

# OPUNTIA

## 65.3

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Daniel Yergin Day 2008

**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.

### WHAT IS FAPA?

This issue is for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. (Details from Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, California 994611-1948) For those of you receiving this issue who do not know what an apa is, please read on.

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 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. FAPA has been going for more than 70 years; the oldest apa is the National A.P.A., founded 1876.

x.3 OPUNTIAs are for FAPA. In addition to articles, there will be mailing comments on other apazines in the last FAPA bundle. I usually quote the remark I am commenting on, so hopefully an outsider can still read the comments with interest.

**FAPA CLEARCUT AWARD** (for most pages published in a mailing) goes to Dale Cozort for 44 pages in FAPA #283.

## MAILING COMMENTS ON FAPA #283

FAPA #283 received in Calgary on May 23, 2008.

**A Different Drummer #13** A fascinating story you tell about George Westinghouse and the invention of the time capsule. As you say, it has been the custom for centuries to store artifacts inside the cornerstone of a new building for future generations, but I had no idea that time capsules, as time capsules deliberately implanted in the ground, only date back to the 1939 New York World's Fair. In 1997, the rural village of Eckville, Alberta, where I was born, planted a time capsule in honour of its 75th anniversary of incorporation (the village was actually founded in 1903). It wasn't until the capsule was being lowered into the ground that people noticed a word had been mis-spelt on the outside inscription, but it was too late to do anything. When the capsule is retrieved a century from now, our descendants will conclude that we were a bunch of rubes with no book learning.

Your story about Charlie Ruch working as a George Westinghouse impersonator in the Westinghouse museum leads me to conclude that there are some strange occupations indeed.

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Setting aside musical impersonators such as Elvis, the Beatles, and Abba, it seems that most impersonators of historical characters stay with more famous people, so it is unusual to read of someone like Westinghouse being copied. In Canada, historical impersonators stick to Sir John A. Macdonald (an alcoholic Glaswegian who was Canada's first Prime Minister) and Louis Riel (the Canadian equivalent of Robert E. Lee).

Also interesting was that the Westinghouse publicist who invented the name "time capsule" was rocket engineer and pulp SF writer George Edward Pendray. Imagination meanders through many channels.

**Ben's Beat #92** You certainly get through a lot of Broadway plays. You mentioned the Chinese New Year Splendor show. It came through Calgary as well, or perhaps as a different touring company. Like New York, it was judged more by Tibet protests than any artistic merit, even though it wasn't official PRC propaganda. It has only been in recent years that Calgary's Chinatown finally sorted out their PRC versus Taiwan factionalism, and now this. Some people tried to make a comparison with Québec, but that of course fails, since the Québec government was allowed to hold several referendums and lost them all. Beijing would never allow Tibet to do anything similar.

**Picayune** Your discovery that the French you were taught in school is not the French that is spoken in France is a common problem. In Canada, all schools teach Québec French, but few students will ever become proficient in it because you only need it in Québec and Acadia. This is why western Canadians are set against official bilingualism. Out here, Cantonese, Arabic, or Japanese are more practical languages. I have forgotten all my grade school French for never having used it. As you found out, the phrases taught are useless for everyday life, the old "My uncle's book is on the table" problem. The Canadian federal government insists that senior mandarins and High Command military officers be bilingual, but it hasn't worked well. When the Québec regiments were rotated through Afghanistan, they ran into trouble because they couldn't find any French-Afghan interpreters. The Afghanistan interpreters only bother to learn English because that is the world language.

**Hanging Out** Re: your rant about American politicians getting good pensions after twenty years in office. In Canada, M.P.s get a pension after six years of service. "*Wasn't it Jefferson who said that a revolution was needed every twenty years?*", you ask. I don't know about him but Chairman Mao felt the same way, hence the Red Guards.

*"That is my point; there is no acceptable reason for Rules! Order is not a natural part of the universe."* Actually it is, and it is also

a special case of chaos theory. Unfortunately most people confuse chaos with randomness. Chaos does have patterns. You can't predict the exact shape and movement of turbulence, for example, but you can predict that the wake of a boat or airplane will follow a line behind the vehicle and will be a certain width and duration.

