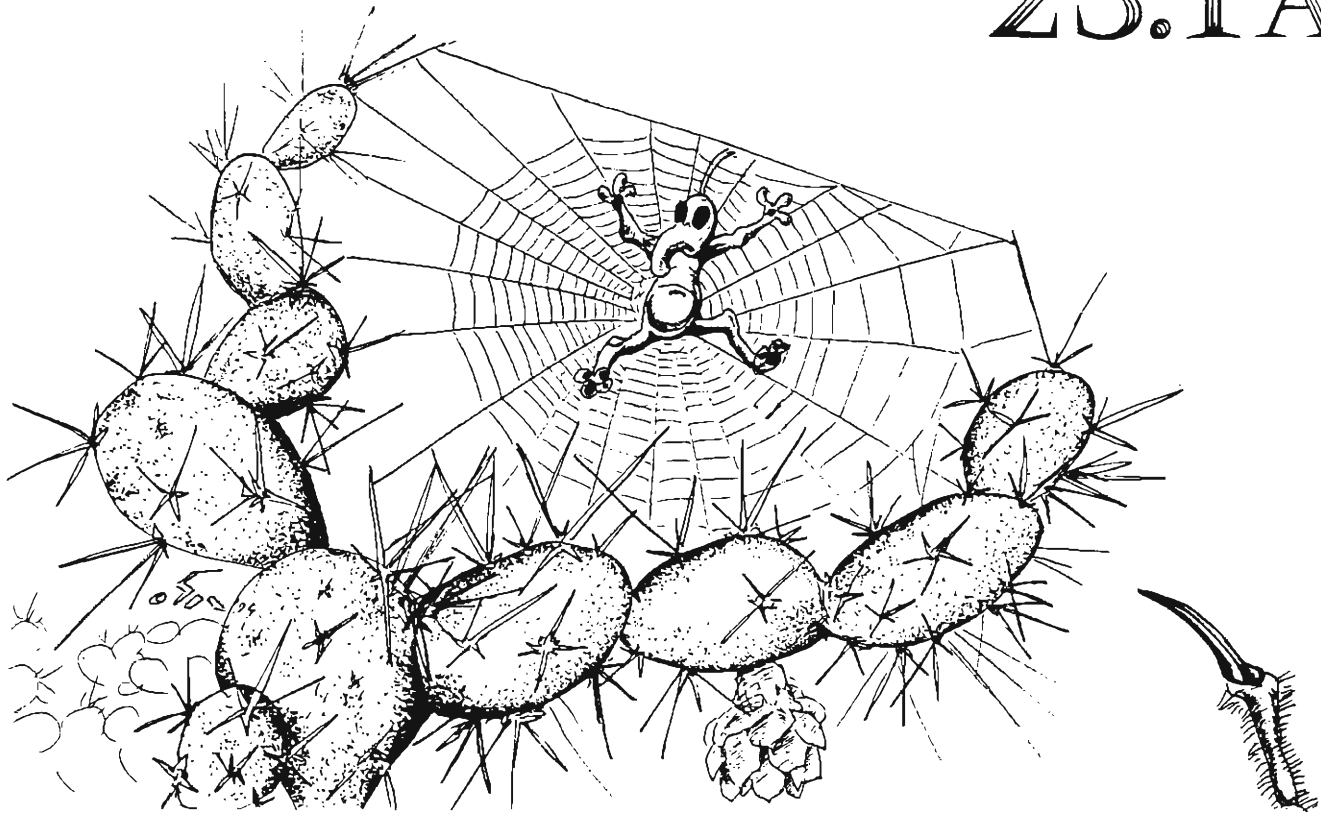


OPUNTIA

23.1A



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March 1995

ZINE REVIEWS
by Dale Speirs

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OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment.

ART CREDIT: Exploring a new world has its risks, as one Wuzi finds out in a moment of horror. OpuntiaWorld is a place of beauty but unforgiving of so much as a careless step. From a series by Franz Miklis, A-5151, Nussdorf 64, Austria.

EDITORIAL: I finally got an Aurora nominations ballot, but not directly. It came with an issue of the Ottawa SF STATEMENT, received two days after OPUNTIA #23 went to the printers. Deadline for nominations was February 28, so I hope mine arrived in time, as I got and returned my form on February 22.

Received is a flyer calling for submissions for the sixth volume of original Canuck SF, TESSERACTS 5. If that numbering system doesn't make anymore sense than OPUNTIA's, that's because the fifth volume will be TESSERACTS Q, due this Christmas, being English translations of francophone SF. Deadline for T. #5 is August 15, 1995; details from #214, 21 - 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, T5J 3S2, and do send a #10 SASE for reply. They are looking for stories about 5000 words, from Canadians only.

Another flyer, this one about FanHistoricon 3 at Cincinnati, Ohio, from June 22 to 25, combined with Midwestcon 46. Fanhistory buffs contact Dick & Leah Smith, 410 West Willow Road, Prospect Heights, Illinois 60070.

Unless otherwise stated, zines are available for what is known as 'The Usual', which means \$3 for a sample copy, trade for your zine, or a contribution such as artwork, a letter of comment, or article. If you have not seen a copy of the zine it is best to see one before sending a contribution, to ensure it is appropriate to the zine. Send banknotes, not cheques, to foreign countries, as bank charges for converting a cheque can often exceed the amount of the cheque.

F.T.T. #16 (The Usual from Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England) This zine originally started out as FUCK THE TORIES but now changes title each issue while keeping the same initials. This time around it is FLORIFEROUS TASTEFUL TERRACE, a reference to the fact that the co-editors are now homeowners. No more radical stuff, at least ostensibly, as JH and JN join the bourgeois. Next election they'll probably end up voting Tory. Hanna starts off with an article about their househunting, and is followed in logical sequence by Martin Smith on flat-hunting. A lengthy section of locs, dealing mostly with economics, with particular reference to a practical alternative to our money system called Local Exchange Trading System. The Loonywatch column provides quotes from the British HANSARD, the American FOSFAX, and other various sources. There is a lengthy exchange of letters between Nicholas and Taras Wolansky about whether or not Reagan won the Cold War; quite frankly I did not read it. The back page has a selection of statistical quotes, a few of which I rather doubt.

