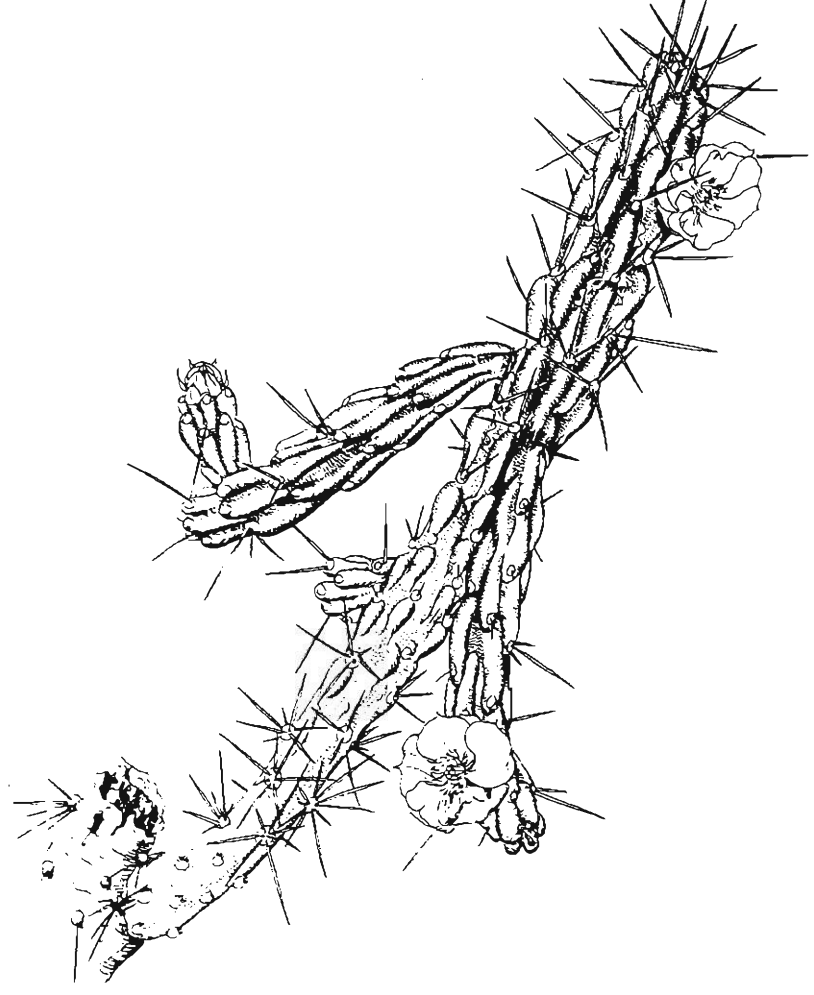


OPUNTIA

30



[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

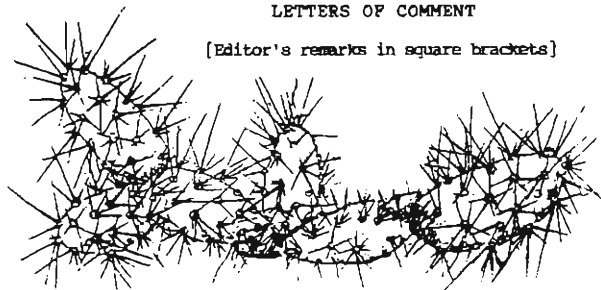
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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue.

ART CREDIT: Opuntia imbricata by Rita Weber, from the 1983 book PLANT INVADERS, published by Dept. of Nature and Environmental Conservation, Cape Town, South Africa

WORLD WIDE PARTY #4: Don't forget to celebrate June 21st at 21h00 local time by raising a glass to your friends around the world. Doesn't have to be alcoholic (especially if you have to work the next day); I prefer root beer myself. You can also have a party instead of just toasting fandom, or do some other special activity such as a one-shot zine or mail art.

NOW AVAILABLE: I recently published SEMPERVIVUM #3, a mail art assembling about constitutional reform, not only in Canada but around the world. Contributors are from Canada, Russia, Spain, England, and USA. Because this is a mail art zine, I've only sent it unsolicited to those I think might be interested and who are active in mail art. However, if you didn't get a copy and would like one, simply drop me a postcard and I'll send one with the next OPUNTIA.



FROM: Sheryl Birkhead 1996-10-26
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

Ian Gunn sure is a versatile artist. Twice I have seen the annual collection he copies and puts out for faneds to use. Always fun to look at. The Mountie depicted there reminds me of Frazier (sp?) in DUE SOUTH.

In my mid-N3F days, I was part of a story Round Robin, and it just didn't work; too many people and styles and too much time/miles between writing and comments.

FROM: Ken Faig Jr 1996-11-10
2311 Swainwood Drive
Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741

I think Harry Warner is right on the money as respects the total number of Lovecraft's letters. 50,000 is probably closer than 100,000 as a good estimate of 20+ years (1914-1937) of voluminous letter writing. About a 10% survival rate is estimated for those letters. By 2025 we will probably have a census of the surviving letters.

