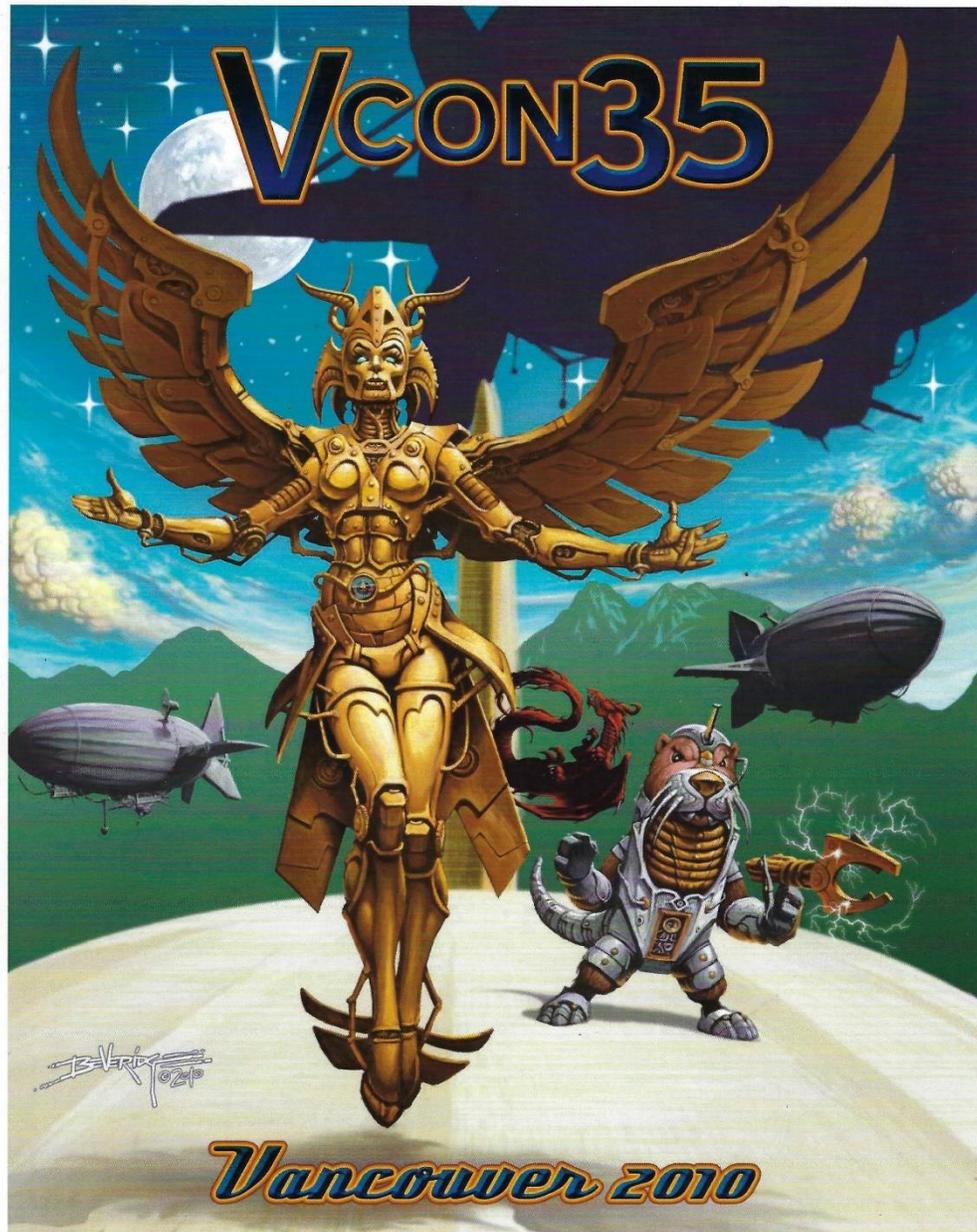


BCSFAZINE

Clubzine of the British Columbia Science Fiction Association
(Issue #546 – November, 2020)



(Issue #546 – November, 2020 – Vol.46 #11 WN546 – ISSN 1490-6406)

Dedicated to The Fellowship of The Greater BCSFA.

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To submit articles, art work, or letters of comment, contact God-Editor R. Graeme Cameron at: < the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

Anyone interested in tons of back issues, please go to:

< <https://efanzines.com/BCSFA/> >

CURRENT BCSFA EXECUTIVE

Chair: Position open

Vice Chair: Position open.

Treasurer: Kathleen Moore.

Secretary: Barb Dryer.

BCSFazine Editor: R. Graeme Cameron.

Keeper of the FRED Book: Ryan Hawe.

FRED Organizer: Michael Bertrand.

VCON Ambassador for Life: Steve Forty.

FRED DINNER – (FRED = “Forget Reality! Enjoy Drinking!”) A local Vancouver area meet-up founded circa 1986. Usually held every second Sunday, but **currently on hold due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.**

FRED ZOOM MEETINGS – (The Graeme’s SF Fen Confab Meetings)

— Every Monday 3:00 PM (PST) to 9:00 PM (PST). All SF Fen welcome.

Contact me at < the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com > and I’ll send you the link.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Midnight, November 31st, My simple layout design ensures it will get into the following month’s issue to be published no later than December 2nd. Guaranteed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03) – EDITORIAL: THE GOD EDITOR SPEAKS – “The Graeme”
- 04) – ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE – Policies and similar rubbish.
- 04) – WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH – Stuff by you!
- 03) – VOID BREATHER BOMBAST – Interesting outer space regolithism.
- 07) – TERRY JEEVES ART PORTFOLIO
- 10) – LITERARY SHENANIGANS – Assorted fake news from the publishing world.
- 13) – RANDOM MUSINGS – *Fans Aren’t Slans* – by **Robert J. Sawyer**
- 15) – REVIEWS DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP – *Lackington’s Magazine*.
- 16) – THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR AND JOLLY REVILER – by **Stan G. Hyde**
- 21) – MILLION WORD YEAR BLOG – A Look Back at VCON 35 – by **Michael Bertrand**
- 39) – MESSED-UP MOVIE MOPES – *War of the Worlds Musical* (2012).
- 41) – FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE – Part five: Genre Films 1921 to 1925.
- 43) – IT IS WHAT IT IS – Mansplaining the State of Fandom – by **Garth Spencer**
- 45) – FANNISH FAILURES AND FOLLIES – Steve Stiles Comic, & Forry Awards.
- 47) – OOK OOK, SLOBBER DROOL! – Locs From Beyond: Lloyd Penney.
- 49) – JOIN E-APA AND LEARN QUAIN T AND FORGOTTEN LORE – by **Garth Spencer**
- 50) – SAMPLE EXCERPTS FROM THE OCTOBER E-APA AMATEUR PRESS ASSOC:
50) – *Living Inside* #9 – by **William MaCabe**.
51) – *Wild Ideas* #4 – by **Henry Grynsten**.
53) – *Boople Doggin’* #100 – by **Chuck Connor**.
54) – *Intermission* #101 – by **Ahrvid Engholm**.
55) – *The Torpidity Times* #10 – by **R. Graeme Cameron**.
56) – *I Never Got the Hang of Thursdays* #178 – by **Garth Spencer**.
- 57) – E-APA MEMBERSHIP RULES
- 58) – AFTERWORDS – The Graeme
- Cover Credit: **VCON 35 Program Book** – Art by James Beveridge.

EDITORIAL: THE GOD-EDITOR SPEAKS!

Stellar Evolutions: The Best Short Stories and Poems of Polar Borealis Magazine's First Fifteen Issues went online at Amazon on October 15th, available in both kindle and trade paperback versions. In the subcategory of "Canadian poetry eBooks" it briefly reached "Amazon #1 Bestseller" status. No idea how that translates into sales, but it certainly sounds nice.

The publisher and Editor, Rhea E. Rose, a noted poet, came to me and asked if she could get involved in the production of *Polar Borealis*. Since it is a one-man operation, I proposed she tackle an anthology instead. The rights having reverted to the contributors, she contacted, contracted and paid them, acquired a magnificent cover art piece from Michael Dean Jackson, selected and edited the 23 short stories and 21 poems within, and handled the foofaraw of placing the 209 page book on Amazon. Rhea did all the work. Kudos to her. I'm deeply impressed.

I derive no income from the book. I simply gave permission for Rhea to go ahead and put it together. All contributors she paid with a fixed fee. Any profits will go to her to recoup expenses (which were considerable) and fund further books she may publish under her RainWood Press imprint. Anyway, nice to hold a bound book with contents that resulted from my original choices made as editor of *Polar Borealis*, plus an article, bio, and photo of myself. Had she lived, I know my mother would have been proud. Thanks Rhea!

The Kindle version can be found here: [STELLAR EVOLUTIONS](#)

On October 28th I took part in a Webinar for senior citizens on the Sunshine Coast, part of a larger lecture series on science fiction. In this case the topic was *SF Conventions – Where It All Happens*. (I didn't chose the title.) I was simply asked to moderate a panel in which the participants had already been selected, namely Clifford Samuels and Randy McCharles (associated with *When Words Collide*, a Calgary SF Literary Convention) and Danielle Stephens and Chris Sturges (associated with Vancouver's *VCON* Convention). Sounded like fun, so I agreed to do it.

Knowing that the panel was limited to one hour (ten minutes of which would be questions from the viewers), I came up with 8 questions which all four panelists would answer in turn, followed by a brief discussion and elaboration before moving on to the next question. I thought this was doable.

Naturally the time flew by faster than I anticipated. There was no opportunity for discussion and elaboration on the questions. In fact, there was only time enough for the panelists to answer just 6 questions. Consequently, the subject of the future of conventions post-pandemic never came up. Oh, well.

I informed the panelists ahead of time I wanted amusing personal anecdotes to vividly bring their personal convention experiences to life rather than pontificating info dumps. The personal touch was required if the seniors were to be intrigued and

entertained instead of being bored out of their skulls. I believe this strategy worked.

I think we managed to convey two concepts: 1) that fan-run conventions are more fun to attend than Professional cons, and 2) that fan-run conventions offer a wider and more varied con-going experience. To sum up, fan-run cons are better. I think we got that point across. The seniors appeared to pay attention and their questions indicated a lively interest in what we said. I think we did good. I'm pleased.

Last but horrifyingly not least, I intend to publish BCSFazine on Monday, November 2nd, one day before the US election. I am completely unable to predict the results. Having read a great deal of history, alternate histories, and numerous dystopias, my imagination is running overtime conjuring up the ramifications of any number of scenarios. It will be difficult enough to cope with whatever happens. I refuse to let my Id unleash its thoughts.

Normally I host a 6 hour zoom meet for members of SF Canada and other SF writers on Tuesdays. And normally the topic of politics is forbidden. But such a meeting held while everyone is keeping an eye on election results is liable to lead to tumult, chaos, and confusion. Oh, not in the meeting, in my brain. Don't think I could handle it. So no meeting this Tuesday. I'm just going to stare at my computer screen in morbid fascination for endless hours till I collapse from fatigue and concern. No doubt waking up to a brave new world, as will we all. Good luck everybody! We're going to need it.

Send your letters of comment, submissions, ideas, etc. to:

< the.graeme.bcsfazine@gmail.com >

ODDS AND SODS ABOUT THIS ZINE

Note – All articles unless otherwise stated are by the God-Editor The Graeme.

Nature of zine – Pretty much anything to do with SF Fandom and whatever the fen are interested in. Or, to put it another way, whatever pops up in my fevered thoughts and the agitated minds of the contributors.

WHAT THE GOD-EDITOR WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH

Basically, contributions by fen like you! Thus far, there has been no great rush of willing contributors, though the ones who have offered their articles are great and wonderful in what they write. It's just that I am greedy and keep hoping for more.

VOID BREATHER BOMBAST

Centaur Acting Up – Ever heard of Centaurs, the minor planets found between the orbits of Jupiter and Neptune? Me neither. Over the years at least 18 of them have ejected dust and/or gas. Apparently Centaur 2014 OG392 is currently giving off clouds of ammonia and carbon dioxide. As a result it has been reclassified as a comet. I have, on occasion, given off similar clouds. Didn't change my status, though. Not permanently, anyway.

Outer Space Thicker Than We Thought – It's complicated but apparently interstellar space outside our sun's solar wind bubble has got 40% more hydrogen atoms than anticipated. Envision a quart of milk. We used to think a volume of interstellar space that size contains 85 atoms of hydrogen. Turns out it contains 120 atoms. Outer space ain't a perfect vacuum. There be stuff floating in it. Mostly stuff shed by the billions of stars in our galaxy. Star dandruff. Weird.

Another Asteroid Zipping By – On Friday, April 13, 2029, the 1,000-foot-wide asteroid Apophis will pass within 20 miles of the Earth. Funny thing, it is accelerating in its orbit around the sun. Something to do with internal temperature variations. As a consequence, astronomers now give it a 1 in 150,000 chance of impacting the Earth on April 12, 2068, triggering an explosion equivalent to 880 million tons of TNT. Apophis is only the 3rd most dangerous asteroid NASA is currently tracking. Hmmm.

November 2nd deadline – By the way, if you are reading this the day I publish this issue, Asteroid 2018VP1 may be screeching down at you at 25,000 miles per hour. Not to worry, it is only the size of a refrigerator and will probably burn up before it hits you. Besides, there's a 99.59% chance it will miss the Earth entirely. Still, given that one woman is known to have been struck by a meteorite when it crashed through the roof of her house, you could be number two! Lucky you.

Lunar Water Detected – It has been known water ice can be found in the permanent shadow areas of craters at both Luna poles. Now "water traps" have been detected in the surface soil of Clavius crater and about 15,000 square miles of lunar surface around it. Water ice locked between grains of dust and apparently unaffected by the day/night cycle. Colonists may yet look forward to that Lunar swimming pool!

Frisky Bennu Samples – The good news is OSIRIS-Rex successfully blasted the surface of Asteroid Bennu with nitrogen back on October 20th, driving myriad grains and chunks into the sampler head. The bad news is a bit of rubble prevented a mylar flap from closing and assorted bits of Bennu took advantage of the situation to float off to become mini-asteroids in themselves. The good news is the sampler head has been safely tucked into the return capsule. So, the less frisky samples will definitely reach Earth labs. But not the more adventurous, feral ones. Just as well.

Utopia Planitia Targeted – China's Tianwen-1 Mars rover will arrive in Mars orbit February 2021, possibly descending to the surface by May. The landing area has been narrowed to a southern section of Utopia Planitia which is largely flat yet

contains a sprinkling of craters and boulders and, most intriguing, ridges wind-sculpted from ancient mud flows. Subsurface radar will be used to search for hidden water ice. Another advantage of the site, it is fairly low lying which guarantees a thicker atmosphere to cushion the descent and landing. The mission is scheduled to last the equivalent of 90 Earth days. Let's hope the rover outlives its lifespan and discovers remarkable things.

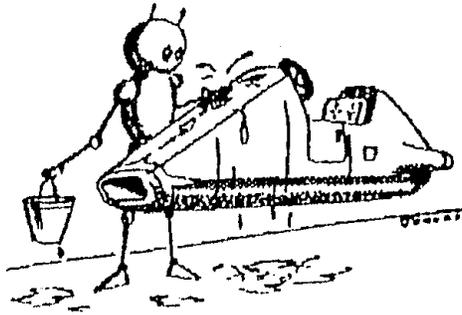
Lunar Space Station Planned – NASA intends to put a space station, to be called *Gateway*, in orbit around the Moon to aid the Artemis lunar landing missions. The European Space Agency has just signed on to build and operate a habitation module and a refueling model for the station. Construction in orbit will begin in 2023. The first lunar landing will take place in 2024, targeting an area near the South pole. Hmm. Inside Clavius crater perhaps? I, for one, can hardly wait. Am eager to watch live footage of astronauts bouncing around on the surface again. That was a highlight of my life in the 1970s. I would dearly love for lunar visitations to wipe away the memory of 2020.

