

# OPUNTIA

## 63.1E

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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. 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, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

FROM: Mark Plummer  
59 Shirley Road  
Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England

2007-02-16

You express concern for the general robustness of the efanazines.com Website, and specifically make comparison with "*one central SF fan Website that collected thousands of historical photos, then lost them all because the idiot running the site never backed up the hard drive*". I think I know the site you mean, and yes, they were foolish not to have any back-up provision, which I think they freely acknowledge, but you extrapolate that efanazines.com is similarly only "*a hard disk crash away from oblivion*".

I think that's an unfair slight on Bill Burns who maintains the site. I asked him [about his backup strategy]: "*All my Websites originate on my PC at home and are then uploaded to my Webserver PC, which lives in my nephew's rack in a commercial data centre in Manhattan. All the live Website files, along with all the source material such as original images and documents, are also backed up to a second PC here every night, and once a week additionally to a rotating off-site backup, which Mary then takes*

*to her office. ... If I get tired, I could pull the plug, but more likely I would turn the site over to someone else. Even if I were to close down the site, most of the material would remain accessible at archive.org ... My nephew has instructions and funds to continue the registration of my domain names and maintenance of my Web server, so my sites would at least continue indefinitely as of their last revision."*

[Since I made my comments in OPUNTIA 63.1A, I've had a change of heart, caused by having to move an elderly uncle (for whom I am his guardian) into long-term care and clean out his apartment. I had to decide what to store in my basement and what to discard, and along with my late mother's material, now have a full basement. The next generation in the family is not interested in piling up such things. The kids don't own CDs because they have all their music on iPods, and their instinct to use the computer instead of reading a book. It opened my eyes, as a result of which I am now scanning family documents and photos for them, since that is the only manner in which they will be interested in storing their past. As much as I believe in the value of artifacts and original documents, my opinion doesn't matter anymore. The next generation will discard them as space-wasters, just as I discarded Uncle Norman's VHS cassettes and reel-to-reel tapes. I am forced to hope that jpegs and pdfs will remain as universal formats still readable a hundred years from now. Otherwise, the past will be lost.]

FROM: Jeanette Handling  
1905 Southview Court  
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650-3525  
2007-02-13

The only obsolete format I got caught on was laser disks, those large disks that resemble huge CDs. I had the system hooked up to my stereo speakers, and the sound and picture were outstanding. It really did create a home theatre experience. Now that I'm retired, however, I am tired of big-screen TVs and complicated stereo hookups. I did cling to my laser disks. Why should I buy my favourite movies again in a different format? I guess I'll watch them as long as my laser disk player works and then get rid of them.

FROM: Kris Mininger  
Calle Obispo 4 bajo  
Plasencia 10600, Caceres, Spain  
2007-02-20

I recently DJed in a bar for the first time. All a DJ needs these days is to make an MP3 playlist at home, then show up at the bar, put the MP3s into a laptop, and click to play. Then he can stand around and drink with the customers all night. Every now and then somebody would request a song. I'd go find the CD, play the song, and then turn the show back to the laptop.

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

2007-03-13

[Re: obsolete music formats] I never transferred my music collection from vinyl to cassettes. There was something about 12" LPs which kept me buying them right up until the point when they vanished from the record shops. I remember the moment very well. In late December 1992 I was casing the folk section of Tower Records in Piccadilly Circus and mentally listing stuff to buy the following month when the sales kicked in. When I went back in January 1993, everything had gone, replaced by CDs. We thus jumped straight from vinyl to CDs.

[And now, even Tower Records is gone. I have noticed that when I am browsing the CDs in Calgary music shops, all the customers are Baby Boomers. Teenagers, in Calgary at least, are at home downloading MP3s.]

2007-06-01

It's difficult to avoid the shadow that Sherlock Homes casts over popular fiction, which, inter alia, must have infuriated and frustrated Doyle. He wanted to be seen as a serious writer of serious fiction. Nobody but dedicated students of his oeuvre can now recall or will have ever read any of his other works.

