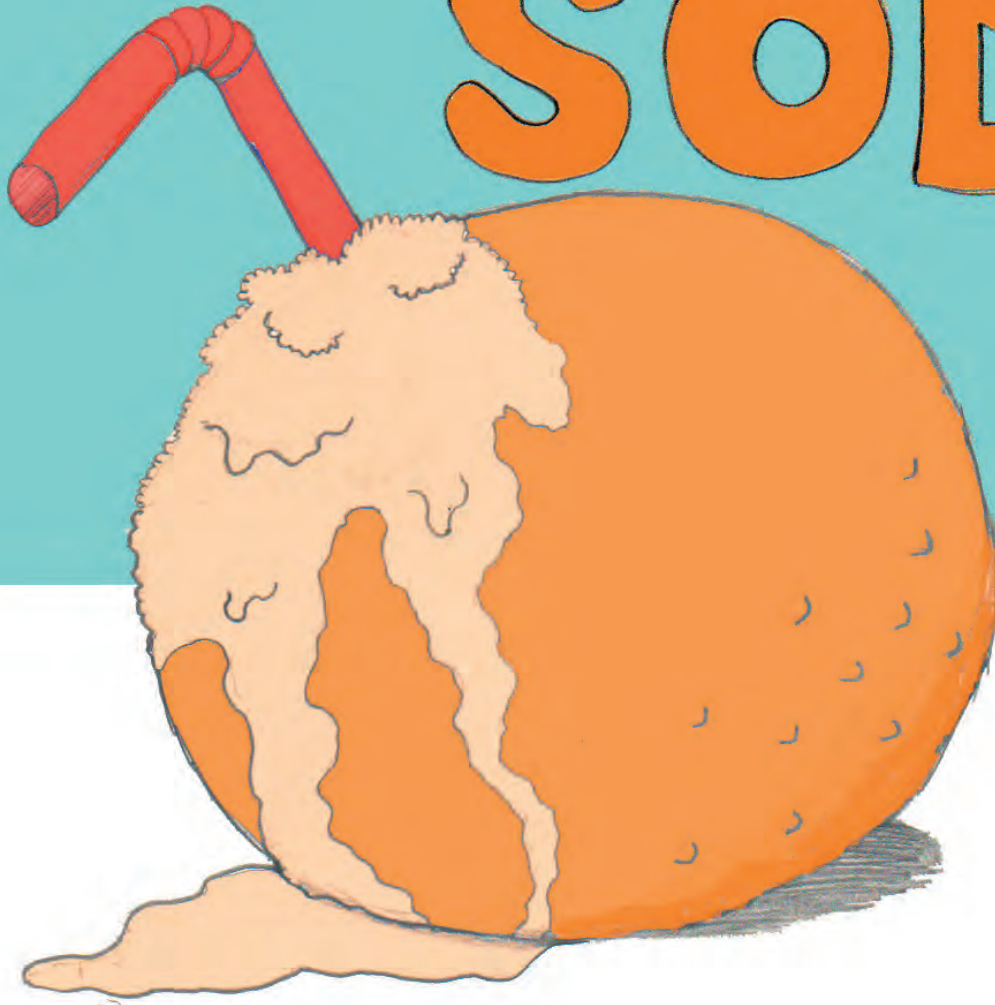


# ORANGE SODA



# TOBY'S GOLDEN AGE

BY  
RANDY SMITH

“The Golden Age of Science Fiction is twelve.”

It's a famous quote, but is it true? At one long-ago convention I saw it at work.

Toby was twelve years old and attending his first convention. I don't know where his parents were. Perhaps they just dropped him off at the hotel to let him fend for himself. It was, after all, a simpler time. He was taking in the whole convention and experiencing the joy of it all.

I met Toby at the convention banquet. Yes, it was that long ago. Conventions still had banquets. He and I were seated next to each other along with an up-and-coming artist, his wife, an neo-pro writer, and a couple of other people (the memory does grow hazy). Throughout the meal, Toby talked about everything he had seen at the convention. He talked about his favorite movies, comics, books, and games. Some of the other folks at our table found him to be a bit annoying, but I was fascinated.