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1996-11-1
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

I remember participating in round robin stories, usually without completion of the project. Former Toronto fan and current Calgary resident Lexie Pakulak tried a similar story project, but called it a glitznik.

FROM: Ned Brooks 1996-10-25
713 Paul Street
Newport News, Virginia 23605

Colton's 1832 prediction about the compression of a page of literature into a period is not as radical as it sounds, and he was not foreseeing the microdot. The word 'period' at that time meant a sentence, rather than a dot at the end of it. I have seen references in the literature even later than that to "a well-rounded period", by which they meant a well-formed sentence.

One could argue that the first amateur papers were the Fugger Newsletters of 1568-1605. The Fuggers were a banking family of Augsburg. The newsletters were published in an English translation in 1924 and seem to be about anything and everything. But I see Federico Guglielmi mentions a political newsletter from the same period.

FROM: Buck Coulson 1996-10-24
2677W-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

There were perhaps a score of small presses producing SF or fantasy in print runs of 1000 to 5000 or so. Most of them died when the publisher did, or when supplies began to cost more than purchasers would pay for the books, or when the specific books

they wanted to see in print were published. You can read about them in OVER MY SHOULDER by Lloyd Eschbach who headed Fantasy Press (though his book was published by Oswald Train). For fanzine publishing, there is THE WORLD OF FANZINES by Fredric Wertham, published by Southern Illinois University Press in 1973. Wertham is better known for his diatribe about comic books; he liked fanzines, so his book on them garnered much less publicity and few sales.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr 1996-10-23
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Years ago I ran across a manuscript diary kept by a local physician in the late 18th century. In it, he speculated for his own eyes only about the possibility that living creatures too small to be seen could be responsible for many of the ills of mankind. If only he had thought a little longer about this topic he might have reviewed possible ways of destroying these tiny creatures. They were too small to be shot or hanged or knifed, he might have reasoned, but no living creature can survive immersion in boiling liquid, so why shouldn't he try to immerse his surgical instruments and bandages in water brought to a boil? He might have even thought it would help to drink boiled water after it cooled. Conceivably he could have become the means by which millions of lives would be spared from death by infection in the decades that followed. Instead the world waited for the 19th century to do something of that sort. I suspect one reason why nobody came up with the germ annihilation method sooner was the general belief that infection traveled mostly through the air. Scientists didn't realize that water, insects, and contaminated solid items were more dangerous than fetid air.

I participated in round robin audio tape groups for quite a few years around mid-century, when everyone assumed tape would replace written forms of fanac just as we're told today that the Internet will wipe out fanzines. The tapes had a bad habit of disappearing, destroying that particular round robin. A prominent fan who was an ardent collector was the main suspect. He is still occasionally heard from in fandom, and I nourish a faint hope that he will make a deathbed confession and reveal the whereabouts of this particular part of his collection. Another problem was the bewildering number of configurations of tape recorders. Those marketed to consumers ranged from half-track to quarter-track, and even a few full-track tapers were soon after the recording method became generally available. Recording speeds started at 15/16ths of an inch to 7 1/2 inches per second. Someone on the chain might not be able to hear stuff recorded at the slower speeds, and a half-track recorder might inadvertently wipe out two segments instead of one when its owner recorded his portion over that of the next person in line. Then there was cheap paper tape which couldn't be played in some machines without tearing.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Chester Cuthbert, Rodney Leighton, Joseph Major, John Held Jr, Karen Pender-Gunn, Tony Davis, Bridget Hardcastle, Olexandr Vasylykivsky

FISSION IN A RADIOACTIVE SEA
by Dale Speirs

The planet Earth was an alien planet several billion years ago, the atmosphere unbreathable by most modern life of our era. Radioactivity was much higher; two billion years of elemental decay have reduced it considerably. The Precambrian eon produced natural fission reactors, with concentrations of radionuclides hot enough to start a chain reaction. Today such a thing would not be possible; back then it was possible.

The discovery of a natural fission reactor began June 15, 1972, in France. At a uranium processing laboratory, a routine analysis of uranium hexafluoride used in French reactors showed that there was an abnormally low concentration of uranium-235. The usual concentration of this isotope was always 0.72%. The analysis showed that some ore samples had as low as 0.44%, but even more startling were samples with 0.74%. At first, it was thought to be a case of mislabeled or contaminated samples that had somehow been mixed with uranium already used in a reactor. A trace on the specimens revealed a different story. Following the trail back to the point of origin led researchers to a uranium mine at Oklo, in the Haut Ogoue district of Gabon. The deposit being mined had an unusual geological history, which had produced a natural fission reactor.

The Oklo reactor originated 1.7 billion years ago when sediments washed down into and filled depressed areas of granite bedrock. At this time the continents did not exist as we know them today; their precursors were arranged into completely different shapes. The major lifeforms were algae, and recognizable animals would not appear for another billion years. Layer after layer of sediment was laid down where the Oklo reactor was to form. After being deposited, the sediments were subjected to geological changes and became concentrated into uranium-bearing ores. The layers into which the

uranium was deposited and concentrated happened to be free of elements such as boron and cadmium, which absorb neutrons and prevent fission reactions. The sediments were overlain by clay, which trapped water in the sediments. With the greater radioactivity of those days, it was easier for the uranium ores to ignite a fission reaction.

