little or no expansion. At least two concons that had moved to bigger hotels, expecting an increase, did not get it. This cost them.

Yet, the two media cons that I talked to, had very large jumps in membership. The Toronto one had over a 1,000 for a first attempt.

Why?? Explanations lead from "We did not advertise as we always got X amount" to "The older fans are staying away because of the younger fans" and "We tried to discourage the vandals and no one showed up."

COMMENTS??

/Con-TRACT/ 1:5, Oct/Nov 1989

On The Committee: "Future Cons"

Since CONADIAN, there has been some rumblings of "Why can't we do it here." While we wish any Canadian SF Club or city all the best in their undertakings, we hope that they will break free from their "we can only do it with locals" and think beyond that. Heck guys & girls, if Winnipeg can do it....

/Con-TRACT/ 7:1, Jan/Feb 1995

Cheap Audio Visual

If your con needs anything from a 35 mm slide or 16 mm film projector, to a portable microphone system cheaply, may I suggest you contact the Equipment Loans officer of your City Park & Recreation office. Here in Winnipeg, each item is only \$10.70 a day.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:4, Jul/Aug 1996

Committee or Hotel Negotiation Meetings: "Where to Meet"

With the hotels in North America facing hard times, we should all take another look at the hotel contracts that we may be using. Now is the time to start thinking about what may be possible. Your motto should be the same as the hotels: "Everything in negotiable".

Both club, and concom meetings are hard on the club. Meeting space can cost lots of money. Large cons breed large concons, especially if you have lots of sub groups & ideas. They too grow out of being able to meet in ones living room. Thus, you may wish to ask for free regular monthly meeting space in your conventions hotel. ConCom meetings can easily take place in a small room on a weekday evening, even if you have to accept irregular dates.

Well organized Club meetings are also possible, but weekend meeting time will be difficult to arrange. Also, unless the hotel has already hosted your convention, they may not understand your programming.

Put it into your next talk with the hotel, what do you have to loose??

/Con-TRACT/ 3:3, May/June 1991

On The Committee: "Concons X2"

Most convention committees seem to exist in one of two ways.

A con may be run by a committee that changes little from one con to another. The con itself does well as the experienced concom works smoothly. Yet, the same work, year after year, leads to burnout.

Another way is a committee that changes positions every year with many new faces. Thus, the wheel must be reinvented every time. This leads to a "I wonder what will happen this year." attitude, by both committee and attendees.

Hotel Contract 101

The ideal contract is one where, when you and the hotel sales rep both have been run over by a truck on the day before the con, a new con committee member, and a random new hotel staff person, can run the meeting, and know what each of you is supposed to do for the other.

One thing to keep in mind is that, when dealing with the hotel, if you don't have it in writing, it may not exist when you need it. Hotel sales people move around. The people you deal with now won't be there next year (unless they hate you, in which case they'll be there forever). So look at your contract, and make sure it reflect exactly what you and the hotel have agreed on.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:1, Jan/Feb 1996

Publicity/Promotion: "Cheap Postage"

Now that Canada Post has gone to franchise operations, don't hesitate to use them. If you are about to spend big bucks to mail your Progress report(s) out, we suggest your projected costs to get discounts. Just ask the local franchises till you find one that will give you 5% off for the bulk purchase.

/Con-TRACT/ 6:2, Mar/Apr 1994

"From the Net"

A suggestion of something that you might want to add to your con flyer that gets seen by everyone, especially mundanes.

"substantial discount for pre-registration; at-the-door slots are limited (and expensive) and may not be available for everyone, so advance registration is highly advisable."

AND to paraphrase UK's Dave Powers:

There is a conrunning boom after (Conadian), and we may be seeing the start of a fanzine boom now. Not everyone likes these changes, but the alternative is stagnation and decay.

If you want a vibrant, enthusiastic and invigorated fandom, you have to have Worldcons from time to time. If you prefer to sit in a bar at a small convention seeing the same old people and doing the same old things with fewer and fewer people taking an interest, then that's your hchoice, but its not a fandom I'd like to be involved with.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:2, Mar/Apr 1996

Post-Mortems: "Talk Down"

When the con is over, one must not lose all that con running info. We recommend that you wait 7-10 days and hold a group talk session. Get the ConCom together, with an excellent note taker and talk about each dept. With the time to cool off, and reflect, one should find the dept heads ready to say: "I should have..." Give each Dept a chance to give a report, and then let other depts ask questions and make comments. The

notes taken, even in highlight form are valuable to all com-cons. Any sent here will be published-no matter how many pages it takes.

/Con-TRACT/ 2:3, June/July 1990

"Could ConAdian Have Been Better?"

We all tried our best and this certainly was NOT the typical 500 person Canadian convention.

Yet we still had people who believed that you could show up at the door and get a dealers table. That bid tables were free and in endless supply. That programing would drop to their kneesif you approached them at any time and much much more.

We tried to stop this. The con chair attended Conventions in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and even dropped into a FRED in Vancouver. We were on GENie & Compuserve and when attending cons, had info tables and when ever we were allowed, we gave talks. Thus the highest level of the Conadian decision making crew was available to answer any and all questions as best as we could. In the cases of known groups, we attempted to contact them and even that meet with mixed response.

