

THE OBDURATE EYE # 17

June 2022

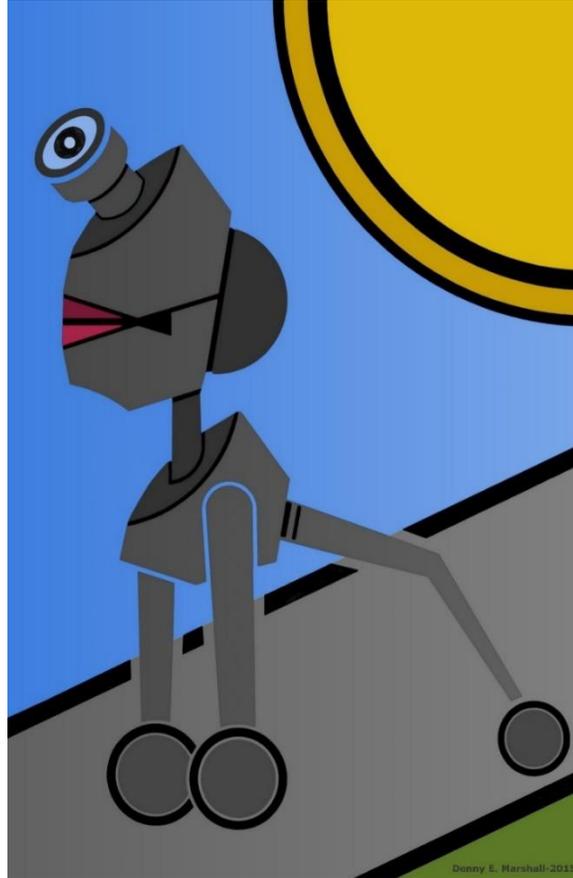


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MASGHEAD

THE OBDURATE EYE #17 (June 2022) is what Garth Spencer does when he doesn't know any better. You can send letters, pictures, trade fanzines, articles, and suggested therapies to him by email to garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.

Art Credits

Denny Marshall..... cover

The Only Thing We Learn

Following Perry Middlemiss' example in a recent *Perryscope*, I thought I might try writing a little about my background. My first attempt turned out to be a mistake, though – it was mainly criticism of other people, places, and events, not excluding myself – and I will have to take a more positive attitude.

§

This human life project is sometimes hard to grasp as a whole; how do you make sense of life? My default mode is to make sense of life as a lot of things to do, many of which are ongoing projects running simultaneously through life. Which tells you something about my Protestant-work-ethic background.

There are other people who make sense of life in terms of presenting an image, either as a show person or as a Proper Man or Woman maintaining their conventional status; or in terms of scoring off others, or being somehow “superior”; or in terms of making money; or in terms of gaining and maintaining power; or in terms of making more discoveries; or in terms of playing Lord/Lady Bountiful to Those Less Fortunate. Can you add to the list of various motivations?

By now, of course, I have found my default mode inadequate. Life is not complete unless you have some physical activities, social relationships, a crank theory to work on in private, a garden, an intimate relationship, a pet to take care of, probably a wife and family, and very likely a home and mortgage and investment portfolio. A Renaissance Fan would have a sport, an art, at least one essay or story on the go, regularly scheduled exercise and blood donations, attendance at the candidates' debate, and bowling or roller-skating on Saturday nights. Have I worked that out correctly?

Tell me if I'm off the beam here.

Allegedly life is about developing our potentials, learning lessons, and growing, in character if not physical height; but a lot of social norms – or family and small-community cultures – seem to militate against learning and growth.

Allegedly grade school is about teaching us what we need to know, as adults, and training us in a range of basic skills – but my experience up to 1975 was that grade school taught us obedience to bureaucratic routines, however nonsensical, and punishing any self-expression or initiative, outside of art classes. Then, abruptly, we were expected to choose our goals in life, exercise our initiative, when it came to choosing trade or post-secondary schools and defining our choice of careers.

I could go on with other examples, but the point is: there seem to be a lot of contradictions and omitted briefings in life as I know it. I am preparing a make-your-own-life-design guide for the half-informed humans. (Do you think it will help?)