The reactor was moderated by the water, which cooled the reaction until it heated up to form steam. When the steam formed, the reaction shut down, and did not restart until the water had recondensed. The Oklo deposits did not function as a single fission reactor. Instead, as one portion overheated and shut down, another area of the deposit would start up. The Oklo reactor bubbled as might a pot of water on the stove. These spontaneous chain reactions continued on and off for up to 70,000 years. The Oklo reactor produced plutonium as a byproduct, which decayed back into uranium-235, hence the abnormally high samples found by the French scientists. In the best proof of a natural reactor, the Oklo mine produced isotopic concentrations of cerium, samarium, europium, and neodymium that can only be accounted for by a chain reaction.

That there were other natural fission reactors besides Oklo seems probable, but the odds of finding very many are low. In the last two billion years, few areas of the Earth have escaped large-scale geological activity. Tectonic activity has destroyed much of the Precambrian record, warping and distorting the rocks considerably.

And what of natural fusion reactions? In stars, yes. On Earth, no. But wait! What if cold fusion is eventually discovered to be a going thing? It would not have to be power-source strength. Imagine water trickling over palladium and platinum crystals or nuggets of pure metal (as they are found in nature). Water contains a small amount of deuterium. A reaction perhaps?

Life on Earth tolerates the background level of radiation that it evolved with. Indeed, some lifeforms can tolerate strong exposure to radionuclides. There are presently, and have been, species which could take their own pictures with only a paper-wrapped film negative placed against them. They have the ability to live with radioactive elements in their body tissues, and apparently without serious problems.

Just north of Bombay, India, is the Tarapur nuclear powerplant, a 400-MW facility that discharges low-level radioactive liquid wastes into the Indian Ocean. The waste waters are mixed with seawater and dispersed through a drainage system just offshore. Siliceous sponges live along this coastal drainage system and filter their food out of the contaminated water. Along with the food, they also filter out assorted heavy metals such as Ni, Cr, Cd, Sn, Ti, Mo, and Zr. Their filtration does not end there, however, as they also take out the radioactive isotopes in the water. Two sponges in particular have come to the attention of scientists. Both of these sponges not only accumulate radioactive elements, but can distinguish between different elements and different isotopes of the same element.

Spirastrella cuspidifera is a sponge that accumulates only cobalt-60 and nickel-63, but not cesium-137 and iodine-131, also present in the water. Growing intermixed in the same microhabitat is another sponge, Prostylyssa foetida, which will collect only iodine-131, and not any other radionuclide. In comparing the concentration of radionuclides in the sponges against the amount present in the water, there is a difference of several orders of magnitude. The isotopes accumulated are highly concentrated above what is found in the seawater. As an example, S. cuspidifera had about thirteen times as much cobalt-60 in its body as the water. P. foetida had no detectable cobalt-60, even though the

seawater cobalt-60 was quite detectable. Although only P. foetida collected the radioactive isotope of iodine, both species of sponges had the same concentrations of stable iodine. In other words, S. cuspidifera could distinguish between the two isotopes of iodine, refusing the radioactive isotope and selecting the stable one, otherwise known as fractionating isotopes.

SF writers looking for a good story idea might wish to consider a sponge which accumulates palladium in its skeleton, then preferentially separates out the D2O from the H2O. The result, of course, is cold fusion.

Radioactive lifeforms are not confined to the more primitive orders, which are often more resistant to radiation damage. A fossil fish from Scotland, genus Homosteus, is one of the armoured fish of the Devonian period about 390 million years ago. The bones of this fish can be photographed by an autoradiograph, using only the alpha particles of the fossil to take the picture. Other fossil fish species of the same deposits, Dipterus valenciennesi and Thursius pholidotus, are not radioactive. Thus the results are not an artifact of the sediments in which they are found. Homosteus was a scavenger, and it is thought that this fish ingested radioactive particles while foraging in bottom sediments, then concentrated them into the bones and liver. The genus persisted for millions of years, so the radiation could not have been that damaging to genetic material.

That an animal or plant may be radioactive does not necessarily mean that the chromosomes will be subjected to serious damage. More important than radiation per se is the element responsible for the radiation.

Isaac Asimov pointed out that the most damaging radionuclide is carbon-14, which can be incorporated directly into the DNA of chromosomes. When the carbon-14 breaks

down, two things happen. First a blast of energy is released which disrupts the chemical bonds. Second, the carbon-14 is converted into nitrogen-14, thereby changing the chemical structure of the DNA. This type of damage is far more important than the possibility of an occasional hit by some other radionuclide decay product.

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TWO YEARS AFTER THE MILLENNIUM
by Dale Speirs

Not long after the 1994 WorldCon in Winnipeg, notice was made of a bid to host the WorldCon in Toronto in 2003. I sent in a cheque to the bid organizer Martin Miller as a pre-supporter. I'm not much for going to SF conventions, being primarily a fanzine fan, but do attend ConVersion here in Calgary out of hometown loyalty, and did go to Winnipeg because it was a chance to attend a WorldCon without the bother and expense of foreign travel. I was happy to see another Canadian bid, and therefore mailed off my cheque to Miller. I had never heard of him before, and so asked him for a few details about himself and the bid, to be known as Eclipticon. I also sent him some OPUNTIAS.