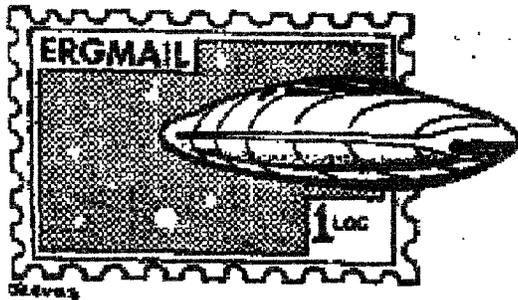
Artemis Program Too US-Centric? – So claims Russia. So far only eight countries have signed the Artemis accords laying out the future exploitation of the Moon, namely the UK, Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, and the USA. So far, France, Germany, and India have not, despite their own robust space programs. Russia has refused, despite ISS cooperation. And China can't sign, because the US Congress won't allow it. This doesn't mean the non-signatories are refusing to cooperate in space. Far from it. It's just that they prefer the future of Solar System exploitation be laid out through negotiation within international law organizations such as the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. Expect much diplomatic intrigue. It'll all get sorted out eventually.

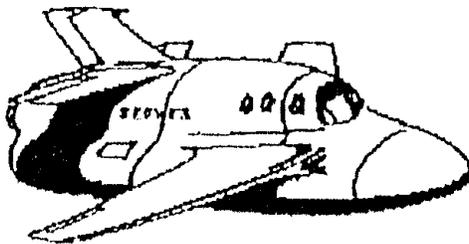
Artemis Mars Program – The first astronaut to land on Mars is probably one of the 13 astronauts (two of them from the Canadian Space Agency, by the way) currently in the Artemis program. The Gateway Space Station will eventually be upgraded to simulate a Mars mission while in orbit around the moon. Then something like it, an even bigger version perhaps, will set off for Mars in the mid 2030s. If all goes well, I should be around 86-years-old when the human race first walks about on the surface of Mars. I hope to live to see that day. Of course it probably won't happen as planned. There will be delays. But if I am still alive and sane on my 100th birthday, a Mars landing would be a treat. Time will tell.

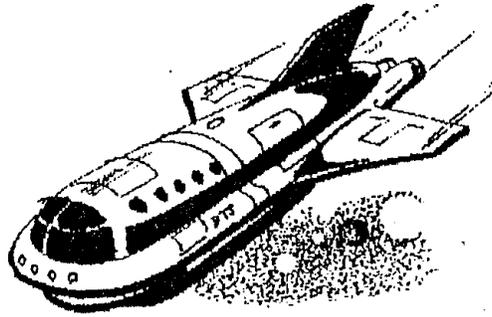
All Women Mars Mission – Beginning today, November 2nd, 6 women will inhabit a simulated Mars Mission on the slopes of Mauna Loa in Hawaii for 6 weeks. They will rely on solar power, eat only mission rations, and don spacesuits whenever they leave their habitat. They will rely on email communication with the outside world, involving a realistic 40 minute delay in responses. The crew includes a nurse, an aquaponics specialist (who is also a weapons armaments specialist), a microbiologist, an astrobiologist, a science writer, and an artist. A most interesting mix. Has the makings of a real cool cast for yet another movie about a mission to Mars. While some fight the Martian hordes, the artist could be sketching the action. Nifty!

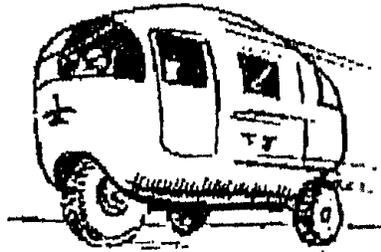
ART PORTFOLIO: TERRY JEEVES

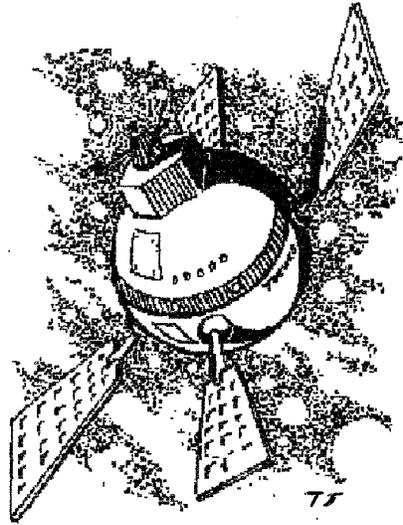


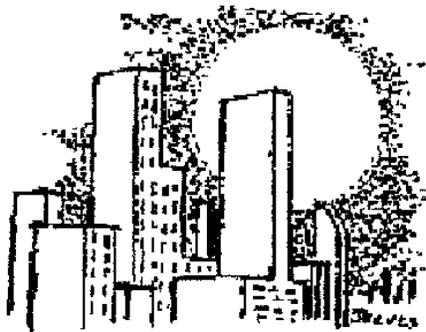












Terry Jeeves Biography

Terry was a legendary British fan who very kindly sent me some fannish illos as well as a series of *First Issue Magazine* articles for my *Space Cadet* Perzine years ago. Unfortunately, I've mislaid most of his fan art "doodles," but I always liked their simple but expressive style and am glad to reproduce the few remaining examples in my computer files here.

The following is his entry in the online Fancyclopedia #3:

(October 1, 1922 — 29 May 2011)

Terry Jeeves was a long-time UK fan artist, writer, and publisher. Throughout his long fan career he was well known for welcoming and helping newcomers to the world of fandom.

His solo fanzine *Erg* (many of which were distributed in OMPA and FAPA as well as generally) saw 166 issues from 1959 to 2005; he also co-edited *Triode* 1954-1977 and *Con-Science* (1954) with Eric Bentcliffe and Eric Jones.

His line artwork (including the trademark alien *Soggies*) appeared in many fanzines and won him the 2007 Rotsler Award.

He was a founding member of the BSFA, he edited its critical journal *Vector* 1958-1959, and he received the 1965 Doc Weir Award. He was on the Loncon 1 and Brumcon Convention Committees. He was a member of the Nor'West SF Club.

He was one of the founders of TAFF and ran unsuccessfully for it in 1955. He was the subject of a Terry Jeeves Fan Fund to bring him to SunCon in 1977, but it actually brought him to Iguacon in 1978. He was inducted into the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 2010. He was a Knight of Saint Fantasy.

With Mike Ashley he compiled the *The Complete Index to Astounding*. He published the *Fanzine Production Handbook*. Thomas D. Sadler published *War-time Daze*, an appreciation zine to Jeeves that included numerous articles and art by him.

Awards, Honors and GoHships:

- 1965 – Doc Weir Award
- 1978 – Terry Jeeves Fan Fund
- 2007 – Rotsler Award
- 2010 – First Fandom Hall of Fame

LITERARY SHENANIGANS

Neo-opsis Magazine goes digital!

After a lengthy delay, issue #31 has just been published. I assume mounting costs are the reason the editors have decided to go strictly digital. The Pandemic may have had something to do with it. I also assume there will be no more hard copies available by subscription or in book stores; just eBook editions. I take for granted the same high quality of content will continue and the issue price well worth paying. Certainly the publishing tasks will be reduced to the fun editing stuff. This could be the needful shot-in-the-arm that will keep Neo-opsis flourishing for years to come!

2020 World Fantasy Con Awards Announced.

The 2020 World Fantasy Awards were announced in a virtual ceremony by World Fantasy Con 2020 on November 1. The winners are:

NOVEL

- *Queen of the Conquered*, by Kacen Callender (Orbit)

NOVELLA

- *Silver in the Wood*, by Emily Tesh (Tor.com)

SHORT FICTION

- “Read After Burning,” by Maria Dahvana Headley, (*A People’s Future of the United States*)

ANTHOLOGY

- *New Suns: Original Speculative Fiction by People of Color*, edited by Nisi Shawl (Solaris)

COLLECTION

- *Song For the Unraveling of the World: Stories*, by Brian Evenson (Coffee House Press)

ARTIST

- Kathleen Jennings

SPECIAL AWARD – PROFESSIONAL

- Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, for *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* (New York University Press)

SPECIAL AWARD – NON-PROFESSIONAL

- Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Laura E. Goodin and Esko Suoranta, for *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

- Rowena Morrill
- Karen Joy Fowler

Source: File 770.

2020 African Nommo Awards Announced

The announcement of the winners for the African Speculative Fiction Society's 2020 Nommo Awards, which had been rescheduled out of respect for the people injured in the recent protests in Lagos and other Nigerian cities, went ahead in a virtual ceremony on October 25 with awards being presented by Tade Thompson, past winner of the Ilube Nommo Award and the Clarke Award, Chinelo Onwualu, co-founder *Omenana Magazine*, Mame Bougouma Diene, author and ASFS officer, and Setor Fiadzigbey, co-winner of the 2018 Nommo Award for best comic.

BEST NOVEL

- *David Mogo, Godhunter* by Suyi Davies Okungbowa
(Voting narrowly gave the victory to that work over *The Old Drift* by Namwali Serpell.)

NOVELLA

- *Incompleteness Theories* by Wole Talabi
(This is his second Nommo Award. The novella comes from Talabi's single-author collection *Incomplete Solutions*.)

SHORT STORY [Tie]

- *Tiny Bravery* by Ada Nnadi
- *Sin Eater* by Chikodili Emelumadu
(Both stories were published by the Nigeria-based online journal *Omenana*.)

GRAPHIC NOVEL/COMIC

- *DANFO* by Morakinyo Araoye, and Steven Akinyemi (authors) Ogim Ekpezu (artist) (TAG Comics)

The Nommo Awards were established in 2016. The roughly 200 published authors and artists who are members of the African Speculative Fiction Society first nominate and then vote for the winners. The Awards recognize work in the four

categories by African creators across multiple genres including fantasy, interstitial fiction, science fiction, spiritual fiction, Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism and horror.

The Ilube Nommo Awards are named after Tom Ilube, CBE who sponsors the prize money for all four awards. This year additional funding was received via Africa Storybundle from Apex Publications and Shadreck Chikoti.

Source: File 770

2020 Chesley Awards Announced.

The Association of Science Fiction & Fantasy Artists (ASFA) revealed the winners of the 2020 Chesley Awards. The Chesley is named for astronomical artist Chesley Bonestell.

BEST COVER: HARDBACK BOOK

- Eric Wilkerson — *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky* by Kwame Mbalia (Rick Riordan Presents / October 2019)

BEST COVER PAPERBACK OR EBOOK

- Amanda Makepeace — *The Long List Anthology Volume 5* by David Steffen (Diabolical Books / December 2019)

BEST MAGAZINE ILLUSTRATION

- Evan Cagle — *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Chosen Ones #1* / August 2019

BEST INTERIOR ILLUSTRATION

- John Picacio — *Ninth House* by Leigh Bardugo (Flatiron Books/Macmillan / September 2019)

BEST GAMING RELATED ILLUSTRATION

- Charles Urbach – *King By His Own Hand Official VIG (Very Important Gamer) Attendee Badge and Art Print for GameHole Con Gaming Convention* (October 2019)

BEST PRODUCT ILLUSTRATION

- Rachel Quinlan — *Olde Fae tuck box, Rachel Quinlan* (Changeling Artist Collective)

BEST COLOUR WORK – UNPUBLISHED

- Debbie Hughes — *The Raven, The Wolf and the Maiden* (Oil on panel)

BEST MONOCHROME WORK – UNPUBLISHED

- Tehani Farr — *Gyhan akaii dannan Deli Iatt "She who sits at the end of the world upon a mountain of bones dreaming"* (Mixed Media, watercolor, graphite pencil)

BEST THREE DIMENSIONAL

- Forest Rogers — *Selene* (Mixed media)

BEST ART DIRECTOR

- Lauren Panepinto (Orbit)
- LIFETIME ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
- Syd Mead (*Note: Syd Mead died December 30, 2019.*)

Source: File 770

RANDOM MUSINGS

Fans Aren't Slans

By Robert J. Sawyer

When I got started in science-fiction fandom in the early 1970s, there was a popular saying that was old even then: “Fans are slans.” It was a reference to the 1940 novel *Slan* by the great Canadian science-fiction writer A.E. van Vogt. In that book, slans, exemplified by the protagonist Jommy Cross, were superior but persecuted mutant humans.

Fans, long seeing themselves as brilliant misfits, quickly adopted the slogan and communal fannish homes became known as Slan Shacks.

Indeed, we still honor the notion of the slan: in 2016, the members of the World Science Fiction Convention awarded *Slan* the Retrospective Hugo Award for Best Novel of 1941 (using the bizarre year-after-publication dating system employed by the Hugos).

But times do change. No longer are fans social outcasts working mundane minimum-wage jobs. No, the geeks have inherited the Earth—and many fans have, for the first time in their lives, *power*. Of course, having read science fiction all our lives, having dreamed of better people and better tomorrows, we’re wielding that power in a just, fair, compassionate fashion, right?

As if.

At Loscon 45, in Los Angeles, in 2018, Gregory Benford—an old-time fan and pro of considerable distinction—was kicked out for having the temerity to refer, as many a fellow Alabaman might, to a younger woman as “honey.” The woman in question, a Hugo Award-winning novelist who had come up in discussion at a panel on “New Masters of Science Fiction”—in other words, in a context in which her achievements had implicitly already been acknowledged—wasn’t even there.

But Greg’s quip “If you write SF, honey, gotta get the science right” was deemed so offensive that the con staff banned him from further programming and ejected him from his own autographing session.

It got sorted out later, and Greg wrote, “The chair has apologized to me and I accepted it gratefully. He and his co-chair were probably trying to do the right thing in these over-heated times. We all are, I trust.”

You'd think. An assumption of good intentions used to be a given in fandom. Sadly, though, that's rarely the case anymore.

Here in Toronto, our venerable First Thursday science-fiction-fandom pub night (which I'd been attending for over twenty years) saw mass defections in 2019, including myself, when one of the moderators unilaterally and anonymously started blocking people from the group's Facebook page over comments made not there but during our monthly dinner—comments that in any non-fannish venue would have been simple, spirited conversation.

Indeed, one of the ring leaders of the purge declared, in high dudgeon, "I never thought I'd be at a fannish gathering where ..."—well, where her personal view of how the world should work would be challenged by provocative but reasonable questions. Yes, she's an old-time fan, too, but she must have been attending a different sort of fannish gathering than the boisterous intellectual free-for-alls that characterized the cons and parties I'd always enjoyed.

Maybe the shift in our fannish culture is in part the writers' fault. Dystopian visions now dominate a genre once defined by the adjectives employed in the titles of the magazines that used to publish it: astounding, thrilling, amazing, wonder.

Despite all the evidence of the last hundred years that human nature can and does change rapidly for the better (suffrage, equal—or at least vastly improved—rights in areas of race, gender, sexual orientation, and more; environmentalism; and all the pacifist trends Steven Pinker documented in his nonfiction bestseller *The Better Angels of Our Nature*), science fiction—and the fans it caters to—have mostly discarded the notion of humanity improving in character and morality, giving up on that search for transcendence that once defined the genre.

Instead, we're left to cringe at the mad power fantasies of much military SF, and the sheer mean-spiritedness and eager desire to invoke newly perceived powers of censure gleefully wielded by many an online commentator, convention administrator, or con-goer.

An example: in 2018, Boston's Readercon proactively disinvited older writers. They didn't merely turn down those writers' applications to be on programming—instead, they wrote them out of the blue to say don't even bother asking, we don't want you anymore.

Of course, that's only one instance; there's a lot of clueless casual rudeness and thoughtlessness on the part of many SF fans. Another phrase from the fandom of yore used to cover that, the exhortation not to be a fugghead.

Yes, absolutely, 100%, no question, we must purge child abusers and sexual predators; our spaces must be safe from real threats of violence, assault, and coercion, as well as that which rises to the legal definition of hate speech.

But, as has been often observed, Asperger's Syndrome is the national religion of science-fiction fandom. Social awkwardness—a clumsy pass, a dumb joke, standing a bit too close, talking too loudly, being unfamiliar with whatever shibboleth is currently being employed to identify the woke—should perhaps be corrected ("Hey, dude—not cool!") but should *not* result in public shaming or banishment.