Now that you've completed this excursion into Sherlockiana, what are you going to do with the accumulated wordage? Are you intending to submit it for publication as a chapbook? Will it merely be submitted as an unpublished manuscript-in-progress to a university archive?

[I deposit copies of OPUNTIA into the National Library of Canada, so the Sherlockiana essay will be preserved, and I also have saved the file (and backed it up on CD-RW) in the unlikely event that some other zine publisher might want to reprint it and has the room to do so. However, I am under no illusions that review articles are deathless pieces of literature. The Sherlockiana essay was written over a long period of time, and I did not re-read all my pastiches in a day or two. I am currently and very slowly writing similar essays for Western cowboy fiction, Stephen Leacock, and fiction about university life, but these will be a long time coming yet. Such essays are not time-sensitive.]

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

2007-02-22

[Re: 8-track fans] It is always interesting to read about any group of devotees who might be brought together to call themselves a fandom.

We're far from being the only ones, and when I read about others, I understand SF fandom a little bit more.

[These days it is easy to set up the most atomized fandom interest group on the Internet. The serious ones though, will be the ones that have real conventions, real publications, and real organizations. Dr. Robert Runté, Professor of Sociology at the University of Lethbridge and a gaffiated SF fan, refers to fandoms as avocational subcultures, a more dignified term for learned journals.]

2007-05-05

[Re: Sherlock Holmes] Some years ago now, my wife Yvonne and I were members of the Bootmakers of Toronto. Just for the record, the large Holmes collection at the Toronto Reference Library downtown is in room 221B.

Found out a while ago that Calgary will host the World Fantasy Convention in 2008. I don't think we'll go, but Calgary is quickly becoming a hotspot for big genre conventions. I imagine that after Montréal has their shot at it, Calgary would be the next logical choice for a Canadian Worldcon bid. Who knows?

[Not I, but then again I am not involved in Calgary SF fandom, being too busy with my duties on philatelic convention committees. I suppose that if the local SF cadre can successfully

carry off the WFC in 2008, and keep the local convention going, they might have a chance for the Worldcon. Hopefully this would happen in the distant future when the oil boom finally moderates and life in Cowtown gets back to some semblance of normality.]

FROM: Brant Kresovich  
Box 404  
Getzville, New York 14068-0404

2007-02-26

My father was a jazz fan and had lots of 33-1/3 rpm records. I still have about 9' of them in my residence, which I still play now and then. I never ever bought an 8-track cartridge. What turned me off was not so much the ka-chunk of the player, but the plasticity of the medium. The plastic was ugly, ungainly, and just crappy to the touch. Not like a record; flat, shiny black, slightly flexible in many cases but inflexible in others. For a long time the cold sliminess of the plastic of PCs turned me off and kept me a Mac guy. I still use cassettes for my pronunciation class. Students look at them askance.

2007-04-14

[Re: Sherlock Holmes] I have read a collection of Doyle's best non-Holmes short stories, which involve ghosts, mummies, and other uncanny beings and doings. In the stories, Doyle almost

always explains too much, not leaving much if anything to the imagination. The other paradox in the short stories is that the ingenious plots hold our interest but the endings don't have any genuine surprises.

Doyle's style also stood in contrast to other "serious" writers that I began reading at 13 or 14, like Stevenson. Doyle's style is vigorous, clear, and readable. He obviously had no literary pretensions and was never brainwashed by "fine writing". He was also good at evoking atmosphere and a sense of place, with the obvious examples of the foggy streets in London and the moors.

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead 2007-03-02  
25509 Jonnie Court  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

Is the Calgary World Fantasy Convention professionally run? I believe it is; if not, I wonder if the team planning for 2008 is local? If the latter is the case, then it sounds as if you have a healthy local fan base.