The silence was deafening. No reply to my letters, no locs on the OPUNTIAS, and the cheque was stale-dated. Was this a serious bid or had I been hoaxed?

At the end of 1996, I received another flyer for a bid in 2003. This time it was called Torcon 3, and listed a veritable Who's Who of Canfandom. The bid committee included Mike Glicksohn, the Penneys, and the Mansfields. No mention of Miller. I asked Lloyd Penney about the original bid. Was this one a continuation of Eclipticon or a new bid? Lloyd replied as follows in a letter dated 1997-1-17:

"Our Toronto in 2003 bid is not the same as Martin Miller's Toronto in 2003 bid. He started in late 1994 with flyers and postcards announcing his bid, and he gathered in the response, including a cheque from me. Friends from the Toronto Trek committee worked with him in getting hotel info. And then ... he sat on his thumbs, and did nothing. We figured that he was trying to get some indication of what support he might get from only the local fan population. Nothing happened until November of 1996, when we got a call from Ken Smookler, legal counsel for Torcon II, asking us to attend a meeting about another Worldcon for Toronto. John Mansfield, Robbie Cantor, and Bruce Farr

were there, SMOFs all, and this new bid got started. Whether or not this is the same bid as before is the most common question we've gotten so far."

The Torcon 3 bid should therefore not be confused with the Eclipticon bid. The latter, I think it is safe to say, should be considered stillborn. I sent my cheque for pre-supporting membership in to the Torcon bid. It was swiftly acknowledged with a proper receipt by Yvonne Penney.

Pre-supporting memberships are C\$20.03 or US\$15 payable to "Toronto in '03", and mailed to: Box 3, Stn A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1A2. E-mail and web addresses will follow.

Not mentioned in the flyer I have seen is the date of the Torcon bid. Let me throw in a plea that they not hold it on the Labour Day weekend, an inconvenient time for many potential attendees. I suspect Winnipeg would have had a greater attendance had it been held during the summer tourist season. The Labour Day weekend is inconvenient for students or parents travelling with school-age children, who must rush back on the Monday to be back in time. A summer con can be integrated into a vacation tour.



THE CHILDREN OF CRONOS:

Fandom in Ottawa

(Part I)

compiled by Garth Spencer

NOTICE: a fanhistory article like this is in the nature of a draft; comments and corrections are expected and encouraged. GS

(This version dated December 6, 1996.)

Ottawa, Ontario is the capital of Canada, situated (like the U.S. capital) disproportionately far to the east of the country it governs, in the region of highest population density. Yet Charles de Lint has remarked on the capital's small-town feel, in some fantasy novels set in Ottawa. (The 1991 population was just under a million. That isn't small, is it?) Part of the boundary between Ontario and Quebec is the Ottawa River, which divides Ottawa from Hull, Quebec. Ottawa is situated 399 km away from Toronto, 190 km away from Montreal, and 460 km away from Quebec City.

Eofandom

There were short-lived groups in Ottawa in the late 1940s, affiliated with the Canadian SF Association. The first Ottawa SF Society was formed in 1948 (see *Opuntia* #26, p. 15).

In the early 1960s Georgina "Dutch" Ellis moved to Ontario from Alberta, and married fellow fan Norm Clarke; they moved to Aylmer, Quebec, and later to nearby Ottawa. Norm Clarke published at least four issues of his fanzine *Honque* by 1965, and also published the apazine *Queebshots* from 1963 or '64 until 1967.

Michael McKenny notes that Norm Clarke was a founding member on July 1, 1965 of LITTLE APA, which is still going.

Gina and Norm Clarke co-published *Descant*, originally a FAPazine, which continued to be mailed to friends as late as 1973. Somehow, fanzines started referring to Gina "Dutch Ellis" Clarke as the "Duchess of Canadian Fandom", meaning (I believe) the arbiter of fannish taste. This would mean more to people if Canadian fanzines from the 1950s and 1960s were more generally available. A lot of the ambience, the flavour, of fanzine fandom is lost without the context. One of the Clarkes' children, Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, was later president of the Carleton University Strategy Club and artist for *Maplecade* and *Bardic Runes*, and is a current member of AP-Arition.

A comics club operated in Ottawa in the early or mid-1960s, when Marvel Comics brought out a new series of superhero comics. Michael McKenny writes, "This seems to have been a relatively informal group of some half-dozen early teens, all from the same neighbourhood. This suggests the possibility a number of such groups existed."

(*The Ottawa SF Statement* #208, October 1994)

Richard Labonté, a student at Carleton University, was publishing a fanzine, *Hugin & Munin*, from some time in the late 1960s, up until 1969. It is written that he introduced Susan Wood to fandom. Alicia Austin, originally a lab technician from Texas, met Rosemary Ullyot and Maureen Bourne while working in Ottawa in the late 1960s, and started a Trekzine with them while working in Ottawa. *Kevas & Trillium* lasted a couple of years. In that time Austin became a well-known and widely published fanartist. Alicia Austin left Canada in about 1970.

