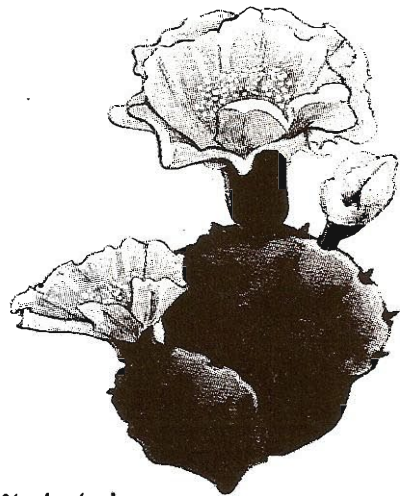

PELEE ISLAND WINERY

2002

Gewürztraminer

VQA Ontario VQA



13.0% alc./vol.

750 ml

White Wine / Vin Blanc

Product of Canada / Produit du Canada

OPUNTIA

53.1A

ISSN 1183-2703

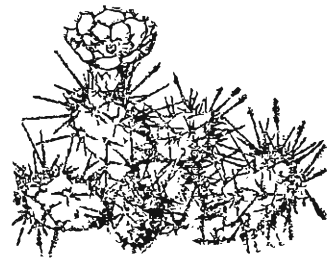
OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines.

COVER ART CREDIT: The wine label is courtesy of Ross Priddle, Medicine Hat, Alberta.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Scott Crow, Ken Faig Jr, Lloyd Penney, Bill Bridget, Phlox Icona, Ross Priddle, Terry Jeeves, Chris Dodge, Joseph Major, Chester Cuthbert, Ficus Strangulensis, E.B. Frohvet, John Hertz, Henry Welch, Kate Lopresti, John Held Jr, Violet Jones, Giovanni Strada, Paula Jesgarz, Matei Monica, Cassidy Wheeler, Dewitt Young, Roberto Sechi, Elizabeth Osborne, Chuck Stake, Russ Forster, Gene Ray George, Sheryl Birkhead, Babynous Cult, King Wenclas, Billy McKay, Ned Brooks, Jae Leslie Adams, Guy Miller, Ruggero Maggi, Joel Cohen, Karen Johnson, A.Langley Searles

**LETTERS
TO THE
EDITOR**
[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



FROM: Joseph Nicholas
15 Jansons Road
Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England

2003-12-10

I want to thank you for the very elaborate stamps that appear on the envelopes in which our copies of OPUNTIA arrive. I am sure you are choosing them deliberately. They are carefully soaked off, dried, and passed on to the Friends of Bruce Castle Museum for resale in packs of foreign stamps.

[If I know the recipient collects a theme or otherwise can use commemorative stamps, I try to place them on my envelopes. Any reader who collects a stamp topical can let me know. I can't guarantee I've got the stamps but I'll do my best. If any readers have undamaged commemorative stamps on paper clipped from their envelopes (except flag or other dull stamps), send them to Joseph and he will forward to the Museum for their good works.]

CHEAT THE PROPHET

compiled by Dale Speirs

G.K. Chesterton, in the opening paragraph of his 1904 novel THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL, writes about a game called 'Cheat the Prophet': *"The players listen very carefully and respectfully to all that the clever men have to say about what is to happen in the next generation. The players then wait until all the clever men are dead, and bury them nicely. They then go and do something else. That is all. For a race of simple tastes, however, it is great fun."*

"The guitar's all very well, John, but you'll never make a living out of it."

Mimi Smith, to her nephew John Lennon, sometime in March 1957.

[unsigned editorial] (1920-01-13) His plan is not original. NEW YORK TIMES, page 12

"That Professor Goddard, with his chair in Clark College and the countenancing of the Smithsonian Institution, does not know the relation of action to reaction, and of the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react, to say that would be absurd. Of course he only seems to lack the knowledge ladled out daily in high schools."