[I'm not on the committee but I have every confidence in them. They are old-guard conrunners who have put on two decades worth of local conventions and have volunteered at Worldcons and other big events elsewhere. The hotel is brand-new, located

in the very heart of the downtown core, and is immediately adjacent to an LRT station and major bus transfer stops. I advise anyone thinking of coming to the convention to book early. Calgary is a boomtown, and you may have difficulty booking a room at the last minute. Both the skiing season and the winter drilling season will be underway (Calgary is Canada's petroleum capital), so there is no real off-season.]

FROM: Joseph Major 2007-02-26  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040

[Re: French book about H.P. Lovecraft] You note that Michel Houellebecq quotes passages from French translations of Lovecraft that do not seem to be in the original. In a discussion of the Chinese SF market, I ran across the statement that often the translator rewrites the story in the course of the translation. Then I read "The Wizard Of Peng-Shi Angle" by Fredrik Pohl, retranslated by F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre. Originally it was "The Wizard of Pung's Corner". MacIntyre didn't check the original story, deliberately. This led to some problems in rendering names. I wonder what squamous, rugose, and cthonic realities retranslations of those Lovecraft stories might evoke, and would our brains deliquesce and run out our ears in the process?

[I've read a fair amount of fiction translated from foreign languages into English, but hesitate to review it because if the story goes poorly, I never know if it was the fault of the author or the translator. Sometimes it is possible to tell if several stories by the same author were put into English by different translators.]

2007-04-17

[Re: Sherlock Holmes never having said "Elementary, my dear Watson." in the original canon.] That line is from William Gillette's play. He had Doyle's permission to do as he pleased with the character.

The Carolyn Wheat story, with Holmes being put through the grinder on the witness stand, is a point that writers never seem to get to. Note that most of them end with the criminal confessing, a confession which would be thrown out of court in the USA (no Miranda).

[The Miranda caution wasn't around in the Victorian era, but both British and Canadian police have long had to give cautions "Anything you say may be taken down and given as evidence against you in court." Nonetheless, a Victorian lawyer would be able to cut an extracted confession into mincemeat if, as so often happens in Sherlockiana, there is no corroborating evidence.]

FROM: Ned Brooks  
4817 Dean Lane  
Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720

2007-02-17

There was an earlier portable player, the wire recorder. The one I have is only marginally portable; it has a handle on the case but weighs about 40 lbs. The Germans made pocket wire machines. I used to see them occasionally in flea markets. The Lovecraft fan Ray Zorn sent me a shoebox of his wire recordings. I don't know if the wire recorder was ever tried in a car. It would not have been much affected by bumps or moderate vibration, as the mass of the short segment of free wire is very low compared to the tension.

FROM: John Hertz  
236 South Coronado Street, #409  
Los Angeles, California 90057

2007-04-04

History is full of moments when some technology or practice that had been scorned, perhaps nearly obliterated, is by some turn of events recognized as valuable, perhaps now costly because of its discard or destruction. The lesson cannot be to throw nothing away; perhaps it is to cultivate a sense of history.

**I Also Heard From:** Mark Strickert, C.Z. Lovecraft, John Held Jr, Martha Shivvers, Ross Priddle, Anna Banana, Peter Netmail, Gianni Simone, Ken Bausert, Phlox Icona, Jennie Hinchcliff, Carolee Wheeler, Joel Cohen, Ficus, Don Mabie, Vincent Romano, Randy Robbins, Chester Cuthbert, Christine Baese, Henry Welch, Ken Faig Jr, John Puig, Dan Sutherland, Ryosuke Cohen, Buffy Key, Franz Zrilich

## **WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION 2008**

Calgary will host the World Fantasy Convention the weekend of October 31 to November 2, 2008, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the downtown core. Attending membership is C\$115 or US\$100 until September 30, 2007. Cheque, money order, Visa, or Mastercard accepted (credit card charges will appear as Sentry Box on your monthly statement). The mailing address is World Fantasy 2008, c/o The Sentry Box, 1835 - 10 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta, T3C 0K2. The Sentry Box is Calgary's oldest SF and gaming store, and has long been a strong supporter of local conventions.