CANADAPA

Vaughn Fraser, a graphic arts student in Ottawa, founded CANADAPA, intended as a Canada-wide amateur press association, in 1972. It brought together some of the Big Names in contemporary fandom, not only in Canadian fandom; but over time, it appeared to bring in comics fans rather than fannish fans. (CANADAPA folded in 1984, under OE Jo-Anne McBride; Vaughn Fraser moved to Richmond, B.C. sometime in the 1970s.)

The Wizards of Beechwood

Michael McKenny writes that the "Wizards of Beechwood" group was founded July 20, 1970. One of the early members were Michael McKenny, now publishing *Bardic Runes*, a small fantasy digest in Ottawa.

The membership was inspired by Tolkien. The students who formed the group provided for seven "seats" on a Council of Wizards. In the numerous gatherings, parties, etc. that took place throughout the early and mid-seventies, the whole social circle of the official members participated, probably as many as two dozen people being involved.

All the official members and many in the wider circle were workers at the Beechwood Cemetery.

In 1974, Michael McKenny was provided with descriptions of each of five Wizards for his Wizard stories later to be published in *Maplecade*.

Several hundred high school students were once entertained by two members of this circle, one of whom is now a professional musician, singing, among other things, a song 120 lines long about Wizardly adventure on Gvihlih-hih.

Elizabeth Holden had a brief contact with at least one member of this circle. Michael McKenny had a seat on the Council (Grey, of course).

The club had other interests besides fantasy & SF, included were world federalism, chess and music. It petered out in the late '70s through the moves of many members.

(Michael McKenny, *The Ottawa SF Statement* #205, July 1994)

Elizabeth Holden has since appeared in Excalibur, the Ottawa SF Society, Ottawa Fandom Inc. and Maplecon. She was a founding member of the Lyngarde writers' group.

The Ottawa SF Society

I first read of Maplecon and the Ottawa SF Society in the mid-1970s through the fanzine library of my Victoria club. Maplecon, as I read in the *Ottawa SF Statement*, was an annual convention then being held in July. It seemed to be one of the larger Canadian conventions.

An article on OSFS' beginnings appeared in a 1987 *Ottawa SF Statement*. Marc Gérin-LaJoie wrote that OSFS "had its roots in the humungous STAR TREK conventions of the early '70s", not because OSFS was exclusively Trek-oriented but because "at the time, ST cons were the only examples of organized fandom available to [me] ..." Gary Moffat's SF bookshop, Alternatives, which opened on Somerset West, was credited as the beginning of an SF group in Ottawa; so was Oktobercon,

a small, one-day convention run out of a high school in Waterloo by Mike Wallis of Toronto (see, it is all Mike Wallis' fault!) his first such of many.

Taking note of the relative simplicity of such an

event, and gaining moral support for the idea from Guests of Honour Spider and Jeanne Robinson, StarWolf ... quickly gained the last momentum needed to bring the concept to fruition. ...

Early programming consisted heavily of introductory talks on various sides of fan activities, from film societies to costuming. The newsletter was first published after the late February "official startup" meeting with the intention of keeping the membership apprised of developments in the field

...

(Marc Gérin-LaJoie, *Ottawa SF Statement* #116, Feb. 1987)

Michael McKenny tells me that the son of one of the 1948 Ottawa SF Society members joined the early 1977 Ottawa SF Society, but had trouble convincing anyone there had been any earlier activity, so he kept quiet and eventually drifted away.

The first time I heard the origins of the current club and con in Ottawa was from personal correspondence with Marc Gérin-LaJoie, also known as StarWolf. This was, in fact, the first fanhistory published in *Maple Leaf Rag* (March 1984). This is what Marc wrote:

I founded the Ottawa Science Fiction Society back in '77; was president for two years; dropped out for a year; was vice-president back in '81; came back as president in '82; am still a member, and have been information officer, as well as newsletter editor, for the most on the former during most of that time, and editor for three years (most recent term), a few months ago).

The original membership of OSFS expanded explosively to roughly 150 in the first year. But it went down due to scholastic and job-move attrition to the 80-100 level after a couple of years, and has pretty much stayed there since.

(Marc Gérin-LaJoie, "The Ottawa SF Society", *Maple Leaf Rag* #4, March 1984)

Before a certain point, OSFS was a club of mostly like-minded people. Maplecon was their (multi)media-oriented convention.

OSFS members usually go somewhere for a dinner after the meeting. In the early days when meetings were at NRC the closest eatery was the Harvey's on Rideau St.; some of us even walked. This came to be referred to as "holding a HarveyCon" even after we switched venues. On one occasion Toh and I had some business to discuss and he suggested we meet somewhere for dinner. I said, "Fine. Which Harvey's?" I can still hear his plaintive reply, "Does it HAVE to be a Harvey's?"