Thus our hands are clean ...

/Con-TRACT/ 6:5, Sep/Oct 1994

EVERY GREAT ACHIEVEMENT WAS ONCE IMPOSSIBLE

/Con-TRACT/ 6:2, Mar/Apr 1994

WE DO NOT PLAN TO FAIL, BUT WE DO FAIL TO PLAN.

/Con-TRACT/ 5:2, Mar/Apr 1993

** BUDGET FIRST!! ** (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 2:3, June/July 1990

** TALK TO PEOPLE! ** (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 2:4, Aug/Sep 1990

WITH KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PAST, WE CAN CHART A COURSE FOR OUR FUTURE

/Con-TRACT/ 7:4, Jul/Aug 1995

MINDS ARE LIKE BOOKS, THEY ONLY WORK WHEN THEY'RE OPEN

/Con-TRACT/ 8:3, May/June 1996

Here I am building beautiful theories and you bring reality into it

/Con-TRACT/ 8:2, Mar/Apr 1996

"Con Running, or How to Herd 10,000 Cats"

/Con-TRACT/ 4:4, Jul/Aug 1992

"Conventions-My Job Away from My Job"

/Con-TRACT/ 4:5, Sep/Oct 1992

"Stop Me Before I Volunteer Again...and again...and again"

/Con-TRACT/ 4:5, Sep/Oct 1992

CONVENTIONS AREN'T AS BAD AS THEY SEEM... NOW COME IN OFF THE LEDGE.

/Con-TRACT/ 6:5, Sep/Oct 1994

"I GAVE THE BEST YEARS OF MY LIFE TO THAT CONVENTION"

/Con-TRACT/ 6:4, Jul/Aug 1994

"You know, there's a disproportionately large number of masochists in the Con running community. I wonder if that says something about the subculture, or if its just the way we treat our Organizers..."

/Con-TRACT/ 8:4, Jul/Aug 1996

"THERE ARE SOMETHINGS, FANS WERE NOT MENT TO MOW" -overheard at Smofcon

/Con-TRACT/ 7:1, Jan/Feb 1995

ON WINNING A CONVENTION BID:

"Congrats, you now have the tiger by the tail". (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

ON A CONVENTION'S OBJECTIVE:

"Our job is to provide the con's members with circus's, some bread and a stretch". SMOFCon '90

"Do good, avoid evil and throw great parties." -con running proverb

/Con-TRACT/ 3:1, Jan/Feb 1991

"my attitude is that none of us will get any egobook if we don't accomplish the task." (K.STANDLEE)

/Con-TRACT/ 8:5, Sep/Oct 1996

Con running is not the event, its a team sport, that supports a convention.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:6, Nov/Dec 1996

ON THE CHAIR'S JOB:

"Just because your in charge, doesn't mean your right"

/Con-TRACT/ 3:4, Jul/Aug 1991

"The Chair Should Never Be Surprised!!"

/Con-TRACT/ 5:1, Jan/Feb 1993

"Thanks for ConTRACT. Your thoughts on con chairs are interesting, although I'm biased, having just finished being one. In recent English con-running, the activity of the chair is usually determined by the need to make sure the work gets done. The chair isn't normally the site liaison, although that sometimes is the case. Basically, jobs get given to department heads and the chair's job is to make sure they get them finished in time."

"J.D." (John Dallman?) in /Con-TRACT/ 2:5, Oct/Nov 1990

ON THE COMMITTEE:

Experience is good, credibility is better.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:1, Jan/Feb 1996

Teamwork:

Coming Together Is a Beginning

Keeping Together Is Progress

Working Together Is Success

/Con-TRACT/ 4:5, Sep/Oct 1992

Everyone needs an assistant

/Con-TRACT/ 7:6, Nov/Dec 1995

DIVISION HEADS MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS

CHAIRS MAKE IMPOSSIBLE DECISIONS

/Con-TRACT/ 6:1, Jan/Feb 1994

On Gofers/Volunteers:

"Conventions are made or broken on the strength of their volunteer help."

Jim Ferris, /Con-TRACT/ 3:3, May/June 1991

EMAIL WORKS 24 HRS A DAY, VOLUNTEERS DON'T

6:3, May/June 1994

On Hotel Relations:

PRICE, TIME, SPACE: ANY HOTEL WILL LET YOU PICK TWO OUT OF THREE.

/Con-TRACT/ 5:4, Jul/Aug 1993

"No matter how often I look at that SHERATON sign, I have yet to see it say ... a non-profit company" (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 1:5, Oct/Nov 1989

"What we really need is a "Motel 6" with lots of rooms and con space and 4 ethnic restaurants". SMOFCon '90

/Con-TRACT/ 3:2, Mar/Apr 1991

"Everything is negotiable"

/Con-TRACT/ 3:4, Jul/Aug 1991

"We are bottom feeders, we want the hotels to give us everything for nothing" (SMOFCon 91)

/Con-TRACT/ 4:1, Jan/Feb 1992

Look for lower rates:

Busiest convention months, for most hotels are April, May, early June, September and October. By booking facilities at other times, you may be able to make a better deal on room rates. Similarly, weekend rates are usually lower than through the week, though you want to make sure that all services and facilities are operational on weekends.

