

THE OBDURATE EYE # 15

April 2022



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MASGHEAD

THE OBDURATE EYE #15 (April 2022) is what Garth Spencer does if nobody stops him in time. You can send letters, pictures, trade fanzines, articles, conspiracy theories, and cheese tasting reviews to him by email to garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

Art Credits

Internet clipart..... cover

A Wooden Leg Named Psmith

I seem to have found a way in Adobe Acrobat to cut eAPAs down to half the memory size that has been usual. You will have to tell me whether this has any effect on the accessibility or legibility of eAPAs.

Look! It's Roy Orbison!

Since I moved in September 2021 I have not been exposed to much television, which relieved me of a good deal to keep up with. Since I tested positive for COVID-19 I was even more relieved. (And somewhat bored ...)

My brother lays cable for Shaw Cablenet, one of the TV/Internet/phone/~~public surveillance~~ service providers in western Canada. The major competitors are Fido and Telus (although they all probably own pieces of each other; non-competition is an old Canadian business tradition). Since my new home is served by Telus, he could only suggest an Internet workaround, which is how I wound up downloading Chromecast TV videos via Google Home to my ... tablet computer. Well, okay, that's one way to keep me harmlessly occupied.

The Cherokees Is Invaded Fort Mudge!

As you will have heard, I came down with COVID-19, probably the Omicron variant, after the last mailing went out. I'm better now, but still had to get retested in the hope of testing negative, in order to continue working for one client. (I will have to repeat this exercise again in February. It isn't covered by our government-supported basic medical plan.)

The Turks Have Taken Vienna!

Languages. The claim that First World languages enable more abstraction doesn't actually persuade me. From long and wearisome personal experience, I consider abstract terms to be meaningless *until and unless they are defined for a given discourse*. (You can tell I have little respect for jargon or bafflegab or Managerspeak.)

So, I have decided I won't argue about languages anymore, as some of the things I learned in linguistics classes are neither recognized, nor generally

believed in mundania. Consider the idea of primitivism: this is such a pervasive idea, outside of academic fields such as linguistics or sociology or anthropology, there is no point in disputing it. Yet, as was pointed out in my classes, hunter-gatherers and pastoralist/agrarian societies in the Third World often have more elaborate vocabularies for flora, fauna, kinship, colour terms, and for all I know, occult herbology, than you find in urban street language.

Houses Sprout New Ears!

(Topics on Facebook)

One of the drawbacks of living in a city - as most people on Earth now do, if a news item some years ago can be believed - is that we simply have to pull in our senses, and *screen out* a great deal of irrelevant signal, ranging from traffic noises and other people's conversations to inconsequential commercials and signage. I really began to notice this when I worked at a storefront word processing/fax and copy centre, and put up some signs to advise people how to use the self-service copier, only to discover that many customers simply couldn't see and read the sign.

I've always intended to measure my chores and tasks and projects and commitments in terms of the time commitments, but usually only get as far as listing as many as I can.

§

I keep noticing how de-militarized our Canadian society seems to be, in my experience, during my lifetime. Maybe it's just my experience, but there seems to have been a lot more common experience of military involvement among Canadian civilians, in my parents' generations.

(Comments:

“Well, when I was a kid, every older person had lived through World War 1 when they were young adults, and every adult had been involved in WW II one way or another. My mother worked in a searchlight factory. My dad flew Wellington bombers. WW II was THE source of common experience and memory.

“Today, people, politicians and the media prefer to avoid the subject of war. It's as if we are all pretending we will never be involved in another conflict.

“So, I'll close by quoting Trotsky, ‘You may not be very interested in war, but war is very interested in you.’

“This is why I support the Canadian armed forces.”

R. Graeme Cameron, Jan. 28, 2022

“It worries me a lot that we have evaded the topic of defense for way too long, deferring sensible precautions and necessary spending. Humanitarian ends must be met, but you can't lower taxes at the same time. We need to be squeezing corporations more to meet our needs, or we may find ourselves still squabbling over the F-35 (or Gryphen) fighter in 2035. I'm not in favour of the military industrial complex, but a defense that consists mainly of left-overs won't cut it.”

Taral Wayne, Jan. 28, 2022

(I will just add that, in another Facebook thread, I commented that 21st-century warfare is likely to be less about trading bullets to see who holds which real estate, and more about trading cyberattacks – and hostile takeovers – to see which digitized resources people control. I ended by saying that I foresaw national forces of uniformed daytraders using investments as weapons. Comments?)