And historically, merely having contrarian views was *never* the cause for ostracism in fannish spaces. But the big tent that once was fandom—filled with liberals and conservatives, atheists and the faithful, libertarians and librarians, and any oddball who could make a joke, take a joke, and, most of all, loved to chew over and debate big ideas—no longer exists.

Instead, self-appointed social-justice warriors, brandishing as cudgels hastily concocted and often ill-conceived “codes of conduct” (SF fandom may have a disproportionate number of decent computer programmers among its ranks, but it has vanishingly few legislators or policy wonks), are practicing intolerance and discrimination while posturing to be fighting for precisely the opposite.

The consequences are real. I’ve seen fans and pros be close to suicide—seriously, actually, with plans in place—because of the depersonalization and online shit-kicking they’ve been subject to over mere peccadilloes and gaffes, or even for just holding unpopular points of view.

In one of the best science-fiction films ever made, 1967’s *Quatermass and the Pit* (finally out on North American Blu-ray), scientists manage to project on a screen ancient images of what they interpret as “a ritual purging of the Martian hives,” a genocide in which anyone who doesn’t conform to societal norms is dispensed with. Later in the film, the main character, possessed by a suppressed Martian memory, tries to kill another man. His reason: “Because you’re different—you had to be destroyed.”

A far cry from fans being slans indeed, but, as one of the scientists in that movie keenly observes, “So, as far as anybody is, we’re the Martians now.”

She’s right. The persecuted have become the persecutors. The outcasts have become those who cast out. The clever have become the conniving. And it’s a damn shame.

Robert J. Sawyer is a Member of the Order of Canada. He’s been Guest of Honour, Special Guest, or Toastmaster at over 100 conventions worldwide. His 24th novel, *The Oppenheimer Alternative*, is out now in print, audio, and eBook formats.

Check it out at < [Oppenheimer-Alternative](#) >

REVIEWS DRENCHED IN MAPLE SYRUP (Canadian Zines & Books Worth Reading)

Lackington’s Magazine #21.

I reviewed every story and poem in this Magazine for Amazing Stories (online) Magazine. Here is a sample review from that column:

Barley Wine and Potable Myth – by Marie Vibbert

Premise:

Being a cook on a bare-bones space station lends few possibilities for moonshine. Potatoes and onion render a serviceable aquavit, but not quite paradise. But along comes a ship in need of repairs which offers Dill from its hydroponic herb garden. A legend is born.

Review:

The woman who created the legend returns to the space station in her old age and discovers she has been forgotten but her concoction become myth central to the very survival of the stations inhabitants. Almost like Jesus showing up at the second coming only to hear everyone saying “Who?” yet living according to the beatitudes. What would be his reaction, I wonder?

Can't say too much without giving away the story. I think it's significance is that it reminds the reader that when we explore the Solar System and then the stars we will take all manner of cultural gifts/baggage with us. It won't just be generation ships full of Spock/Carl Sagan clones relying entirely on clear-headed rationality. Every religion, every superstition, every belief system will accompany humanity no matter where we go.

What this story points out is that the result may, on occasion, be both charming and hopeful.

See the full review here < [Lackington's #21](#)>

**THE LIGHT-HEARTED VITUPERATOR
AND JOLLY REVILER:
Fandom as Halloween**

By Stan G. Hyde

So, this year, I almost let Halloween slide.

I wasn't sure how many trick or treaters might show up. I was worried about how I would maintain social distance. I knew I had to dig through a bunch of boxes to get to the storage where all the Halloween stuff was kept. (Move sewing boxes, move

Christmas boxes, get the Halloween boxes ... The only advantage was then the Christmas stuff would be out and ready for later in November.)

I was really wondering if it was worth the trouble.

I also started wondering who Halloween was for.

Let me be frank, it's always been a big celebration here. Long ago there was always a group of us who would write ghost stories and then gather on the night to tell them. (Your God-Editor of *BCSFazine* was among them.)

We maintained the tradition for a very long time, but it's hard to have a deadline every Halloween so that slipped.

Later the date was observed with elaborate dressing up of the house, which continues to this day. A animator friend would make up special Halloween comics that he gave out (I remember one was about a pandemic as the scary thing ...)

Later he brought over a roulette wheel where kids bet their candy.

I was very uncomfortable about that. He did keep the candy they lost when they bet as part of the winnings for others ...

He also made a twenty foot puppet skeleton which presided over the house for many years ... and I had coffins which I had made for a production of *Dracula* at the school. For many years there was elaborate lighting to go with the stuff in the front yard.

Halloween was always a very creative occasion.

Halloween is also special, a little closer to the heart and a little more arising on its own in the year, unlike the calendar holidays that come with a day off work. Unofficial if you like, yet celebrated by people dressing up as people who they are not—in schools, and restaurants, and stores and offices.

Houses are decorated. Parties are held.

Halloween comes regardless of the fact it is not very *official*. It seems to be in the hearts of folks, and it seems to give them permission to get creative ... even folks for whom that isn't a big part of their year usually.

So, as usual this year, I dug out the props, and bought candy, and drove out to the Apple Barn in Abbotsford too get some decent sized pumpkins that I could carve, I wondered if it was a waste of time and why I was doing it.

This is what happened in my neighbourhood.

As I started to transform the front yard into a haunted graveyard, I noticed I felt really good. I started to feel that I was doing this for myself. It was a connection to my friends and family, my neighbourhood, and the wheel of seasons that make up the year.

Even if nobody came, I still had Halloween. A pandemic couldn't stop Halloween. Maybe it is in my heart.

One of my neighbours who usually put on an elaborate display, did nothing.

Another neighbour decorated the yard as he normally did, with lots of hand-made decorations (he's an artist) that were both whimsical and scary.

(I later found out that he was worried about whether I was going to decorate or not—I'd started late as there was a lot of work I had to do. I'm Chief Examiner for

International Baccalaureate Film, and it's the end of year for the southern hemisphere. That means standardization, meetings, and marking ... all made more complicated since my team is spread out across the globe—this year in Mexico City, Vienna, and Beijing. Welcome to the future—it's great to work with people all around the world—but it has complications).

Despite all that, I made time for the celebration.

Little by little, the neighbourhood transformed. Pumpkins were carved into Jack-O-Lanterns, decorations were raised—like the dead. If it wasn't as elaborate as usual, it was still delightful.

The plague really couldn't stop Halloween. It had come after all.

On the night, there were trick or treaters—who wore masks and stood well back. I was masked too. I had the fog machine on, and the sensor driven ghosts moaned and howled. I managed to get four pumpkins carved and folks complimented my artistry (er, I could be a lot better. You're always your own worst critic.) My favourite prop, a sensor activated giant spider, dropped down on people's backs as they took candy. (There's always a parent or someone that says, "Look out! Look behind you!" so that the poor trick or treaters turn to face the glowing eyes of the spider right when it has dropped to eye level. That never gets old.)

In my hood, one of the houses had raised a rear-projection screen and screened *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. There was a house with *Baby Yoda* themed pumpkins, and later on a *pumpkin Baby Yoda* puppet emerged.

Michael, who teaches classes in puppetry, had created a bunch of themed puppets and proudly showed off his version of Frankenstein's monster. Jack-o-Lanterns with all kinds of other images were outside a lot of the houses, along with some resting skeletons, and—in one case—a lot of creepy zombies and body parts.

We all had permission to be a bit weird, to be a lot creative.

Halloween calls us to dress up in costume and re-imagine the spaces.

Halloween calls us to dream of other lives in other worlds.

And that's the real magic.

I've been thinking a lot of Science Fiction fandom in this context ... that in a way, what drew me to fandom is that it is Halloween all year long.

I used to see that bumper sticker, "Reality is a crutch for people who can't handle science fiction." It was always funny, but I wonder if it isn't a bit more profound.

Here in *Stan and Kate's Secret Base*, we watch Horror movies every night through October. (This year the weekly themes were *Dracula*, Anthology Horror Movies, Made-for-Television Horror, and *Frankenstein*.)

We always end up, on Halloween, watching *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

(I reviewed 'Rocky' for the University newspaper before it was a Midnight cult phenomena, and Katie always gives me a hard time for *panning* it. I think I was a little more gentle than that, but honestly when you're in an empty theatre watching the film it isn't the same experience as when you're surrounded with fans in costumes throwing rice and wielding water pistols. Certainly the headline, ROCKY FLICK ATTEMPTS A GAY HUMOUR, was the editor's idea, not mine.)

Again, I think of fandom, and people dressing in costume living lives that are not the lives they really live. Giving themselves over to imagination and contemplation of worlds that do not exist—yet—and alternative ways to live.

“Don’t dream it, be it.”

Wikipedia says of *Rocky*, and I’m sure many of you know this:

“Although largely critically panned on initial release, it soon became known as a midnight movie when audiences began participating with the film at the Waverly Theater in New York City in 1976. Audience members returned to the cinemas frequently and talked back to the screen and began dressing as the characters, spawning similar performance groups across the United States. At almost the same time, fans in costume at the King’s Court Theater in Pittsburgh began performing alongside the film. This shadow cast mimed the actions on screen above and behind them, while lip-syncing their character’s lines. Still in limited release forty-five years after its premiere, it is the longest-running theatrical release in film history. It is often shown close to Halloween. Today, the film has a large international cult following and has been considered by many as one of the greatest musical films of all time. It was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress in 2005.”

and this ...

“Cult film participants are often people on the fringe of society that find connection and community at the screenings, although the film attracts fans of differing backgrounds all over the world.”

I think that could just as easily be ‘Science Fiction fandom participants ...’ (And of course, there’s significant cross-over.)

Connection and community are important, especially when it is a community of people who have an easy time imagining other lives for themselves, and other realities for the world, who don’t lean on the “crutch of reality” too much.

Creativity and imagination seem to be two qualities that are more necessary now than ever before. (Not to mention the necessity of adults understanding and being sympathetic to science and the possibilities it presents, and the warnings it might give from time to time.)

It’s important to imagine your way around problems creatively. The immediate solution might not be clear (er, response to Covid, the assault on democracy, global warming), but if you can imagine what the world looks like after the problem has been solved, or what the world looks like once we’ve failed to solve the problem, then there’s a hook to working backwards to find a solution.

Thinking outside the box. Imagining a different world. Imagining a different you. Having empathy with aliens ... or just those folks down the street.

It might be a cure for the Phillip K. Dick world we seem to be living in right now. I know I’m glad that there’s a loose association of dreamers and doers called Science Fiction fandom, just as I’m glad that the local dreamers and doers made sure Halloween came once again in the year of plague. I love my fellow fans, and my

neighbourhood, and especially love the fact we were—safely—together sharing the products of creativity, imagination, and dreams.

Right now, sharing dreams is a very good thing.

Who is Halloween for? It's for all of us to remind us to be a little scared, a lot imaginative, and engaged with our neighbours—even if they're dressed as zombies, while we dream of worlds that might be

HALLOWEEN FOREVER!

I'd like to close by sharing the prose poem from the end of Ray Bradbury's *The Halloween Tree*.

"Always the same but different, eh? every age, every time. Day was always over. Night was always coming. And weren't you always afraid, Apeman there? or you, Mummy, that the sun will never rise again?"

'Yesss,' more of them whispered.

And they looked up through the levels of the great house and saw every age, every story and all the men in history staring round about as the sun rose and set. Apemen trembled. Egyptians cried laments. Greeks and Romans paraded their dead. Summer fell dead. Winter put it in the grave. A billion voices wept ... Then, with cries of delight, ten thousand times a million men welcomed back bright summer suns which rose to burn each window with fire!

'Do you see lads? Think! People vanished forever. They died, oh Lord, they died! But came back in dreams. Those dreams were called Ghosts, and frightened men in every age ...'

'Night and day. Summer and winter, boys. Seedtime and harvest. Life and death. That's what Halloween is, all rolled up in one. Noon and midnight. Being born, boys. Rolling over, playing dead like dogs, lads. And getting up again, barking, racing through thousands of years of death each day and each night Halloween, boys, every night, every single night dark and fearful until at last you made it and hid in cities and towns and had some rest and could get your breath.

'And you began to live longer and have more time, and space out the deaths and put away fear, and at last have only special days in each year when you thought of night and dawn and spring and autumn and being born and being dead.'

'And it all adds up. Four thousand years ago, one hundred years ago, this year, one place or another, but the celebrations all the same—'

'The Feast of Samhain.'

'The Time of the Dead Ones.'

'All Souls', All Saints'.'

'The Day of the Dead.'

'El Dia De Muerte.'

'All Hallows'.'

'Halloween.'

The boys sent their frail voices up, up through the levels of time, from all the countries, and all the ages, naming the holidays which were the same."

MILLION WORD YEAR BLOG

A LOOK BACK AT VCON 35.

By Michael Bertrand

2010 – (Oct 1-3) – VCON 35:

Author Guest of Honour: **CHERIE PRIEST**. Artist GoH: **JAMES BEVERIDGE**. Filking GoH: **HEATHER DALE**. Venue: Vancouver Airport Marriott Hotel.

CONCOM: *Chair* - Danielle Stephens; *Advertising* – Greg Cairns; *Art Show* – Rose Wilson; *Assistants* – Rick Arino, DeeJ Barends, Paul Carpentier, & Palle Hoffstein; *Dealers* – Jeff Currey; *Elron Awards & Writers Workshops* – R. Graeme Cameron; *Filk* – Cindy Turner; *Gaming* – Jenni Merrifield; *Guest Liaison* – Charles Bae; *Hospitality* – Susan Walsh; *Hotel Liaison* – John Cunningham; *IT Manager* – Jason Lee; *Kidcon* – Andrew Brechin; *Kidcon Assistant* – Adrian Estergaard; *Masquerade* – Marcella Tiggewerth; *Media* – Johanne Cordeau; *Operations* – Chris Ravenwood; *Program Book* – Garth Spencer; *Publicity* – Russ Quick; *Registration* – Ron Merrifield; *Secretary* – Keith Lim; *Treasurer* – Kathleen Moore; *Vice-Chair & Programming* – Pauline Walsh; *Volunteers* – Richard Walters; & *Webmaster* – Jenni Merrifield.

Sponsored by WCSFA, the West Coast Science Fiction Association. Three days of quadruple-track programming with separate rooms for art show, dealers, gaming, filking, kidcon, & hospitality con-suite.

COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BERTRAND:

Coming Soon: VCON 35

Yes. Coming soon (as in TOMORROW) to this blog will be me, live reporting from VCON 35, a madcap nerdfest of epic (by Canadian standards) proportions where all us wacky West Coast geeky types get together to rub elbows and attend panels and go to room parties and in general, enjoy being the majority for one beautiful shining weekend.

I'll lug my trusty (if slow) laptop along, and work hard to keep up my quota despite all the distractions by throwing in by tracking my progress through the convention and adding in whatever comments I feel like sharing with the world based on what is going on.

So expect it to be part con report, part intellectual overflow from the panels I attend (you guys get to read all the comments I didn't get to make during the panels! Lucky you!), and my usual stochastic meandering about life and love and microwave popcorn.

I am quite looking forward to this convention. We are not getting a room this year, and that will place certain restrictions on the fun, but on the other hand, it will

place certain restrictions on the *expense* too, and that will be a big help right around now.

I like getting a room, because it means I can attend the maximum amount of the convention possible. Plus, it's just very nice to spend two or three nights in a hotel room, away from home, where the beds are nice and changed every single day, or more than once a day if you want, and there is room service and you can just stay indoors for the whole convention, eating at the restaurants and partaking of the convention at your leisure. It's all very civilized and makes for a nice little vacation from home.

But it's also pretty expensive, and what with the general chaos in the household for the last month or so, this convention has pretty much completely sneaked up on us and mugged us. We did not make a single long term plan, let alone book a room way back when it would have been possible, and presumably if we could get a room now, it would be at the standard hotel rates, which would be beyond insane.

So, no room this year. Probably means also no breakfast buffets for me, which is a pity as I look forward to those, but they tend to happen in the mornings and when I am not sleeping at the convention, odds are I will not be making it there until the afternoon.