Overall, F.T.T. is to the left of the political spectrum with an emphasis on economics.

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS #29 (US\$6 for three issues or trade from Jim Romenesko, Box 1334, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201) A reviewzine that does not attempt to list every zine received in trade, but rather goes into detail on a few or discusses a theme. This time around, OBSCURE starts off with an extended discussion by zine pubbers about FACT-SHEET FIVE. When the Gunderloy F.F. collapsed, many zine pubbers were at loose ends because they relied on it as a central communication point. The new version of F.F. by Friedman does not trade free copies or review everything that he receives, a policy calculated to avoid the problems that destroyed Gunderloy. This has upset some zine pubbers, and others resent the capsule reviews. In the SF hobby, the troubles of F.F. have gone largely unnoticed because SF zines were never dependent on it. They have a long history and networking system that other zines have not. Most SF zines review each other. So do musiczines, which are used to reviewing bands and music, and thus can easily make the step to zine reviews. Unfortunately many other zine pubbers come into the hobby with no knowledge of what networking is, a diffuse intersecting system, not a central gathering point with spokes radiating out to the zines. This is one reason why I have been reviewing non-SF zines in OPUNTIA, in the hope of getting them to connect with our little world and its ways. If we don't guide them, who will?

Also in this issue of OBSCURE is an extract of a talk by a library archivist on curating zine collections, specifically the Gunderloy collection donated to the New York State Library. The final section is on teaching a journalism course with zines, rather than newspapers, which students don't read.

GLOBAL MAIL #10 (The Usual from Global Mail, Box 597996, Chicago, Illinois 60659) The inverse of a reviewzine, it being a requestzine. All kinds of requests from around the world, with hundreds of listings for art, zines, computers, boycotts and actions, e-mail, video, and audio.

If you are looking for somewhere to place your work or for new trades, here is the place to start looking. The category "Zines Requesting Contributors" has 58 entries alone.

HILDISVIN #3 (The Usual from Holger Eliasson, Box 171, S-114 79 Stockholm, Sweden) A series of essays running through this zine, mixed in with brief extracts from locs and a few zine reviews. An over-riding theme all the way is the true paganism and runes of Scandinavian history, not the pathetic pseudopaganism that clutters up some of the North American SF cons, or the bad rehashes of Nordic legend in trilogies churned out by Ivy League graduates for New York editors. Eliasson starts out with some reviews of various brantweins, then to locs and commentary on runes and Nordic legends. The main piece of the zine is an extended account of a visit to Denmark for a gathering of reconstructed viking ships and an unofficial group of genuine neopagans. Not all is sweetness and light; the rough edges of both are shown. Many diversions into history and language, tied back to the modern gathering. This is the sort of essay THE NEW YORKER would run, and much more interesting than the usual con reports in SF zines that catalogue "and-then-I-met ... and we went to this restaurant". By the time one has read through HILDISVIN, one will have absorbed a surprising amount of information about Nordic history and mythology.

SACRED TRUST #1 (The Usual from Murray Moore, 377 Manly Street, Midland, Ontario L4R 3E2) Canadians will recognize instantly the source of this zine title, from former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, a Tory who praised the OAP even as he tried to destroy it, and was only stopped by an outcry that convinced him it was "a sacred trust". Moore writes on why he wishes he was married to John Irving, an Ad Astra 14 conreport, and, a neat trick for the first issue with no locs, letters from the editor.

MORIARTY'S REVENGE #3 (The Usual from Dave Hicks, 8 Dyfrig Street, Pontcanna, Cardiff CF1 9LR, Wales) Conreport in the usual British angst style, with funny bits worked in. Mostly drinking in the bar; one wonders why they do any work in getting up a programme if they just drink. A typical encounter with mundanes: "There were, in fact, an alarmingly large number of small boys at breakfast, all smartly dressed with short, gelled hair, being shepherded about by large intimidating middle-aged women. They were part of some sort of choral event, but I preferred to think of them as I usually do of The Straight Family Who've Booked Into The Hotel The Weekend Of The Convention And Realize They've Made A Ghastly Mistake. Particularly reprehensible examples of fandom are pointed out to the impressionable youngsters: "See, that's what science fiction does to you!""

Also locs, musings on fanzines as folk art, and etcetera.

ON SPEC #19 (C\$6 in Canada, US\$6 elsewhere for sample copy from On Spec, Box 4727, Edmonton, Alberta T6E 5G6) This is Canada's fiction prozine, perfect-bound with colour covers. A short story by W.P. Kinsella starts off; I figured he was more or less slumming in this genre but it turns out to be a fairly interesting concept about what else was imported with all those Japanese cars. Most of the stories in this issue are fair to middling; no outright bad ones but nothing that will be anthologized for decades to come. Overall, a pleasant read. A brief bio and portfolio about Robert Pasternak, one of the best SF artists currently working today.

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE #10 (The Usual from Karl Johanson, 4129 Carey Road, Victoria, British Columbia V8Z 4G5) Bits and pieces on ConAdian, Robert Runté on the cover but not detoured this time, media and book reviews.

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #58 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) This issue is largely given over to an interesting fanhistory of Australian SF, definitely worthwhile reading on how the hobby developed from prewar days.

SPACE CADET #1 (The Usual from R. Graeme Cameron, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Apt. #110, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) A few years ago, I thought to use as a cover for OPUNTIA a map of Canada showing the locations of all the SF zines published, under the title "The Dominion Of Fanada". This was about the time that NEOLOGY quit, and the map was so blank it was too embarrassing to run. In the last year, I have begun receiving quite a number of perzines from B.C., Manitoba, and Ontario, enough to believe that fanzines aren't quite extinct yet. This is the latest example, from the soon-to-retire editor of BCSFAZINE. Subtitled "The Aging Old Fart Nostalgic Time Waster Gazette", it introduces the editor by a series of essays on how he became addicted to SF, a trip to Mayan territory, and his grandfather's account of his service in WW1. Also an analysis of what Ed Wood used for UFOs in his PLAN NINE movie.

BCSFAZINE #260 (\$24 for twelve issues from WCSFA, 1855 West 2nd Avenue, Apt. #110, Vancouver, British Columbia V6J 1J1) Excellent clubzine. This issue commemorates a BCSFAN who recently died young of cystic fibrosis, Sara Brearley, aka Peregrin. She was a very good artist, and besides a brief biography of her, there is a selection of her artwork, which was of professional quality.