My point, and I do have one, is that human life in my experience is a mispocha of random experiences, like a mix of two or three different jigsaw puzzles, but with only half of the pieces from each puzzle. This would be funny if anyone had set up the

sketch with any proper buildup, but I think it just sort of happened by accident, like grade school curricula.

When I report back to whatever planet assigned me to this planet, I am going to make two requests:

- 1) Give me a day or two and the name and location of whoever gave me this assignment, then send some people for the doctor and the priest; and
- 2) Send some conscious and well-prepared agents to Earth, for a change, with a commission not to take the planet over, but to act as comedy writers and producers. Earth badly needs them.

Furry Bicycles

(Anders Bellis, Facebook, May 8, 2022)

BICYCLIS TRIFFIDUS

As summer is now practically upon us and tourists are beginning to arrive in Sweden, I think it is imperative that we now warn those renting bicycles not to leave them outdoors too long, at least not unattended. You see, last year a few experimental spores were blown out the window of a military laboratory at an undisclosed location in Sweden. These spores were genetically modified, and the thing is, they have quickly multiplied and will attack bicycles and in short order sprout, covering the bicycles with the plants - or growths, rather - visible in the photograph, *Bicyclis triffidus*. Do not try to remove these growths should this happen to your bicycle! They were genetically designed to eliminate bicycling soldiers from invading foreign powers, and will if touched result in a painful death in a matter of seconds.



(Anders Bellis photo)

The Universe Electric

by Denny Marshall

Moment the big bang blew apart
Cosmos formed a beating heart
Creations hand historic
The universe electric

Eyes shine like a million stars
Skin marked and aged with deep scars
In invisible fabric
The universe electric

Legs and arms grow and expand
Fingers branch out from one strand
Body forms geometric
The universe electric

News

Aurora Awards

“Are you ready to start reading works by this year’s finalists? We are pleased to announce that this year’s voters’ package contains either e-versions or links for all our 2022 nominated works and is now open to CSFFA members to download.

“The electronic versions of these works are being made available to you through the generosity of the nominees and their publishers. We are grateful for their participation and willingness to share with CSFFA members. Please remember, all downloads are for CSFFA members only and are not to be shared.

“The purpose of the voters’ package is simple—before you vote for the awards, we want you to be able to read as many of the nominated works as possible so you can make informed decisions.

“Downloads are available until voting closes, July 23rd, 2022, at 11:59pm EDT. Voting for this year’s awards will begin on June 11th, 2022. So, enjoy and let the reading begin.”

(Randy McCharles, May 11, Prix Aurora Awards group on Facebook)

Convention 2022

“When Words Collide 11 (WWC), Calgary, is the 2022 host convention of the Aurora Awards.

“See who Canadians think were the award-worthy Canadian creators of SF & F in 2021.

“Learn which Canadian creators are this year’s inductees into the CSFFA Hall of Fame.

“On Saturday, Aug. 13, starting at 5 p.m. MDT, WWC invites everyone to view the Aurora Awards ceremony.

“WWC’s Master of Ceremonies, author Mark Leslie Lefebvre, will be live streaming the ceremony on both WWC’s YouTube and Facebook channels.

“The Aurora Awards’ livestreaming is open to everyone and is free to watch.

“All of WWC 11 is an online event and free to attend.”

<https://www.whenwordscollide.org/Registration/>

Convention 2024

This [was] posted on the CSFFA website in regard to their upcoming AGM.

It is item 8 on their agenda.

"MOVE that we accept VCON as the host for Convention 44, Oct. 17 to 20, 2024"

Chris Sturges on behalf of VCON. “I have a signed contract for the Hilton hotel for Oct 17th to 20th, 2024. We will host an Aurora Awards banquet and we will have Canadian Author, Director, and Artist guests, although we have not selected or invited them yet. We have decided to make Canadian guests a new facet of VCON, in addition to our regular Guests of Honour. This year we are inviting Drew Hayden Taylor as a Canadian Guest of Honour, although he is not confirmed yet. Our Hotel room rates will be \$179 per night, and we should have a VCON group rate for Air Canada as well. Chris Sturges, April 7, 2022.”