As Toby and I talked, I came to realize that he was still experiencing the sense-of-wonder of true discovery. Everything was new to him. Story plots that seemed old and tired to me were fresh and exciting to him. He told of the fun he had playing video games I had never heard of. He found everything about the convention itself to be fascinating, and he was thrilled to be meeting people—especially older people—who shared many of his interests.

I began to wonder if I had ever been like Toby. Had there ever been a time when the world of Science Fiction and fandom had seemed no new and fresh and exciting? Probably. When I was twelve and discovering Isaac Asimov, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Lester Del Rey, and Robert A. Heinlein, I may have felt the same way. If I dug back deep into my memories, I could still remember the thrill of seeing Star Trek for the

first time. I could still remember hunkering down on my bed to read the latest issues of The Mighty Thor, The Amazing Spider-Man, or Superman's Pal Jimmy Olson. I could remember wanting to be involved in this thing called Fandom and attending some of the conventions written about in the back pages of the prozines.

Had I become so jaded that none of seemed as exciting to me as it had when I was twelve? Had I lost much of Toby's sense-of-wonder? Had fandom itself begun to seem too normal?

My temptation is to answer “yes” to all of these questions. Yet, I also know that my own twelve-year-old self still lives inside of me somewhere. A really good writer can still give me that “gosh, wow” feeling that I got from some of my earliest SF reading. A good conversation on a panel or at a room party can stimulate my mind and help me to see old topics in new ways. I may not quite be experiencing the thrill of new discovery that Toby was feeling that evening at a banquet at his first convention. Yet, the opportunities for discovery are there. I only have to be aware and ready for them to happen at any moment.

Toby was determined to experience all aspects of fandom while he was attending his first convention. He proudly showed me a paper sack in which he had the part of his first costume. It was Barbarian costume and consisted of a pair of shorts, a cut-off T-shirt, a pair of sandals, and a plastic sword. He planned to go to the restroom and put it on.

As he talked about his costume, he saw some other people enter the room who were wearing costumes.

His eyes widened as he said, “That guy has real chain mail!”

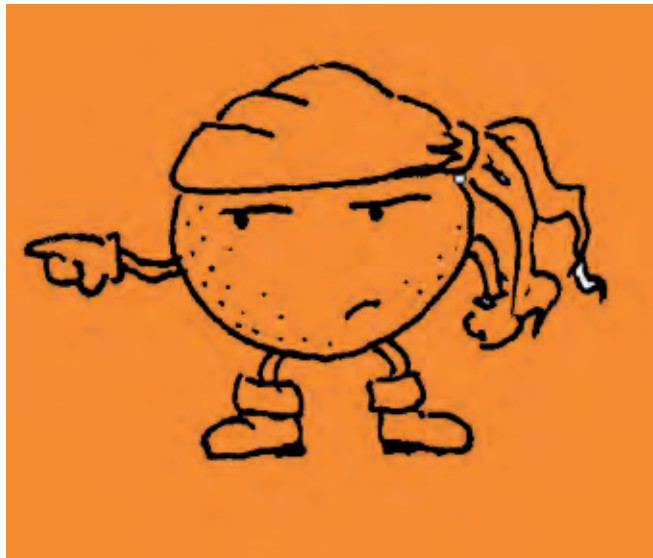
“He probably spent a lot of time working on it,”

I said, “Why don't you ask him about it?”

“Those people have really fancy costumes,” he said, as he saw the Best In Show winners from the previous year's Worldcon.

“They've been making costumes for a long time,” I said.

He suddenly decided that his costume wasn't good enough to wear at the convention. I encouraged



him to put it on. It was, after all, his first costume, and he should be proud of it. People would enjoy seeing his costume, even if it wasn't as fancy as those of much older and much more experienced costumers.

No amount of encouragement from me could get him to put on his simple, first-ever, costume. He continued to stare with a sense-of-wonder at the costumes that others were wearing. Was he simply feeling discouraged, or was he thinking of a time when he could make costumes like those he was seeing?

I may never know the answer to that question. As far as I know, I have not met Toby again. I don't

know if he is still involved in fandom, if he is still making costumes, or if he is still reading and watching SF as avidly as he was at the age of twelve.