**Snickersnee** Re: your comments about the Electoral College and elected Senate being counterbalances to protect low-population states from high-population states. You wrote: "*As a monarchist, of course, I regard all such arrangements as mere sweaty substitutes for rational rule, but under the circumstances I suppose they are valuable.*" Speaking as someone who lives in a monarchy where constitutional reform is the third most popular sport after hockey and curling, I can assure you that a monarchy is not rational rule. The Queen of Canada (which is a separate and distinct title from her other titles) seldom sets foot in the country she reigns over, which is why the republicans have never been able to get going here. Imagine how popular Shrub would be if he only set foot in the USA once every five years, cut a few ribbons, waved at the lumpenproletariat, and hied back to whence he came.

**Exclam #6** "*... I do remember when Harry Warner locs were everywhere, and a fanzine wasn't quite complete without one.*" Not to worry. Most zine editors will agree that Lloyd Penney has assumed the mantle, and nowadays one doesn't have a real zine until a letter of comment from Lloyd appears in it. -3-

Re: your query about the source of the epigram of how being hanged in the morning focuses the mind. Not Oscar Wilde, but rather Samuel Johnson: *“Depend on it, sir, that if a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it will concentrate his mind wonderfully.”*

**Alphabet Soup #58** Re: your comment about how book collectors store the dust jackets separately from the books because mint jackets are worth more. The other nutty thing they do is pay more for books with uncut pages, in other words a book that has never been read. It is like stamp collectors who will pay triple or multiple for a stamp that has never been hinged into an album and has perfect undisturbed gum, even though they never display the gum side.

**For Fapa** *“Tar sand oil is messy. ... It is a technique you use when you run out of easier and cheaper methods. (Dale may give chapter and verse.)”* Actually, those first two sentences say it all about the Athabasca Tar Sands and the adjacent underground oil sands. (The Tar Sands are just oil sands exposed at the surface.) The oil sands didn't become profitable until oil passed \$40 per barrel and will not be a panacea to end the crisis of \$135 oil.

**Voice Of The Habu V10#2** You wrote about your memories of the Tacoma Narrows bridges and the original “Galloping Gertie” that tore itself to pieces in strong winds, immortalized on film and

nowadays as YouTube videos. In my high school physics class (Red Deer, Alberta), that famous newsreel was used to explain the phenomenon of resonance. It was a sensation among the students, who asked to see it a second time. The teacher obliged, and this was in the days of actual film projection, when the projector had to be reset through complicated levers and re-threading in order to rewind the film. I suspect the teacher didn't mind the extra work because he enjoyed seeing it a second time as well. Normally physics is a rather dull subject for schoolkids, but the class really came alive that time.

**Lofgeornost #91** *“There's a fundamentalist preacher in my town whose views ... are greatly opposed to my own. But we share passionate interests in radio and railroads, and I think that the pleasant conversations we've had on those topics have disposed us to view our disagreements with a bit less vehemence than might otherwise be the case.”* I find the same thing to be true of my membership in the Calgary Philatelic Society, where I meet with oilmen and housewives on equal terms while discussing stamps and postal history. One of our past secretaries was an NDP candidate in a provincial election, we have an Ontario francophone who would like to see the Pequistes hanging from the streetlights, and they both sit peacefully side-by-side with an Englishman who emigrated to Canada decades ago after his Derry store was burned during the Troubles. We never discuss politics or the language wars, just postmarks and paper varieties.

I find, however, that the local Calgary SF convention fans are tolerant of everyone as long as they are libertarian or politically-correct lefties. Dare to suggest that taxes should be used for repairing waterlines and roads instead of subsidizing the Marxist Vegan Lesbians Committee For Feral Horse Protection and you will be pilloried.

**Visions Of Paradise #126** You mentioned the possibility that you might be descended from Albanian royalty. I know both sides of my family back to the late 1700s but alas, they were all farmers. My parents were the first ones in their families to go to university. King Zog was the last Albanian king, more of a gangster really. Him and King Sargon of the ancient Sumerians both sound like character names out of a bad sword-and-sorcery novel by Lin Carter (not that he ever wrote any good ones).

*“Is it my imagination, or do people who are power-crazy tend to rise to supervisory positions more so than people who are actually qualified?”* No, it’s not your imagination. People who want power put more time and effort into getting it, as opposed to people who emphasize qualifications as if they were tradesmen. Hitler didn’t waste time working for a Ph.D. in art; he wanted to rule and sacrificed for it. It’s the same thing with Big Business executives, who are willing to sacrifice their family lives in order to pile up millions in the bank. You are a good math teacher because you valued good math teaching more than making Head

of the Board of Education. I am an outside Parks employee because my idea of Hell is sitting in an office all day long. Everyone rises to their own level because that is the level they are comfortable with. I have seasonal labourers who have been seasonal for twenty years; they whine and complain they never get ahead, but won’t spend their off-season and their money on getting a horticultural diploma instead of beer and two weeks in Hawaii every winter.