From A Fool's Errands

(an autobiography in progress)

I once saw a need that was once filled by some fanzines ... but whether contemporary fans feel the same need now is dubious.

Back in 1983 I waited impatiently for a Canadian newszine to appear – *New Canadian Fandom* by name – and I was feeling exercised by a recent exhibition of neofannish naivete, i.e., a very over-aggrandized and under-capitalized mediacon held in entirely too small a town (my hometown). It was painfully clear to me that some fans weren't getting some pretty basic information about fandom, such as how conventions work, or can fail to work. So, I started my own newszine.

Three and a half years later, after I gave up producing *The Maple Leaf Rag*, I knew two or three things about fans as a group. One was that there was not, if there ever had been, any common knowledge that all fans knew, or anything that fans generally valued. Another was that whether or not fans needed to know some common basic facts about conrunning, they didn't *feel* any such need.

As Dorothy Parker put it, “You can lead a whore to culture, but you can't make her think.”

Excerpt from *How to Human*

(Subtitle: Things people take for granted too much to tell other people)

Advertising. advertisers will try to use to seduce you into buying a product, “Remedial Life Lessons Need to Be Taught in Schools” (Tim McAleenan Jr., <http://theconservativeincomeinvestor.com>, May 30, 2014)

Agenda in Life. Define Your Own. What is the best life for you to live? (Good things for me would include documentary research, writing, drawing, assembling objects; maybe carpentry, rather than office work. I also take satisfaction in completing chores, cycling, swimming, playing with animals, entertaining children on the bus by making silly faces, or dreaming up educational and enlightening pranks for people with more money than sense.

Agenda for the Day – make a to-do list to tackle each day, and why you should create it. “Remedial Life Lessons Need to Be Taught in Schools” (Tim McAleenan Jr., <http://theconservativeincomeinvestor.com>, May 30, 2014)

Alphabet. If you are having trouble making a word understood, you may use the NATO Phonetic Alphabet: A = Alpha; B = Bravo; C = Charlie; D = Delta; E = Echo; F = Foxtrot; G = Golf; H = Hotel; I = India; J = Juliet; K = Kilo; L = Lima; M = Mike; N = November; O = Oscar; P = Papa; Q = Quebec; R = Romeo; S = Sierra; T = Tango; U = Uniform; V = Victoria; W = Whiskey; X = X-ray; Y = Yankee; Z = Zulu;

Animals. Expect animals almost always to respond to you with a limited set of behaviours. Give domestic animals attention, affection and consistency. DO NOT APPROACH wild animals; just remember something important you have to do elsewhere. Do not run from them, do not use loud noises and abrupt gestures, and DO NOT leave food out in your camp.

Appliances. Keep the appliances’ instruction sheets and warranty papers. When you have any possessions, you are likely to receive instructions for assembling, maintaining and repairing appliances, and particularly for their warranty coverage.

Assumptions. Assume *nothing* yourself – neither about practical and mechanical processes, nor about what people think or feel or want – but by all means, detect the assumptions of others. “Common sense isn’t.” (David Gerrold)

Attention. Pay attention to people and make the effort to pick up their nonverbal clues. (If you just can’t, then you’re totally boned.)

LoCs

Cathy Palmer-Lister, cathypl@sympatico.ca, January 4, 2022

About cheese: I like them all except for the ones that look mouldy. In my teens, I had a microscope and a book on things to look at through this instrument. One chapter had a lot of information on how to isolate and examine the mites in cheese. I still look very suspiciously at any cheese that might contain living lifeforms.

Lloyd & Yvonne Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2, January 27, 2022

I have here issue 14 of The Obdurate Eye, and while I have the afternoon ahead of me, I thought I'd work ahead on the slowly dwindling pile of e-zines, and get some response out.

((I guess that alerts me that you have at least enough to handle, and I had better not invite you to join eAPA. Pity, that.))

The Cheese Issue, hm? Like the commercials say, it ain't easy... A flying cheese wedge...cheddar or Swiss? All is good. But if the cheese is a spacecraft, what keeps the ship from turning into an intergalactic fondue?

((Nothing, particularly. I was going to make even more cheese jokes throughout, but next issue I can pick another irrelevant theme and do more with it.))

I would like to keep a copy of the graphic on page 3."