Toby, if you are attending this convention or reading this fanzine, please make yourself known to me. Let me know that you are the man who was the boy whom I met at that convention banquet all those years ago. I want to thank you. I want to thank you for showing me what it really means to have a sense-of-wonder around this crazy world we call Science Fiction and fandom.

Somehow, Friday Night at the Fanzine Lounge, there were so many fun little bits, some strange typing and some strange drinking. It was the last of the League of Evil Geniuses party and I took a small plastic shot glass of Chipotle Vodka, raised it over my head and quieted the party room and got them to toast: To Evil!

## The Awesomeness of Being and Becoming Awesome.

by  
"Awesome" Bob Hole

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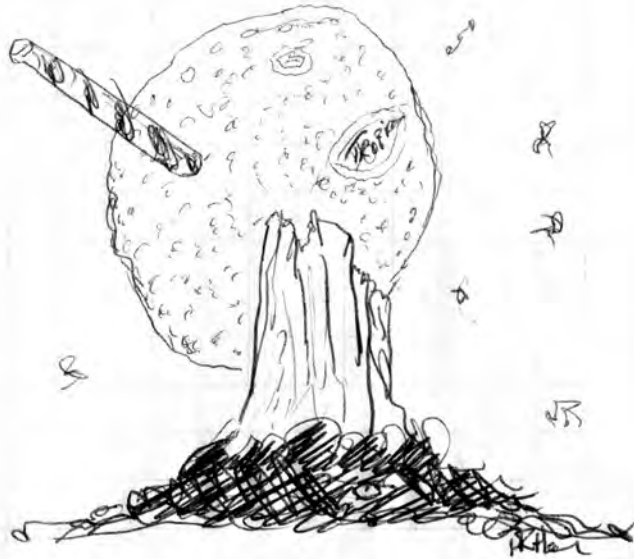
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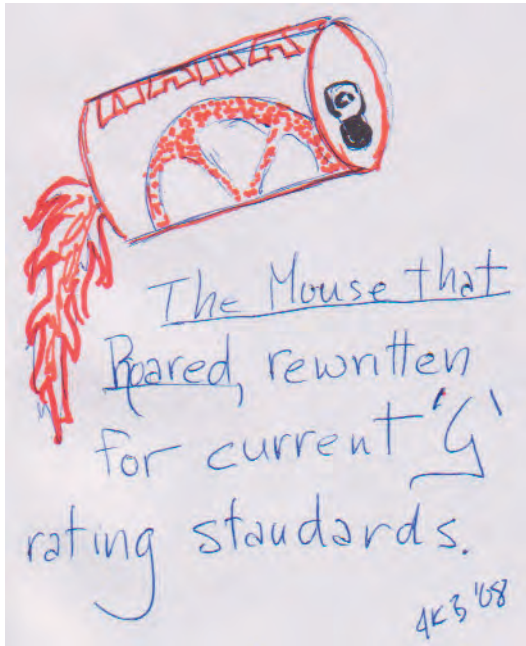
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Technology – it's new, it's exciting, it's constantly changing. So why is orange soda still orange? Are we so tied to the tropes of the past that we don't have the vision to step beyond the tyranny of color? After all, as fans of science fiction and fantasy, we should be accepting of worlds in which orange soda is purple, green, or even clear. But the resistance to fantastic coloration in soda seems entrenched, even in the world of speculative literature.

One of the joys of youth for many of my generation was Nehi Blue Cream soda. It had a tasty vanilla flavor, true, but it was blue – a bright, cheerful blue that brooked no argument. It was a triumph of modern petrochemical engineering bringing you flavor divorced from color. After all, we've had colorless

colas and fluorescent pink beverages full of density-neutral balls of tropical starch, but the beverage world is devoid of orange. Yet, orange soda is still orange, despite the existence of both colorless natural orange extracts and effective artificial orange flavoring.

I would draw a parallel between the decreased interest of the general public in the space program and science in general and the lack of clamor for sodas with inventive coloration. With modern education calling for 'teaching to the test' rather than training our youth in critical thinking and the scientific method, fewer and fewer of a new generation will be asking why sodas should be held to such a conservative standard. By supporting better science education, we will move towards a time when the tyranny of natural coloration will no longer be a problem.