MARKTIME #36 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, ELCA Copy Centre, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631) A brief history of Strickert's zine pubbing, now in its 25th year, with travel reports, radio taping, and locs.

OSPS STATEMENT #213 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, c/o A.G. Wagner, 251 Nepean Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 0B7) Clubzine with media news, zine and book reviews.

MIMOSA #16 (The Usual from Nicki and Richard Lynch, Box 1350, Germantown, Maryland 20875) A fanhistory zine. In this issue, an emphasis on WorldCons of the past and some unusual zine histories. Mike Resnick writes about coming back from ConAdian: "So I'm sitting in the airport, waiting to board the plane from Winnipeg to Minnesota. I think there are three mundanes on the flight; everyone else is coming from WorldCon. Larry Niven's there, and Connie Willis, and maybe a dozen other pros, and one of the topics of conversation as we await the plane is whose names will make the cover of LOCUS if the plane crashes, and whose names will be in small print on page 37, and how many obituary issues Charlie Brown can get out of it. Then the topic turns to who you would rescue if the plane crashed: Connie and Larry and me, because you wanted more of our stories, or Scott Edelman and me, because you wanted us to be so grateful to you that we'd buy your next twenty stories."

THE WRONG LEGGINGS #2 (The Usual from Lillian Edwards, 39 Viewforth, Edinburgh EH10 4JE, Scotland) Travel reports and TAFF controversy. Conclusions about fan funds may be of interest to the dwindling few who still support them. Will this be another "Zines are dead" hoorah?

CYBRER BUNNY #4 (The Usual from Tara and Robert Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP, England) I don't know if I should be reviewing this issue, since the lead story is my account of a coyote that lives near my work depot. However, setting aside the brilliant writing on Calgary coyotes, there is some other stuff on piano lessons, a poem on spider plants, a story about getting rid of birds by not making a noise, kittens falling out of windows, a bit of arachnophilia, and locs.

On the back cover is one of those computer-generated 3-D artworks. I could never do them until recently, when I read a magazine article about them. To see the 3-D, pick out two similar spots side by side. Cross your eyes so

that the spots overlap. This overlap will be blurry; sharpen the focus on the overlap, and as you do so, the 3-D image will appear.

TWISTED TIMES #15 (US\$3 cash from Stuart Mangrum, Box 271222, Concord, California 94527) Articles about machine art, beginning with the May 1994 performance of the Survival Research Laboratories, a group which uses scrap bits to construct machines. These machines are designed to destroy each other; they are let loose in an arena to gouge, crush, claw, or burn each other up. Fire marshals trying to close SRL shows can't stop the crowds for the hottest (literally and figuratively) underground event of the year. In a similar vein is a report on the Burning Man Festival in the Nevada desert, with machines and performance art, ending the weekend with the torching of a neon-lit, pyrotechnics-packed statue of the Burning Man. This report actually deals with publishing a daily zine at the event. DTP plans die suddenly when it is discovered the laser printer won't, because someone forgot to load the proper software. The zine is therefore published with handprinted text, much to the amusement of another zine pubber on site who used a manual typewriter. Harry Warner would have been delighted. Also, how to clean dust out of photocopiers and computers. In other news, an interview with the publisher of SCHWA and various accounts of life in California. Nice cover done on a colour photocopier. Recommended.

BARDIC RUNES #10 (\$4 from Michael McKenny, 424 Cambridge Street South, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5) A fictionzine specializing in sword-and-sorcery stories. Best one of this ish is actually a story about political intrigue in the ancient Japanese Emperor's court, "The Demon of the Copper Gate" by Mark Noe. No actual demons, just a quick witted courtier surviving as best she can.

DASFAX v27#3 (The Usual c/o Bill Lund, 6600 South Vine Street #105, Littleton, Colorado 80121-2767) Clubzine of Denver Area SF Association. News, reviews, locs.

CONTRACT V7#1 (The Usual from John Mansfield, 321 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B9) This zine specializes in listing Canadian SF conventions, with brief reports about recent cons and suggestions on con-running. One suggestion is to charge all the con expenses to Air Miles credit cards; the points gained can then be used to fly in a Guest of Honour free.

GEGENSCHWEIN #71 (The Usual from Eric Lindsay, 7 Nicoll Avenue, Ryde, New South Wales 2112, Australia) Lots and lots of book reviews. The lead-off article is an account by John Berry of an unfortunate incident with a homing pigeon. Also locs and editorial comments.

PROBE #95 (The Usual from SFSA, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) A 72-page clubzine in card covers, with a strong emphasis on fiction. This zine regularly prints lots of fiction from South African writers. Also, again a regular thing, an essay discussing F&SF. The video reviews are mostly stuff that has long since come and gone in North America but apparently only just reached South African shores. Locs and miscellany.

THINGUMYBOB #13 (The Usual from Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NR, England) Postmarked Gibraltar this time, Connor being in the Senior Service. Most of this ish is response to the previous S&M ish, but also locs on fandom splintering and con sizes.

FOSFAX #173 (The Usual from FOSFA, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) Unrestrained glee and rubbing of hands over the recent American election results which put Republicans in command of Congress. In between the Irish jigs and the three-cheersing for Gingrich, a few of the more sober celebrants get in numerous book reviews and con reports. Lots of locs, the most famous part of this zine. 68 pages of microprint. Recommended.

THYME #100 (The Usual from Alan Stewart, Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) Not unnaturally, this issue looks back on its history, with reprints of editorials, con reports, articles, and art. The tangled lineage of editors is laid out; THYME seems to have been a game of pass-the-potato in Australian fandom as they tried to keep the flame burning (pardon the mixed metaphor).

FILE 770 #107 (US\$8 for five issues, from Mike Glycer, 5828 Woodman Avenue #2, Van Nuys, California 91401) A newszine of fandom, with heavy coverage of worldcons. In this issue, followups on ConAdian, an imitation zine called ANSIFILE, and miscellaneous. The ANSIFILE is not quite a parody of a certain British zine, as it contains actual news items done up in the style of an Englishman from Reading.