(Ann Elid, "Worm's Castings", *Ottawa SF Statement* #200, Feb. 1994)

Ottawa Publications

The first *Ottawa SF Statement* was published March 1977, edited by StarWolf. Editorship rotated to Chris Hackett, Terry Newcombe, Hildegard Henderson, Jim Rea, Starwolf again, Joe Casey, and Lionel Wagner with Beulah Wadsworth.

John Mansfield attended OSFS meetings from the second one ever held, and served as the first Vice-President. Up to Oct. 1977, judging from reprinted ten-year-old minutes in the club newsletter,

John Mansfield was vice-president of the Ottawa SF Society. He resigned in Oct. 1977 to work on a wargaming con.

(*Ottawa SF Statement* #124)

(John Mansfield, e-mail, Sept. 1996)

In June 1977, Charles Saunders founded *Stardock*, the club fanzine, and edited it for two years; it was taken over by Jeff Cohen in 1979.

Stardock was to have been the "bonus" for being a full member. It never was and it was as much or more an anthology as a fanzine. It was succeeded by *Maplecade* and later *Cascade*, edited by Sansoucy Kathenor Walker.

(Ann Elid, "Worm's Castings",
Ottawa SF Statement #200, Feb. 1994)

There were 6 *Maplecaedes* and 3 *Cascades* published between 1981 and 1986. The editor was Sansoucy Kathenor (that last, a pseudonym for Walker), who still lives just south of Ottawa. She is the leader of the Lyngarders (This name from Lyn Saunders and Hildegard Henderson, whose place was the usual meeting location in the early years), which she founded in January 1980. This is a writers' workshop which meets monthly. Janet Reedman [formerly of Victoria, B.C.] had a story in *Maplecade* 6.

(Michael McKenny, personal communication, June 27, 1994)

Sansoucy Kathenor/Walker, started *Cascade* as a fictionzine; she started offering a special *Maplecade* issue for Maplecon preregistered members. *Maplecade* had been produced in a digest-

size, photoreduced format. The two eventually merged into *Cascade*, an annual featuring SF, poetry, fantasy and art, plus a few science articles. Featured writers have included Marianna MacDonald, Charles Saunders, Elisabeth Holden, Michael McKenny, Barry Blair, Hal Clement and Larry Niven.

In 1985 the digest began offering payment on acceptance at \$5 per page or per illustration, plus complimentary issues. Unfortunately, due to increasing workshop and writing commitments, Sansoucy Walker found it necessary to suspend *Maplecade* in 1986.

First Contact

From about 1980 on, at least, the *Ottawa SF Statement* had the format described by Robert Runté in 1989, comparing the approaches of different faneditors on a fanzine panel:

... I did reflect later that there were two distinct approaches to editing represented.

On the one hand, Wagner and (Steve) Forty adhere to the 'print-everything-you-get' school, which emphasizes club participation and a pragmatic approach to logistics. Wagner argued, for example, that by having his contributors submit their own typed copy, he not only eliminated the tedious task of typing up each issue, but assured his contributors complete editorial freedom. Similarly, while Forty did retype submissions, his goal was to get as many club members involved as possible.

Skeet, on the other hand, writes much of the issue himself, based on information submitted. For him, editing implies more than the mere collation of other people's material, requiring not only the editor's active intervention, but the imposition of

high standards in the selection of what gets published.

I would argue that the appropriate approach depends entirely on the nature of the zine in question. I agree with Wagner and Forty that a club newsletter belongs to all the members and should therefore act as their forum, even if this occasionally means including material which is not entirely up to standard. On the other hand, genzines, personal zines, and the like should be a reflection of the editor's taste and abilities, and therefore requires a rather strong editorial presence.

(RAR, *I'm Not Boring You Am I?* #7, fall 1989)

It's hard to explain the charm of the scrappy early *Statements*, if the first thing you see is the scores of different typefaces, signs of struggle with the mimeograph or copier, and the complete lack of consistent text margins. I guess you have to feel, as I do, that the newsletter in the mailbox is a new toy to play with, a thing to mine for bits of news and for funny articles. Every issue of OSFS had original amateur art on the cover, and small fillos scattered throughout; letters were often signed with pseudonyms, Ann Elid, The Ol' Pefesser, things like that. It was apparent from the text and graphics in OSFS that there was a strong comics and gaming interest represented in OSFS. There were also reports on the regular social meetings ("Who Cares"), the Lyngarde writers' group, "Maplewe'en", etc.).

A friend educated in book design, who briefly wrote fanzine reviews for *The Maple Leaf Rag*, wrote:

editor Joe Casey [ca. Jan. 1985] ha[d] a few problems in producing OSFS. Primarily, that his typing is one sustained typo. Now, I'm not the type

who sees a single typo and flips out ... But the very number of them (combined with rather shoddy photocopy as repro) gives one the impression that this is a low-class, who-cares type of zine.

Often, though, even the worst repro can be salvaged by interesting contents. I have, in my collection, several ditto zines that survive only on the strength of their writers. ...

(E.B. Klassen, *Maple Leaf Rag* #11, Jan. 1985)

In 1983 it seemed that OSFS concentrated on costumes and fantasy. An editorial in one issue had sworn up and down that OSFS was being taken over by an evil sinister Arthurian-fantasy cabal. Things like that tended to create misinformation.