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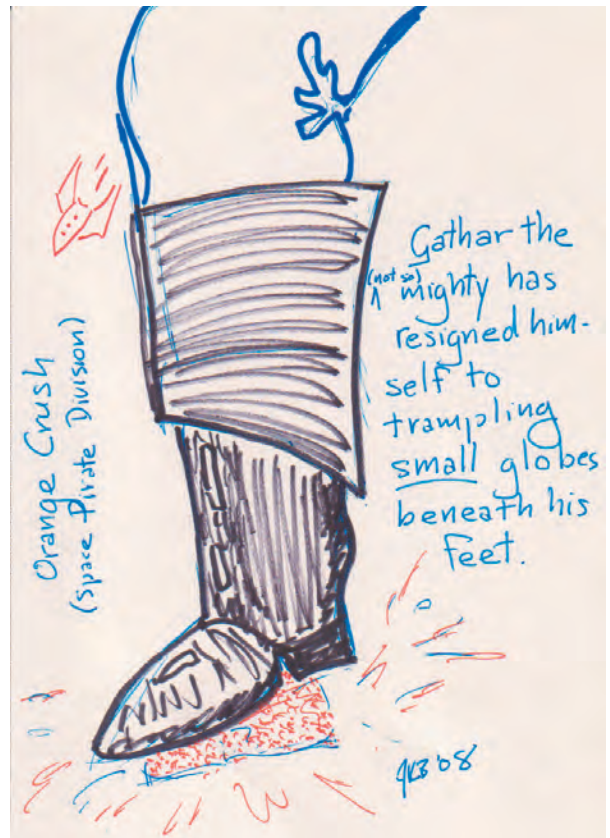
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The blank page is taunting me.

I'm in the fanzine lounge at Baycon. It's my first real time hanging out in such a place and I've decided to throw my lot into writing a piece for the fanzine in an hour. I guess we'll see if I can do it, right?

And right now, the only thought in my head seems to be that orange soda and bacon do not go together well. What an article. Think, katster, think. Well, I suppose we can't all be Chris Garcia. Just think of what a boring world that would be. The kind of world in which all of us drink orange soda.

Okay, newbie. Get yourself together. You must make an article worthy of the name. You must hold your own against the fanzine veterans...

Let's start again.

Orange soda. It has the vita...no.

Ummm...

Let's cheat and ask the virtual fan lounge. Well, they just think it's cool that I'm online from the Baycon fanzine lounge. This is what I get for trying to get other people to do my work for me.

Okay, then, let's talk about bacon. Bacon, as opposed to Baycon, is the fat and greasy tasty treat that's good for breakfast or anytime. It goes better with orange juice than orange soda.

Baycon, as opposed to bacon, is a fun way to spend Memorial Day weekend. I've only been going two years so far, but I think I'll probably make it a regular thing. But we're not talking about Baycon, we're talking about bacon.

The virtual fanzine lounge would like me to mention at this point that you can go hang out with them via <http://www.ustream.tv/fanlounge>.

But we were talking about bacon. There is rumor that bacon is bad for you. This is not true. Bacon is bad for you in excess. Moderate use of bacon has been shown to promote good hygiene and excellent breakfast habits.

Plus, according to certain writers who have big name blogs, it's fun to tape bacon to cats. Somehow, this doesn't count as cruel and unusual punishment.

You should not pour bacon grease down your

drain. If you do so, you make the sewers oily and slippery. If the sewers are oily and slippery, how are you going to escape during the inevitable zombie apocalypse?

At this point, Bill Mills would like me to mention <http://TVoF.com>, the Voices of Fanzine podcast.