"But there are such things as intentional mistakes or oversights, and, as it happens, Jules Verne, who also knew a thing or two in assorted sciences, and had, besides, a surprising amount of prophetic power, deliberately seemed to make the same mistake that Professor Goddard seems to make. For the Frenchman, having got his travelers to or toward the moon into the desperate fix of riding a tiny satellite of the satellite, saved them from circling it forever by means of an explosion, rocket fashion, where an explosion would not have had in the slightest degree the effect of releasing them from their dreadful slavery. That was one of Verne's few scientific slips, or else it was a deliberate step aside from scientific accuracy, pardonable enough in him as a romancer, but its like is not so easily explained when made by a savant who isn't writing a novel of adventure."

Anonymous (1969-07-17) A correction. NEW YORK TIMES, page 43

"Further investigation and experimentation have confirmed the findings of Isaac Newton in the 17th Century and it is now definitely established that a rocket can function in a vacuum as well as in an atmosphere. The TIMES regrets the error."

[Three days later, men walked on the moon.]

“For instance, it is not inconceivable that a system could be developed that would permit any one of many million telephone subscribers to dial any other one directly without the aid of an operator and with fully automatic registration of all data needed for billing. The system would be so intricate, however, that it is most unlikely that the necessary information for operation could be placed in the hands of each user or that they would be able or willing to operate such a system.”

Dr. Frank B. Jewett, President of the National Academy of Sciences USA, in 1946.

“Oil is now the lifeblood of our civilization. Estimates vary as to how long the world’s total supply will last; hardly anyone gives it less than 20 years, but hardly anyone now believes it will last much past the year 2000. ... By the 1990s, there will be permanent worldwide depression which will make the so-called Great Depression of the 1930s seem like the Good Old Days.”

Science fiction writer Norman Spinrad in a fact article published July 1975 in ANALOG. The fallacy was that he was thinking of \$2/barrel oil, which is indeed scarce, but Alberta alone has a century’s worth of \$25/barrel oil in the Athabaska tar sands.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don’t send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

FAPA #265: (Details from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Modern zine publishing as we know it today began in the middle 1800s as cheap, home-use printing presses became available to the general public. Zinesters developed a distro method called the amateur press association (apa) where members sent x number of copies of their zine to a central mailer (also known as the official editor). The zines are collated into bundles, and each member gets back one bundle of everyone’s zines. There is usually an annual fee to cover postage. Apas have a minimum level of activity required, such as publishing 8 pages a year. It must be emphasized that apas are not for passive subscribers; you must commit to the minimum activity level or you will be booted out. The oldest apa, the National A.P.A., was founded in 1876 and still going.

Fantasy A.P.A. is now in its 67th year and bundle #265 had 28 zines with 293 pages. FAPA deals with science fiction and fantasy, but topics are wide and varied, as is the membership

(some are wide, and some are varied). Apas are communities in the Papernet.

Sugar Needle #23 and #24 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 1174 Briarcliff Road #2, Atlanta, Georgia 30306) Devoted to candy, with lots of weird foreign candy wrappers illustrated. Anyone for Zeeuwse Roomboter Babbelaars?

Tortoise #17 (The Usual from Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32/33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England) Perzine with family news, a story about coffee grinding the alternative way, reviews, and letters of comment.

Head #6 (The Usual from Doug Bell and Christina Lake, 12Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8QA, England) Fannish doings down the Bristol way, both SF and soccer, a trip report to Greenland (don't stop moving or the mosquitoes will get you), comics review, flying cheap, and letters of comment.

Spoliation Report #22 (Mail art Usual from Ficus strangulensis, Route 6, Box 138, Charleston, West Virginia 25311-9711) Compilation of items submitted for a project entitled "Deliberate destruction or alteration of a document".

This Is What Happens When You Don't Eat Your Vegetables #1 to #12 (The Usual from Michael Morse, 10871 Roseland

Gate, Richmond, British Columbia V7A 2R1) Mini-comics with on-the-spot sketches of Vancouver's SF fandom.

The Thought #135 and #136 (The Usual from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona 85318-0760) Lots of political commentary, letters of comment, and some reviews. Not for the complacent.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V8#3 and #4 (The Usual from Southern Fandom Confederation, c/o R.B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Drive, Madison, Alabama 35758-1064) News and notes about SF clubs in southern USA, zine and convention listings, convention reports, and letters of comment.