There will still be plenty of panels and parties and just generally hanging around in the Hospitality Suite and chatting with the ebb and flow of nerdity than washes through that exalted place.

Science fiction conventions are always highly life affirming things for me. I get to hang out with all these awesome people who are nerdy intellectual types just like myself. I pretty much spend the entire convention in interesting conversations with intelligent people, and you know what? That is, more or less, my idea of heaven.

So the next time you hear from me, I'll be blogging from Heaven. Wish me luck!

This entry was posted on September 30, 2010, 8:00 PM.

FRIDAY (Oct 1 – Vcon 35) included:

1:00 PM

- WRITERS WORKSHOP with R. Graeme Cameron (M) & Donna Farley, Eileen Kernaghan, Donna McMahon, & Casey June Wolf.

2:00 PM

- SMALL PRESS and SELF-PUBLISHING: NOT JUST VANITY with Eric Choi, Ira Nayman, Robert Luis Rabello, & Marcie Tentchoff.
- THE FUTURE OF ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING with Dave Duncan, Tarol Hunt, Ian Alexander Martin, & Lynda Williams.

3:00 PM

- LESSON LEARNED with Tarol Hunt, Alexander Martin, Ira Nayman, & Lynda Williams.
- TENSE VIEWPOINT with Geoff Cole, Don DeBrandt, Edward Willett, & Julie McGalliard.

- WHERE'S MY FLYING CAR? With Jason Bourget, Eric Choi, & Karl Johanson.

4:00 PM

- READING with Eric Choi.
- 19TH CENTURY STEAMPUNK ART with R. Graeme Cameron.
- KILLING OFF CHARACTERS with Don DeBrandt, Tarol Hunt, Donna McMahon, & Julie McGalliard.
- SCIENCE FICTION AND COMEDY with Toren Atkinson, Ira Nayman, and Edward Willett.

5:00 PM

- STRONG IN BODY, STRONGER IN MIND with Geoff Cole, Paula Johanson, Donna McMahon, Virginia O'Dine, & Julie McGalliard.
- OPENING CEREMONIES with James Beveridge, Heather Dale, & Cherie Priest.

6:00 PM

- READING with Brenda Carr.
- RIESE WEBSERIES SCREENING and Q&A with Alyssa Ciccarelli, Ryan Copple, Nicholas Humphries, Kalena Kiff, & Daren Luc Sasges.
- ARTISTS RECEPTION.
- FORREST J ACKERMAN: A MONSTROUS LIFE with R. Graeme Cameron.

7:00 PM

- MULTI-AUTHOR BOOK LAUNCH

8:00 PM

- WHAT IS STEAMPUNK? With Diana Vick.

9:00 PM

- HEATHER DALE CONCERT

11:00 PM

- OPEN FILK

COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BERTRAND:

I am too lazy and relaxed to separate these into the right entries and back date them and such, so, deal with it.

2 PM, just outside reception.

Well, I am here. I got on the bus (not too long a wait) and got myself to this here Marriott and managed, with the help of a kindly VCON volunteer, to find the convention. The thing is that, if you get onto the elevator and come to the second floor (which is where the sign in the lobby says the convention is located), you emerge into what looks like a generic residential wing of the hotel. There is an enticing looking set of double doors and you can hear much hubbub behind them, but they are locked.

The magical trick is that you have to press the mysterious glowing blue button located to the left of the doors. Then, they open up, and you are transported via this portal (and your feet) into Registration and the convention proper.

Apparently, the hotel will not allow the convention people to put up a sign in the lobby making this clear, so the clueless and obese like myself who go to elevators by instinct, like salmon forging upstream, are stuck wandering the halls like a rogue senior citizen until someone rescues us.

I guess putting hand-made signs up in the lobby would make the place look less *high class*. Whatever. We are nerds. Class means nothing. Status means nothing. Efficiency is everything!

So I made it through registration, which moved aching slow for no reason I could appreciate, but then again, we fat fellows are often impatient while we are standing.

If I had been able to wait sitting down, no doubt I would have found them the soul of alacrity.

I was originally going to be at something in the very first programming track at 2 PM, but by the time I got through Registration, it was 1:55 PM and I was getting the hardcore urge to blog, so I decided to skip the first programming block and chat with you wonderful, wonderful people who read my blog instead.

Well, when I say chat, I really mean I talk at you now and you read it later. It's the writer style of chat, where we get to write something then retreat to a safe distance and cower in our hermit caves.

After Registration, there was ... registration. There is WiFi here, which is good, but it is NOT free, which is ... less than good. I had to shell out 27 bucks on the ol' credit card to get three-days' worth of Internet access for my all-important laptop so I can continue to blog even while away from home and all its creature comforts.

Trust me, I might not seem rugged by society's standards, but by the standards of my extremely agoraphobic lifestyle, right now, I am freaking Robinson Crusoe.

I am hoping that I will find a place to plug in, because I got around 2 hours of battery life on this laptop and that will simply not be enough to meet me rampaging blogging jones.

Well, plus I want to maintain my quota regardless of just scratching the itch. 2875 words per day, no matter what.

Right now, I'm sort of waiting for the next programming block. That will be the 3 PM block. I get the feeling that I will soon regret my decision to abide by my "the next time you hear from me, I will be at VCON" thing as I try to get my whole quota in despite having less than half the usual time plus a convention to attend.

Well, if I don't quite make it, then whatever. I am well on schedule to finish my millions worlds in mid-November or so, and so if I miss the mark by a few words one day, it won't exactly derail the train.

It will just make it miss a stop, at most.

I have said hello to a few of the usual suspects. I saw Steve Forty in the hall and said hello, but I am pretty sure he did not hear me, because we were moving in opposite directions and I barely realizing who I was seeing in time to shout a hi over my shoulder.

Ray was by, and sat with me for a bit, but I was furiously a-blogging and so he eventually realized I was busy and wandered off again.

And I saw Kathleen the way I usually see her here at VCON, as a green blur with red hair on top as she darts around doing many small jobs for the convention and being her awesome energetic helpful self.

Well, I have burned through my battery enough for now, and I should go grab a pocket program and plan my panel peregrinations for the next personal period of participation.

See you later!

5 PM, The Seymour Room

Well I paid 27 dollars for the Wifi and then that WiFi service completely freaking disappeared. I cannot find it anywhere. I am wondering who the hell I just gave my credit card information to and if that was a huge scam and they are going to drain the thing on me. Who were those people? I can't even find them to cancel!

So, color me miffed.

Anyhow, I am at a panel about science fiction comedy. Not a contradiction.

After all, there's Douglas Adams.

Um, and me, I hope. Some day. Maybe.

So ... wide open market.

Insert tumbleweeds and the sound of the wind over dusty plains.

6:12 PM, Hospitality Suite

Had a fun time at the science fiction comedy thing, hung around for the opening ceremonies in the same room because as many times as I have been to VCON, I have never been to the opening ceremonies, as honestly they never sounded very interesting and I always found another panel at the same time to be more compelling.

I always go the closing ceremonies, but that is because they blatantly bribe me by sandwiching them in between the Turkey Reading and R. Graeme Cameron Elron awards, which are both things I would not miss for anything short of life saving surgery.

And these things are always all in the same room, so it would be rude to get up and leave just to miss the closing ceremonies themselves. And I am fat, and ergo inertia's bitch.

So this was my first opening ceremonies. Can't say they were an electric thrill to the cerebral cortex, but they were pleasant enough, and Danielle is an amazing person and seems to have made all the guests of honor instantly fall in love with her, so there was a nice happy vibe to the whole thing.

Now I have meandered up to the Hospitality Suite, installed myself on a table next to an electrical outlet so I could plug this blogging machine in and save my precious battery life, and relaxing with a pear cider. Soon I will go and more thoroughly browse the local food options, guilt free as I donated ten bucks to the Hospitality alien head bucket, and ponder whether I am ungrumpy enough to go down to the front desk and register for internet again.

Well that was nice. I just saw Jade for the first time in ages and we had one of our usual proto-manic level hyper verbal weird and wonderful conversations. I don't really ever want to get into any kind of group creative endeavour with him ever again,

but chatting with him now and then reminds me that he's a pretty cool and interesting fellow, and that he and I think alike in a very crazy and stimulating way, so as long as I am not commingling my destiny with his, he and I can get along just fine. In small doses, anyhow.

In big doses, we just wear each other out with sheer verbal virtuosity. (Verbosity? This portmanteau habit of mine is going to get me into trouble someday.)

Still grumpy about the WiFi thing. That is 27 bucks that I am never gonna see again, and to no end. Like I said earlier, I should just bite the bullet and go pay for the actual Wifi from this hotel. But it will take some time for my internal pressure to lower enough to allow it.

Boy, I hope that wasn't some scam to get my credit card number. I got a lot of money on that card, money that is supposed to see me through this con, and ... OK, need to stop thinking about this.

Hmmm. Maybe the alcohol was a bad idea. I really could use a nap right now. But with no room to retreat to, the nearest place for me to nap is home, which is a fifteen minute bus ride away. Plus waiting for the bus, plus getting to it and back ... if I left now and got comfy and relaxed at home, no way would I be able to overcome inertia to get back.

One thing about the move from later October to early October is that there is way less of an excuse for people leaving large bowls of various kinds of Halloween candy lying around for my greedy little hands. My blood sugar and general health is glad for this, but the spoiled fat kid who traditionally "takes VCON off" from his low sugar diet is a little grumpy.

They do have these amazingly good super thin Danish ginger snaps. I have had them before, although I can't remember their name. Actually, there is a story attached to me discovering them. A friend had taken me to this Danish import store, and I tried one of these cookies and was an Instant Fan. Zing. So I immediately bought a whole box of them, and took them back to his place with me.

Opened them up, and started to munch them ... and they were so good, and so light, and so thin...and well, before I knew it, I had eaten the whole box. Must have been forty of the star shaped delights in there.

And then got really, really sick. Presumably all that tasty ginger ganged up on me, but I had to go to the bathroom and spend a very unpleasant period feeling like someone was trying to saw their way out of my stomach with a red hot but very dull saw.

Luckily, that passed objectively quickly. But it taught me the wages of my gluttony!

In desperate times, anyone might have to rob Peter to pay Paul. The secret? Don't be Peter. Be Paul.

Well, I have WiFi!

Turns out they have free WiFi here in Hospitality and I have been sitting under a sign proclaiming such ever since I got here and, quite typically of me, it took someone else coming along and pointing it out to me for me to find out.

I am trying to learn to just accept that I am the wacky neighbour in the sitcom of life, and therefore my flaws, while extreme, are lovable and endearing.

I'm just a goofy guy.

This entry was posted on October 1, 2010, 10:48 PM.

VCON: More Hospitality

I took a bit of a break, but then I realized, somewhat suddenly, that I had better get my quote done before I wander off somewhere else, otherwise I will not get it done before midnight.

I am looking forward to the next thing, which will be going to the very cool seeming Uncle Viktor's video lounge for first, a *Buffy the Musical* sing a long, and then *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and those are things I will enjoy very much.

I have been to them before at VCON, and as far as I am concerning, singing along to music you love with a group of fellow freaks is about as close to religion as I am likely to ever get.

I like this Uncle Viktor guy. He showed up at the opening ceremonies dressed in a slightly tie-dyed labcoat with a basket of goodies and gave me an entire Caramilk bar. Rumor has it that when he runs a video room, it is the best video room ever, where people just lie around, relax, watch videos, and eat candy.

This sounds like my kind of person. I have a lot of respect for people who know how to create a scene, a mood, an experience, a vibe, especially, of course, a really relaxed and positive one. I would absolutely love to learn that art myself, as I consider providing a safe place for people to relax and unwind and be themselves, or at least be whoever they need to be, to be one of the most wonderful, magical, meaningful things you can do. Some of us free spirit types are just too sensitive, too delicate, too estranged from reality to feel safe in normal situations, and we need to create our own weird little worlds in order to be able to relax and, at least, feel normal.

I would love to have my own little cafe or restaurant, or maybe a book store, but someplace that I could turn into a hub, a home away from home for all the strange customers and lost angels and lonely aliens of the world, where odds are, you are by no means the weirdest person around, and where my people, the missing children and lame ponies and broken people of the world, the freaks and weirdos and nerds and losers and misfits and other societal refuse, can feel at home, relaxed, and *included*.

If I could do that for people, I would be so happy.

Well, I'm here at a science fiction convention, which is kind of like that. Us nerds are often broken people, which is not surprising given what kind of childhoods we inevitably have had. I bet if I was to take a poll of people in this room, every single one of them would have known bullying, ostracization, verbal abuse, teachers trying to make you conform, adults being weirded out by you ...

Well, that last one is probably not as universal as the rest. It's certainly something I know about. It's only clear to me with the perspective of age, but looking

back, I must have freaked adults out a fair bit by being this little fat kid who talked like an adult and was so precociously smart. The sort of teacher I could never get along with was always the kind that absolutely has to dominate every student, whose entire ego is based around their ability to impose their will on small children.

And I just do not dominate. I was never a willfully misbehaving Bart Simpson kind of kid, but I was very intellectually confident and absolutely unafraid of authority, so it was just not possible for an adult to cow me into obedience, especially in this post-corporal punishment age. What are they going to do, beat me? Nope. And I always had really high marks, so they really had no leverage on me.

So looking back, I can see there was times when I was a highly disruptive influence on the classroom simply by sitting there, serene and immune and unafraid of the teachers.

I realized, quite early, that their power was entirely arbitrary, and required a lot of cooperation and indoctrinated belief in their authority, and that by ignoring that, I rendered them powerless, or rather, I left them only the option of dealing with me reasonably.

My motto in life, or at least one of them, is “I can always be reasoned with and never be forced.” Growing up, my parents might have lacked attentiveness, but they had a great deal of reasonableness. There was no arbitrary rules. There was not a lot of rules period, but what rules there were had explanations. Quite reasonable explanations. So before school, I had no experience of “because I say so” to speak of.

So I can only imagine what my classmates must have thought of me. I was this bizarre creature who was slovenly and unkempt, yet I did my work with (regrettably) contemptuous ease and seemed to not just defy authority, but actually dare to treat teachers like they were his equals.

What the hell was THAT about?

To this day, I have no fear of authority. Partly, that is because I often agree with authority. I am a choosy rebel, and have no problem with the existence of rules and order and cops and whatnot. Again ... I’m reasonable.

And I will admit, a lot of my lack of fear of authority is that authority has never done much to me. I’m a well behaved sort, I suppose, and haven’t given them a reason to step on me. If I had been harshly punished at any point, perhaps I would know fear. And probably a lot more hate, too.

But I also don’t fear authority because I am quite confident in my ability to handle myself with them. Perhaps it is merely that middle class upbringing that teaches me that the cops are my friends and I have nothing to fear as long as I have done nothing wrong.

But you know what? It’s true. Or it has been in my life.

Why fight authority unless it’s something really important?

This is what makes me, on some levels, a conservative. Or at least, what used to be called conservative.

Whatever happened to Establishment conservatism?

This entry was posted on October 2, 2010, 12:07 AM.

VCON: Home to Sleep

The *Buffy* sing-a-long was great, *Rocky Horror Picture Show* was great, and then I took a cab home with my friend and ex-roomie William to get some direly needed rest.

I was so amazingly sleepy at the end of RHPS that I completely forgot my bag, laptop included, behind when I left the room. Did not realize my mistake until I was in the cab home, and at that point I was far too tired to even think about getting the cabbie to turn around and take me back to the hotel to retrieve it.

I am just going to have to hope that some kind soul will put it someplace safe for me so I can get it when I go back to the hotel for more con going goodness.

Despite how tired I was when I got in, I only slept around three hours, then ... well, here I am blogging when I should be sleeping. I am hoping that after I get a snack, I'll get sleepy again. Three hours of sleep is not enough of a recharge for another round of panels and hanging out in Hospitality and so on.

I'm off to bed again. Next time you hear from me ... it'll be later.

This entry was posted on October 2, 2010, 8:49 AM.