ANSIBLE #91 (SASEs from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU) A newszine of fandom, with heavy coverage of British writers and publishers and all the rubbish they get up to. Very humorous throughout, save perhaps the ominous report of Scientologists trying to shut down Internet comments about it.

FOR THE CLERISY ABOUT LATVIA #7 (Trade only of zines or letters of comment; no cash. From Brant Kresovich, Riga Business School, Riga Technical University, Skolas 11, LV-1010, Riga, Latvia. He will take back issues of zines whether or not they are published by you.) This time we read a discussion on how 'yes' and 'no' are used in Latvia, a review of restaurants ("Ignore the waiter's suggestions for soup since he'll forget to bring it" ends a review), and the war of the genders in Latvia.

ARTYCHOKE #11 (comes with THYME). Focuses on an artist in each issue, with bio and portfolio. This time around is Teddy Harvia, wingnuts and all.

GRADIENT #11 (The Usual from Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-1023) This zine is strong on analysing SF awards such as Hugos, trying to establish a basis for ranking authors. This time around, the question is who might be the best current SF writer. Asimov and Heinlein don't count, they not having recently turned in any books to the editors. I do question use of award nominations and wins as an objective guide, since history demonstrates that many authors win year after year on name recognition rather than merit. Elsewhere is a short piece of fiction adapting "A Christmas Carol" with Ghost of SF Past, etc., mixed with personal biography.

VISIONS OF PARADISE #58 and #59 (same as GRADIENT) This is a diaryzine in the life of a math teacher. Pretty much routine, with accounts of school, the kids in sports, and family get-togethers. Also included is "The Jaundiced Eye", a book review column.

PUNK PLANET #5 (US\$2 from Julia Cole, Box 1711, Hoboken, New Jersey 07030-9998) As might be guessed from the title this musiczine specializes in punk rock, but the editors refuse to be drawn into "What is punk?" arguments. Some excellent writing in here; you don't have to like punk or know much about it to appreciate it. Larry Livermore writes about his friend Spike, who spent much time and money chasing a girl. Poor Spike, mohawk and all, has a difficult time keeping up with her constant, weekly fads as she veers from riot grrl to emo chick and onward. He finally gets her drunk, starts to bed her, and discovers to his horror that she is a he, a transvestite. Now he is an emotional wreck, worried that people might think him a fag. Lots of music reviews, as well as a complaint from one columnist that record companies don't seem to understand what punk is, so stop sending inappropriate promos: "... how Orbital even comes close to qualifying as punk is beyond me." Meanwhile, band interviews and scene reports, including one from exotic Edmonton, Alberta. What is unusual for a musiczine is that this one includes fic-

tion, about the same level as SF fanfiction. You can take that any way you like. Jim Testa has advice on how not to put out a fanzine. Aimed at punkzines but also works well for SF zines, such as "... diary types, I really don't care how much you love eating at Taco Bell or Denny's", and "If you're going to photocopy your photos and not have them dot-screened, at least try to make sure that they look like photos, and not faded caveetchings." Also a section of zine reviews, mostly punk. PUNK PLANET is good-humoured all the way through. Quite recommended.

LITTLE FREE PRESS #113 (US\$1 or trade from Ernest Mann, 714 Third Street SE, Little Falls, Minnesota 56345) A zine promoting the Priceless Economic System (PES). This issue skirts dangerously close to "everything is a conspiracy" theory; Mann has a bad habit of generalizing too much. But he does make some good points. This issue starts off with a commentary on childhood and how it is affected by economic status. From there on to the rat race and how many people get caught up in the status-seeking game, working themselves to death and missing out on being with their children because they've convinced themselves they need a bigger house and a new car every few years. Next up is war and profiteering, but Mann confuses cause with effect when he writes: "Wars are and were started for profit!". Immense profits are earned by corporations and smugglers in wartimes, but history clearly demonstrates that most wars are started by them-versus-us grievances. I've noticed this in previous writings of Mann; he ignores the fact that people are motivated by religion, politics, or pride as much as any greed motive. Former Yugoslavia is not a bloodbath today because that serves the bankers and munitions companies but rather because the Serbs dream of a Greater Serbia and all the combatants are remembering 500-year-old feuds and religious wars. Québec separatists aren't agitating about money; they want independence for language and cultural reasons.

We all agree on Utopia, but as I've asked before, "How do we get there?". Mann talks about increasing volunteerism and a switch to the PES by missionary work, followed by a vote and an abrupt switch to a PES. This, alas, is the usual failing of propagandizers for a belief, the idea of obtaining the Millenium if only we could reach everyone. I suspect that if we do eventually reach a PES, it will not be by conscious preaching of a system, but by gradual evolution of society. This seems to be beginning as the computerization of the economy shunts people off to the sidelines permanently. The supposed Generation X have no chance of duplicating the materialism of Baby Boomers. If this goes on, might not future generations decide to get by with a modest bungalow instead of an executive house? A two-door hatchback instead of a land yacht? Envy is learned, not innate.

Mann writes: "After I stopped watching TV and reading the news, I soon realized I wasn't scared anymore". The truth of this statement seems self-evident to me.

This issue of L.F.P. concludes with personal accounts of Mann messing with boats and buying houses, although the chronology seems a bit confusing.

WARP #32 (The Usual from Montréal SF&F Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2W 2P4) Clubzine of a general SF&F club that concentrates mostly on media SF and cons. Very well produced, with screened photos throughout, not blobby prints that look as if taken in a sunless cavern. News and locs heavily emphasize cons, including the vexing question of why one con broke even when it should have been a smashing success (suggested answer is that it was the last of too many cons in the city; potential attendees were tapped out). Photos of ConAdian, including me on page 16; in the photo of Capucine Plourde addressing the Aurora crowd, I'm the guy at extreme left in the back row, with the goatee and glasses.

Besides the extensive con reports, there is fanfiction about Deep Space Nine and the second part of an extended look at lost race novels.

Meanwhile the CUFFuffle between Lloyd Penney and John Mansfield continues, both in the locs and the news column. One can almost see Garth Spencer madly typing away on his computer, getting this all down for his next fan-history. Lloyd and John are arguing about why no one took up CUFF funds in 1994 for a free trip to ConAdian. For those of you not familiar with it, the Canadian Unity Fan Fund is to help an eastern Canadian go west and vice versa, although it didn't do it in 1994 and perhaps not in 1995.