## **ZINE LISTINGS**

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overcas), 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. SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive, a genzine is a general zine]

**EOD Letter #3 and #4** (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Lovecraft zine with good content. Issue #3 is devoted to an analysis of the 2006 Sotheby's auction of letters and manuscripts of H.P. Lovecraft. Realizations ranged from \$5,400 to \$45,000, indicating that Lovecraft collectors are no longer just convenience store clerks living in basement suites but well-to-do serious collectors. #4 discusses the feuding of the post-WW1 era among zine publishers, which makes any of the modern feuds look like a tea party at the vicarage.

**Tortoise #23** (The Usual from Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32-33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England) Doings and goings-on in Shrewsbury such as a medieval fair, the Darwin Symposium (Shrewsbury was his hometown), a trip to Tasmania, how to braid things, and letters of comment.

**Probe #131 and #132** (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) SF clubzine with trip reports, reviews, and lots of short fiction.

**Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V8#12** (The Usual from R.B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Drive, Madison, Alabama 35758-1064) SF newszine of goings-on in southern USA fandom, with convention reports, reviews, and letters of comment.

**The Fossil #332** (US\$15 per year from The Fossils, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan, Denver, Colorado 80209) Devoted to the history of zines since the late 1800s, and a very substantial publication it is. Articles in this issue run the gamut from pre-WW1 to post-WW2, with biographies and histories. The feuding between zinesters circa WW1 and the 1920s shows that there is no new thing under the sun or in zinedom.

**Plokta V12#1** (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, England) Genzine with assorted fictive pieces, yet another Ikea saga, and letters of comment.

**Statement #346 to #349** (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) SF clubzine with news, letters of comment, and feature columns. There is a strong emphasis on astronomy in the columns.

**The Ken Chronicles #3** (The Usual from Ken Bausert, 2140 Emma Drive, East Meadow, New York 11554-1120) Perzine; this issue is an account of Ken's genealogical research. He is tracking down the addresses where his parents and grandparents lived to see if the houses are still standing. As might be expected, some of the neighbourhoods have changed, and some street names and community names are almost forgotten now.

**Off-Line #40** (The Usual from Claire Cocco and Vincent Romano, 35 Barker Avenue #4G, White Plains, New York 10601) Perzine; this issue is taken up entirely by an account of the editors' wedding commitment ceremony, something apparently halfway between a traditional marriage ceremony and common-law cohabiting.

**Vanamonde #668 to #687** (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly single-sheet zine with commentary on a wide variety of subjects. I was interested to read of the zinester who had a non-competitive event medal from the 1932 Olympics. I too have an Olympic medal, from the 1988 Calgary games. One side is identical to the athletes' medals and the other side honours those of us who were volunteers with a minimum number of hours and a certain level of responsibility. It is the same size and cast as the competitive medals but without the clasp and ribbon, which is



why no one has seen me wear it to SF conventions or zine fairs. I was a publications editor for the Olympic Arts Festival.

**Musea #154 to #156 and CD #3** (The Usual from Tom Hendricks, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) Adventures in reading, as Hendricks discusses series and other books worth reading. #156 is an epic poem about life in an astronomical observatory. The CD is a collection of Hendricks's songs. He performs regularly in a theatre box office.

**The New Port News #232 and #233** (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with comments on a variety of subjects.

**Warp #66 and #67** (The Usual from Montréal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2X 4A7) SF clubzine with news, convention reports, fan fiction, and an ongoing series about ancient Egypt.

**Alexiad V6#1 and #2** (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Genzine with lots of book reviews, candy bar reviews, and letters of comment.

**Farmer's Daughter #2** (The Usual from Christine Baese, Box 624, Northville, Michigan 18167) Perzine by a dairyman's

daughter, with explanations of how cows are milked and other aspects of farming. Also a thoughtful essay on urban sprawl, one of the greatest enemies of agriculture. Speaking as the son of a rancher, I quite enjoyed this zine.