SATURDAY (Oct 2 – Vcon 35) included:

10:00 AM

- WRITERS WORKSHOP with R. Graeme Cameron (M), Linda Demuelmeester, Dave Duncan, & Rhea Rose.
- PODCASTING with Toren Atkinson, Mary Choo, & Tarol Hunt.
- STEAMPUNK GAMING with Cherie Priest, & Donna Prior.
- YOU SUCK! NO, YOU SUCK! With Eileen Kernaghan, Eric Lanoix, Ian Alexander Martin, Marcie Tentchoff, & Sandra Wickham.

1100 AM

- KNIGHT vs SAMURAI with Devon Boorman, Chilam & Lorna Suzuki.
- GOOD VILLAINS with Donna McMahon, Virginia O'Dine, Lynda Williams, & Julie McGalliard.

NOON

- PENCILS AT HIGH NOON with Toren Atkinson, James Beveridge, Chilam, Lynne Fahnstalk, & Tarol Hunt.
- AUTHOR GUEST OF HONOUR INTERVIEW with Cherie Priest & Michael Walsh.

1:00 PM

- NEWTON'S LAWS IN SF MOVIES AND TV with Rob Knop.
- SF&F NAME THAT TUNE with Michael Walsh.
- UPCOMING MOVIES OF 2010 AND BEYOND with Gareth Von Kallenbach.
- BEAST OF BOTTOMLESS LAKE SCREENING AND Q&A with Rebecca Coleman, Kennedy Goodkey, Fabric Grover, Roger Haskett, Mike Jackson, Scott John, Melanie Kelly, Phil Mahoney, Craig March, David Nyki, & Bronwen Smith.

2:00 PM

- READING with Donna McMahon, Marcie Tentchoff, & Casey June Wolf.
- MATT AND FRAME FOR THE ART BUYER AND THE ARTIST with Teena Gin.
- HOW DID THAT GET ON MY BOOK COVER? With James Beveridge, Dave Duncan, Eileen Kernaghan, Ian Alexander Martin, Cherie Priest, & Edward Willett.

3:00 PM

- DRAW ME THIS with James Beveridge, & Cherie Priest.

4:00 PM

- SPECULATIVE FICTION POETRY with Mary Choo, Eileen Kernaghan, & Marcie Tentchoff.
- LUCK AND SKILL IN GAME DESIGN with Palle Hoffstein.
- HUMAN BATTLESHIP with Rick Arino.
- SPACE ELEVATOR PRESENTATION with Michael Laine.

5:00 PM

- READING with Ira Nayman.
- DAVE DUNCAN BOOK LAUNCH
- BUFFY vs. EDWARD: WHAT WOULD DRACULA THINK? With Cherie Priest, Julie McGalliard, & Sandra Wickham.

6:00 PM

- READING with Edward Willett.
- BARITSU DEMONSTRATION with Academie Duello.

7:00 PM

- READING with Eileen Kernaghan.
- OKAL REL UNIVERSE EVENT with Krysia Anderson, Craig Bowlsby, Angela Lott, David Lott, Jennifer Lott, Tegan Lott, Michelle Milburn, Janice Shoults, JP Sullivan, Brianna Thomas, & Lynda Williams.
- WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE PLAYING with Tarol Hunt, Karl Johanson, Donna Prior, & Lisa Smedman.
- MASQUERADE.

8:00 PM

- READING with Russ Crossley.
- OUR GREEN FUTURE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SOYLENT with Karl Johanson, Paula Johanson, & Donna McMahon.

9:00 PM

- SF & FANTASY PICTONARY with Toren Atkinson, Chilam, & Susan Walsh.
- STEAM DANCE

COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BERTRAND:

VCON: Stuff from Earlier.
Hospitality, 12:45 pm

Damn, the Wifi at Hospitality is gone. I sure hope it comes back at some point, because I needs my Internet to blog.

Soon, I will be heading out to *Sci Fi/Fantasy Name That Tune*, which sounds like it was made for me, because I am a huge nerd and I have a lightning fast memory for music I've heard. I'm just hoping it's not a bunch of filk songs, because I don't know jack about filks. But I know a lot of music and I can usually identify music very fast, if I know it.

Meanwhile, I graze Horse Brutality (that's how Doctor Frank-n-Furter pronounces it) and watch the comings and the goings of the nerd herd.

It feels good to be amongst my kind. Conventions are like Christmas for the nerd herd. We get to see out extended family (each other), we anticipate it all year, we love it when it happens, and we are sad when it is over. And there always that silly wistful feeling of "Why can't life be this nice all the time?"

This entry was posted on October 2, 2010, 9:31 PM.

VCON: Stuff from Earlier 2.

Grouse Room, Human Battleship, 4:30

Yes, Human Battleship. I have heard good things about this wacky ass game online so I decided I would take a chance and attend. I don't feel like participating, but I am watching the proceedings with interest.

The rules seem complicated, but that is the nature of games. If you think complicated rules mean a complicated game, just try to write down the rules for Tic Tac Toe some time.

So far, it is silly and fun. I would be playing if I had more ... pants confidence.

One instantly bad decision: trying to get small preschool children to play a game involving a lot of waiting, blindfolded, for instructions involving knowing the different between big steps and little steps, left from right, and what a forty five degree angle is. Fun.

This entry was posted on October 2, 2010, 9:35 PM.

VCON: at the American Grille.

I need food. I have been surviving on Hospitality scraps for too long. I needed WiFi. The hotel restaurant, the American Grille, has free WiFi. And I needed someplace to sit and blog.

So here I am, at a mildly overpriced hotel restaurant, typing away at my blog of ages, and enjoying some very nice chicken noodle soup as my appetizer before a steak sandwich and fries.

I had a somewhat heartbreaking moment in order to get here. Faithful readers Melissa (Melissa says hi!) and Trevor (Trevor says hi!) wanted to come to dinner with me, and I had to politely turn them down, because I need to do a lot of blogging before midnight, and therefore I need to be alone with some WiFi in order to make my quota for the day.

I really feel bad about turning them down, and this is my first really sharp taste of the lonely life of the writer. It's no divorce proceedings, but it still is the first time I have had to consciously turn down social interaction in order to blog, and it feels ... weird, and wrong, somehow.

Usually, I have a fairly isolated and lonely life, with all my social engagements happening in the evenings, giving me lots and lots of alone time to go do the blog thing and get the whole day's writing done before the evening out with my friends.

But of course, I have been at this convention all day, and not had a heck of a lot of time to blog. This is the first solid time to sit down and get some solid writing done since heading to the convention today, and so I really had to take this opportunity to be a hermit and sit at a table alone and type type type.

A few updates: obviously, my kitbag and the laptop inside it were returned to me. Uncle Victor put it in the lost and found, located at the busy nerve center of the con at Ops, and I was able to stop in and retrieve it, which was a great relief.

A surprise, though: one of the people in charge of ops brought his lovely Malamute named Jade along, and so I got to pet her and she got to industriously lick my hands.

I must taste good today.

Spent a few hours at Hospitality, as I state in an earlier post. Felicity was there, with a fresh from the printer's load of *BSCFAzines* to distribute, the always special edition that is distributed at VCON. I was happy to see her, of course, and she looked lovely as usual. And I was happy to see the *BCSFAzines*, because I am in there twice, once in the letter column and another time in a reprint of an article I did quite a while ago on here, a review of a movie called *The Mogul*.

So hopefully, lots of people will pick up a *BCSFAzine* and find my stuff and read it and maybe even like it a little.

Speaking of writing, boy, the writers here make a scribbler like me feel inadequate. They all have lots of books published and do interesting experiments with narrative structure and perspective and tense, and I just plug away at this weird blog experiment of mine and increasingly feel like I am treading water.

I will be glad when I have completed this little exercise. I have enjoyed doing all this writing, for the most part, and I find the task of writing 2875 words a day to be increasingly trivial in difficulty. This new thing of sitting in front of the TV and blogging while I watch stuff has made filling word count subjectively quite a lot easier, and perhaps that has lead, inadvertently, to this increasing feeling of disconnection from the work, boredom, frustration, and a general kind of dissatisfaction.

In a way, that was the point. I had this notion that if I get all my writing done very early in the day, I will be left at loose ends for long periods of time, and that will lead to a creative flowering that will lead the way to a new project.

What I somehow contrived to forget is that this would be an intensely painful and uncomfortable experience. In order for the frustration to reach the point of

breakthrough, it has to build up to the point of being intolerable, and that is no damn fun.

I am not sure what I will do with this revelation. I will certainly be looking for another, additional outlet for all my creative energies, but I think I will also be looking to do less *blogging* and more *writing*. It has been ages since I wrote a short story, a serious editorial, or really, anything that was not just myself droning on and on like this, and I am beginning to become dangerously bored with myself.

I need to shake off this laziness, skip the midnight movie a few times, and instead focus on writing something substantial instead of just the usual blogginess.

The *journaling* has certainly been good for my own self-therapy, and I understand how it is that writers develop the need to write because it becomes part of how they think about things, how they process their emotions even, and that is by writing about them.

But this sort of writing only uses the lowest gear of my writing ability, and I am beginning to really crave doing something that makes better use of this creative engine of mine.

Being around all these amazingly successful authors just makes the point all that sharper for me. I mean, they sure as hell did not develop their brilliant careers by just sitting around adding lines to their blog all day.

They wrote things, submitted them places, knocked on doors at least in the virtual sense, and made something of themselves, and now they get to visit cons and be on panels and have all us wannabes hanging on their every word and wishing we were them.

I just don't have the confidence in my work to go submitting it to places. I know that is a serious problem, yet another facet of my crippling shyness, but that's just how it is.

Well, the Next Thing after this is to switching from 2875 words a day of *whatever* to a thousand words a day of proofread, edited, optimized text, and the whole point of that is to get myself used to making my words the best that they can be, and once I do that, perhaps then I will consider my works presentable enough for showing to other people.

Well, it is winding towards night and I am getting tired. My appetite seems to have vanished partway through my meal, which has been happening to me a lot lately, and I think I am all out of words for now. I will hopefully be back later for another 1K words.

Time to close the laptop, get the rest of this meal wrapped up for me, and head back into the hotel. Later all!

This entry was posted on October 2, 2010, 10:35 PM.

SUNDAY (Oct 3 – Vcon 35) included:

10:00 AM

- WRITERS WORKSHOP with R. Graeme Cameron (M), Marcie Tentchoff, & Lynda Williams.

- HOUSE RULES with Toren Atkinson & Lisa Smedman.
- RELIGION IN FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION with Geoff Cole, Dave Duncan, Roubert Luis Robello, Edward Willett & Julie McGalliard.
- PLAYING IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SANDBOX with Don DeBrandt, Cherie Priest, & Sandra Wickham.

11:00 AM

- GAMING AND COMMUNITY with Toren Atkinson, Palle Hoffstein, & Donna Prior.
- STEAMPUNK COSTUMING with Diana Vick.
- HOW TO WRITE A FIGHT SCENE (ESPECIALLY IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT) with Devon Boorman, Craig Bowlsby, TG Sheperd, Robert Luis Robello, Lorna Suzuki, & Edward Willett.

NOON

- FRANKENSTUFFIES with Danielle Stephens & Pauline Walsh.
- TURKEY READINGS with Eileen Kernaghan, Virginia O'Dine, Fran Skene, Lynda Williams, & Casey June Wolf.
- ACADEMIE DUELLO DEMO with Devon Boorman.

1:00 PM

- READING with Geoff Cole.
- PUNKING YOUR RAYGUN with Diana Vick.

2:00 PM

- READING with Robert Luis Robello.
- MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE with Geoff Cole, Ian Alexander Martin, & Ira Nayman.
- ART AUCTION
- HISTORY IS MY PLAYGROUND with Dave Duncan, Donna McMahon, Cherie Priest, & Lisa Smedman.

3:00 PM

- READING with the Evolve Group.
- WORLDS OF WHEDON with Don DeBrandt, Julie McGalliard, Michael Walsh, Pauline Walsh & Susan Walsh.
- AUTHOR MAGIC 8-BALL with Geoff Cole, Tarol Hunt, Eileen Kernaghan, Ira Nayman, & Edward Willett.

4:00 PM

- PROMOTION IN THE AGE OF TWITTER with Tarol Hunt, Ian Alexander Martin, Donna Prior, & Lynda Williams.
- COGS & WRENCHES with Keith Lim, Jenni Merrifield, Danielle Stephens, Pauline Walsh, & Cindy Turner.
- WHERE'S THE SCIENCE IN OUR SCIENCE FICTION? With Karl Johanson, Rob Knop, & Donna McMahon.

5:00 PM

- CLOSING CEREMONIES with James Beveridge, Heather Dale, & Cherie Priest.

COMMENTARY BY MICHAEL BERTRAND:

VCON: Home Again, Home Again, Jiggity Jig

Here I am, home in my bedroom again, having gotten some sleep and looking forward to more, but I figured I would try to get a jump start on the day's blogging while things are calm and quiet.

Did not make quota yesterday, sigh. After I finished blogging at the American Grille, I realized I was beginning to feel extremely tired and having trouble concentrating. This has been happening to me lately and I am not sure why. But for the last week at least, I start getting extremely tired whenever the sun begins to set.

This is a markedly inconvenient thing. You'd think I was solar powered.

I was so tired, in fact, that I dithered about the hotel lobby for at least ten minutes before I was able to get enough brainpower together to figure out that what I should do is call Joe's cell phone and ask him if I can crash in his hotel room for a little while.

So Joe was kind enough to come down and retrieve me, and I was able to relax and unwind in his room for a little while, and then he offered to drive me home so I could nap, and I accepted.

I sort of wish I'd said no, though, because I knew that if I came home and slept, chances were that I would not make it back to the convention. And I was right. I came home around 10 PM, and went to bed, and slept till around 1 AM, and got up briefly, but I was still too tired to do anything much so I had to go back to sleep and slept until not long before now.

So I kind of feel like I wasted an opportunity to do more hanging out with all the cool nerds just to sleep, and at this moment, that feels dumb and self-destructive. I could have just found a vending machine and got myself some diet cola and kept on truckin'. Sigh. Oh well.

I'm still deep in the process of learning to accept my limits. Perhaps that's part of why us creative types tend toward depression, because we can so clearly see the vast world beyond our limitations and it makes us more acutely aware of how small we are and how big the world is and it makes us feel powerless. Less creative people do not see beyond the walls of their own lives. Often, they have no idea their lives even have walls, or that there is anything beyond them. So they are content in their own little subjective worlds.

But we smarty types with creative brains see it all, and sometimes even want it all. Not smart.

Plus, the power of the mind within its own subjective world is so great that it gives a false sense of mastery. Everything seems possible within the mind, and then when you start to deal with true reality, harsh and cold and complicated and difficult and requiring effort beyond mere thought, there is a tendency to, quite irrationally, think that there is something wrong with you. This should all be as easy as thinking of it, right? And if it's not, that's because you are a weak pathetic loser.

No, it's because life is work and takes a lot more than just thought, and you need to stop letting that voice inside you convince you that there is something wrong with you because you find life so hard. It is no harder for you than for others, you just have an unhealthy set of expectations and assumptions, and life only gets easier through dealing with it, not by avoiding it.

You only get stronger through exercise.

I know, I know, I'm one to talk, I have been fleeing everything my whole life. That's the problem with being so good at escaping, you never learn to endure. And when the place you escape to is your mind, well, that's always available, isn't it?

Or at least, it's always there. Things can keep me from escaping there, and historically, I have hated those things. Things that make me concentrate on the here and now and present instead of operating partially or entirely from the deep warm womb of my oversized intellect.

All I need is someone whose job it is to deal with life *for* me and I'll be fine, honest!

Well, I have had a little breakfast and I am starting to get sleepy again. Time to go another few rounds with Mister Sandman and then maybe head back to the convention.

This entry was posted on October 3, 2010, 8:49 AM.

VCON: Hospitality Again

Hospitality again, around 12:28 PM.