Maplecon

Maplecons appear actually to have been *fall* conventions from the first. Maplecon I was held Oct. 13-15, 1978 at the Skyline Hotel. Keith Laumer was a late addition to the GoH lineup, "coming up from Florida at his own cost." Preregistration stood at 120 a month in advance. I haven't tracked down other details, such as the site or Guests of Honour.

Back in 1978, I decided the club needed a 'direction'. After our first year (quite successful), it was getting on time to try our hand at a con. A 150-member club needs something to tie it together from year to year, and to draw 'new blood'.

By the dust off our scales and fur off our backs - not to mention L*U*C*K - it worked. See, we drew attention to ourselves, and other people grew interested.

The next year, the local comics club joined in, and it became a joint venture.

In a sense, Maplecon was partially responsible for OSFS never quite getting back up to the old level of membership.

(Marc Gérin-LaJoie, "The Ottawa SF Society",
Maple Leaf Rag #4, March 1984)

It is of interest to note that, after a certain point, dead dog parties at Maplecon were closed, relaxed parties, restricted to the people who worked on the con, and conversation there centred on how things went and how to correct things that went wrong.

Now, the con overshadows lesser efforts such as OSFS monthly meetings, and the latter don't get the same coverage as they once did. Also, people who might once have spent their sparse shekels on club memberships (be it OSFS or the Star Trek club, or the comics group, etc.) now wait to spend it on Maplecon.

Maplecon also drains away enthusiastic help and promoters and supporters whose efforts could help maintain OSFS in the public eye.

The fun, if I may term it that, began in 1980, with the Maplecon III committee. By then, Maplecon also took in the local Star Trek group, the gamers, the video shows, etc.

At this point, the Maplecon Committee had two co-con-chairmen, one representing the comics club, one from the SF side of things.

When the time came for OSFS to pick its con chair, they made THE blunder in the club's history. I had

been making discreet noises about possibly being interested in getting re-involved again (but got ignored). Instead, they put someone else in the post ... someone from out of left field whom no-one else had ever heard of before. ...

I *did* wind up getting involved, after all. I took over three posts a few weeks before Maplecon III, one of which was press liaison/publicity, when we found out that the guy who had been in charge of that post had done virtually *no work at all*, and that with the con a month away! And the co-chair (who was supposed to have helped run Worldcons, or even chaired one or two, depending on when you asked him) was blissfully unaware that his con had been getting no publicity!

With this kind of thing occurring, is it any wonder that the Maplecon committee were getting a bit nervous about the kind of "help" they were getting from the OSFS side? Unfortunately as OSFS representative, this co-chair was the go-between from con to club. With an imagination such as his, you can well guess the tensions and problems that arose. Mix in a rather stubborn, somewhat prideful, no-nonsense exec. member (no, not me) and a few worried MC individuals, and you have the recipe for an OSFS meeting I'd rather forget.

The con went off after all (drawing over 800 people; not bad for a month's advertising, what?) and was something of a success. But, thanks to the co-chair never getting around to doing a proper budget, the con went under for over a thousand dollars (the only one of the five MC's that wasn't financially

successful). The clubs covered the debts, but major wounds and scars were created at the meeting, and due to the aftermath of Maplecon III.

Remember the no-nonsense exec. member? Well, he wanted to fight Maplecon's name going to the committee and their getting total, legal independence. Now, I'd *created* OSFS and, to an extent, Maplecon, but I wasn't quite so vehement about it.

So at Maplecon IV, the problem hadn't been quite resolved yet. Most of the then-current exec. got re-elected, including the politico. In came '82, and things came to a head almost immediately.

In January the exec. decided to have the newsletter go bimonthly, as an economy measure. Since the newsletter serves to let members know of coming club meetings and functions, letting the membership know of the plan to go bimonthly by simply not publishing a newsletter that month was not a terribly bright idea. They next lost the club's P.O. box through mismanagement.

Add disintegrating relationships with other groups in the area, losing track of zines and clubs to trade with due to foulups in the membership listings, interminable business meetings at the monthly meetings, and many other things ...

That was when membership took a nosedive - we usually run memberships from one January to the next and people were staying away in droves. Someone mentioned to a friend, at a Who Cares party, how fed up they were and were not going to

renew. The friend suggested, if you don't like it, do something.

It was mentioned that there was a clause in the constitution of OSFS which permitted non-confidence votes to be taken.

Most of the problems had arisen as a result of members of the current exec's failure to acknowledge the wishes of the club membership in the past year, e.g.: no politicking, no (or less) business, let Maplecon have their way, etc. Add carelessness to the list and it was decided to publish an evaluation in the newsletter and give the exec. a chance to explain their policies and actions over the preceding year.

The punchline was that the exec. simply couldn't satisfactorily explain away so many foulups and bad blood. They were voted out on a non-confidence motion. In March, a new exec. (with one leftover from the old) with myself at the head took over and membership increased. It has remained relatively steady since then (despite a changeover in exec. at the end of 1982).