**Word Watchers (2007 Winter)** (The Usual from Jeanette Handling, 1905 Southview Court, Jacksonville, Illinois 62650-3525) Etymological zine devoted to chronicling the latest slang and neologisms. The latest issue includes words such as Plutoed (to be demoted, as the planet Pluto was in 2006) and "low food security" (the official USDA description for starving people).

**Murderous Signs #14** (The Usual from Grant Wilkins, Box 20517, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1A3) Literary zine with a reprint of a 1929 essay by Frederick Philip Grove on the value of art, and various poems. Unfortunately, there are also 15 wasted pages of the old wheeze of re-photocopying text until the nth generation is no longer legible. It wasn't art the first time it was done 40 years ago, and it still isn't today.

**File 770 #74** (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine of SF fandom, including who died and who had babies, convention reports, and a detailed report about how a British SF convention was killed off by Internet nitpickers.

**Banana Wings #29 and #30** (The Usual from Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Musings on fandom, the current state of SF writing, an application of psychology to the Gormenghast novels, movie portrayals of the Roman Empire, and letters of comment.

**Challenger #25** (The Usual from Guy Lillian, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, Louisiana 71115) 75-page zine with articles on SF literature, convention reports, bookshops and homemade towers, the canals of Mars, criminal trial reports (Lillian is a Public Defender), and letters of comment.

**The Knarley Knews #122 and #123** (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Genzine with essays on a variety of subjects and lots of letters of comment.

**BCSFazine #406 to #408** (The Usual from British Columbia SF Association, Box 15335, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1) SF clubzine with club announcements, letters of comment, and space-fillers.

**Ethel The Aardvark #129** (The Usual from Melbourne Science Fiction Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) SF clubzine with club news, hoe to be a quizmaster, reviews, and letters of comment.

### **Banana Rag #35 (Supplement)**

**-10-**

(Mail art Usual from Anna Banana, R.R. 22, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Bananas in the news, particularly the B.C. government's push to publicize good nutrition by having each Ministry adopt a fruit or vegetable. The Ministry of Finance chose the banana as its symbol. Your tax dollars in action.

**Xploited #1** (The Usual from Kathleen Neves, 2600 - 18 Street #9, San Francisco, California 94110) The theme for this issue is the San Francisco transit system, with anecdotes from various contributors about riding the buses.

### **ZINE REVIEWZINES**

The following zines are all review zines. There isn't that much overlap between them, since everyone in the Papernet has a different node on the network, and thus gets a different set of zines in trade.

**Zine World #24** (US\$5 cash from Box 330156, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37133-0156) Reviewzine with news of zinedom and hundreds of zines listed. Those who say that Papernet zines are dead should have a look at this.

**Xerography Debt #21** (US\$3 cash from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) Reviewzine with multiple reviewers. Also commentary on the recent collapse of book and zine distributors in the USA, leaving many small-press publishers on the hook for unpaid deliveries. It illustrates an important point for zinesters who want to sell their zines wholesale, and that is to never, ever, under any circumstances, ship your zines on a sale-or-return basis, because you will be caught out on the wrong side of the ledger sooner or later. Even the multinational corporations like Tower Records are falling like autumn leaves, so don't expect to beat the crowd.

**The Zine Dump #15** (The Usual from Guy Lillian, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, Louisiana 71115) Reviews of SF zines.

**Narcolepsy Press Review #1** (The Usual from Randy Robbins, Box 17131, Anaheim, California 92817-7131) Assorted zine reviews, clippings, and biographical notes.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Beware Of Cat** (2007, hardcover) by Vincent Wyckoff is a book of reminiscences by a letter carrier in Minneapolis. Wyckoff had been telling friends and family for years of anecdotes about his

mail route, and was finally convinced to write them down for publication. Wyckoff writes of run-ins with assorted animals, not all of which were bad; most were friendly. This includes the time he thought a homeowner's sign "Beware of Cat" was just a joke, and found out the hard way that felines can be vicious as well.