(R. Graeme Cameron, the Facebook “Help Keep VCON Alive!” group)

“Twenty-eight members of CSFFA approved all of the motions presented for approval in advance of the 2022 CSFFA annual general meeting.

“AGM attendees via Zoom on June 4 were first to learn details of CSFFA’s new grant available to CSFFA-member writers and artists. Details will be published soon.

“Work on the CSFFA website to replace the current website is on track. The goal is for the new website to be online before 2023 begins.

“VCON’s bid to host the 2024 Aurora Awards was accepted.”

(CSFFA 2022 AGM Summary by Cliff Samuels, Jun 4, 2022)

LoCs

Taral Wayne, taral@bell.net, May 1, 2022

To the average fan, it must seem as though I've been doing very little of late. Nothing could be farther from the truth ... in fact, I've been doing nothing at all. A couple of locs, that's all, and only because someone provoked me in some way or another, not out of any urge to be fannish.

I actually have things I want to do, but have been preoccupied with other matters. There is art I need to do for the upcoming issue of Inca, for example, which will come due in the summer. I also have some notes for a new issue of *The Baloobius*, which is on hold. But if I don't set all that aside, I'll never finish the story I've been writing all this year, so far. There's no chance it will grow into a novel ... that's not even thinkable. But I'm only a bit more than half-way through the writing, and it's 21 or 22 thousand words long. The pity of it is that the fiction is entirely self-motivated, and nobody is going to give a fuck. A dozen people might read it, and the rest turn up their noses. Yes... I admit it. It's a Fraggles Rock story, involving some of my own invented characters. But you have to admit ... at least it isn't a My Little Pony story!

Lloyd Penney, May 3, 2022

As I alluded to in my past letter of comment, I have been busy with editing books and other work, which has eaten up my free time to do other things, like responding to fanzines. A common excuse of mine, true. But I do try to make amends by writing multi-issue locs, like I am about to do with issues 15 and 16 of *The Obdurate Eye*.

((Good idea.))

15...We caught COVID-19 in February of last year, the original variant, and while we felt like hell warmed over for close to two weeks, we got over it through bed rest and protein shakes. We lost an amazing amount of weight, and once we recovered, we got the first vaccines we could find, and masked up. We occupied ourselves with many downloads from Google (I have a lifetime ability to download from Google, and it has served us well).

The Turks Have Taken Vienna? How? Did you leave it lying around again? If you can't pick up your cities when you are done playing with them, don't be surprised if someone takes them! Amirite?

((I saw what you did there.))

I am no fan of military groups or activities or spending, but in this age where the Russian government has decided to declare war and ignore all the Rules of Engagement, and commit the worst of atrocities on Ukraine, who's to say other countries won't be tempted to try it? Our thin veneer of civilization truly has worn so thin as to have complete holes in it. Cyberattacks have become everyday, so Putin's use of Trumpish outright lies and nonsense, and using them, plus attacking and raping civilians, seems the newest outrage in this increasingly surreal future we're in.

((I still argue that the battlefields of the present and future are liable to be stock exchanges and corporate boardrooms, but I guess Putin hasn't gotten the message. Strange, given the high Internet awareness of other Russians. Some of them even generate disinformation on the Internet professionally.))

I remember long after fannish newsletters were gone, I ventured out with the idea of some kind of revival, and broached the idea to all the clubs I knew of across the country. The response I got was a little shocking ... most clubs ignored my idea, and those who did respond were angry that I would try to push their clubzines away, and try to take most of their contents. I wanted all the clubs to be stringers to my central publication, and produce something informative for all, but they wanted nothing to do with that, and I shelved that idea permanently.

((Saddening, but not surprising. I am slow to internalize the fact that communication is no longer a primary motivation in current fandom. The kind of information I am turning up, I will have to place on my website, as repeatedly suggested to me.))