I am here in Horse Spit Alley Tea and surrounded by nerds. There is no WiFi, but I can plug my laptop in, and that is half of the battle right there, because my battery is dead dead dead.

I completely forgot to plug this laptop in when I was home so it could recharge while I slept. D'oh! And the worst part was, I had no place to plug in at breakfast, so I was typing an entry and thought I had half a battery left and ... poof. Dead.

I keep forgetting that the battery life indicator on this thing is completely inaccurate. It will tell me I have half a battery left when I have basically nothing. Grr.

And the thing is, I hadn't saved the file (duh!), so I lost that entry entirely.

Losing written text is kind of like losing a limb to a writer, so that was very ouch.

Oh well, lesson learned. Save constantly and don't trust the battery life thingy.

Breakfast was very nice. I had the buffet, so I got to sit there with a big plate full of bacon, watermelon slices, croissants, and hash browns. Heaven.

And the serving people were very nice. Last night, I felt my waitress went over the line between *brisk* and *brusque* and she got snippy with me because I used my cloth napkin to blow my nose. Listen, I am not crazy about that either, because a cloth napkin is not disposable and someone is going to have to touch it to take it off the table and another person will touch it to put in the washer.

But when my nose is running, I do not have a choice. I have to use whatever is at hands, and it is a peculiarity of my irritable sinuses that eating is often what sets

them to drain. So I have a lot of experience with having to blow my nose in public in restaurants, and I am a little sensitive about it.

So to have her tell me to put the napkin on my plate and that she is going to have to throw it out because I blew my nose on it was not a good thing for me.

It annoyed me so much that I had to do something about it, so after stewing in my irritation for a while, I decided to strike back via the receipt I signed for my VISA, where I gave her a 2 cent tip, and wrote a little note at the bottom that read

“REST OF TIP IN NAPKIN.”

Take that, snippy waitress! If you don't want to touch used napkins, don't work in a restaurant.

I am pondering going down to see Robert Picardo's appearance at this convention. For those who do not know, he played the Emergency Medical Hologram on *Star Trek: Voyager* and a character named Woolsey on *Stargate: Atlantis*, and that same character on *Stargate: Universe*.

I've seen all of *Stargate* except for *Universe*, and he was by far the most enjoyable and reliable thing on *Voyager*, but mostly, I would like to see him because he seems like a very cool kind of guy in the interviews I have seen. He's quite accessible to fans and seems to genuinely like us as much as we genuinely like him. I get the feel that, despite being a Big Time Television Actor, he is a quiet and bookish person by nature, and so we quiet and bookish nerds are a quite a good fit for him, more so than the usual extroverted and loud world of actors and show business.

So I may wander down there. Or maybe not. There will likely be quite a crowd and I am generally disinclined to join the madding crowd for nearly any reason.

This is the irony of being such an introvert. I am too quiet and bookish to go see the quiet and bookish guy.

Whatever. I am learning not to be so hard on myself for not being an extrovert. I am a nice guy, and can be quite entertaining and witty and whatever, but I am essentially a quiet shy introverted type, who often does not want to have anything to do with people...and that's...okay.

I think part of the problem is that I need to give myself permission to set limits and defend them. And that involves the real trick: giving myself permission to maybe be a little grumpy sometimes.

It would be great if life could always be smooth and copacetic and relaxed, but sometimes, in order to protect one's limits, you have to be willing to at least clear your throat and say “Ahem!” You can't complain too much about life stepping on you unless you are willing to give life a chance to avoid it by warning people. And that involves assertiveness.

That's why small dogs yap so much. They are acutely aware that they might get stepped on, sat on, or ignored at any moment, and that only by being loud can they keep people's attention. Me, I am a big dog, but I am a gentle giant, and have a tendency to shrink into myself. So I need to learn the same sorts of lessons. If you want some grease, little wheel, you have to start squeaking. Nobody will fulfill your needs if you can't bring yourself to mention them.

Do they have a twelve step program for people with a paralyzing fear of speaking in public? “Hello, my name is James, and I have a ... oh god ... a ... FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!” Way to go, James, you just graduated.

What would happen if Gary Oldman and Gary Numan met? Would the universe explode? Or would we just end up with Gary Man?

This entry was posted on October 3, 2010, 12:28 PM.

VCON: The Carnival Is Over

And now, the bittersweet post-convention period.

Like I blogged before, these things are like Christmas, and that includes that little sadness after it is all over and you have to go back to your regular life.

I had a ball this year. Lots of fun panels were attended, lots of productive hours were spent in Hospitality chatting with my fellow geeks, and I got to attend the Turkey Readings and act like a goof for an audience, which I find deeply satisfying.

For those who are not *in the know*, the basic idea of the Turkey Readings is that a group of panelists take turns reading passages from the worst science fiction and fantasy novels they can find, and volunteers like myself act out the various roles. At the same time, another volunteer attempts to illustrate the scenes from the book on a big pad of paper on an easel.

But merely making people suffer with terrible writing would not be enough! This is actually done as a highly enjoyable form of extortion, where the audience members can, after thirty seconds of reading have elapsed, bid to stop the pain, and once stopped, others can bid to keep the reading going.

So say the reading is really bugging you, you could say “I bid fifty cents to stop!” and then put your fifty cents into the pot. But someone else really wants to know how Captain Enormous of the Space Corps could possibly escape the Tentacles of Terror, and says “Seventy five cents to continue!”, and puts their trio of shiny quarters into the pot. Each person who wants one outcome or another bids an amount and then puts said amount into the pot, and this continues until someone bids to stop and nobody outbids them to make it continue, at which point we move on to the next literary atrocity.

It is easily the most fun thing I do all year. We pretty much start laughing at the beginning and don’t stop till hours later. Those of us who are big hams get to act out the scenes, which is hella fun, and we all get to enjoy the fun of laughing at that which sucks, which I find highly cathartic, to be honest.

In case this all sounds a little mean, only books whose authors are dead are used, so we’re not mocking the works of anyone who is still around to get their feelings hurt.

When I went up to be an actor, I got to be the chained male captive of fierce jungle amazons in a frankly pretty god damned kinky bit of flog fuel. They were all sarcastic and impish and teasing while drooling over my incredibly powerful, virile, and masculine body.

It’s the part I was born to play.

And I was all sexist and nasty and stupid in return, like a bull in a pen. Frankly, I was getting a wee bit uncomfortable with the sexual overtones by the end, but it was still ten tons of fun and I got to make an audience laugh, and to me, that is pure gold.

After that was dinner with my good friends Joe, Julian, and Felicity at a restaurant called Harold's, which has as its core conceit that it was named after a little old man of that name who had been coming to said restaurant every day for 35 years for lunch. This, despite that Felicity knows quite well that said restaurant used to be called The Wayfaring Tree and have a totally different decor, menu, and style.

Silly things like that aside, I liked the place, because despite being a little pricey, they made me extremely happy by offering something I have been seeking for years: a really good hot dog. I got the foot long hot dog, which was topped with melted Gruyere and chili, and it was quite good. I am somewhat of a hot dog snob, and this one was quite satisfactory. Oh, and another signature affectation: they serve their fresh fries in little cones of fake newspaper, like they do at European fry houses, or with traditional British street vendor fish and chips.

After that, it was back to the convention for the wrap up party with the dubious nickname the *Dead Dog Party*. Basically it's just a big party for all us congoers where we drink and chat and stretch out those last hours of nerdy goodness by staying up till the wee hours of the morning. I chatted with lots of intelligent and interesting people and in general had a great time.

But, sigh, speaking of the wee hours of the morning, I am far behind on sleep, and should really get back into my nice warm bed for another trip to the land of Nod.

More post-convention reportage later on. I might even look over the schedule and try to cobble together some sort of actual organized con report.

But now ... to sleep, and dream of large women.

This entry was posted on October 4, 2010, 11:08 AM.

MESSED-UP MOVIE MOPES

War of the Worlds Musical Stage Production (2012) – My thanks to Robert J. Sawyer for drawing attention to a temporary free showing of the film online. I was vaguely aware of Jeff Wayman's Album from 1978, having seen reproductions of the nifty cover depicting Martian Fighting Machines, but was totally unaware that it was later turned into a stage production, let alone that a film version of that production was available. Turned out to be well worth watching.

The filmed production was held in London's O2 arena. No wonder. Theatres aren't generally big enough. The orchestra filled most of the stage which was backed by an incredibly wide high definition movie screen of some sort. The actor/singers appeared on stage between the musicians (and conductor Jeff Wayman) and the audience.

Liam Neeson, the narrator, appeared as a holographic projection at stage left. He even took his final bow as a holograph! Visually, the show was stunning. Would have been overwhelming if you were seated in the front row.

What I liked best were the film elements, particularly the opening prologue in which we see a Martian Tripod tromping across the Martian landscape, descending a long ramp into an underground installation, undergoing some kind of cleaning process, and then its occupant (a sort of Martian Cthulhu) emerging to discuss the impending invasion of Earth with his fellow war-mongers.

The Martian cylinders fired from a giant cannon are quite nifty, featuring a unique design. They have at least two tubes that emerge like spines from the bow after lift-off to project thin streams of expulsive green exhaust. Sounds a bit repulsive but is actually a beautiful effect.

The cylinders do not resemble meteorites but are rather obviously giant metal cylinders poking straight up into the air after plopping half-buried into the Earth. The entire end of the cylinder unwinds like a gigantic jar lid. This is most impressive.

A considerable amount of time is devoted to the tripod battle with the pre-dreadnought *Thunder Child*. Quite exciting, if a bit repetitious in the imagery. One of my favourite scenes from the book, so glad to see it in this production.

Speaking of battle sequences, the film scenes of same on the big screen were further enhanced by sheets of actual flames leaping up from the front of the stage. Not only that, but from the roof erected over the stage a full-size Martian Fighting Machine descended to loom over the audience and shoot out multiple tongues of flame as well! I should think it would be damn scary sitting in the front row! Rather warm, too. Whole setup looked quite dangerous to me.

Actually, the Tripod wasn't quite as large as the ones depicted in the film elements, but it looked to be twenty feet tall and that was plenty big enough. The design was a bit spider-like, in that the articulated legs first segment stuck out sideways from the round body. Twin cockpits resembling a pair of compound eyes completed the beastly appearance.

Another remarkable visual was the growth of the Martian red weed over the landscape. A positively Lovecraftian motion of writhing red tentacles and fronds that appeared quite menacing in itself as it swarmed across the land. Quite a powerful image, delightfully so in a shudderingly scary manner.

I think the film elements alone, properly edited with appropriate narration, would make a fine short movie that viewers would consider a magnificent homage to the original book. I don't know who handled the CGI, but it was extremely well done. Not what I expected. Blew me away.

The actors were uniformly good. I didn't care for the Parson character as a character, too much whining about mankind's sins unleashing the forces of Hell, but I thought Jason Donovan performed the role with great gusto. Another standout was Ricky Wilson as the Artilleryman. He was positively gleeful as he fantasized about the new order humanity, hidden underground like rats in sewers, would create in order to ultimately defeat the Martians. Also, he had a complex bit of steampunk

machinery to interact with to illustrate his vision, and as a bit of business designed to reinforce his vision I thought it worked quite well. Some of the other actors, particularly the women, had rather weak roles to work with, but they made do as best they could. In that sense the script was unevenly written.

My main criticism has to do with the music. Certain sounds I found annoying, and overall it struck me as monotonous and repetitious. If it weren't for the visuals and some of the acting I think the music would have driven me out of the theatre before the performance was over. It was driving me nuts.

As a result, I in no way desire to listen to the album. I have heard people praise it as a masterpiece, but my impression based on the film is that hearing it would be a nightmare, an exercise in painful boredom. Possibly I am being unfair. Perhaps, if not distracted by visuals and concentrating entirely on the music, I would pick up nuances and learn to appreciate its subtle virtuosity. Maybe. Fact is, for whatever reason, it rubbed me the wrong way. I guess I just didn't like the sound of it. No accounting for taste.

To sum up, I had a heck of a good time watching the film version of the stage production. Highly entertaining and at times magnificent. Taking into account its *flaws* as I perceive them, I would award it 8 out of 10. If you like the music, you'd call it 9 out of 10. To put it another way, if you love H.G. Wells novel *War of the Worlds*, this film is a *must see*. No doubt about it.

FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE: A CHECKLIST FOR OBSESSIVE COMPLETISTS

There are hundreds and hundreds of genre films these days. Impossible to keep track. But what about the history of such? Finite numbers for any given period: some well-known, others obscure. There are many worth seeing, good, bad, and indifferent, yet all vital to a comprehensive understanding of how the genre evolved and developed. Some may be impossible to track down, others are shown frequently on TV, many can be ordered. Accessibility varies from year to year. Still, worth a try.

The idea is to check off the ones you have already seen, then devote the rest of your life to sourcing, watching, and checking off the remainder of the lists. After all, not as if you have anything else to do. Right?

PART FIVE: GENRE FILMS 1921 TO 1925.

1921:

- *Between Two Worlds* – Fritz Lang film; girl argues with Death over lover's fate.
- *The Golem's Last Adventure* – Comedy with Golem as farm hand.
- *Island of the Lost* – German version of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*
- *A Message From Mars* – Martian attempts to convert cruel human to kindness.

- *Nosferatu* – Brilliant, creepy, illegal German version of *Dracula*. Classic!
- *The Sky Ranger* – Serialized duel between gizmo-laden scientists

1922:

- *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* – Evil genius exploits collapse of social order.
- *The Ghost Breaker* – Kentucky hillbilly confronts ghosts in Spanish castle.
- *Häxan* – Fantastic, documentary-like Danish history of witchcraft. Powerful.
- *One Exciting Night* – Unexciting haunted-house spoof with racist overtones.
- *The Radio King* – Serial about competition over instant worldwide radio contact.
- *The Thunderstruck City* – Mad Scientist destroys Eiffel Tower with ray gun.
- *The Young Diana* – Comedy version of Picture of Dorian Gray re: woman in role.

1923:

- *Au Secours! (Help!)* – Grand Guignol satire directed by Abel Gance.
- *The Crazy Ray* – Experimental film treating city of Paris as a fantasy.
- *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* – Brilliant Lon Chaney Sr. as ugly good guy.
- *The Last Moment* – Bookworm trapped on ship by apelike monster.
- *Mars Calling* – 1st US 3-D film, depicting dream of life on Mars.
- *Tales of Hoffman* – Main focus love affair with mechanical doll Olympia.
- *The Unknown Purple* – Comedy about invisibility lending itself to crime.
- *Warning Shadows* – Innovative, suggestive, psychological horror-house film.
- *While Paris Sleeps* – Lon Chaney Sr. trying to turn victim into waxwork.

1924:

- *Aelita* – Futurist and cubist vision of Mars awash in Soviet propaganda.
- *Black Oxen* – Remaining forever young turns out to be problematic.
- *The Last Man on Earth* – Misogynist comedy with world run by women.
- *Laughing at Danger* – Yet another potboiler to do with death ray inventor.
- *The Nibelungen* – Siegfried confronting dragon scene. Legendary Fritz Lang film.
- *On Time* – Mad scientist wants to put Gorilla brain in young man's skull.
- *The Perils of Paris* – Death ray inventor murdered, daughter seeks revenge.
- *Sinners in Silk* – Man remains young, attracts his son's girlfriend.
- *Waxworks* – Stylish tale of 3 villains; Conrad Veidt as Ivan the Terrible.
- *Without Warning* – Ultraviolet death ray villain threatens US Navy.
- *Vanity's Price* – Aging actress becomes 20 years younger but suffers amnesia.

1925:

- *Death Ray* – Fast-paced Soviet worker uprising defeats renegade Jesuit villain.
- *The Hands of Orloc* – Conrad Veidt as pianist with grafted murderer's hands.
- *The Lost World* – Ground-breaking Willis O'Brien animated dinosaur film.
- *Madrid in the Year 2000* – City becomes major port thanks to massive canal.
- *The Monster* – Lon Chaney wants to put the soul of a woman in a man's body.
- *One Way Street* – Ex-diplomat in love triangle including rejuvenated woman.