C&M Quiktip, /Con-TRACT/ 1:3, June/July 1989

"Your group wasn't 'big enough' for the hotel's main accommodations so you wound up in the laundry room-with unlimited towel service" (cartoon)

/Con-TRACT/ 3:3, May/June 1991

On Programming:

"If what you say is important or interesting, they would put you on a program item" (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 2:6, Dec. 1990

"First Timers"

Well if its a person's first con, they might be confused and not know what they are supposed to be doing, even if they are there already. A bunch of friends told me about conventions but when I went to my first one, they were mostly too busy to lead me around and hold my hand and help me figure out what was going on. Fortunately I found the Volunteers Office which had some people in it perfectly willing to tell me where to go and what to do. I think a group of people going to cons and helping out first timers find activities they are interested in and answering questions ("No, that person over there is (probably) not an escapee from a mental institution. They are in character right now.") is a good idea. Like here in the Northwest we have the Neofan panels and handouts. ("How to Survive a Convention" and "How to Pack for a Convention" etc.)

(Jacqueline Passey, /Con-TRACT/ 8:6, Nov/Dec 1996)

On Publicity:

"Knowledge is power in an information age" (Anon.)

/Con-TRACT/ 3:3, May/June 1991

Convention Flyers:

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

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

"Picture, if you will, a poor neo picking up a con flyer at a Laundromat. This person sees that it is some sort of con and wonders if it that implies some sort of criminal activity. He sees who the GoH are and wonders what the @#\$% a GoH is. He sees that there is a video room and thinks "whoopy thrill cakes" because he has his own VCR. He reads about the games room and thinks of Snakes & Ladders, Monopoly and Pop-a-Matic Trouble. He sees that the SCA will be at the con and is happy that some people are interested in the prevention of cruelty to animals. He reads about the whos, wheres, whens and how much of the con, but not the what, which is the most important part. So we have yet another neo who

should be scribbling down the con's phone number, instead scanning the rest of the Bulletin Board and having his interest stolen away by a hand-made ad for a used roto-tiller." (K.J.)

/Con-TRACT/ 5:3, May/June 1993

On Registration:

"Trust the Con Com but Always Make Your Own Hotel Reservations"

/Con-TRACT/ 5:3, May/June 1993

Keep name badges simple

A delegate's name badge should be merely a method of quick introduction, not a biography. Keep the badge simple. Include only the person's name and city, and leave it to personal conversations for people to find out more. Use the person's first name instead of initials wherever possible (it's John Smith, not J.G. Smith).

C&M Quiktip, /Con-TRACT/ 1:3, June/July 1989

On Security (Site Management):

"People who want to run security, shouldn't". -con running proverb

/Con-TRACT/ 3:2, Mar/Apr 1991

On The Treasury:

THE SCENT OF MONEY WILL ALWAYS BRING SHARKS

/Con-TRACT/ 7:3, May/June 1995

"I know we have lots of money, but I have not counted the empties yet." (Ultimate treasurer's report.)

/Con-TRACT/ 2:6, Dec. 1990

(from a correspondent signed "S C-A":)

Being new to Fandom, and assuming the position of Treasurer midway through the year, I was in the unfortunate position of not being aware of some policies and procedures of not only the position, but of the convention. I have learned lately that the treasurer is more powerful than I was lead to believe, and some things would have been done differently if I had been made aware of this sooner.

I presented a plan of bill payment to the president within 30 days of the convention, and was "ordered" by the chairman to do otherwise. I have since learned that the treasurer is empowered to make the decisions on where and when to spend money, and may receive input, not "orders", as to what to pay & when.

It is irregular in any organization, and can even be considered by auditors to be improper, to repay personal costs incurred that were over budget before giving the monies collectged to the treasurer. All monies, and all receipts to be paid, must go through the treasurers hands. Although I am told that "this is the way we run cons", it is not proper financial procedure, and I must be concerned with proper procedure for the protection of all concerned.

No one is to have any bills except the Treasurer, and only the Treasurer. I have obtained certain contracts, bills & receipts needed for audit purposes, that should have been in the treasurer's hands all along.

While the con does have an Enroute account, it also has a credit limit. It is quite irregular to knowingly attempt to charge amounts over this limit, and assume they will be accepted by Enroute.

Proper financial planning includes a carefully prepared budget. The budget that was presented to me was not. An example is that the video room is over budget by 14%, due to not including the mandatory taxes in the budgeted amount. The hotel space is over budget due to not including the full space costs as per the contract, and the taxes thereon. Many items were not budgeted for, or done carelessly, as the above items were. Please remember in your discussions of whether or not certain departments were over or under budget that a proper budget is a guideline, not carved in stone.

We must all be concerned with the fact that there is not enough money to go around, and every penny counts.

/Con-TRACT/ 5:2, Mar/Apr 1993

Sources/Resources Cited and Articles Reprinted:

ARTIFACS, an artshow-running shareware program from Steve Hanchar: \$15 from Hanchar at 2813 Nth 49th, Milwaukee, WI 53210.