You mentioned the Poul Anderson novel **Tau Zero**, about a relativistic starship with a runaway engine, as a result of which it outlives the galaxy. This is one of the best hard SF novels ever written, taking a high concept plot that even today is as fresh as it ever was.

You mention Neil Asher’s bad habit of discussing every detail of a spaceship’s technology. This is a fatal error to the longevity of SF stories because they become dated. Cyberpunk stories about characters using massive 10 megabyte floppy disks or jacking in to virtual reality helmets are what killed that subgenre off. And, of course, there are all those Golden Age stories where starship pilots calculate their courses with slide rules and engineers spot-weld bus bars in the ship’s hull. The classic movie example is from **2001: A Space Odyssey**, with its Pan-Am space shuttles and space station stewardesses wearing pillbox hats.

**Visions Of Paradise #127** You mention the Locus statistics that in 2007 the number of new novels published was 250 SF, 460 fantasy, and 198 horror, plus 90 anthologies, 100 collections, and 1,013 genre reprints, the grand total being an all-time high. Joseph and Lisa Major probably read them all and will have the reviews in their zine **Alexiad**, but the rest of us slackers are lucky to get through even a single percentage point of them. I don't try to keep up in any category but philatelic fiction and that itself is a tough row to hoe. I follow the lead of Ned Brooks and Brant Kresovich, and look for older books that deserve renewed attention and the more obscure modern books that won't make the bestseller lists. It is nice to know that the genre is not being totally destroyed by media fans. The advent of on-line booksellers such as Chapters.Indigo.ca, Amazon, and Abebooks has done wonders for the reader determined to ferret out what will never be found in local bookstores.

**No Exit #7** Re: many zine editors not listing zine trades, especially in Britain. This is regrettable because the whole point of publishing a zine is to be part of the Papernet, and not to publicize the other nodes in the Papernet takes away from the experience. One doesn't have to review each zine in great detail as if reviewing a new novel. The x.1 issues of **Opuntia** show my zine trades under the title "Zine Listings", not "Zine Reviews", and the brief comments appended are only intended to give a rough idea of the trade as I saw it. The other way to connect

through the Papernet is via letters of comment, which most zines are good at, albeit some of us may have to severely crimp them to fit in. Others have a bad habit of running letters completely unedited, such as extraneous greetings and reports about conventions that are just a checklist of names and restaurant menus.

**Sweet Jane #55** You provided a list of American presidential elections you considered to be the most important in shaping history, so I got to thinking about Canadian counterparts. Because provinces are equals with Ottawa, I include some provincial elections as well (Canada is a confederation, not a unitary federal state). I won't attempt to rank them by significance.

1911 federal: The Liberals favoured free trade (then called reciprocity) with the USA while the Tories opposed it. The Tories won, and for the next 75 years Canadians had to pay higher prices for goods because of tariffs that protected Ontario manufacturers at the expense of the rest of Canada.

1935 Alberta: The Social Credit party under William "Bible Bill" Aberhart swept into power, and spent the next four years in a noisy battle with Ottawa over monetary powers. World War Two made the whole dispute a moot point, so the pragmatist faction took over from the monetary reformists. The Socreds stayed in power until 1971; the Tories have controlled Alberta since.

1958 federal: After decades in the wilderness, John Diefenbaker led the Tories to the largest majority in Canadian history. Unlike the outgoing Liberals, he strongly pushed the economic development of western and northern Canada, including the Trans-Canada oil pipeline, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and for which a postage stamp was issued by Canada Post. He was a great orator but a lousy Prime Minister.



1968 federal: The old guard made way for the younger generation in the shape of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who later married a co-ed, the daughter of the Minister of Fisheries. Tory leader Robert Stanfield was widely recognized then and now as one of the

kindest and most decent people ever in politics, but he was of the previous generation and never more than Opposition Leader. This election was a turning point that showed image was more important than substance to the Baby Boomers who were just reaching voting age. Trudeau was a philosopher-king who didn't discriminate; he held everyone in contempt regardless of race, religion, or language. He was the only Prime Minister who alienated both Québec and western Canada simultaneously.