Like most letter carriers, he kept an eye out for elderly or infirm people who might need help. He attended a block party on his route, and none of the others recognized him out of uniform. He delivered a much re-routed 1976 letter from Saigon that finally reached its recipient 14 years later, a Vietnamese refugee who had never bothered to tell the post office her forwarding address because she thought all her family were dead. He watched the neighbourhood change, as retirees moved on to nursing homes or the graveyard and were replaced by young families.

This book is not a major tome on postal history or an expose of the USPS but makes for pleasant spot reading.

**Gold Diggers Of 1929** by George Fetherling (2004, trade paperback) is a look at the start of the Great Depression in Canada at the time of the 1929 stock market crash. The Crash was not the sole cause of the Depression but it was the most conspicuous. There have been many books about the American stock market crash, and of the Canadian suffering during the decade that followed,

but few about the involvement of Canadian stock markets at the time of the Crash. The Canadian experience was not a mirror image of what the Americans went through. Unlike the 31,000 banks in the USA, Canada only had 10, with most of the capitalization belonging to the top four or five. Canadian banks did not speculate in stocks or accept stocks as collateral for loans, as did their American counterparts, and thus we did not see bank runs or failures.

In both countries though, speculators, mostly average citizens who had no business being in the market, bought stocks on margin from brokers. Margin buying means putting down \$1 cash for each \$100 of stocks purchased (or whatever limit the broker imposed; there was no universal standard), and paying off the \$99 owing after the stocks had risen far enough to make a profit. The margin was known as call money, and the interest rate charged by the broker varied. If the stocks dropped in value, the speculator was instantly liable for the unpaid balance. If not forthcoming in a day or so, the broker would sell the stocks and any remaining debt was charged at the call money rate, sometimes as high as 15%. It was a good way to lose the farm and suck money out of the economy.

Prior to the Great Depression, Montréal was the financial capital of Canada, but since then Toronto has taken over. The financial district is centered on Bay Street, the Canadian equivalent of Wall

Street. There were differences in Canadian speculation compared to the USA. On the prairies, citizens usually gambled in wheat futures at the Winnipeg Commodities Exchange. Eastern Canadians preferred mining stocks on the Toronto exchange, many of which were salted mines or else mines that only existed on paper. Most promoters, however, had the decency to at least start the mine shaft for a few metres, if only so they could put photographs of miners hard at work in their brochures.

The stock market took the blame in both countries, but the roots of the Great Depression extended into several different areas. Agriculture was too efficient and productive, in particular causing a glut of wheat worldwide. Canada, more so than most countries, depended heavily on exports of wheat, and the prairie provinces were essentially a one-crop economy.

Until the NAFTA treaty was signed in the 1980s, Ontario and Québec manufacturers were protected from foreign competition by high tariffs. This was a double-edged sword, because when the prairie farmers stopped buying manufactured goods, there was no alternative market. An international trade war made the Great Depression worse than it would have been otherwise.

When the American stock markets crashed on October 29, 1929, one of the problems that aggravated the situation was that so many

millions of shares were traded that the stock tickers couldn't keep up. Reports of share sales ran a half-day behind, so no one knew what the market price was. This problem was felt in Canada because many corporations were interlisted on both the Toronto and New York stock exchanges. Stock owners had to guess what was going on, which only heightened the panic.

The Great Depression lasted longer in Canada than the USA because our small population and lack of economic diversity made it difficult to re-start the economy. It wasn't until Canada entered World War Two on September 3, 1939, that the economy improved. This made a generation of Canadians cynical about how there was never enough money for social services but always enough for wars.

## SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

noticed by Dale Speirs

Bryant, E.A., and S.K. Haslett (2007) **Catastrophic wave erosion, Bristol Channel, United Kingdom: Impact of tsunami?** JOURNAL OF GEOLOGY 115:253-269

*“On January 30, 1607, a massive wave from the ocean surged up Bristol Channel in the United Kingdom, flooding more than 500 km<sup>2</sup> of lowland along 570 km of coast. It killed 2000 people and*

*is considered Britain's worst natural disaster on land. The wave occurred on a fine day and surprised inhabitants. Contemporary descriptions of the event have many of the characteristics of accounts of recent catastrophic tsunamis. Geomorphic evidence for tsunamis in the channel can be found in the form of transported and imbricated boulders, bedrock sculpturing on coastal platforms and ramps, and, at isolated locations, wholesale erosion of the coastal landscape. Tsunami wave height increased from 4 m in the outer Bristol Channel to more than 6 m within the inner Severn Estuary. Theorized flow velocities range between 11.8 and 18.1 m s<sup>-1</sup>, increasing up the estuary. Under topographic enhancement, these depths and velocities may be sufficient to generate bedrock sculpturing, which is indeed observed at a few locations on rocky headlands in the channel. Interpolation of the amount of cliff retreat at Dunraven Bay indicates that an imbricated boulder train was deposited by tsunami sometime between 1590 AD and 1672 AD, a time span that encompasses the January 30, 1607, event.”*

Summerhayes, C., and P. Beeching (2007) **Hitler's Antarctic base: the myth and the reality.** POLAR RECORD 43:1-21

*“In January-February 1939, a secret German expedition visited Dronning (or Queen) Maud Land, Antarctica, apparently with the intention inter alia of establishing a base there. -13-*

*Between 1943 and 1945 the British launched a secret wartime Antarctic operation, code-named Tabarin. Men from the Special Air Services Regiment (SAS), Britain's covert forces for operating behind the lines, appeared to be involved. In July and August 1945, after the German surrender, two U-boats arrived in Argentina. Had they been to Antarctica to land Nazi treasure or officials? In the southern summer of 1946–1947, the US Navy appeared to 'invade' Antarctica using a large force. The operation, code-named Highjump, was classified confidential. In 1958, three nuclear weapons were exploded in the region, as part of another classified US operation, code-named Argus. Given the initial lack of information about these various activities, it is not, perhaps, surprising that some people would connect them to produce a pattern in which governments would be accused of suppressing information about 'what really happened', and would use these pieces of information to construct a myth of a large German base existing in Antarctica and of allied efforts to destroy it.*

*Using background knowledge of Antarctica and information concerning these activities that has been published since the early 1940s, it is demonstrated: that the two U-Boats could not have reached Antarctica; that there was no secret wartime German base in Dronning Maud Land; that SAS troops did not attack the alleged German base; that the SAS men in the region at the time had civilian jobs; that Operation Highjump was designed to train*

*the US Navy for a possible war with the Soviet Union in the Arctic, and not to attack an alleged German base in Antarctica; and that Operation Argus took place over the ocean more than 2000 km north of Dronning Maud Land. Activities that were classified have subsequently been declassified and it is no longer difficult to separate fact from fancy, despite the fact that many find it attractive not to do so.”*

Speirs: That last sentence sums up the response of conspiracy theorists to any facts that get in their way.

Edwards, C.J., et al (2007) **Mitochondrial DNA analysis shows a Near Eastern Neolithic origin for domestic cattle and no indication of domestication of European aurochs.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON 274B:1377-1385

*“The extinct aurochs (*Bos primigenius primigenius*) was a large type of cattle that ranged over almost the whole Eurasian continent. The aurochs is the wild progenitor of modern cattle, but it is unclear whether European aurochs contributed to this process. To provide new insights into the demographic history of aurochs and domestic cattle, we have generated high-confidence mitochondrial DNA sequences from 59 archaeological skeletal finds, which were attributed to wild European cattle populations*

*based on their chronological date and/or morphology. This, in combination with our new finding of a T haplotype in a very Early Neolithic site in Syria, lends persuasive support to a scenario whereby gracile Near Eastern domestic populations, carrying predominantly T haplotypes, replaced P haplotype-carrying robust autochthonous aurochs populations in Europe, from the Early Neolithic onward. During the period of coexistence, it appears that domestic cattle were kept separate from wild aurochs and introgression was extremely rare."*

Speirs: In other words, the first European dairymen brought their cattle with them from the Near East and did not adapt the local wild cattle to their herds.