/Con-TRACT/ 3:3, May/June 1991

Artwork

Its all on disk! This one however, is aimed at the actual artists. It provides such headings as Manual vs Computer bookkeeping, The cost of your work, What sold when & where and much more. It was unveiled at Chicon and certainly had lots of interest. Price has yet to be announced. Info: Walt Daniels, Box 1605, Indianapolis, IN, USA, 46206

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

Carver, John. Boards Make a Difference." Good boilerplate constitution for clubs/cons, with optional paragraphs; can provide topic areas you should think about.

/Con-TRACT/ 7:4, Jul/Aug 1995

Conrunner

is a UK based zine aimed at those who run conventions in Europe. I had not placed it on the zine list last issue as I thought that it was finished now that Conspiracy was done. I am glad that I was wrong. The zine does display the differances in thinking/organizing/hotel deals/programming, etc that makes cons in europe vastly differiant that those run in the USA. Trades or comments to:Ian Sorensen, 7 woodside Walk, Hamilton, UK, ML3 7HY.

/Con-TRACT/ 1:5, Oct/Nov 1989

Conrunning on Compuserve

If you want to know the latest on what is happening in World SF Con's you may wish to wander through it. The US Computer network COMPU\$ERVE has a conrunning dept in their SF area. They also have a series of "how to" conrunning files to copy. You may wish to find out if any member of your concom is a member. It is expensive. For details, talk to your local computer store.

/Con-TRACT/ 3:1, Jan/Feb 1991

"Convalescence Report." (unsigned.) A beginning-to-end report on Convalescence, a small convention in Ontario drawing just 100 attendees. /Con-TRACT/ 2:6, Dec. 1990.

Farmer, Dale. "Murphy's Laws of Con-Running". (E-mail dale@access.digex.net with additions.)

/Con-TRACT/ 7:5, Sep/Oct 1995.

Government Assistance Programs

Publisher CCH Canadian has produced a book that covers that, and are listed in a publication called exactly that. It has chapters on type & extent of assistance, Eligibility criteria, How to apply and Contacts for additional information. The book should be available in the reference area of your public library.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:1, Jan/Feb 1996

ITT Sheraton *free* software for event management, requiring IBM DOS 3.3 & 640K of RAM, including 2nd ed. of their 64 page "con running guide", a subscription to a "con running magazine". phone number given: 1-800-323-1847.

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

(Note: since that time, this number has become a fax number. No response now to queries about this software. -GS)

Little Golden Guide

The STAR TREK WELCOMMITTEE has produced "THE FANS "LITTLE GOLDEN GUIDE" TO THROWING YOUR OWN CON. Booklet of comments, advice & suggestions on organizing and running a small convention. Available for \$2.55 from 200 E. THOMAS St, Lansing, MI, 48906.

/Con-TRACT/ 2:3, June/July 1990

Mason, Mary. "Party Kit".

/Con-TRACT/ 1:5, Oct/Nov 1989.

The Masquerade Handbook

A 150 page handbook has now been released. Published by the Costumers Guild West, it covers all the details needed to run a Mid-sized Masquerade. Inside you will find lots of info on everything from Timetable & check list, registration, operations, backstage, Judges and even forms and Good ideas the Don't work! Price is \$7.00 from: 3216 Villa Knolls Dr, Pasadena, CA, USA, 91107."

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

"Meeting Planner's Cost Cutting Commandments". (Source not given).
/Con-TRACT/ 3:4, Jul/Aug 1991.

"95 Ways to Save Money On Your Next Meeting". (Source not given).
/Con-TRACT/ 2:5, Oct/Nov 1990.

Runte, Robert. "PineKone Lessons".
/Con-TRACT/ 2:4, Aug/Sep 1990 & 2:5, Oct/Nov 1990.
(unsigned until 2nd instalment.)

Steel, James. "Why Run Conventions?"
/Con-TRACT/ 2:4, Aug/Sep 1990.

A summary mainly of concom personality types, concluding that conrunning seems to be a form of initiation ceremony into any fandom.

Virzi, Dennis & Robert Taylor. "Budgeting for a Convention".
/Con-TRACT/ 5:4, Jul/Aug 1993.

Observations on Canadian Fandom: Canadians dont travel

With the high cost of Canadian air fares and the absence of real seat sales, few fans travel great distances. The vast majority of Canadian fans seem to usually grow up in one place-move once when they get a job, and then settle down. That couple with the fact that we only have the population of the state of California in the 2nd largest country of the world, has produced a fan that rarely goes beyond his own local con.

Thus the attempts of the few fans that try to bring ideas from other cons, or even other cons (Westercon/Worldcon) to Canada, are meet with vast apathy, and distrust.

Local cons, seperated by Canada's vast distances, can and have bred local fiefdoms of con committees that have always done cons a certain way and may never change. Ways that actually save a con money, are labeled as being used to line the pockets of the poor fool who suggested the idea. New ideas, such as a daily newspaper, are looked upon as a way to give ego to the person who recommended it-rather than to the con. Fandom, an organization that prides itself on its liberalism, can be very conservative at times.

Thus we welcome those of you who have visited Origins, World SF Con, San Diego Comic Con, or even just other cons, to tell us what you think was done right, wrong, and your comments on same. ...