Hobnail Review #1 (US\$15 for three issues from Hobnail Press, PO Box 44122, London SW6 7XL, England) Review of small press periodicals and a few zines. Essays on soccer fanzines, a crusader for truth in vanity publishing, and editors' horror stories about how not to submit manuscripts.

Snake Den #20 and #21 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Apazine for Lovecraft enthusiasts. #20 examines the zines published in the 1880s by Lovecraft's uncle-in-law Edward Gamwell. #21 discusses Lovecraft's involvement in zine politics from 1931 to 1936.

Modest Proposal #2 (US\$3 from Ron Babcock, Box 3211, Tempe, Arizona 85280) Devoted to the milieu of stand-up comedy, with interviews with comedians and some mildly amusing bits and pieces.

Erg #162 to #164 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ) Genzine with articles on movie continuity lapses, aviation cul-de-sacs, and WW2 stories.

Shouting At The Postman #51 (The Usual from Ken Miller, Box 101, Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940-0101) This issue is taken up by big-game hunting in the editor's basement, as he goes after the crafty squirrel. And finally succeeds. Having just done some game hunting myself (a mouse got in my basement), I can relate to this epic.

It Goes On The Shelf #25 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Reviews of older books that deserve renewed attention and obscure tomes that will never make the bestseller list.

Handschrift #4 und #5 (Mail art Usual from Roman Castenholz, Triftstrasse 47, 53919 Weilerswist, Deutschland) Mail art assembling of handwritten responses.

The Knarley Knews #100 to #103 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine with commentary on fanzine reading, house and yard renovation, the great state of Iowa, some brief trip reports, and letters of comment.

Musea #123, #124 and #127 (The Usual from Tom Hendricks, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) Miscellaneous commentary on art, architecture, and politics, as well as short stories.

The Sticker Dude Times #2 (Mail art Usual from Joel Cohen, The Sticker Dude/Ragged Edge Press, 267 Broadway, New York, New York 10007) This issue is taken up by an account of a gathering of mail artists that became a bit more memorable than expected, as it was held in New York City the weekend of the great blackout of 2003. Guests arriving from out of town just as the power went out had everything from a 40-block walk to sitting in the dark inside the Holland Tunnel. Many of the events had to be revised, but everyone adapted to the excitement and a good time was had by all.

Shot By A Ray Gun #6 (The Usual from Billy McKay, Box 542, North Olmstead, Ohio 44070) This issue is a compilation of artwork McKay has done for other zines. Perhaps SF zine editors should be hitting on him for something different than the usual Rotsler fillos.

Bildstoerer #8 (Mail art Usual from Roman Castenholz, Triftstrasse 47, 53919 Wellerswist, Deutschland) In German; mail art compendium and texts.

Cherry Monocle #11 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 1174 Briarcliff Road #2, Atlanta, Georgia 30306) Collage art, a poem, and some Arto Mat creations.

Floss #4 (The Usual from Lilian Edwards, 39 Viewforth, Edinburgh EH10 4JE, Scotland) The sex issue, with vagina monologues, online dating, and convention reports.

Statement #307, #310, and #313 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 456 Gladstone Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5N8) Clubzine with news and notes, especially of the recently concluded World SF Convention in Toronto.

For The Clerisy #50 to #52 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068-0404) Commentary, reviews of older books, zine listings, and letters of comment.

Word Watchers (Spring 2003) (The Usual from Jeanette Handling, 2405 Sanford Avenue, Alton, Illinois 62002) A zine for those interested in neologisms, the finer points of English as it is wrote good, and various cartoons on the use and abuse of language.

Murderous Signs #7 (The Usual from Grant Wilkins, Box 20517, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 9P4) Literary zine with an essay on the Iraq war, poetry, and fiction.

Plokta V8#1 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, England) Collective perzine, with accounts of faux Italian restaurants, the village of The Prisoner, Lord of the Rings slash fiction, and letters of comment.

Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #10 and #11 (The Usual from Garth Spencer, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) Perzine with items about the editor's life, fannish news out on the coast, and convention-running notes.