Sciadas, George (2006) **Our lives in digital times.** CONNECTEDNESS SERIES 14:5-22 Published by Statistics Canada, Ottawa.

*"The paperless office is the office that never happened, with consumption of paper at an all-time high and the business of transporting paper thriving. Professional travel has most likely increased during a period when the Internet and videoconferencing technology were taking-off, and e-commerce sales do not justify recent fears of negative consequences on retail employment and real estate. Data reveal that consumption of*

*paper for printing and writing alone has increased significantly over the last two decades. In Canada, consumption more than doubled between 1983 and 2003, with most of the growth occurring during the first of the two decades. As the growth rate of consumption (139.3%) outstripped the rate of growth of the population (23.6%), per capita consumption increased by 93.6% to 91.4 kilograms in 2003. This is equivalent to almost 20,000 pages per individual, enough to cover an area of almost 1,200 square metres. Per capita consumption in the U.S. is comparable to that of Canada; but increased consumption is not confined to developed countries. Worldwide production and consumption of paper also more than doubled over the last two decades, with especially high growth in emerging Asian economies (particularly China, which absorbs a significant amount of Canadian paper exports)."*

Day, T., et al (2006) **The evolutionary emergence of pandemic influenza.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON 273B:2945-2953

*"Our results suggest that if evolutionary emergence of past pandemics has occurred primarily through viral reassortment in humans, then thousands of avian influenza virus infections in humans must have occurred each year for the past 250 years.*

*Analyses also show that if there is epidemiologically significant variation among avian influenza virus genotypes, then avian virus outbreaks stemming from repeated cross-species transmission events result in a greater likelihood of a pandemic strain evolving than those caused by low-level transmission between humans. Finally, public health interventions aimed at reducing the duration of avian virus infections in humans give the greatest reduction in the probability that a pandemic strain will evolve."*

Trainer, M.G., et al (2006) **Organic haze on Titan and the early Earth.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 103:18035-18042

*"Recent exploration by the Cassini/Huygens mission has stimulated a great deal of interest in Saturn's moon, Titan. One of Titan's most captivating features is the thick organic haze layer surrounding the moon, believed to be formed from photochemistry high in the CH<sub>4</sub>/N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. It has been suggested that a similar haze layer may have formed on the early Earth. Here we report laboratory experiments that demonstrate the properties of haze likely to form through photochemistry on Titan and early Earth. Our results show that the aerosols produced in the laboratory can serve as analogs for the observed haze in Titan's atmosphere. Experiments performed under possible conditions for early Earth suggest a significant optical depth of haze may have*

*dominated the early Earth's atmosphere. Aerosol size measurements are presented, and implications for the haze layer properties are discussed. We estimate that aerosol production on the early Earth may have been on the order of 10<sup>14</sup> g·year<sup>-1</sup> and thus could have served as a primary source of organic material to the surface."*

Clark, Campbell (2007-05-21) **In the postal service we trust.** GLOBE AND MAIL, page A4

A survey was carried out by the GLOBE AND MAIL and CTV asking Canadians which federal institutions they trusted most. Canada Post was trusted by 90% of Canucks, the highest rating for any federal agency. The military was next at 86%, then the CBC at 84%. The RCMP and the Supreme Court of Canada were tied at 80%. CSIS was only trusted by 60% of Canadians, and you will not be surprised to learn that the House of Commons had a 58% approval rating.