In upcoming issues we hope to run some thoughts on and maybe even a cheek list of items to be looked at when working or running that little bit of the con. We will invite your comments on same.

/Con-TRACT/ 1:3, June/July 1989

Sorry We Missed You

Recently we have found that Ray Bradbury was in Edmonton this past summer and Harlan Ellison was in Toronto over the Oct 21 & 22nd. Ray

talked at a Computer show and Harlan at a Comic Con. It is shame that there is not a better underground to pass on the visit arrangements of our writers, artists, etc. One can always attempt to invite them out for a lunch, ask their hosts for a chance to get a book autographed or just approach your local SF store to make them aware and let them do the rest.

Conrunners can try to make sure that they enjoy their visit and thus be receptive to an approach to do a convention in the future. Also, we do want them to say nice things about your city when talking to other pro's.

Anyone Can Be King With Other Peoples Money

Canadian conventions continue to loose money. At least two major conventions lost really big bucks and one may never fly again. Both suffered when the financial trust was placed in the wrong hands.

Another convention had an estimated attendance of only 50 people when in previous years it had been many times that.

These problems should make interesting conversations at SMOFCON.

/Con-TRACT/ 1:6, Dec. 1989

Death In The Family

While conTRACT is aimed at providing the con-organizer with information and dates, we could not be all things to all people. A sister(?) publication MLR had attempted to provide more general news from across Canada. It's dead Jim.

Editor Mike Skeet, for some reason, that he does not make clear, has stopped producing his magazine.

The magazine will be missed.

Canada has the population of California stretched across the fourth largest country in the world. Many clubs, groups and cons exist in a world of their own. Each seems to live in a sort of city state of their local making.

Calgary hosts 4-5 cons a year, including the largest con in Western Canada, yet does not have an SF club. Toronto has a population of 2.5 million plus to drawn on, but he ten year old AD ASTA, its only SF Con, refuses to advertise or grow larger.

Canada needs a regularly printed general newszine. ...

/Con-TRACT/ 2:3, June/July 1990

Ad Astra Moves

Toronto's AD ASTA Con has moved from being the same date as Edmonton's ConText to being opposite Vancouver's Westercon. They are taking that date, even though they are getting less space from tehir hotel than before. Maybe they should look over the whole idea and consider a year off before the hotel gets the idea that the con can be forced into whatever the hotel feels like giving?

/Con-TRACT/ 2:4, Aug/Sep 1990

(a reply:)

"A quick comment on your paragraph in Vol. 2 #5 about Ad Astra.. First, we moved to the first weekend in July because the hotel pointedly asked us to change our date from June...we were not happy about this, but we looked at our options, and we decided to be flexible. Besides, we'd already advertised Ad Astra 11 at the HoJo, and would have had a terrible time informing everybody about the change. We chose the first weekend in July because it was a weekend that had no potential conflict with any other con within a 500-mile radius. We did not see any chance of conflict with Westercon, it being on the opposite coast. Because we showed flexibility where they did not, the hotel is actually giving us more space...our consuite will be even bigger. This new weekend will probably be in effect as long as we are at the HoJo, and tentative plans say new hotel for Ad Astra 12. I expect we'll be able to move back to June then. Also, the decision about our move had nothing to do with ConText also taking place on that weekend."

"LP" (Lloyd Penney), /Con-TRACT/ 3:1, Jan/Feb 1991

Creation Cons In Canada

With Canada's population base being smaller than the USA, the US run CREATION Cons are realizing that they are not going to do well outside of Toronto. Also, the Canadian grapevine here has reported on their various tricks & traps. Billed as a two day con, it is really the same program repeated. Also, when the GoH goes to the dealers room to autograph books, the dealers room, etc is thrown open to the public, thus you don't have to pay the high daily membership rate. On the plus side, local clubs are finding that it is a great place to lay out advertising for their cons. Repeat CREATION cons in Canada are going to be fewer than last year.

/Con-TRACT/ 2:4, Aug/Sep 1990

Creation Goes Conadian

Last year the US based company CREATION, started to sample the Canadian market. As a result of that year, their policy this year seems to be based on such facts as the table rates have doubled to \$225-\$50 US, The city of Winnipeg has been dropped and Calgary & Montreal added. Toronto's 2.5 million population base will attract them 3 times this year. My Ghod how the money comes in, the local dealers are squeezed out (Just raise those table rates again-Creation does not pay them),and the \$\$ all goes to the good old USA.

/Con-TRACT/ 2:6, Dec. 1990

Creation Toss & Turns

Creation cons in Canada seem to come & go. We will still try to keep you informed as best we can from WRITTEN information. When in doubt, contact the hotel and confirm that the convention space has been booked or phone them directly.

/Con-TRACT/ 4:1, Jan/Feb 1992

Creation Con Canada

certainly has come back to Canada big time. Prices are up and locations are more numerous. There is even one in Sioux Ste. Marie (US side). Why?? It may be one of two reasons. One, the money in Canada has always been good and with the increased table costs, more will be available. Thus STAR POST (A ST only Biz) has their own warehouse now in Toronto. _OR_ The increased success of Fan run ST Cons in Canada means that there is still money out there. When Sask fandom brought John Delance (Q) up, he duly reported back how many people showed up and the next thing you know, Creation shows up in the same city. Take your pick or both???