SPENT BRASS #27 (The Usual from Andrew Hooper and Carrie Root, 4228 Francis Avenue North #103, Seattle, Washington 98103) Fandom news in the front section, followed by a Readercon 7 report which compares it to Wiscon. A report on journalism, specifically how to quote a source and write dialogue. Some zine reviews and locs.

ANGRY THOREAUAN #12 (US\$4 from A.T., Box 2246, Anaheim, California 92814) Always interesting reading in this zine, which concentrates on underground music and life in southern California. Articles on needles, including the long ones used for spinal taps, bad zine typography, and biographies of musicians from the classical age, just to prove that modern-day rockers didn't invent drugs and sex. Interviews with phone sex operators on what they are asked for. The editor of A.T. noted that every time he got out an issue, the area was hit by earthquake or firestorm; this time around the attendant disaster was the bankruptcy of Orange County. I'd laugh at them but then I worry what might be going on in the Corporation of the City of Calgary; I hope our Treasurer didn't bet on derivatives and not tell us. Band interview and lots of zine and music reviews.

KNARLEY KNEWS #50 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) The editorial is worried about why the college students don't want to learn and why for. (Henry teaches a course on microprocessors.) Elsewhere, suggestions for travel to the Glasgow Worldcon with small children, addiction to e-mail, book reviews, and a loccol.

ZERO-G LAVATORY #3 (The Usual from Scott Patri, Box 1196, Cumberland, British Columbia V0R 1S0) A bit about life in the Comox, a role-playing card game, locs, and fiction. I quite enjoy the last item, a piece of faanfiction "The Disappearance of V-Con 21". It manages to bring together CSIS, time travel, and the latest secret life of Robert Runté. One can only hope that the tenure committee at the University of Lethbridge doesn't find out about all those things the genial professor has done. "Now then, Dr. Runté, we'd like to spend a moment going over your resumé. There seem to be some discrepancies; what is this about your time in Vietnam?". Normally I sneer at faan or fan fiction, but this is good readable stuff. All Scott has to do now is prove that Runté is actually an undercover agent with CSIS assigned to infiltrate the Lethbridge branch of the Reform Party. Add in a Heritage Front member who breeds giant mutant rabbits and all the bases will be covered.

RELUCTANT FAMULUS #38 (The Usual from Thomas Sadler, 422 Maple Avenue, Adrian, Michigan 49221-1627) Fanfiction editorial as always. Robert Sabella discusses Hugo votes and an encounter with Tanith Lee. Terry Jeeves on his service in WW2 (the Brits won), cats in heat, and locs with an honest-to-goodness Ted White letter. Anytime now there'll be a Harlan Ellison letter in there, just wait and see.

ATTITUDE #4 (The Usual from Michael Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge, CB1 3QF, England) An editorial plea to tolerate Trekkies, then various articles with lots and lots of angst about fanzine fandom. I've been saying for years that there is little difference between SF fandom and stamp collectors or aquarists (my other two hobbies) save perhaps the latter are less reactionary and more able to handle future shock. In ATTITUDE is an article on a trade union meeting that demonstrates much the same, that it may be difficult to distinguish SFdom from just about any other subculture. And con reports which worry and fret about cons. Lots of locs.

STICKY QUARTERS #24 (The Usual from Brian Earl Brown, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, Michigan 48224) A perzine, this issue subtitled "The Sarah Chronicles". Brian is the proud father of a baby daughter now in the toddler stage; the first part of the zine looks at how her thinking and speech abilities are developing. Some bits on computers, including how addictive Internet can be. John Berry continues his army memoirs, with particular reference to lowlife upper-crust officers. Some TV and book reviews. Life in municipal government and the difficulty in ordering supplies. Sounds like me trying to get pole saws out of the Parks Dept..

ALERT CANADA #1 (Probably \$3 for a sample by mail, but a freebie at selected newsagents and music places in the major cities between Montréal and Vancouver. Write to #406, 1040 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6B 2R9) A musiczine covering the techno houses and other alternative nightclubs across Canada (except the Maritimes, where they only have night life if the aurora borealis is shining). Brief summaries of each city are followed by local club listings. Worries about running a rave, where 1000 people are considered a good crowd. Raverunners have many of the same worries as conrunners. This zine provides a national overview of very localized scenes, and thus fills a useful purpose.

LOWER ROSEDALE REVIEW #8 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2K6) This reviewzine covers a few SF zines but also mentions a variety of small-press and art stuff, not to mention the lunatic fringe of evangelism. Contains a proposal for a new project called Mail-Lit, similar in concept to Mail Art.

DRIFT #67 (same as above from C.F. Kennedy) This zine is a miscellany of writing and odds and ends. The issue at hand is mostly Rodney Leighton, actually. Elsewhere, we read of various pets and their interactions (pigeons and dogs don't go together well). A back page proposal on No More Elections and adopting the Greek habit of exiling an unpopular politician.

MOTHER MILES #6 (The Usual from Eoghan Barry, 38 Leinster Road, Basement Flat, Dublin 6, Ireland) A perzine, starting off job hunting, then over to music reviews of alternative rock. A consideration of the state of television, with a parody of the news, which wasn't hard to do, since television has been a parody of itself for years. A review of Rushkoff's book CYBERIA; not recommended for a multitude of reasons, such as crediting Bill Gibson with the invention of techno music. This zine is a mix of SF and music, so those worried they might inadvertently face something from another genre should relax.

LAUDANUM #1 (The Usual from Ian Moore, 2 Chatham Court, Chatham Street, Dublin 2, Ireland) An introductory zine, as Dublin fans busily double or triple their zine production. The new Seattle? In any event, Moore is a Science Librarian edging his way into zinedom. He provides a bit of chat about himself and his world to get things started.

ERG #128 (From Terry Jeeves, North Yorkshire, but as this is the last issue, not much point giving an address.) In this ultimate ish, rants on political correctness, a parody of a Greek play (I'd forgotten that Grecian urn joke), nicad battery recharging, reviews and locs.

Finis.