- *The Phantom of the Opera* – The Classic version with creepy Lon Chaney Sr.
- *The Power God* – Secret of murdered scientist’s atomic engine eagerly sought.
- *The Unholy Three* – Silent horror dependent on Lon Chaney Sr. as ventriloquist!
- *Up the Ladder* – Television viewer complicates inventor’s marriage.

Sources:

Science Fiction: The Complete Film Sourcebook – Edited by Phil Hardy, 1984.

The Encyclopedia of Horror Movies – Edited by Phil Hardy, 1986.

An Illustrated History of the Horror Film – Carlos Clarens, 1967.

The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction –Edited by John Clute & Peter Nicholls, 1993

Science Fiction in the Cinema – by John Baxter, 1970.

IT IS WHAT IT IS

(Mansplaining the State of Fandom)

By Garth Spencer

Henry Grynnssten wrote a short article (in his last contribution to eAPA) about the “degeneration” of humanity, apparently ever since the Industrial Revolution. I am not sure this idea stands up to close examination.

Granted, he marshals evidence from the distinction between the physical capacities of the humans with the most physical fitness (such as Olympic athletes), or the humans with the most survival fitness (as in Australian aborigines), and the average humans in average urban environments. But I suspect this is arguing from human examples that – let’s face it – are extremes in any population, and ideals in certain societies.

We have archaeological evidence that even Neanderthals took care of handicapped members. We have literary evidence that even the pagan Germans and Scandinavians found a place for handicapped members.

A halt man can ride a horse. The handless
can be herdsman. The deaf can fight bravely,
a blind man is better than a burned man,
and a dead man is of no use.

Chisholm, J.A., *The Eddas*

Despite the Greco-Roman ideal of a healthy, athletic citizen—“*Mens sana in corpore sano*”—we have a wealth of evidence that the majority in agrarian communities, feudal societies, and Iron Age civilizations were subject to poor sanitation, short lives, chronic and epidemic diseases, and malnutrition.

The present day is not really very different. We see a few very able, very fit and healthy people, another minority of variously handicapped or chronically ill people, and a great majority of moderately healthy and capable people.

The real issue, I propose, is actually one of *adaptation* for our current environment. Rather than being degenerated foragers and hunters, or degenerated yeomen farmers, we are adapted now to different challenges.

That calls into question what the different challenges are, not only in different habitats but in different times. Face it: we keep changing our environments, and we keep adapting to them – and not physically, but socially. We can still *develop* our speed, strength, vision, memory as much as athletes or aborigines do – but we generally *don't* do so, in urban environments, without specific need. We have writing, memos, clocks, calendars, Daytimers, secretaries, scriptwriters, teleprompters, telescopes, microscopes, maps, infrared and motion sensors, audio and video digital recorders, libraries and the Internet to supplement our untrained senses and memories. We have every tool invented, from shovels and other idiot sticks to giant earthmoving machines, to supplement our under exercised bodies. And why? To speed up productivity, to enhance shareholder value each quarter; that's why.

Now, there is a wealth of evidence that many people in contemporary urban societies are *not* well adapted to contemporary challenges, such as treacherously shifting industries and economies, or suddenly shifting market demands for skilled professionals. In effect, our current ideal citizen is a technologically savvy entrepreneur—but relatively few people are going to make a living in IT or entrepreneurial business. Just look at America's Rustbelt. Or, closer to home, the boom-and-bust petroleum economy of Alberta.

I am also thinking of visible evidence such as the numbers of homeless people in First World Cities, the evidence on record of the increasing numbers of the working poor, and the evidence presented by the electoral base supporting populist, crypto-fascist demagogues. When a large portion of a population feels disenfranchised, cheated and deprived of their means of living, of opportunities to improve their circumstances, then they will support nativist and fascist candidates. Evidently there are many people in our current societies who feel this way now: people who are displaced by, and ill-adapted to technological and economic change.

There is some debate now about how adaptive our societies *themselves* are—our very cultures, even—to the actual physical world. As witness the ubiquitous contamination of water supplies on Canadian reserves, or the pollution of Alberta watersheds, where First Nations used to live off the land. A lot of electrons have been spent on grappling with that issue, and I am not qualified to recapitulate the arguments.

What I can do is to raise a further question: are our societies, or cultures, ill-adapted to real human beings? If so, should we, or *can* we reshape societies to serve human needs better?

Or do we have to adapt ourselves physically to meet future employment and environmental conditions? There's a story idea for you.

FANNISH FAILURES AND FOLLIES

Steve Stiles Retrospective Art Book Available

Fans of Graphic Artist Steve Stiles, recently deceased, will be glad to know a retrospective of his art, which he had been working on for many years, is now available for purchase. Titled *The Return of Hyper Comics*, it consists of 164 pages of his art and writing. Steve was and is noted for his dry, satiric wit.

One possible source is Powell's Books at: [The Return of Hyper Comics](#)

LASFS Announces 2020 Forry Award

Neil Gaiman was voted the 2020 Forrest J Ackerman Award for Lifetime Achievement by the members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society at their October 22 meeting.

The Forrest J Ackerman or Forry Award has been given by the LASFS annually since 1966 for lifetime achievement in the SF field. Usually, it is presented at Loscon, the convention hosted each Thanksgiving Weekend by the club, although the con has been postponed to 2021 due to the pandemic. Ackerman joined LASFS in the year the club was founded, 1934.

Gaiman's many works include the comic book series *The Sandman* and novels *Stardust*, *American Gods*, *Coraline*, and *The Graveyard Book*. He has previously won the Hugo, Nebula, and Bram Stoker awards, as well as the Newbery and Carnegie medals. In 2013, his novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* was voted Book of the Year in the British National Book Awards.

Source: File 770

Forry Award Winners: Award for Service to the Science Fiction Community

Each year since 1966, the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society has presented the Forry Award for Lifetime Achievement in the field of Science Fiction. Named after long-time fan and "Mr. LASFS", Forrest J. Ackerman, the award is chosen by members of the club during a meeting usually in the mid-to-late Fall of each year, and announced at that year's LOSCON. In 2002, over thirty-five years after the award's establishment, the club felt that it was high time that Forry himself receive the award that bore his name.

This award is not the same as the Big Heart Award, administered for forty years by Forry Ackerman in memory of E. Everett Evans.

Recipients by Year

1966	Ray Bradbury
1967	Fritz Leiber
1968	Poul Anderson
1969	Larry Niven
1970	Harlan Ellison
1971	Theodore Sturgeon
1972	A.E. van Vogt
1973	C.L. Moore
1974	Robert Bloch
1975	Kris Neville
1976	Marion Zimmer Bradley
1977	L. Sprague de Camp
1978	Leigh Brackett
1979	Jerry Pournelle
1980	Robert A. Heinlein
1981	Horace Gold
1982	Arthur C. Clarke
1983	Frank Kelly Freas
1984	Julius Schwartz
1985	Robert Silverberg
1986	Jack Williamson
1987	Donald A. Wollheim
1988	Ursula K. Le Guin
1989	Andre Norton
1990	Isaac Asimov
1991	Curt Siodmak
1992	Hal Clement
1993	Roger Zelazny
1994	Frederik Pohl
1995	Harry Turtledove
1996	Chuck Jones
1997	Jack Vance
1998	David Brin
1999	Connie Willis
2000	Anne McCaffrey

2001 Ray Harryhausen
2002 Forrest J Ackerman
2003 Philip Jose Farmer
2004 Len Moffatt
2005 John DeChancie
2006 William Tenn
2007 David Gerrold
2008 Joss Whedon
2009 Fred Patten
2010 Karen Anderson
2011 Mike Glyer
2012 Terry Pratchett
2013 Lois McMaster Bujold
2014 Tim Powers
2015 Tie: Charles Lee Jackson, & Spider Robinson
2016 Greg Benford
2017 Greg Bear
2018 Steven Barnes
2019 Barbara Hambly
2020 Neil Gaiman

Source: LASFS Web Site

OOK! OOK! SLOBBER! DROOL! (Letters of Comment)

Note: Annoying comments by God-Editor [*are in brackets*] immediately after introduction of topic in question. This, a feeble attempt to create the illusion of a conversation in a fanzine lounge or a hospitality suite in the interests of conviviality. But mainly, to avoid tiresome necessity (if editorial comments are at the end of each LoC) to start each paragraph with “[*Re: your comment...*]” which would be a terrible waste of space (unlike this brilliant introductory note which is, of course, a triumph of its kind.)

From: **Lloyd Penney** – (October 17th, 2020)

Dear BCSFen:

Got yet another BCSFAzine, issue 545 this time, many thanks to Graeme for putting them out on a regular basis. It is an extremely quiet Saturday here, Yvonne is busy at the nearby sewing machine, and here I am, hacking away. So quiet...

Lots of talk about Mars these days, especially the fact it is about as close as it can get to Earth, and I can see it in the southeast sky most evenings. Now, there may be large caverns of water under its surface? Kim Stanley Robinson is beginning to look like a prophet, even if the water is salty.

I used to see so much in the way of Barry Kent MacKay artwork in the early zines I received. I guess he was drawing this when he wasn't drawing fine artwork to depict many of the wild species of Canada.

Graeme, do you have a complete list of all SF magazines and other paying markets in Canada? I have a gap of time when it comes to editorial projects with *Amazing Stories* ... the latest issue is out, I believe, and I have just finished some copy editing work for Sharon Lee, and will be starting on some non-fiction work for Paula Johansen. I have some time opportunities I would like to fill.

*[Actually, no I don't. I just review magazines for *Amazing* as their latest issues pop up. However, if you check out the following links you'll have a good start on compiling a list:*

AEscifi – [AEscifi Magazine](#)

Anathema – [Anathema Magazine](#)

Augur – [Augur Magazine](#)

Kasma – [Kasma Magazine](#)

Lackington's – [Lackington's Magazine](#)

Neo-opsis – [Neo-opsis Magazine](#)

On Spec – [On Spec Magazine](#)

Polar Borealis – [Polar Borealis Magazine](#)

Pulp Literature – [Pulp Literature Magazine](#)

Speculative North – [Speculative North Magazine](#)

Unnerving – [Unnerving Magazine](#)

There are fewer Canadian book publishers these days, something like 5 collapsed this year alone, but several still call for submissions to anthologies every once and a while. You can find them on Google, methinks – The Graeme]

Various Westercon and Worldcon bids ... I do try my best to keep up with them, but I do know that I will probably never get to another Worldcon. Europe has taken and run well a number of Worldcons now, and their processes for bidding for a Eurocon. A Montreal Smofcon sounds interesting, but I think those days are long past.

The local ... Graham Darling, our condolences on the passing of your mother ... Graeme, like you, we have retired from convention-running, but we have made ourselves available to consult on other events.

My loc ... I keep hearing of various conventions and other events that are announcing their cancellation as the pandemic carries on. The events we are hoping for in 2021 may be cancelled yet again, if they are even planned for 2021, and nothing yet has expressed that optimistic hope. By the time the pandemic ends, which may be 2022 or later, will there be anyone willing to start these events again? I am hoping Ad Astra might announce a 2021 date, but who says they can actually do it without endangering anyone's health? We must hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

Still quiet ...Yvonne is still working on making Hawaiian-style shirts for sale at next year's events, if they take place, and I am still making jewelry, same places, and same hope. We just pray this will be done soon, and we'd like to smack those who will not social distance or wear a mask, but is most of the people who live in my building. Take care, and see you again soon, I hope.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

JOIN E-APA AND LEARN QUAIN T AND FORGOTTEN LORE!

By Garth Spencer

E-APA, one of the longest-running electronic Amateur Publication Associations, is a great place to find and learn Things Fans Were Not Meant to Know! Words that rhyme with orange, for instance, or the curse that sank Atlantis, or the REAL reason why the British Empire is no more!

You, too, can share your Forbidden Knowledge of the Lost Civilization of Sitnalta, why the fabulous city of Temlaham was buried under a landslide, and the Hideous Sign now covered by the Site C Dam! JOIN the international quest to save humanity from the approaching threat to us all!

Or just have fun writing fannish contributions to a monthly APA.

Write Garth Spencer at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com for the eAPA Guidelines, and check out the password-free October 2020 mailing on eFanzines.com which you can find here: <https://efanzines.com/eapa/eapa198.zip>

SAMPLE EXCERPTS FROM THE OCTOBER E-APA

LIVING INSIDE #9 – William MaCabe

Sci-fi trivia Some years back, after I had written the quiz for the BSFG the second time I got one of those boxes of trivia questions cards. I'd seen this set used before used for the quiz (or so I thought) and knew that some of the questions and answers would be wrong so, if I was to use them in a future quiz (which was still a possibility) I'd have to check them. These are some of the questions that I wouldn't have used.

- 01 - What was Thunderbird 5?
- 02 - What are the two diet staples of the miniature alien in Slava Tsukerman's *Liquid Sky* (1982)?
- 03 - At what age was euthanasia enforced on the population in *Logan's Run*?
- 04 - Which French anthology comic became an animated feature film in 1981?
- 05 - Name three of the historical characters encountered by Bill and Ted during their Excellent Adventure.
- 06 - Who coined the term "science fiction?"
- 07 - Whom did Patrick Macnee replace as the original lead in *The Avengers*?
- 08 - Which sci-fi film won the 1977 Best Picture Oscar?
- 09 - Who was the role model of the citizens of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*?
- 10 - What was the name of the most senior alien in *The Adventure Game*?
- 11 - Name all eight actors to have played Doctor Who in more than one story on Living inside number 9 television.
- 12 - What was the name of Gerry Anderson's first live action TV series?
- 13 - Which actor was hurled through time in *The Time Tunnel* in 1966?
- 14 - What kind of creature were the invaders in John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*?

The not-so-correct answers:

- 01 - A spy satellite. Actually, it's described as their space station although it's more of a call handling service complete with operator.
- 02 - Sex and Drugs. According to the film, it feeds on a chemical produced in the brain either at the point of orgasm or on various chemical stimulants.
- 03 - 30. This would depend on which version you're talking about. That's the age from the movie and the following TV show but if you go by the book it's 21.

- 04 - *Heavy Metal*. That was the name of the US comic and the film but the French version was *Metal Hurlant*.
- 05 - The card names only four—Socrates, Napoleon, Joan of Arc and Genghis Khan. There were more including two princesses, Billy the Kid and Abraham Lincoln.
- 06 - Hugo Gernsback. Look hard enough and you'll see the first use of the term is down to William Wilson in the 1850s and, although he uses it to refer to something that was later called Martian poetry (written from the point of view of a non-human) he wasn't that far off. Wilson was a poet and critic. I've often wondered if he had anything to do with the choice of that name for an Edgar Allen Poe character/Story.
- 07 - Ian Hendry. Actually the original Avengers were played by Ian Hendry and Patrick MacNee but Hendry dropped out after a series or so and was replaced by a series of actresses in different parts.
- 08 - Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Actually Star Wars was nominated for best picture that year but the winner was Annie Hall.
- 09 - This one turned up on two different cards with two different answers. One says Henry Ford—supposedly the source of their date system although Living inside number 9 that is only given as After Ford. The other one says Doctor Vulcan.
- 10 - *Nanny Ogg*. The Adventure Game was a short-lived kid's game show in which all the alien characters had names that were an anagram of Dragon. According to wikipedia the senior alien was The Rangdo.
- 11 - You can look up the list anywhere on the internet but the last one they put on is Paul McGann whose sole appearance in the part was in a one-off TV movie until he got a brief shot at the part in one of the extra bits many years later by which time Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant and Matt Smith had all appeared in several episodes.
- 12 - *UFO*. This is at worst questionable. Before this came something called The Secret Service which was made partly as live action and partly with puppets.
- 13 - James Darren. Actually this was a two man thing with both Darren and Robert Colbert drifting from one time to another.
- 14 - Plants. In the original and many other versions of the story the Triffids are an exotic species or some kind of odd hybrid later versions have them genetically manipulated but they're not from some other planet.