/Con-TRACT/ 5:4, Jul/Aug 1993

CUFF

We now understand that nominations were to be in by 4 FEB. Did anyone see any mention of it, other than in the Jan OSFiC statement that I received after that date?? Was anyone nominated?? How?? Its a shame that we saw little mention of CUFF in the few nationally traded/mailed zines that Canada does have. ...

Alberta Times Two Times Five

Can someone tell me why Edmonton & Calgary seem to want to run cons on the same weekend. I understand that ST CON in Calgary is opposite a CREATION CON, probably as policy. But why CONTEXT vs CONFEDERATION?? Do they think that there is enough Fandom in Alberta to support a media & sercon the same weekend?? Also why do we have 5 ST CONS in Alberta this year!!

/Con-TRACT/ 3:2, Mar/Apr 1991

The Alberta Tour

Between 28 FEB and Mar 15, one can attend three cons in 18 days in Alberta. Con*Fusion (Edm), then ST CON and CALCON in Calgary. The cities are only 3 hours apart. Great going guys!!

/Con-TRACT/ 4:1, Jan/Feb 1992

Aurora Congrats

The new Aurora awards are really beautiful. 10 were awarded this year at CONTEXT in Edmonton. We again noted, like Calgary ast year, that fandom does not exist east of the Alberta border ...

/Con-TRACT/ 3:4, Jul/Aug 1991

Conversions (sic)

We are still trying to find a Canadian SF con that actually attracted more people this year than last. ConVersions attendance was c.100 less than their break even point. The art auction still made \$8,000, CUFF \$8.00. The con suffered with less numbers as none of the rooms seemed not as full and lively as last time. Except the returning Con Suite that, as usual, you had to squeeze through. The Masque was

short but of high calibre. The dealers did not do as well as in the past, but all wanted tables for next year.

Westercon Ups & Downs

Westercon44/V-CON 20, was a combination of great weather and huge fun. The Party list however, was longer than the workers list. Also, the U. used the con to pay a lot of back bills and the program book came in WAY over budget. The result is that the con is c.\$5,500 in the hole. Steps are being taken to get the money together to pay for this. ...

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

Less Taxes

The Canadian government realizes that the GST is effecting the convention business in Canada. Hence, they have again added yet another list of goods & services, that are exempt, from US Cons run in Canada. This will effect future & current Westercon and World SF/Fantasy cons.

Also, a new books is out for all of us. "Canadian Meetings and Taxes: Tax Facts for Meeting Planers" is now out. Your Library should have a copy.

/Con-TRACT/ 3:5, Sep/Oct 1991

Recession In Canada

ConTRACT will be keeping an eye on the numbers of people attending conventions. We have already reported that no SF/F convention has increased in numbers since Spring 1990. The ONLY con that we know had an increase was Toronto Trek. Without proper budgeting, Cons will continue to suffer financial setbacks.

/Con-TRACT/ 4:1, Jan/Feb 1992

Clubs Takes Steps

With many North American Conventions loosing money in the last few years, it comes as no surprise as Cdn SF Clubs are re-writing the rules under which their clubs/cons run. They are aimed at getting better financial control over those who wish to run their local cons. At least two club constitutions have been re-written recently and are available to those interested. They are:

-BCSFA ...

-WINSFA, PO Box 3178, Wpg, MB, R3C 4E6

/Con-TRACT/ 5:1, Jan/Feb 1993

SF Canada And The Convention

"SF Canada has notified Wolfcon, the Nova Scotian host of Convention 13, that it will present a bid to organize CONVENTION 14, Canada's national SF convention, in conjunction with Conadian, the World SF Convention, to be held in Winnipeg in 1994. As of January 15, SF Canada was the only bidder.

"SF Canada has also reached an agreement with Convention 13 that will allow its members to vote free of charge in the final round of the

Aurora Award balloting. SF Canada will compensate Convention 13 for every ballot received from a paid-up SF Canada member."

(Dennis Mullin/Jean-Louis Trudel)

COMMENT: Interesting idea. Since ConTRACT has been nominated, should I too, pay for any conTRACT subscriber that votes for the award?? A Convention could actually finance their awards this way!!

/Con-TRACT/ 5:2, Mar/Apr 1993

GENie and I

... When I started doing zines [in 1966], I was using DITTO machiens and now we are doing computers & photocopy. The times have changed.

Now E-mail makes the ability to pass info, (true or false) at the speed of light. The two major commercial E-mail boards are Compuserve and GENie. ... SF, Media & con running are in the flat fee area.

/Con-TRACT/ 5:3, May/Jun 1993

On Hospitality:

Paying to much for your video room, approach your local SONY store and convince them you have the perfect place to show off their biggest & best. Plus maybe an add in the PB??

/Con-TRACT/ 5:4, Jul/Aug 1993

CUFF

This years CUFF administrator offered up free transportation, accommodation & membership in the World Science Fiction Convention to *ANY* member of Canadian fandom EAST of the Ont/MB border. NO ONE took them up on it!!