Kairan #7 (Mail art zine trade from Gianni Simone, 3-3-23 Nagatsuta, Midori-ku, Yokohama-shi, 226-0027 Kanagawa-ken, Japan) Nicely produced zine in card covers, in English by an Italian living in Japan. If that isn't international, what is? The theme of this issue is the state of mail art in Latin America, and the hopes of mail artists there who were freed of brutal dictatorships only to be crippled by hyperinflation and rampant unemployment. Some of the authors write of the 1960s and 1970s, when mail artists were 'disappeared' by Peronists and generalissimo regimes. For North Americans and western Europeans to think about the next time they feel hard done by because their car insurance went up \$100.

Covert Communications From Zeta Corvi #11 (The Usual from Andrew Murdoch, 9211 Glendower Drive, Richmond, British Columbia V7A 2Y4) Checklist of dozens of SF awards and lots of letters of comment.

Bibliozone #71 (Mail art Usual from John Held Jr, Box 410837, San Francisco, California 94141) Thin zine that specializes in the bibliography of mail art publications. This issue lists the zines of Lon Spiegelman, with annotations about the the contents and quotes therefrom. Useful reference work for mail art historians.

Zine World #19 (US\$6 cash from Zine World, Box 330156, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37133-0156) 64-page reviewzine with columnists, lots of zine reviews. The next FACTSHEET FIVE.

Lamplight #13 (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Thin apazine with convention report of the National Amateur Press Association. This zine organization was founded in 1876 and has been in continuous existence since.

Mimosa #30 (US\$4 North America, US\$7 overseas, from Rich and Nick Lynch, Box 3120, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20885) 66 pages in card covers. This is the final issue of this SF fanhistory zine, with a wide variety of reports of olden days in fandom.

Let's Kiosk! (The Usual from Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England) One-shot perzine but basically a continuation from the old INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GARDENER. Accounts of foxes and allotment gardens, touring the Baltics and Tunisia (where the major tourist attractions are leftover Star Wars movie sets), life in London, and New Labour politics (aka crypto-Tories).

Probe #120 and #121 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine with news and notes, letters of comment, and lots of short stories. The covers are always excellent because Roberto Schima is one of the best artists around. He should be winning Hugos every year.

Fantasy Commentator #55/56 (US\$8 from A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, New York 10708-5909) A definitive reference for SF historians. This issue continues with a look at female SF writers from the 1930s to 1960s and tries to dispel the myth that there were none before feminist writers flowered in the 1960s. One hopes that the academic litcrit crowd will notice and revise, but it is unlikely they will do so just because the facts get in the way. Also an installment of the late Sam Moskowitz's account of what it was like to edit an SF magazine, where the realities of printing deadlines and profits get in the way of prima dona artists and eccentric publishers.

Xeens And Things #16 (The Usual from James Dawson, Box 613, Redwood Valley, California 95470) Zine reviews and letters of comment.

Xerography Debt #11 and #12 (US\$5 from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 963, Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078) Reviewzine which uses multiple reviewers. Also some essays on the history of zines, not the usual “Zines were invented in the 1970s” or “Zines were invented in the 1930s” but interesting sidelights in the history of the Papernet, such as zines produced in American WW2 internment camps for pacifists who refused to serve, and Mussolini’s early career as a zinester.

The Zine Dump #4 and #5 (The Usual from Guy Lillian, Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153-3092) Reviewzine with lots of capsule listings of zines, mostly SF.

Chunga #5 and #6 (The Usual from Randy Byers, 1013 North 36 Street, Seattle, Washington 98103) Essays on the novels of James Blish and world expositions, She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed (of African fame, not Rumpole), convention and trip reports, alternative history, and letters of comment.

The Fossil #317 (US\$15 from The Fossils Inc., c/o Gary Bossler, 145 Genoa Avenue SW, Massillon, Ohio 44646) Devoted to the history of amateur journalism. The issue at hand discusses an

1885 photo of female zinesters at a Boston convention, and provides brief biographies of some of the young woman (one of whom got married at the convention to a fellow zinester!). I’ve often wished someone with access to all these original photos, zines, and other documents would write a basic history of zine publishing by women in the second half of the 1800s, and aim it to the young women of today. In those days it was far, far more daring and sometimes dangerous for an unescorted young female to indulge in such things as zine publishing and traveling to conventions, than it is today for a riot grrl to pierce her lower lip and prance down the street in her underwear on her way to the dance club. Those who think zine publishing began in the 1970s could use a basic introduction to the zinedom of a century ago.