Agenda for the Day...I do what this point outlines. I have a central list called Dumb Things I Gotta Do, and it has a long-term calendar of important dates to remember, like birthdays or anniversaries, or dates with commitments or events or conventions. It also has a list of undated Things I Gotta Do, and dates for conventions, with further details. All kinds of lists are on that double-sided Word document. Then, I have a list I write up weekly, with a long list of things to do each day of the week, and a list of things to do each day. Some may call it over-structured, but when I can check off or cross off something on that list, I feel I am accomplishing something. I've done this for about six years now, and it has helped so much.

((This closely resembles what I have been doing, aided by the Tasks function in MS Outlook. Very recently, I was informed about another app called Google Tasks, which is even more applicable to work environments.))

My letter...you are right, I just wouldn't be able to take something on like eAPA right now. The trucker convoy is just a bad memory for many Ottawans, and the recent bikers' invasion to honour veterans looked like it might be much the same. (Both events shared organizers.) Happy to say, most of the bikers spent the weekend in Ottawa, and then went home. I have now been paid twice for two books from the same author, and have been paid for my work per 100,000 words. It is freelance work, as is my work with BBW International and PAL Communication, but all together, they are keeping the bank account topped up. How long this will keep up, I don't know. Help me, 6/49, you're my only hope. Most restaurants are now mask-free, but they are enlightened enough to hope that those who mask up will continue to do so.

((Good show, Lloyd. I will have another long-term gig coming up, working from home. Good thing, too.))

Years ago, I tried my hand at reviewing fanzines, and I admit, I sucked. I liked them all, and gave kudos to anyone who tried their hand at it. There used to be so many more than there is today, and even then, the commentary was relatively civil. When KTF reviews came out, this helped no one, and they had their day. I think lists of zines available, or subbing to eFanzines.com or Fanac.org, is best to find out what's out there, and make decisions for yourself.

((It took a while for me to get the word that few fans were producing, or accepting, KTF reviews, or strong for the red rage of loccols. In fact, I keep being surprised by how sensitive people are about any remarks directed to them at all. It is as if no one around me ever grew up with the phrase the phrase “grow a hide,” as I did.))

16... We're from Starfleet, and we're okay, we warp all night, and we beam all day...if you remember where that comes from, you are officially old, and so am I.

((We are both out of period for this performance. We needed rehearsals.))

A post-pandemic examination of fandom in Canada and its future is needed. It looks like running conventions has become nigh-on impossible, or at least unlikely. People are still understandably leery about gathering, trying to avoid another round of COVID, which makes some events virtual yet again. Some conventions are dead or dying because of uncertainty about potential revenues (memberships), or depleted treasuries, or apathy from all, or the unaffordability at this time of suitable facilities at hotels or other centres. Will we have to reinvent our gatherings? I don't want to spend as much time as I have on Zoom, I want to be able to get to some kind of gathering and hug my friends. I miss them.

((Me too. Especially hot tub parties.))

I am pleased when something I write gives pause to some readers. I stand by my comments on a plethora of social media platforms. Some share owners, which is fine, they are creating pathways between one platform and the other. The only way to find someone is to Google them and see what platforms they are on. For the record, while most of my activity is on Facebook, I archive my locs on LiveJournal, and that's about it.

Much of what you list for *How Do We Human* seems like common sense and experience for many, but some are also basic learning for new bachelors and students out on their own for the first time. Basic skills for some are brand new for others, and some of us never master some of those basics.

((Which was my original point.))

I am writing all of this on Yvonne's laptop while she uses the big desktop computer in the back room. We are working on helping the local anime convention get through the immense amount of paperwork it takes to sell all the tables in their cavernous Vendors' Hall, and Yvonne is the best of the two of us at managing the huge, multi-page spreadsheet provided to us. I am assisting her when needed, especially with determining which of the 600+ tables in the room are already purchased, or available, or rolled over to 2023. We are being compensated for our work, and to add to it all, we purchased a table two years ago in their Crafters' Corner area, which is basically their secondary vendors' area.

((That's the way to do it!))

We Also Heard From: Alan White, Michaelann Dahlmann, Cathy Palmer-Lister, and Denny Marshall