How are we supposed to deal with this. Heck, if they are not interested in the World Con, why should be try to offer them a trip to Convention??

Does this prove that paying for food for 5 days is a financial burden to every Eastern fan?? Or is it, the fact that news just does not get past on in Canada unless it deals with the colour of Picards underwear or is PC??

So now that we have around \$1,000 in the bank, thanks to donations from William Gibson & others, what should we do with it?? Shall we let CUFF die too..... Or will we watch Western Canadian Fans & Pros scrabble over the \$\$.

/Con-TRACT/ 6:4, Jul/Aug 1994

CUFF 1994

There has been some discussion as to "Why were we not told" as to CUFF. The Vol 6 #1 "Jan" issue of this zine carried on page 6 a 3/4 page ad telling all who read it that we were looking for candidates for this years CUFF and that they should contact us by 1 May 1994. If you receive

this issue you should have received that issue. What more can you do within the exsisting Canadian fanish community??

Please don't start me on the fact of why Canada does not have a newszine & if it even deserves one. OR on how so called CDN fandom, works as a series of city-states. Also, since there has been no interest in CUFF for two years running, do we carry it on?? I look forward to the 'wantabe's" squabbling over money.

However since the matter was not brought up at the Convention biz meeting and will never be a program item at any con, I consider that CUFF has died....

/Con-TRACT/ 6:5, Sep/Oct 1994

CUFF

Lloyd Penney on page 20 of issue 258 of BCSFzine seems to have gotten it all wrong. First he says that ConTRACT is a limited Distribution zine. Its not, it goes out to everyone who wants it. What he seems to have forgotten is that of all the CDN zines that received ConTRACT, not one thought CUFF important enough to reprint, bring up at club meetings or pas on. The Aurora ballot certainly was though.

He then says that only one issue contained something on CUFF. (Actually two did) I am sorry that I did not do what he "now" expects me to do, heck, what conTRACT did was more than Central Canadian fandom has done for CUFF in years past.

Lloyd attended the Convention meeting over two days in XXXX when the CUFF direction was changed to MAKE SURE that it was going East to West for the Wcon. Thus he was aware years in advance that it was happening specifically to get a fan free to Wcon. We wish he had remembered that.

He goes on how we had little time to promote CUFF. He does not realize that while attending Ad Astra in his city, we mentioned CUFF at every opportunity. We held CUFF auctions at those cons that allowed me-Wolfcon, Keycon and Conversions. Those auction are why there is money in the CUFF account. Each auction brought in hundreds of \$\$, much more than the "turkey readings" brought in, years before.

He does confirm that ConTRACT is dismissed as a listing of cons and thats all(sniff). Hence at the end of 6 years of continious publication (but who cares) we are switching text & con listing. I wonder if anyone will notice.

/Con-TRACT/ 6:6, Nov/Dec 1994

Death Of Canadian Fandom

The number of conventions in Canada continues to decrease. The list above may look impressive but remove the gaming & media cons and the list is very short. That coupled with the failure of CUFF this year, the poor responce for nominations for the Aurora Awards, and the fact that NO Canadian Specialty book store is attending a 4,500 pure SF con all seem to be hand writing on the wall. ConAdian may be the swan song. Do you care??

/Con-TRACT/ 6:4, Jul/Aug 1994

On Awards

"Block Voting"

Yesterday, if someone presents his thoughts on who should really deserves an award at a club meeting in a city, convinces the members through consensus, that they should nominate/vote for this person/zine/whatever. Then to save money, they put their votes in one envelope and mail them.

Tomorrow, a group with it's own private computer net server, discuss the fact that a certain person/thing really should win an award. Now the group gets copies of all the email via the net server, and through consensus, are convinced that they should nominate/vote for this person/zine/whatever, and they too do this. However, since they live apart, mail the ballot in separately.

The difference is????

/Con-TRACT/ 7:4, Jul/Aug 1995

Can*Con

I would have reviewed Can*CON, and the Aurora Awards, but it was quite graphically pointed out to me that ANYTHING I said would be treated as "Sour Grapes." as both Conadian & John Mansfield had been put in "their proper place in history". It was also pointed out in the lead paragraph of the editorial of the Summer 95 issue of ON SPEC. So don't look for any comments on such matters as their putting the Art show/dealers/Computer Expo all in one room while programming was in 5 other rooms, or the 3 attempts at putting out the Program book of which the final one did come out late on Friday and some of us found out that we were supposed to have been on programming earlier. Pity, I cannot go on. However, I do recommend Loyd Penny's comments (and he lost to!) in the June issue of the OSFS Statement, 251 Nepean St, Ottawa, ON, K2P 0B7.

/Con-TRACT/ 7:4, Jul/Aug 1995

Creation Not In Canada

We understand that Creation cons had got stopped at the Border, didn't declare the full extent of their merchandise and whammo, a 6 figure fine.(Chris Chartier) Thus, we now know that there are no more Creation Star Trek & X-FILE cons planned in Canada. Their Fellow traveller, a CDN company based in BC, who tried to have ST Cons in Ed, Wpg & Sask has also closed.