Warp #55 (The Usual from Montréal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2X 4A7) Clubzine with colour cover and well illustrated throughout. News and notes of Montréal fandom, essays on a 1635 novel that was a contributing source to ERB’s Tarzan and the history of beer in SF. This club is predominantly media fans, who are fond of making short videos as club projects. The latest effort is a movie trailer for BEAVRA, about a giant beaver thawed out by global warming in the Arctic and which goes on a rampage through Toronto. What could be more Canadian than a gigantic beaver in Lake Ontario snapping off the CN Tower as it is attacked by Avro Arrow fighter planes?

My Expedition To The North Pole #1 to #9 (The Usual from Babynous, 110 ½ State Avenue, Bremerton, Washington 98337-1241) A series of 4.25" x 11" zines with collage photos and text telling the story of the narrator's unsuccessful attempt to visit Santa Claus by land. From Washington state to the North Pole by land therefore means mostly Canadian travel, but the narrator does not travel through the Canada I know and love. What with flying fish and a rather unusual extension of divorce property division law, this para-Canada is evidently in a different universe. However, knowing what life is like among the rednecks of rural areas and northern bush towns, this epic is not too farfetched.

File 770 #142 (US\$8 for five issues, from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine of SF fandom, with news and notes, convention reports, and letters of comment.

Alexiad V2 #3 to #6 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, handicapping SF awards, convention and trip reports, and letters of comment.

Drawings Of The Vancouver Goth Scene #1 to #7 (The Usual from Michael Morse, 10871 Roseland Gate, Richmond, British Columbia V7A 2R1) Mini-comics with on-the-spot sketches of Vancouver's gothics.

MarkTime #70 and #71

(The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 6753, Fullerton, California 92834) Perzine with accounts of garlic festivals and transit fans, a look back on 2003, and letters of comment.

The Free Press Death Ship #3 (The Usual from Violet Jones, Box 55336, Hayward, California 94545) Reviewzine with lots of zine listings, letters of comments, and rants.

Grackle #1 (The Usual from Malinda, 1703 Southwest Parkway, Wichita Falls, Texas 76302) Perzine about life as a bicycle-riding vegetarian neo-flatlander in Texas. Not quite as dangerous as foot patrol in Iraq but just as hard on the nerves.

Amapra #18 and #19 (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Thin apazine with brief account of Florida trip.

Banana Rag #31 (Mail art Usual from Anna Banana, RR22, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Lengthy account of her recent trip to Europe and the mail/performance art and artists met with along the way. An interesting aspect is that she also reports on how artists store and catalogue their mail art collections and what arrangements some of them have made for posterity to preserve the mail art.

The New Port News #210 and #211 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with miscellaneous short commentary. #210 has a list of the editor's antique typewriters in his collection. Don't forget that a century ago the typewriter was every bit as cutting edge as wireless PDAs are today, although I imagine it will be easier for a future generation to store PDAs in a collection. #211 has a thread of commentary on anti-gravity Cavourite.

Outlaw Mutation Boogie #61 (The Usual from Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England) Zineish commentary, non-zineish commentary, snippets about life as an IT man in HM Customs and Excise, and fun with video conferencing (nobody showed up for the meeting at the other end, leaving a roomful of London bureaucrats staring at a remote broadcast of an empty meeting room in Manchester).

Lessons In Divination #4 (Mail art Usual from Babynous Cult, 110 ½ State Avenue, Bremerton, Washington 98337-1241) Mail art zine with collages and assorted text.

Twink #30 (The Usual from E.B. Frohvet, 4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott City, Maryland 21042) Final issue of this SF genzine, with convention reports, an essay on feminism in Heinlein's stories, various reviews and listings, and letters of comment.

Since I can't loc a defunct zine, I thought I'd comment here on a paragraph that caught my eye. It reads: "*Buying things becomes increasingly difficult/annoying. The bored phatic "How are you today?" has been supplemented by the bored, phatic "Did you find everything you wanted today?" ...*" I thought this was just a Calgary thing but obviously it must be continent wide if the clerks in Maryland are asking the same questions as Calgary shopgirls.