I've been gradually picking up fanhistories as I locate them, one recent book to hand being UP TO NOW, a 1994 reprint of a 1939 book by Jack Speer. (US\$5, overseas add \$2 for seamail, from Richard Newsome, 281 Flatbush Avenue #1-B, Brooklyn, New York 11217) This book covers fandom of the 1930s to just before the first WorldCon of 1939. It is subtitled "A History of Fandom as Jack Speer Sees It", which fairly sets the stage for the readers. There are accounts of the staple wars, numbered fandoms, numbered transitions, and much about feuding. Don Wollheim figures prominently in the feuds, in which his Communist friends and he, travelling under the name of Michelism, won many fanish battles but ultimately lost the war. The politics of FAPA were as intense as any Canadian constitutional accord, and written up with the same significance. Buried in the despatches is the history of zines as they went from letterpress to hectograph to mimeograph. This book is written in doubleplusungood Spelling Reform, where people thot instead of thought, although strangely enough they question instead of kwestshun. The eye is thus constantly jarred away from the text's content. Setting aside this one complaint, it is a reasonably good read, and certainly an addition for fanhistorical collections.

Long ago and far away, in a parallel universe, fan fund winners wrote up their trips and published them. That, of course, is merely bad fantasy in our universe. However, at least one TAFF report did slip through a stargate located in Rob Hansen's house. ON THE TAFF TRAIL is US\$6.50 from him at 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1AB, England. This book covers his 1984 TAFF trip to the New World, where he visited the Los Angeles WorldCon, searched for a decent beer, found decent pizza, travelled about USA, and found the love of a good woman of Armenian descent. Much good reading in the style of Walt Willis.

I picked up English translations of a number of Soviet writers at ConAdian, where Yuri Savchenko and some fellow Russians had a table in the bourse. These paperbacks are part of a series of SF translations published by Raduga out of Moscow. The Raduga series includes both short story anthologies and novels.

Vladimir Obruchev was a geologist and explorer who wrote SF on the side. Born 1863 and died 1956, he was still working in his 90s. His 1924 novel PLUTONIA was inspired by Jules Verne's JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH.

Obruchev had the advantage of better geological and palaeontological knowledge, and so decided to do an improved version of JOURNEY. In PLUTONIA, Russians exploring an unknown area of the Arctic Ocean just before WWI enter a cavity inside the Earth, explore it most of the distance to the back, and return. I was amused by an early paragraph in PLUTONIA in which the Russians are informed that it is a race against time because the Canadian government is also sending an expedition to the Arctic (neither side knows the cavity is there). But we never hear about the worrisome Canucks again, so all is well.

Using the hollow-Earth hypothesis and one or two other pieces of pseudoscience, Obruchev tries hard to extrapolate otherwise only on the basis of the scientific knowledge of 1924. The Russians do not walk up to the edge of a crevice and rappel in. Rather the opening into the cavity is surrounded by polar ice, then curves gradually into another polar area surrounding the interior of the entrance. The explorers work their way from one ice field to the next, unaware they are moving inside the Earth. The ice jumbles play havoc with their perception of the horizon. Fog and cloud make it seem that the sun has disappeared for a different reason. There is an interior sun, the glowing remains of the meteorite that punched the

cavity, and is gradually fading out. It is suspended in the centre of the cavity by pseudoscience, and shines by radioactive decay which has dimmed it to red light.

The explorers learn what is happening as they travel from polar ice (exterior) to polar ice (interior rim) to tundra with mammoths to Tertiary terrain with giant mammals and onward all the way back to Jurassic flora and fauna. At the far end of the cavity is nothing but volcanoes and deserts, where moisture has not penetrated. Since the oldest fauna is Jurassic, this enables scientists to establish a Triassic age for the impact that created the cavity, which is hundreds of kilometres in diameter. The impact took millenia to cool down to the point where the first plants and animals could enter and colonize.

PLUTONIA is, as Obruchev intended, a device to educate readers about palaeontology in the best Gernsbackian method of combining scientific facts with fiction. Obruchev avoids the "As you know, Professor, ..." type lectures and gives readers a fair chance to puzzle out each scene before the explorers figure it out themselves. The explorers move into the cavity with numerous episodic encounters. Each zone inwards has a successively older fauna, grading from Pleistocene around the edge of the cavity entrance to Jurassic near the middle. The animals are described and their behaviour demonstrated, often by encounters with the explorers.

The explorers, mostly scientists, are a trigger-happy bunch. They presume, shortly after entering the cavity, that there are no humans inside, on the basis that the fauna, such as mammoths, would otherwise be extinct.

"That's right. We've only just dropped in and already we've killed three local inhabitants", Gromeko said."

Gromeko and his fellow explorers are well equipped with guns, not only for collecting specimens but also to

obtain food. As they float down a river, they knock off animals left, right, and centre. The boats are loaded with specimens and venison for the larder. Sometimes for various reasons they can't kill anything, which frustrates them: "Thus the day went by without their being able to kill a single one of these strange new animals."

One wonders how these explorers survive. They fire buckshot into a peaceful herd of grazing dinosaurs on the riverbank to see what they would do. What they would do, it transpires, is rush the boats and swamp them. Not once but twice the explorers camp on the slopes of ominously rumbling volcanoes in the hopes of seeing eruptions. Naturally they come twice within moments of losing their lives. I don't know why, but during these passages I kept thinking about natural selection for some reason.

The explorers also carry on a running battle with giant ants the size of small dogs. After several unrelated fights, the explorers decide that perhaps the ants might be in the right; after all, they are only defending their territory.

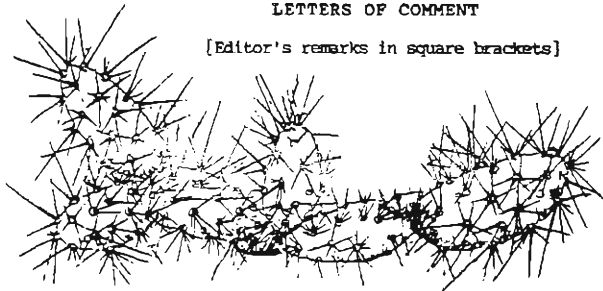
Entering volcanic lands, the explorers find massive deposits of pure metals such as iron and gold. One member of the expedition is delighted at the prospect of immense riches to be had, until reminded what would happen to the price of gold if millions of tons of it come on the market.