((Easily done.))

You also wrote: "As these redneck truckers come down from the West to invade Ottawa, they need to be reminded that they have obligations as well as rights. They are obliged to not spread the COVID around, and that's why we have masks and vaccines. If they don't care about that, or think it's a hoax, they are no better than an ignorant Conservative or Republican.

((It took me some backing and filling to find out what the trucker convoy story was. I'm not watching TV, and not listening regularly to the radio news, so a lot is getting past me.))

I have been job hunting for some time, and I have built up a large body of editorial work over the past three years. I thought my chances of getting an editorial job would improve, but I suspect that my experience might be intimidating to some. I have gotten more than a dozen interviews, and they have all been good, but no job yet. I am 62 going on 63, so like you, I suspect there is some agism going on. I have now a client who likes what I can do, and

has paid me handsomely for the first book of his I worked on, and a second book is now in the works, so that might be a primary source of income for a while.

((Looks like a lot of us are being pushed into consulting, or other freelance work, rather than regular employment. One more challenge that not everyone will meet successfully.))

I have been working on my own con list for this general area, and even now, some conventions are being postponed until later in the year, or have been cancelled outright, and let's try this again in 2023.

((That sounds about right. When I get down to researching the complete information for conventions on my list, I fully expect to find significant proportions are cancelled or postponed or virtualized. Which is sad – conventions became a large part of my social activity, not to mention private life – but again, it's a change that represents a challenge that we have to meet.))

There are many jurisdictions where COVID-19 is still a problem. All restaurants here have had their dining areas closed yet again, but may open up this coming Tuesday, February 1. Our vaccination rates are pretty high, but there are so many who think it's all a hoax, or they don't like the needles, or in true temperamental childish fashion, I donwanna, and I donhafta. See rights vs. obligations above. In the US, there are jurisdictions where the vaccines are hindered, if not almost illegal[ly], and the death rates are soaring. And yet, that's where conventions and similar events are off and happening as if there's no pandemic at all. Can't figure that one out at all.

((In hindsight it's pretty easy to figure. As early as my childhood I noticed /how much people assume arbitrarily/, just in order to get on with the day. My folks assumed arbitrarily in the 60s that smoking and significant drinking and driving their kids around without seatbelts were effectively harmless, until they became less and less socially accepted; eventually the ashtrays disappeared, and seatbelts appeared, even if Dad continued to have a few beers before dinner. We even started taking our shoes off in the house when that started to become a social norm. Until 2020 it was unusual to see people wearing face masks on the bus, except for some southeast Asians who had a cold or didn't want to get one. Now, nearly two years after the COVID-19 pandemic was announced, there are still people who resist accepting the nuisance of wearing masks and getting vaccinations. Just as some people resist getting haircuts, or dental care, or going out of the house without wearing guns, or wearing ties at work. I think that's all that's at issue: what norms of behaviour people are willing to conform to.))

My letter...I'd never heard of Kumospace. I find that social media is supposed to bring us together, but with hundreds, if not thousands of social media platforms, it's doing an even better job of keeping us apart.

((This is the same effect that cable television, and later the Internet and the Web, had on social communication. Perhaps naively, I go on thinking there was a degree of social consensus that prevailed in the 1950s and until some point in the 1960s, when mainstream cultures broke down into subcultures, with conflicting information, beliefs, practices and values. Certainly, as early as the 1980s, you couldn't even attend a science fiction convention and find a generally-shared understanding of what fandom was, or who the whole gathering was for.))

I continue to lose weight, and can say almost 20 pounds lighter. Old clothes fit again. Once this pandemic eases up again, I will be in touch with BBW International again to get some work. Hope you can do the same in Vancouver. What can I say about Belgian cheeses? They go well with select chimays.

((Good to hear!))

Joe Siclari from FANAC <estern7770@gmail.com> February 1, 2022

Happy New Year! Hoping you all are safe and well in yet another pandemic year. We've spent our time trying to reverse entropy and adding to the Fan History Projects.

We'll tell you what's been new over the last few months, but first a call for help. There are projects and problems we'd like to take on, but lack the skills and the bandwidth to learn them. If you have some knowledge about these things, please get in touch. Here are the projects we have in mind.