... Meetings are taking place semi-regularly between reps of the different clubs to ensure no disputes can be allowed to develop again; in fact, they have held joint events to publicize each other's groups, and to try and boost memberships from a wide variety of sources.

(Marc Gérin-LaJoie, "The Ottawa SF Society",
Maple Leaf Rag #4, March 1984)

I later received some corrections and additions to StarWolf's account.

Sandra Hollingshead (Maplecon 1 & 2 co-chair and #3's guest liaison), and Suzanne Robinson (Maplecon 2 & 3 head of registration and #4 co-chair), had this to say:

We take particular exception to Marc's statement ... regarding Maplecon 3's debts: "The club covered the debts ..." StarWolf is mistaken. OSFS, when presented with its half of the debt for which it was legally responsible, told the committee it did not have the money. The International Comic Collectors Club was in a state of disarray and, with their president's business going bankrupt, was likewise unable to fulfil its commitment. The burden then fell upon the con committee for Maplecon 4 (largely holdovers from the previous year). These people put their own money into paying off these debts, many of whom were never paid back.

This situation, where OSFS reneged on its legal and binding financial commitments, is what finally resulted in the incorporation of the convention as a separate entity. Those people on the con committee decided that if they were to be responsible for the debts, then they should be in complete control of the convention, including the choice of the co-chairs. They were not prepared to take responsibility for someone else's mistakes.

To the credit of OSFS, most members agreed with this position and were very surprised with the vehemence expressed by the Maplecon committee ... the OSFS membership could not understand what all the commotion was about. Once the dust had cleared, and the bloodletting had ceased, the

separation was reasonably amenable (sic); however, the relationship between the two organizations was damaged.

Maplecon perhaps does draw support away from OSFS, but Maplecon's strength should not be seen as the major factor in the decline of OSFS. Many members of the con committee were fully participating members of OSFS (and still are); they simply had to make a choice as to the direction in which they would concentrate their efforts.

One of the initial functions of Maplecon was to act as a promotional activity for OSFS. However, the child soon outgrew the parent, and after many growing pains became an adult itself. OSFS should be proud to have produced the largest regional convention in Eastern Canada.

(Suzanne Robinson & Sandra Hollingshead,
Maple Leaf Rag #7, July 1984)

The Maplecon III Spider-Robinson-Heart-Attack Rumour:

The Spider-Robinson-Heart-Attack-Rumour was just that. Spider was accidentally listed in the Maplecon program book as a guest when in fact he had only been suggested as one. Whether he hadn't been asked or had been and declined I don't know. At Maplecon someone asked the co-chair why Spider wasn't present and was told "he had a change of heart" or some such phrase. That someone took it seriously [sic] and called Spider long distance to offer sympathy. Spider was on the road at the time and Jeanne Robinson sort of panicked at the call, hardly surprisingly. It took half the weekend to sort

this out and it left a bad taste. It was a large part of the reason that the Robinsons didn't come to later Maplecons.

(Ann Elid, "Worm's Castings",
Ottawa SF Statement #200, Feb. 1994)

Maplecon 4

Maplecon 4 was held Oct. 23-25, 1981 at the Skyline Hotel. Guests of Honour were Joan Vinge, Frank Miller, Lynn Abbey, and Chris Claremont; FanGoH was Elisabeth Pearse (of Toronto's Draco Film Society). At this time Maplecon evidently appealed to some fans rather than others, as Bill Marks reported:

Most of the fans I like to see at conventions wouldn't dream of going to a Maplecon. I went because, through various wheeling and dealing, I had my trip, room, and membership paid for. Never one to turn down a free lunch, I went, determined to have a lousy time.

Friday lived up to my expectations 100%. Absolutely no planned functions before 7 p.m. When things finally started to pick up around 7:30 I went down to the huckster's room to sell a few copies of *Miriad* ... In two hours I had sold 3/4 of the magazines I had brought, my first indication that I should treat the weekend as a business trip instead of as a con. The final straw that ruined the party aspect of the con was that the consuite was closed all night because, in their wisdom, the concom had decided to store the con's mimeo and computer equipment in the consuite. I should have gone with my first instincts and gone over to Hull that night instead.

It was late Saturday afternoon, after a successful day in the huckster's room, that I began to discover the secret ... Once I realized that there were others there who saw SF as a business as well as a ~~responsibility~~ hobby, I knew there were people there I could relate to. Despite the dry consuite (which closed at the ridiculously early hour of 2 a.m. so that "the gophers could go sleep") ... I had a great time meeting and partying with such people as Galad Elflandsson, John Park, Charles Saunders, Gene Day, Denis Beauvais, Jim Frenkle [sp?], Chris Claremont, and Dan Day. I also managed to get four manuscripts and two art portfolios out of the deal. ...

(*New Canadian Fandom #3*, Jan. 1982)

There has been occasional confusion as to OSFS' current address. Ann Elid explains why:

After OSFS lost its post box in 1982, Marc G.-L. volunteered to share his post box. This was never wholly satisfactory as neither party was ever sure who had what mail. OSFS got their own box later and changed to a private address when postal station J went commercial in late 1993.

(Ann Elid, "Worm's Castings",
Ottawa SF Statement #200, Feb. 1994)