WILD IDEAS #4 – Henry Grynnssten

That there are no real men anymore is a common complaint from certain people of a certain sex that I won't name here. But the theme of this month's issue is not flawed or defective male partners who have degenerated from a generation or two ago, but about man generally—males and females. We humans have all degenerated, and it has taken thousands and thousands of years. And it is a trend that's still continuing. But what's the evidence, and why and how? This degeneration is yet

another reason to be worried about our world. But after presenting the problem I present what might be the solution to this sad development ...

... When people became sedentary farmers and later settled in cities, life became much easier, and the natural consequence was that fitness started deteriorating, a process that has continued to the present without ceasing, and still continues.

Archaeologist Stephen Webb analyzed 20,000-year-old fossil tracks in soft mud left by migratory Aborigines in New South Wales in Australia, and reached the incredible conclusion that they were running at 37.3 km per hour, i.e. as fast as Usain Bolt when he ran 100 meters in 9.63 seconds and smashed the world record.¹⁰ But if the Aborigines had had modern shoes and had run on a modern track instead of in soft mud (probably covered by water), as the tracks show, they would have reached 45 km per hour, anthropologist Peter McAllister thinks.¹¹ That is, much faster than the absolute elite of runners today, pumped full of steroids and trained with modern techniques for years, using hi-tech equipment on specially-made tracks.

In his book *Manthropology: The Science of Why the Modern Male Is Not the Man He Used to Be*, McAllister says it outright: the man of today is the worst that has ever existed. And it isn't hard to agree. There are no real men anymore. But women aren't getting off the hook to loll about in complacency on some high horse: there are no real women anymore either.

20,000 years ago, you find that an average Neanderthal woman would probably beat Arnold Schwarzenegger in arm wrestling, and that is without any access to modern gyms ...

... And physical strength and stamina is just the beginning of the whole sorry tale I'm serving up. Are you ready for more humble pie? Our ancestors also had much sharper senses. The aboriginal inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego in the southernmost part of South America had kept some of this acuteness when Charles Darwin encountered them on his voyage with the *Beagle*. On 24th of January 1833, he wrote in his diary of the Fuegians that:

“All the organs of sense are highly perfected; sailors are well known for their good eyesight, and yet the Fuegians were as superior as another almost would be with a glass [binoculars]. When Jemmy [a Fuegian] quarreled with any of the officers, he would say ‘me see ship, me no tell’. Both he and York have invariably been in the right; even when objects have been examined with a glass.”

Darwin wasn't exaggerating. Modern Australian Aborigines still have eyesight that is four times better than is the case with people from the West. What a Westerner with 20/20 vision can see at a distance of 1.4 meters (\approx 4 feet), an Aborigine can see at a distance of 6 meters (\approx 20 feet) ...

BOOPLE DOGGIN' #100 – Chuck Connor

Bias in Academia? Perish the thought! About 5 years ago I had a “run in” with an academic who claimed to be well published. Sadly, nothing in nay of her peer review journals, and a dubiously issued thesis that had apparently shifted 30 copies (according to her publisher’s website.)

However, in regard to art (or is that Art?) I’ve never been too worried as to the “process”—it’s whether or not I like it. I know, that’s what the dear old Pope used to say, back in the 1500s. But if it was good enough for him, then it’s perfectly adequate for me. My only complaint in regard to “modern art techniques” is that it is too ephemeral on the grounds of “A limited edition/time existent installation.” Art should be something that can be appreciated today, tomorrow, and a decade down the line.

The Mona Lisa. I suspect that Da Vinci, like Michelangelo, had a collection if papers he would copy and pierce—so as to provide an outline before getting down to the nitty-gritty of selecting one of his apprentices or studio artists to do most of the donkey work before he comes along and signs it off. I’m trying desperately to remember where I read an examination of his pieces showed a variation in brush techniques.

And that’s before we get onto the Golden Ratio, and the fact that the picture of St John has suggestively ‘feminine’ features, and one really weird looking finger.

I’ve also heard it suggested that Mona was trying to hide a set of odd looking wooden dentures—but again, I could be totally wrong on that.

The fannish connection—I first thought it would be Tony Berry and his *Eyeballs In The Sky* fanzines. Especially as Berry was/is a Birmingham Novacon stalwart.

However, the Duplicator (Mimeograph is soooo American) in the newspaper scan is a Gestetner 300 series—probably a 350 with the multiple copy counter at the top, below the handle is the paper lift adjuster, and by the counter dial is the ink pump control (three settings—one blue dot—economy ink feed—through to 3 blue dots, heavy ink feel, or “suck the very last drips from the tube” setting.) The ink pump also had a lock for the tube of ink, plus a lock for the ink bar itself. Release that, clean the drums and screen, and a new colour ink and off you go.

The late Terry Jeeves (he used to do the fanzine *ERG*) published what would be called a “How To” these days—*Duplicating Without Tears*. That was where I learned how to do multi-colour without any colour change kit.

INTERMISSION #101 – Ahrvid Engholm

I've earlier covered the Swedish (and American) sf movie *Terror in the Midnight Sun*. Here's about another sf flick, which AFAIK wasn't finished. It wasn't the "first" Swedish sf film, but Expressen writes September 18 1974, *Film Girl Wanted to Play a Martian in Sweden's First SF Film*:

The hunt for girl for Swedish films continues! Now what is wanted is a "strange" girl. She shall play a being from an alien planet in Sweden's first sf film. At least that's what the men behind the film claims, composer Ralph Lundsten and director Bo A Vibenius.

"Everything is prepared. As soon as we find the right girl we start," Ralph and Bo say.

Ralph Lundsten is well known as electronic composer, film maker and artist. His unique studio in Värmdö outside Stockholm has become world-famous. He has eg made 12 short films for TV. This sf film will be his first feature film. Vibenius usually directs, but is this time satisfied with supplying money. He made a substantial loss with the film "How Marie Met Fredrik," but is now in the black again from American profits of the brutal film "Thriller."

"We got the idea for the new film together, but realised that we couldn't write the manuscript ourselves," Bo A Vibenius says. So they contacted Bertil Mårtensson, known critic and sf author. Mårtensson writes the script for "Cosmic Lover," which is the film's working title. Lundsten's fantastic studio and house will play a major role in the film. In this house lives a man named Ralph (played by a foreign not-yet-named actor) meddling with electronics and electronic sound waves. Via a computer-controlled TV transmitter he comes in contact with the girl Iona, "an Angel who is bored in space."

"After a while she comes to Earth and the rest of the film is about her confrontation with our future world," Vibenius says. Lundsten will direct, opens his house and (of course) make the music. It's through his equipment and sound projections on TV that the ideas have emerged. The horror artist Hans Arnold will make masks and set decorations. And the premiere will be in March next year.

"If we can only find the girl," Lundsten and Vibenius say. They have travelled everywhere in the country to find the young "strange" girl who will play Iona.

"But isn't it too fantastic. You couldn't reach space with this studio equipment," you wonder.

"You never know," Ralph Lundsten says. And smiles ...

*And a day later from Göteborgs-Posten September 19, 1974, *They Make Swedish SF Film*:*

When Bo A Vibenius made the film "When Marie meets Fredrik..." for kids, he didn't get his invested money back. But "Thriller," which couldn't be shown in Sweden in original form, he has now made money from USA. So now he'll do an sf film, the first made in Sweden. It's named "Cosmic Lovers" and it will be directed by composer Ralph Lundsten who makes his feature film debut. Lundsten will also make music for the film. The Manuscript will be written by the sf author Bertil Mårtensson, and the shooting begins this autumn. The female lead is Iona, an "unearthly being" who comes

to Earth and right now the producer Vibenius is looking for an “incredibly beautiful” girl for that part. The male lead Ralph, who deals with electronics, will be played by a foreign actor.

This film never made it to the screen, but Vibenius made many other films. In fact he became known as the Swedish B-movie king. *Thriller—A Cruel Picture* (too violent for the then Swedish Film Bureau!) has in fact become a major cult classic, inspiring for instance Quentin Tarantino. The famous pin-up star Christina Lindberg played the lead.

As for Ralph Lundsten, he's been most known for his beautiful electronic music (I have visited him in his fantastic studio!) but he was a film maker too. He made number of experimental short films, often giving the same sort of dreaming feeling as his music. Many of his films are on YouTube, just search for *Ralph Lundsten*.

THE TORPIDITY TIMES #9 – R. Graeme Cameron

Re: TV development. In Canada our first television broadcaster was the CBC, inspired by the BBC, which started up in 1952. I remember two channels in the late 1950s in Ottawa. English language CBC and French language CBC. It was never meant to be a monopoly. It was first only because the federal government felt we should catch up with the Americans. Many Canadians living close to the US border were already picking up American TV broadcasts and Canada wanted to counteract their cultural influence. Private stations affiliated with the CBC became established, and in 1961 a bunch of them formed the CTV network. Since Canadian TV was competing with American TV, both CBC and CTV developed the habit (via contracts with the US networks) of showing American shows a day or two ahead of American broadcasts. *Star Trek*, for instance. In general, most Canadians watch both Canadian and American news broadcasts on a regular basis and always have. Thus we keep a wary eye on our powerful neighbour to the south.

I applaud Lundwall back in 1969 wanting SF shows to replace Westerns. Growing up, Westerns were a plague. I watched a great many, shows like *Paladin*, *The Rifle Man*, *The Rebel*, and of course *Bonanza*, but I had little choice, there were more Westerns than anything else. Americans were nuts about Westerns. Movie Westerns boomed too. Then, I'm not sure when, it was if somebody threw a switch and Americans were no longer interested in Westerns. New TV shows and movies became 4 rare. I suspect the social stresses of the Vietnam war had something to do with it.

Re: your confession you don't share my taste in B movies. I AM SHOCKED ... SHOCKED I TELL YOU! ... well, actually not. Lots of people don't. Probably most people. And not just movies. I know local fen who are bored to tears whenever I write

or talk about history, or archaeology, or anything at all if it's more than ten years in the past. But they put up with it because I'm otherwise a good fellow, or something.

As far as rejection of my taste in movies go, I blame the silly fad of insisting on standards. Or rather the academic-minded critics who insist on *judging* films. I see movies as a form of genre fiction designed to entertain. There are time and budget restraints, not to mention various levels of talent involved, just as in written SF. Yet I enjoy all SF, be it written by H.G. Wells, P.K. Dick, Carey Rockwell (Tom Corbett series) or R. Lionel Fanthorpe. Each has its own delights. So, too, films.

Some viewers are too literal minded. I consider *Alphaville* one of the greatest SF films ever made. It's a humorous take on Orwell's book *1984* with numerous digs at America's influence thrown in, but many people regard it as a piece of shit because it doesn't make literal sense—travels across the galaxy in a car? How can that be?

Some people don't like Godzilla films because guys in suits don't look *real*. This ignores the Japanese esthetic that the concept is more important than the appearance. The Japanese don't obsess over realism. As Manga style demonstrates.

I could go on, but I'll just say, for me, the only bad film is a dull, boring one.

I NEVER GOT THE HANG OF THURSDAYS #178 – Garth Spencer

It occurs to me now that I may have been wrong about everything.

A month or two ago I learned that I really have trouble listening. This suggests that people haven't been hiding things from me all my life, after all, as much as I kept failing to understand what they thought was plain English.

I thought I had some kind of cognitive problem. But maybe I just have rigid, exclusive demands on how people express themselves; and any nuance or insinuation or unspoken body language just aggravates me, and leads to firing from jobs, and breakups with women.

And here I thought I could learn anything, if only I could get the right information out of people.

But then, I kept asking people to express subliminal, nonverbal information, and that wasn't going to work.

By this age, it's clear that this is how I am liable to stay. It is also finally clear that there was no point in my trying to discover what middle-class lifestyle I had to conform to, since that lifestyle is becoming impossible and will be extinct soon anyway. It would have been nice at least to find out what 20th-century Anglo culture I had to fit into, but it isn't as if people can supply a current manual.

Clearly I need to make a different plan for my remaining years.

From what I witnessed in university classes, one branch formal philosophy became more and more concerned with the process of reasoning as opposed to

specific philosophies about specific topics, while other philosophers with degrees focused on issues more or less outdated, or better dealt with, in neurology, psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. I began to suspect there was a failure of communication between disciplines. Just my impression, though, and I gained it about forty years ago at a liberal arts university.

Human evolution—I suspect it takes at least 50,000 years or so to make any observable difference in human metabolism, neurology, or behaviour. But that’s about as long as modern *H. sapiens* has been around, at a minimum. Since evolution is a matter of adapting to a changing environment, and we have been changing our social environment far faster than any breeding population can adapt physically, any observable change in humans would have to be deliberately engineered. I am waiting to see what kinds of genetic interventions—gene therapies, probably—are going to emerge commercially. If memory serves, some therapeutic interventions have already been attempted on children.

If the above excerpts intrigue you, you can read the complete October issue of eAPA #198 at: <https://efanzines.com/eapa/eapa198.zip>

Should you wish to join eAPA (newcomers welcome!) contact editor Garth Spencer at: garth.van.spencer@gmail.com

It costs nothing to join, nothing to participate. Here are some of the rules to keep in mind:

e-APA is an Amateur Press Association primarily for science fiction fans, and is an attempt to bridge the format and style of traditional paper-based APAs with newer digital publishing formats.

Publication format: Each fanzine contribution will be in Adobe .pdf format.

Distribution frequency: Distributions are made once each calendar month. Deadline for submitting a fanzine is the first of the distribution month. The OE will compile the distribution and make it available as soon as practical (generally on the 2nd), and will notify members by e-mail when the distribution is ready for downloading. Bill Burns, at eFanzines.com, has generously agreed to provide server space and bandwidth for eAPA.

Activity requirements: Members are expected to contribute activity at least once every other distribution. Missing three consecutive distributions will cause the member to be dropped from the active roster; he or she will no longer be able to contribute to distributions. The OE may waive activity requirements for a member for serious reasons. Each fanzine may have a maximum size of 15 to 20 pages

(depending on content and graphics); there is no minimum size requirement. This is to keep the distributions at a reasonable size for emailing. Activity may consist of either written or graphic material primarily by the member. Fanzines are e-mailed to the OE for inclusion in distributions.

Official Editor: Elected for a one-year term by ballot by eligible active members in January. The OE is responsible for receiving, archiving, and making distributions available for downloading, and for keeping track of member activity requirements. The OE will publish in each distribution an “official organ” (OO) with a table of contents of the distribution, a list of members, and any other official information required.

Membership: Membership is open to anyone. The active roster will consist of no more than 15 members. Prospective members should let the OE know by e-mail that they want to join, and will be expected to contribute to the next distribution. If the active roster is full, a waiting list may be started. Those on the waiting list may download distributions, but can’t submit fanzines for distribution. Distributions will be password protected at the eFanzines site; members may, at their discretion, make their eAPazines available to the general public at eFanzines as well, or through any other medium.

Dues: There are no dues for e-APA. At the moment, Bill Burns is providing free server space at eFanzines.com for e-APA. Should it become necessary or desirable in the future, members will be canvassed regarding dues/fees to cover server space and bandwidth costs.

Amendments or changes: These can be made to this set of guidelines at any time after being voted on by the active members. A simple majority by active voting members is enough to amend or change the guidelines.

AFTERWORDS

By R. Graeme Cameron

If the sample excerpts from E-APA appeal to you, consider joining and becoming part of the monthly conversation. Like having a bunch of old-fashioned pen pals with no worries of intrusions by FaceBook-era trolls. That be a good thing, methinks.

Been listening to election results while frantically attempting to complete this issue of BCSFAzine. As of 6:38 PM Pacific time the outcome is anybody’s guess. I want Biden and the Democrats to win, what with me being a life-long liberal, but in the October E-APA I predicted Biden had only a 10% chance of gaining a clear cut victory. Why? It has been long apparent to me that what Democrats point out as Trump’s flaws are viewed by his supporters as virtues. The more Democrats complain and criticize, the higher Trump’s level of support rises. He may pull this off *because* of his shenanigans being exposed. I await results with faint hope and upset stomach.