I assume managers are latching onto the same fads. I'm sure this one is in one of those self-help books. (And why do bookstores put up signs identifying the self-help section? Doesn't that negate the whole point of it? But I digress ...) When a clerk asks me if I found everything I was looking for, I just mumble incoherently and she proceeds to ring up my purchases without listening. Actually, I prefer it this way. Several years ago when the phrase first became a fad in Calgary, I made the mistake of saying 'no'. The clerk immediately rang for a stock boy to search out the missing item, which was missing because the shelves were bare and had a not-in-stock sign on them. I had to wait ten minutes while the spotty-faced lad wandered about in vain in the back rooms, while several other customers in line behind me glared at me for holding up traffic. The other phrase "Have a nice day!" was briefly supplanted by a variation "Have a fantastic day!", but mercifully both seem to have died out.

Thoughtworm #10 (The Usual from Sean Stewart, 1703 Southwest Parkway, Wichita Falls, Texas 76302) Perzine of a librarian who has just moved to a new job in Texas and tries to settle in as a flatlander. Among other things he learns that putting up anti-war signs in rural Texas is only for the bravest of the brave (sort of like putting up a sign in Calgary that reads "Gay vegetarians for Kyoto Accord"). Also book and zine reviews.

MAIL ART LISTINGS.

The Penguin: (Jeroen ter Welle, Boeninlaan 393, 1102 TL Amsterdam, Netherlands) Theme on the penguin, size A6 (14.8 x 10.5 cm). Send 16 originals or copies, documentation to every 15 contributors. No deadline.

Comforters: (Lois Klassen, Box 74540, Vancouver, British Columbia V6K 4P4) Send me quilt squares (6" x 6") to be used on the top of comforters that I am making for displaced people (refugees). The comforters, also known as blankets or quilts, will be distributed by the Mennonite Central Committee, the Red Cross, and the Red Crescent societies. The squares can incorporate artwork but they must be washable and durable; poly-cotton is the best material. Send as many as you want because each comforter needs 130! I will return photos and periodical documentation about the project.

Mouse Age:

-12-

(Christa Behmenburg, Max Planck Str. 64, D 85375 Neufahrn, Deutschland) When Douglas C. Engelbert from the Stanford Research Institute in California developed in 1968 a wooden box named "X-Y position indicator for a display system" nobody was interested in this useless toy. Two young Swiss engineers, Daniel Borel and Pierluigi Zappacosta, found Logitech in 1981. They took up Engelbert's idea and transformed his clumsy box into a handy little animal, tapered to a point with a fat back part and a long tail. The computer mouse was born. Later on Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, and finally Bill Gates, helped the plastic rodent to spread all over the world. Today no business, no communications, no information can do without it. It has changed the world for better or worse. But how tragic; with development it is going to lose its tail. Within the next decade it will probably have died out.

What do you think about the computer mouse? How has it influenced you and our world? Save it for the future by your art work! For a documentation and exhibition of cartoons, caricatures, photographs, paintings, and collages of the computer mouse, I need contributions from artists all over the world. The exhibition will take place in Berlin in 2005. Deadline is April 2004. All techniques. Size: postcard. No return, no jury, doc to all.

Think Here: (Jose Roberto Sechi, Av. M29, N° 2183, Jd. Sao Joao, Rio Claro SP - 13505 - 410, Brazil) Mail art magazine. Drawing, design, painting, engraving, gluing, rubber stamp, writing, poetry, visual poetry, photograph, etc.. In black and white, please, maximum 13 cm x 8 cm (horizontal format). Theme free, no return, no jury, no deadline, documentation to every 18 participants.

Brain Cell Fractal: (Ryosuke Cohen, 3-76-I-A-613, Yagumokitacho, Moriguchi-City, Osaka 570, Japan) Send 150 stickers or some other type of small mail art image. These are collated into a collage on an 11" x 17" poster, and a copy sent back to each contributor, along with a list of names and addresses of those participating.