PiWigo: Migrate our photos to modern photo gallery software from our 25-year-old custom software
Search Engine Optimization (SEO) -

We'd like to get search engines to find our materials more readily. FANAC.org had about 1,100 sessions in December according to Google People Cross Reference – Needs to be replaced; currently using 25-year-old custom code that indexes Fancyclopedia and FANAC. This lets us put together a list of material about a specific person and let the user know if the reference is a photo, fanzine, etc. PDF links to main site – we are moving from a JPG for every page (inside a custom HTML) to a PDF per issue. However, when the PDFs are found via search, then the reader goes directly to the file. That means that unless they are savvy enough to inspect the URL and tinker with it, they have no idea that they are on our site, and no easy link to the rest of the site.

Help? If any of these speak to you, please send a note to fanac@fanac.org ...

We Also Heard From: *Lisa Gemino, Steve Fahnstalk, Bill Burns, Michaelann Dahlmann, Lyn McConchie, Fran Skene, Sheila Brown (Apaplexy), Leybl Botwinik (CyberCozen – Israel), José Sánchez*

It Came in My Email

I give up. A principal reason for the delays in my personalzine is that I have left the reviews of fanzines received until the end of the month, then the end of the next month, and then the month after that ... because I hate reviews. Then, I thought I would just list the ideas that they brought up. That would work if I read them as soon as they arrived, and wrote letters of comment immediately. That hasn't worked since most publications went online. I will have to change that next month. April 2022.

Fanzines received, then:

Alexiad #120 & #121, c/o Lisa & Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA, jtmajor@iglou.com, <http://efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>

Askew #36, John Purcell's personalzine, 3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, Texas 77845 USA Email address: askance73@gmail.com

Cyber-Cozen 33:12 & 34:01, The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Editor: Leybl Botwinik, leybl_botwinik@yahoo.com. Tel: Leybl Botwinik +972-54-537-7729.

Fadeaway #67 is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email fabficbks@aol.com.

FANAC Newsletter 17 from Joe Siclari from FANAC <estern7770@gmail.com>

Fanactivity Gazette 1:9, February 2022 (presumably from George Phillies of the N3F), 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609, phillies@4liberty.net

Ionisphere 33 & 34, Edited and Produced by John THIEL, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. Email kinethiel@mymetronet.net

La C'hronica Fevráglh XLIII / February 2022 from the Kingdom or Republic of Talossa, depending on the year, Chancery Communications Chancerycommunications@outlook.com, talking about online elections

MT Void, Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society, Co-Editor: Mark Leeper, mleeper@optonline.net, Co-Editor: Evelyn Leeper, eleeper@optonline.net

The N3F Review of Books, Professor George Phillies, D.Sc., Editor, published by the National Fantasy Fan Federation, PO Box 143, Tonopah NV 89049 and is distributed for free to N3F Members and archival sites. Editor: George Phillies, 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester MA 01609, phillies@4liberty.net (send your reviews here!!)

N'APA 256, January 2022, the official collator is George Phillies - phillies@4liberty.net; The official preparer is Jefferson P. Swycaffer - abontides@gmail.com (send him your contributions)

The Baloobius, Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Ave. Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario, M6K 1S6, Email Taral@bell.net

Origin 47 & 48a, Editor and Bureau Head: John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. kinethiel@mymetronet.net

Perryscope 19 & 20, the personalzine published monthly by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3122. E: perry@middlemiss.org

SF Commentary 109: A tribute to Bill Wright (1937–2022), edited and published by Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard St, Greensborough VIC 3088, Australia. Phone: 61-3-9435 7786. Email: gandc001@bigpond.com

This Here #49 & 50, Nic Farey, 2657 Rungsted Street, Las Vegas NV 89142, or email fareynic@gmail.com

The Alien Review 3, produced and edited by Perry Middlemiss, 32 Elphin Grove, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122 AUSTRALIA. E: perry@middlemiss.org

Tightbeam 330. The Editors are George Phillies phillies@4liberty.net 48 Hancock Hill Drive, Worcester, MA 01609. Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

The National Fantasy Fan - Editors, TNFF: George Phillies phillies@4liberty.net; Jon Swartz jon_swartz@hotmail.com

TommyWorld (Tommy Ferguson), 125 Haypark Ave, Belfast, BT7 3FG, Northern Ireland, TUtw@tommyworld.net, [Uhttp://tommyworld.net](http://tommyworld.net)

The Zine Dump #54, Guy Lillian * 1390 Holly Ave Merritt Island FL 32952, GHLIII@yahoo.com