The explorers make their way back to the surface, after being delayed by encounters with apemen. With priceless specimens, they board the expedition ship waiting in the polar ice, and make their way back to Mother Russia. What they don't know is that while they were gone, WWI began. They are intercepted by an Austrian warship, and in the shuffle of the aftermath, the specimens are lost. Since no one would believe them about Plutonia without proof, they keep quiet. With the war and the Russian Civil War, the chaos permanently silences them.

I've always enjoyed the writings of Vladimir Voinovich, although English translations of his books are difficult to locate. He is a humourist, whose satires are much more enjoyable to read and reread than that dour Solzhenitsyn, whose works I've read once and no more. I was pleased to discover in a secondhand bookstore THE IVANKIAD (1977, by Farrar, Straus & Giroux). This is an autobiographical story of how Voinovich and his pregnant wife were able to move from a one-room apartment to a two-room apartment in their building co-operative. Next door to that two-room place was a three-roomer belonging to Sergei Ivanko, a bureaucrat in a government publishing house and on the committee of the writers' collective that owned the building. Ivanko wanted one more room so he could add a toilet, and it looked as if he would be able to add one of the rooms by breaking down the wall of the two-roomer. The second room would become another one-room apartment. But Voinovich had been promised the two-roomer; the fight got underway when Ivanko bullied the tenants' committee into revoking that promise. What follows is a bureaucratic war. At first, Voinovich is losing, despite letters and meetings that neatly twist Soviet law against Ivanko. In the end, Voinovich wins by simply moving into the apartment and ignoring the bureaucrats and Ivanko. Just as no one dared support Voinovich in the beginning because it might make waves and draw unfavourable attention to them, so it is that in the end no one wants to support Ivanko for exactly the same reasons, knowing that trying to evict Voinovich would attract attention.

Along the way, Voinovich gets in shots at his favourite target, the Writers' Union. He trots out saucepan jokes about the Union: "Can a saucepan be considered a member of the Writers' Union?" "Yes, because while it has not written anything talented, on the other hand it hasn't written anything untalented."

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Rodney Leighton
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1994-12-9

I've been considering various zine and pseudozine projects. Here's something I came up with awhile ago; got an opinion? Wondering just how many SF zines there are published in the world in a year, I thought of a research project which might provide at least a partial answer. Someone could undertake to file each and every SF zine, he, she, or they received in a year and then enumerate and perhaps evaluate them. I thought about offering but suspect it would have to be someone with a good reputation; well known. I mean, if I ask you to publish a request by me for SF faneds to send me zines for this project, would you? Would anyone respond? This is not a sneaky way of doing so; it's a question for your readers if you choose. I'm not going to undertake what will or could be a fairly major project without some encouragement.

[Zine publishers please respond directly to Rodney. I will mention that he is a reliable loccer.]

Just a note to let you know I have decided to go ahead with my "How many SFzines are there in the world?" project. I don't have the resources to make a big deal of this and I have become a major pessimist, so I don't anticipate much from this. I am going to retain zines I get direct in one box and any I get secondhand in another box. Direct-from-publisher zines will be read, located if I have anything to say, and filed. If anyone feels like sending packages of zines or extras, I'll read what I like, write and thank the sender, and file all those except non-SFzines. If I haven't had any reaction, if none of the faneds I write feel this is a worthwhile project, and no one promotes it, I may call it off about next autumn. Possibly not. I can, by reading review issues and fanzines received lists, get a good idea of some of the zines that are out there.

If the project runs its course, it will run until March 1996. I am not in the financial position of promising what sort of research report will appear. I hope to make a decent zine out of it, with comments on how it went and an overall view, plus listings. Could take the form of a loc sent to a number of publishers, could be a number of reports tailored for various zines to use, or be a small photocopied zine. Might even be a LOCUS-sized monster. It depends 75% on response and 25% on my finances 18 months from now.

FROM: Lloyd Penney
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1995-1-6

As much as I'd like to delve into other publications, I think I'd be better off if I tried to keep my focus on SF fanzines. So much to read, so little time. It's taken me enough time to understand what goes on in fanzines.

FROM: Buck Coulson
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1995-1-4

I used to go to the program at conventions, but by now I've encountered about all of the discussions at one point or another, and participated in most of them, and don't go to panels unless I'm on them. That's why fan veterans don't go to program items: "been there, done that". I'm also busy huckstering during programming hours. Parties are where you meet your friends, fan friendships often being long-distance ones, and catch up on what each of you has been doing since the last con you both made. If you are new to fandom then you don't have any long-distance friendships, or even the concept of them, and have noneed for partying. The same, possibly, goes for members of local clubs. I never see my friends except at con parties, or now and then when one stops by here or I'm going somewhere that leads past their homes.

[Seems reasonable to me. Because I am a zine fan first and foremost, I don't attend a string of cons, only the few around Calgary, and, as a special case, ConAdian because it was a chance to visit a WorldCon without bother of converting to a foreign currency, Customs, etc.. I therefore haven't been overexposed, thus my preference to panels.]

The character of cons and fandoms changes vastly over time, with or without attempts to embed it in amber at a certain point in its development. An organization to make sure that "at least 10% of panels relate to SP" would be terribly frustrated, because convention committees are independent groups, and each one runs its cons the way it likes. So Midwestcon is a long party with no programming, Wiscon emphasizes feminist programming, Ohio Valley Filk Fest restricts programming to singing and panels about filksongs. You don't like it, you don't have to go. The best thing about both fanzines and conventions are that they aren't regimented but are purely determined by the

marketplace. If not enough people come, the con either changes to attract more or eventually dies when the con-com can no longer afford it. Fanzines die when the ego-boob runs out or, now and then, they become so successful that the publishers have too much work in publishing.

A ban on publishing certain items is censorship, even if it's temporary. All censorship is temporary in the long run; all the novels which have been banned at one period or place have been available at other periods or places. Most novels now regarded as classics were banned at some point.

[But at the time they were banned, they were intended to be banned forever, with no access to them anywhere. The Homolka case from the beginning has only a ban until the trial is over, so as not to influence the jury.]