The Tree Of Poetry: (dott.ssa Tiziana Baracchi, Via Cavallotti, 83-B, 30171 Venezia-Mestre, Italy) The Tree of Poetry is a very uncommon species of plant; it is an American maple which is in Venezia-Mestre in 83/B Cavallotti Street, Itinerari '80 Centre. Giancarlo Da Lio dedicated this tree to poetry in a lot of artistic performances. Below its fronds, sheets with verses, in plastic envelopes to preserve from rain, hang down. The poets read their lines in the shade of the tree. Itinerari '80 is an artistic movement; from different trends many excellent artists gather strength around Giancarlo Da Lio. Moreover, as well as they work, they must manage their work making use of everything and

everywhere. Well, it is necessary to show works not only in the official galleries, but above all in the alternative art spaces: where people go and come, on the road, in the shops, in the gardens too; so the Tree of Poetry was born and is growing. Do you want to send your mail art or mail poesy?

Postcard Mail Art Project: (dott.ssa Tiziana Baracchi, Via Cavallotti, 83-B, 30171 Venezia-Mestre, Italy) Technique: free. Size: 15 cm x 10 cm. No deadline.

Collage d'aujourd'hui: (Dianne Bertrand, Art terre, 9109 Deschambault, Saint Leonard, Quebec, H1R 2C6) Mail art collage.

Artist Trading Cards: (Chuck Stake, 736 - 5 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1P9, Canada) ATCs are works of art created on 64 mm x 89 mm card stock. They are the same size as hockey trading cards, but the similarity stops here. Cards may depict anything, be 2-D or 3-D, they may be original, a series, an edition, or a multiple. Cards are signed on the back by the artist and, if necessary, an edition number is included. ATCs are paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubberstamp works, mixed-media, etchings, found images, recycled works of art, assemblages, etcetera. The only stipulation is that the card fits in the standard plastic sheets that hockey cards are normally stored within.

LIBRARY REPORT

by Dale Speirs

The University of Calgary Library, which I visit once a week (the stacks are open to the general public), has in recent years suddenly become a major resource in science fiction.

I consider myself fortunate to be able to use the Library even though I have never been student or staff (I graduated from the University of Alberta in Edmonton). My writings, with their plethora of literature cited from obscure or ancient periodicals and books, were composed from countless hours of research in the stacks, and, more recently, subscription databases such as JSTOR, Science Direct, EBSCO, and other sources of peer-reviewed data.

In 2002, the Library received the Bob Gibson collection of about 30,000 pulps and books, with many rarities. Gibson was a palaeofan who was active in Canadian zinedom in the 1940s and 1950s; he died in 2001 at age 92. The collection is still being unpacked and sorted, and two specialist book dealers are helping with the assessment of the collection. One of the dealers is Grant Tiessen (Pandora Books, Manitoba) who may be known to some of you as a mail-order SF dealer. The Library has already begun to use some of the pulps in research projects, and it appears that the collection will be actively mined, not just buried in Special Collections.

News of the Gibson donation triggered a donation from another collector. The complete works of Jack Vance are also being added to the shelves. Other existing specialty collections include the Harlequin books and a collection of recreational mathematics books and games. -14-

I have always been worried about libraries and museums that don't have the funds to properly look after their collections, so over the past two years I have donated \$10,000 to assist the U of C Library, 75% of which for the Gibson collection and 25% for the microfilm collection (where I have spent countless hours researching postal history).

Some SF clubs raise money for food banks or other charities. Commendable, but the poor will always be with us, and money donated there is gone in the wind. A library leaves a legacy to future generations. I suggest that SF clubs and conventions concentrate on supporting SF collections in public or university libraries, and encouraging the use of those collections for research projects. The latter is particularly important, for special collections should be actively used, not stored as artefacts.

Something which I wish more zine collectors would do is to actually mine their collections for useful information and write histories or other essays therefrom. SF and apa zinedoms are reasonably self aware of their pasts, but many zinesters are

ignorant of their history. I doubt that any riot grrls are aware of their predecessors in the late 1800s, when it was far more daring for a woman to publish a zine or attend a convention unescorted than it is today to get a lip piercing or wear a bra on top of a blouse, not under. Most music zinesters believe zinedom began in the 1970s, and mail artists trace their zinedom to the 1950s, but I know there had to be predecessors in those subzinedoms.