/Con-TRACT/ 8:1, Jan/Feb 1996



Letters

Lyn McConchie, April 18, 2017

In the review on *Fragment*, a book by Craig Russel, it is stated that "the remnants of the ice sheet cause a catastrophe in the Caribbean", which raised my eyebrows. Frankly, I find that highly unlikely, and the author would have to produce a hugely convincing argument to persuade me. The Antarctic is familiar to most New Zealanders, we normally have a number of researchers down there at any one time, including some who work in and out of McMurdo Station. And while a catastrophe wiping out the station is not unlikely, an ice sheet making it all the way to the Caribbean - isn't. Any such sheet would have to work its way over seven thousand miles through increasingly warm seas. Nor do I think that the prevailing currents would take an ice sheet up that coast, all the way north past the protrusion of South America to swing nor-nor-west into the Caribbean. I always enjoy a good disaster novel, and have a whole shelf of them, but in this case I have to question the plausibility of this one's premise.

(I was a bit surprised by that, too. The middle and both ends of it is that in the story, the detached ice shelf was still supposed to be so massive as to resist melting even in the tropics, and to have so much momentum it would scour the buildings off a peninsula in the Falkland Islands, and would even grind the top off a volcanic seamount in the Caribbean, creating a volcanic event. How this works with the limited space for the ice mass to pass between Antarctica and South America, as you say, I don't quite know.)

E.B. Klassen, April 19, 2017

Hope you are reasonably well (about all we can hope for these days). Paula and I are reasonably content, sitting occasionally in the sun in what might finally be spring. We have new plants up and a few that survived the winter. However, beet greens, Swiss chard, and green onions are not a complete meal. However, radishes will be ready in about a month, so that will change everything <grin>.

We're coming up on two years here in Sooke and we're both getting social lives. Paula is involved with the quilters guild and the Tuesday night knitters. I'm involved with Transition Sooke (part of the Transition Town movement). And we both attend the monthly Zero Waste Sooke meetings (small though they are).

ZWS is planning a Repair Café in about five weeks, so I've taken over the organizing. Should be good fun and a social good.

I read too much, and too much non-fiction, so I've been deep in despair over the corporate capture of government and the subsequent lack of action on things like climate change, and Transition Sooke is good for that. The goal is to be moving this town down the road to a low energy, localized future. Transition becomes a hub for all the other groups moving in the same direction. Groups like Sooke FoodCHI (Community Health Initiative) which is working on local food issues. Or ZWS, trying to convert the waste stream into a reuse/recycle stream.

This is a town with ~200 volunteer organizations--the place would stop cold without volunteers.

Yes, there's a provincial election coming up. (We live in John Horgan's riding, and I like him. But I really want to see a minority gov. with a half-dozen Greens holding the balance of power). But I'm focused 16 months down the road on the municipal election. This is one I can affect. I'd like to start a weekly coffee and argument night around municipal issues, leading up to an unofficial progressive slate being elected.

But we'll see. I'm trying to focus on one issue at a time, so I don't go too far, fail, and have to move. I like this town.

**John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845, USA,
askance73@gmail.com, May 17, 2016**

Hey there, Garth!

Since I have a bit of time before I take a shower, a quick letter of comment on your latest *Interesting Times* shall be written. Aren't you thrilled that your zine takes precedence over my cleanliness? I'm impressed.

Another new fiction web-zine? That's always good to see. Best of luck to *Strange Fictions SciFi & Fantasy Zine*. I believe I shall have to sign up for it and get notifications when new stories are published. Sounds promising.

You asked about Ross Chamberlain: he is living in Las Vegas, Nevada, and I don't have his mailing address, but Ross is active on Facebook, so you can find him there. Nice guy, great long-time fan and artist.

So thank you for the fanzine, and I wish you well.

We Also Heard From

Garry Owens (who replied to "What is the difference between primary resource companies and kindergarten pupils?" with "No idea"); Charles Rector (who sent us *Fornax* #17); Cathy Palmer-Lister; and the N3F Editorial Cabal.

Calendar

August 2018

Aug. 8-11 revived Bathtub Race as part of KitsFest in Vancouver

Aug. 10-12, [Animethon](#), Edmonton, AB

Aug. 10-12, [OzCon International](#) , Portland, OR

Aug. 16-18 Worldcon 76 in San Jose, CA. www.worldcon.org/

Freyfaxi – Aug. 19?

August 25-27: Ener-Con at the Canada Inns Destination Centre Polo Park in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

September 2018

Labour Day Weekend: 3-day Novel Contest.

Sept. 14-16, [Gatecon](#), Vancouver, BC

September ?: Saskatoon Comic & Entertainment Expo at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Fall equinox - September 21

21/22 Haustblot

October 2018

10-12: VCon 42 to 14th – theme: British Invasion.

Fallfeast/Hausblot – October 23?

Oct. 26-28, Kumoricon, Portland, OR

November 2018

National Novel Writing Month (question: which nation?)

(Orycon 40 in Portland: a week after Remembrance Day, again?)

December 2018

(When is SMOFCon 34? I established it will be held in Santa Clara, CA)

Closing Remarks

I think I will devote next issue entirely to fanzine reviews. Ghu knows I owe as much to an enormous number of correspondents. With any luck I can do this within a month.

Yours,

Garth Spencer