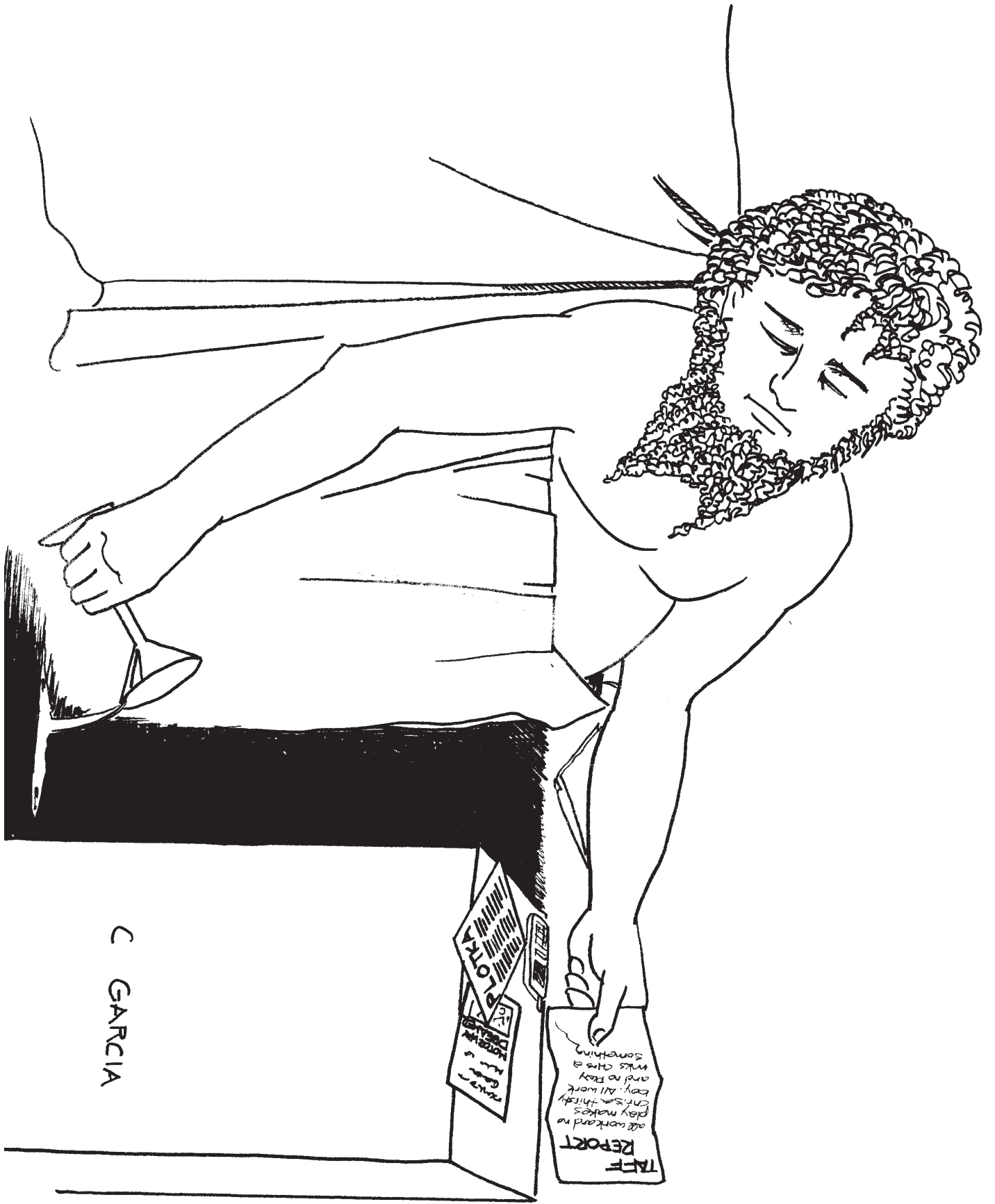
But we were talking about bacon. And orange soda. I don't really like orange soda. It tastes too much like that horribly yucky stuff they give you to test your blood glucose level. After a few doses of that stuff, I've been put off orange soda for life. The last time I went in, it was root beer flavored.

I would have thought that Jones Soda makes bacon soda, but it looks like that isn't the case. The closest they come is Turkey and Gravy soda. It looks like they also have an Antacid soda for those who can't tolerate the idea of Bacon or Turkey and Gravy soda.

And now that I have been happily random through this whole article, I leave you with the wisdom of REM: "I've got my spine, I've got my orange crush..."



Art was from Jason Schachat(Cover and Page 7), Bob Hole (Page 3), Greg Vinland (Page 2 and 5), JK Brown (Page 6 and 4), Espana Sheriff (Back cover)  
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