A number of SF fans have produced what they call indexes but are actually just checklists of zines. I am doing a genuine subject index (just Canadian zines) but can only hope to do a tiny percentage of the Canuck zines. Who will be brave enough to prepare a subject index of American or British zines? Garth Spencer writes fanhistories and Davida Gypsy Breier has been publishing zine histories in her zines. MIMOSA has published personal reminiscing about SF fandom, and there are some apa histories. But much remains to be done.

In recent years, old zines have been posted on Websites such as efanazines and fanac.org, but I don't see people using them as a resource. With the availability of such zines, one would expect to see histories citing title and page, but most of what I notice is just the "I seem to remember reading somewhere that ... " type of writing. You will have noticed that my essays cite references, not only to prove that I did my homework but to provide a starting point for readers who wish to delve further into the matter.

A SUDDEN AND GREAT FLOURISHING OF LIFE.

by Dale Speirs

In the space of five million years, between 543 and 538 megayears ago, the diversity of life forms in the fossil record suddenly increased so much that the transition is called the Cambrian explosion. Fossils older than 534 megayears are rare, and few in diversity. Fossils 538 megayears or younger abound both in number and diversity. All the major phyla of animals and plants suddenly appeared in the fossil record after that explosion. It is not because of incomplete fossil collecting, for enough Precambrian and Cambrian sites have been sampled that we know the explosion is not an artefact of collecting. There was a very real and sudden change in life on Earth during that five million years. Palaeobiologist Andrew Parker considers this question in his book **In The Blink Of An Eye** (2003, Perseus Books). He takes a long and meandering route to his final conclusion, with much foreshadowing, alternating with an equal amount of digression. For those who know little about palaeobiology, this extended information dump will be necessary to understand how Parker derived his results. Having studied the subject in university, and being the son of a field palaeontologist (my mother had a half-dozen fossil species named after her), I found myself speed-reading through large chunks of text, but the average reader will need to take it slowly. Parker writes to inform and builds his thesis from the ground up axiom by axiom.

He first separates what most scientists have conflated into a single explosion in diversity, firstly the expansion of life from a handful of phyla such as bacteria and algae into 38 or more phyla such as crustaceans and worms, and secondly the abrupt appearance of hard parts and armoured ornaments. He makes a convincing case that the origin of the diverse phyla predates the Cambrian explosion and involved a long, slow process of evolution of internal organs and body plans. It was the sudden appearance of hard external parts, which can evolve quickly, that marks the Cambrian explosion.

The trigger for the Cambrian explosion was a proto-trilobite evolving eyes. Before that, everything was blind and predators could only locate prey by scent or by bumping into them. Scent can be suppressed by prey, but vision is independent of the target. Parker demonstrates that eyes could evolve from eyespots or photosensitive sensors in less than 400,000 generations even by the most conservative estimates. For an annually breeding animal that would be less than 500,000 years, a blink of the eye in geological time.

It was not increased oxygen or other environmental change that triggered the Cambrian explosion. It was, for the first time in history, a predator that could actively seek out and target prey, instead of bumping along through the sediments. This triggered an arms race, and within a short time the vast majority of animal

phyla had to develop eyes in retaliation or become bit players like corals or sponges. Eyes in the form of light sensors had existed before the Cambrian, but they were directly connected to organs such as locomotor muscles and only reacted instinctively. True eyes require vision, which requires a brain to collect and process the light signals and then order muscles to react. That was a co-evolutionary process. As brains developed in primitive animals to handle all the sensory cells, they reached the point where they could organize and process the sensory input. This in turn favoured animals with better sensors. With time, and in less than 400,000 generations, the co-development of eyes and brain triggered the onset of vision.

Predators with eyes cut a wide swath through the blind animals, which had to develop their sensors into eyes or go extinct. This arms race also improved the survival rate of animals that had hard skins or spiky ornaments, and soon shells were the standard defense. Eyes meant brains, and brains meant faster evolution than had existed in the previous two billion years. Life had been evolving very slowly and with little effect for the 2.5 gigayears before the Cambrian explosion, but in the next 538 megayears the pace of evolution would accelerate exponentially to culminate in bipeds whose vision could now take them into outer space. And while the pace may seem slow to humans, we will be colonizing space even faster than the blink of an eye.