FROM: Harry Warner Jr.
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Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1995-1-9

Freedom of the press wasn't always such a battle cry by newspapers when sensational trials were imminent. When I was working for the Hagerstown dailies back in the 1940s and 1950s, we reporters were under strict orders not to try criminal cases in the newspaper. We could write an advance story on an important trial in which we would summarize the charges against the individual, anything law enforcement authorities may have reported already, and details of the crime that had already appeared at the time of its commission. Management didn't want us to contact attorneys and get their predictions on trial strategy, or ask members of the families of the accused and victims for opinions on whether the defendant was guilty, narrations of the defendant's previous life, or any of the other outbursts that now emerge from something like the Simpson case.

[continued next page]

I think it was better that way because today efforts to stretch one constitutional guarantee to the very limit are endangering another constitutional proviso, the one about fair trials. Locally the newspapers began to imitate their brethren in bigger cities in trial reporting about a quarter-century ago, following a change in newspaper ownership.

FROM: Joseph Nicholas
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1995-1-5

"Our protests can only fall on the deaf ears of economists captive to monetarism.", concludes your commentary on the monetary system in OPUNTIA #22.1. "What is to be done?"

This sounds altogether too despairing. There is quite a lot to be done but people are doing it in their own small ways. In FTT, for instance, we've talked about LETS systems, and the way in which they allow people to decouple themselves from the financial speculations of a money system which now has little to do with real economic activity. Of the billions of dollars, pounds, yens, francs, and deutschemarks which flow through the world's finance markets every day, less than 5% is actually related to the production of goods and services. LETS are just one example of the UK's burgeoning Do-It-Yourself culture, a semi-underground of the alienated and disaffected. We've also mentioned the work of the News Economics Foundation, which has done quite a lot of work on economic sustainability (as opposed to the growth festished by mainstream politicians and economists), and particularly on the integration of social and environmental factors into economic planning.

I agree, however, that neither this intellectual activity nor the grassroots activity of the DIYists is sufficient to answer the question of how we get from here to Utopia.

Despite the difficulty of drawing up such projections, some work has been done in this area, most notably by James Robertson, a former Chief Economist to the UK Treasury, whose two books FUTURE WORK and FUTURE WEALTH you might find worth seeking out. THE DEATH OF ECONOMICS, a less radical assault on economic orthodoxy by Paul Ormerod, might also be of interest. He is principally concerned with the shortcomings of economic theory, which for him exists in a state of abstract perfection, a never-never land with no connection with what people actually do. His comments on the assumptions economic theorists have to make for their markets to work are particularly cutting, but what most struck me was an anecdote about so-called economic rationality, that is, how in theory people are supposed to be able to maximise everyone's gain by first maximising their self-interest. A number of students were paired off and studied as they played various co-operative games. Invariably, those who tried to maximise their self-interest lost, reducing the gains of their partners in the process. Those who had not been 'contaminated' (Ormerod's term) by the doctrine of economic rationality pursued a consensus line and therefore won. Since society is based on co-operation rather than competition, the doctrine of economic rationality clearly has little relation to the real world.

One criticism to be made of such observations is that it always seems to be former economists who make them after they've stopped practising; why didn't they recognise the failings of their dismal science earlier, when they might have been in a position to do something about it? The probable answer is that they were too close to it, and didn't have the time to take a step back to pause and think awhile. But if I now take a step back, I experience the same twinges of despair I detect in your words. We can discuss the issues until we're blue in the face, but will the banks and transnational corporations pay the slightest bit of attention? In this might lie the seeds of hope, because the continued orthodoxy of banks and

TNCs can only protract its failures. When the system has ground completely to a halt because their theories have been shown not to work, what option can they have but to try some of the alternatives?

[What worries me though, is that when the system grinds to halt it will be the masses who suffer, not the classes. There are no poor bankers.]

Kim Stanley Robinson's GREEN MARS has several discussions of what is clearly recognisable as 'new economics'. I'm not so daft as to suggest that we should take an SF novel as a literal blueprint of the future, but incorporation of new economic ideas in a SF novel strikes me as an encouraging sign. If Robinson can slide these ideas into the minds of people whose idea of the future might be nothing more than banging around the galaxy in a spaceship, then more power to his elbow.

FROM: Jim Caughran
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1994-12-7

The Homolka episode raised some interesting questions about censorship, particularly in light of WIRED's editorial flames about Canada's totalitarian society. My reactions to civil liberties questions generally remain liberal knee-jerk. But I'm aware that Canadian attitudes to government are quite different. In the USA, the government is distrusted; give them the opportunity and they will trample all over you. Rights must be carefully spelled out. In Canada, people trust the government, often despite evidence to the contrary, and the line between government and individual is less carefully drawn. Both governments seem to try to live up to the expectations. But things are changing here as a result of USA television spillover and different laws, like our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Will the laws lead to different expectations or is it the other way around?

[Somewhere I read a nifty article that WIRED's support of unrestricted networks will last right up to the day that some hacker breaks into their computers and scrambles their files just before WIRED goes to press.]

FROM: Joseph Major
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1995-1-6

Regarding Tom Feller's discussion in REASONABLE FREE-THINKER of media lionization of outlaws: Not only did dime novelists contemporaneously write on Jesse James, but William Bonney, aka William Antrim né Henry McCarty, used to read those dime novels featuring the outlaw adventures of Billy the Kid with a higher level of criticism than most. He knew when they were exaggerating.

Could you send FOSFAX some of your communist jokes? We would really appreciate them. You know that Communism was developed by a philosopher because a scientist would have tried it out first on rats.

[A WW2 veteran who was in England before the war began told me this joke: Three men are in a boat, one a Communist, the second a Fascist, and the third a union shop steward. The boat suddenly sinks; people on the riverbank can only watch helplessly as the men swim for shore. The Fascist keeps doing one-arm salutes at the crowd and drowns because he can't swim with only the other arm. The Communist exhausts himself shouting slogans, and slips below the water, too tired to swim. The union man swims steadily and surely, but just before he reaches shallow water, a factory whistle blows, and he drowns.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Chester Cuthbert, Margot Dame, Henry Welch, Michael Hailstone, Brant Kresovich, Ashley Parker Owens, Randall Tin-ear, Terry Jeeves