1976 Québec: The separatist Parti Québécois won a strong majority. Four years later, it held the first referendum on separation, which like the others afterwards it has always lost. It has been in and out of power since, and is currently in opposition.

1993 federal: The Tories went from a strong majority down to two seats, the worst debacle of any federal party in Canadian history. Even the Prime Minister lost her riding. Midway through the campaign she famously said that the issues were too important to debate during an election. In that same election, the Bloc Québécois, the federal wing of the separatists, became the official opposition party. This led to the peculiar situation that the official title "Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition" went to a republican who wanted to break up the country, but because he and his party were legally elected, nothing could be done. You tell that to the younger generation today and they don't believe you.

**The Devil's Work #142** “ ... *if a story is unintelligible then it is Great Literature, and the converse that if it is intelligible then it's not Great Literature.*” Too true! I call this problem, also common in the art world since the advent of abstract art, “pretentious drivelism”.

**Number One #13** Re: all the radio and newspaper contests you entered trying to win something, and all the people looking for freebies at special events. Contests are still common in Calgary but you have to log on to Web sites. Very few bother anymore with being the tenth caller, etcetera. Freebies at special events are mostly confined to the Stampede rodeo tradition of free pancake breakfasts put on by shopping plazas and downtown businesses. It requires that you stand in line for an hour to get two pancakes, two sausages, and a paper cup of warm orange juice. Most companies now have private functions instead where everyone chips in \$5 for a quality breakfast and the profit goes to charity.

Re: trying to recruit more members for apas. I don't like the idea of pandering with discounts because those are not the people we want. Zine publishing is something that has to be an obsession, so that we know the new members will stay. But it isn't just zinesters who are having problems. The American Philatelic Society had 50,000 members ten years ago, and will be down to 38,000 by year's end at the current rate of decline. The Calgary Philatelic Society had 225 members a decade ago, and only with

great difficulty have we been able to hold our own -8-  
at 180 over the past three years. There is no one under the age of 40 in the club. That's not to say that stamp collecting is declining, but all the new collectors are on-line.

**A Propos De Rien** “*I suspect that hydroponic farms and solar cells will take over any empty sunny space soon, ecology or not.*” Solar cells perhaps (which could shade desert soils and allow plants a better chance), but not hydroponics which have never been economical for food production because of their unstable nature. Back in the middle 1970s when I was studying for my B.Sc. in Horticulture, my professors made the point that the slightest blip in nutrient concentrations in a hydroponic solution will cause a runaway imbalance that kills off the crops. I have since seen this happen in a number of hydroponic projects, some costing millions. People often confuse hydroponics (growing plants under lights with their roots in nutrient solution or inert media) with plant-light gardening (plants under lights in soil or peat mix). The latter is more stable because the microbial flora keep the nutrient imbalances under control. What most people call hydroponics, such as marijuana grow-ops or African violets under fluorescents in Auntie's living room, are not the real thing.

**Comment-ary #4** “*Maybe gas is cheaper in Canada than here, where it's right around \$4/gallon now.*” Never. Prior to the recent run-up in the price of oil and the value of the Canadian



dollar, gasoline in Canada averaged 80 cents to \$1 per litre (eastern Canada is more expensive than Alberta), or roughly \$5 to \$6 per gallon, at a time when Americans were complaining about paying \$3. The rule of thumb is that European fuel is double the Canadian price. As of May 27, when I type this, gas in Calgary is \$1.29 per litre, and easterners are paying about \$1.50. Both my cars are Honda Civics, so it doesn't bother me. SUV sales are in free fall out east and Stateside, and even in boomtown Calgary people are hesitating to buy them.

**Science Fiction Adventure Magazine V3#1** I was quite interested in your account of a farm auction, me being a farm boy. My father was a livestock veterinarian who kept a couple hundred head of Charolais on the side as range cattle (ie., not grain-fed except in winter as a supplement). He did pregnancy tests on cows at local auction marts, and as a boy I used to follow along and write down the ear tag numbers and test results as he did them. Dad often went to farm auctions and came home with neat stuff that lay around and was never used. Mom stopped him from buying a llama once, but she didn't find out about the two bison until after they had been delivered.

Re: your alternative history scenario about a world in which electricity dominated transportation and the internal-combustion engine was just a curiosity. As you suggest, it would have required that the electric light appear in the middle 1800s, sooner

than it did in our timeline. I think the internal-combustion engine would still have won out over electric trolleys because the overwhelming advantage is that a car frees you from the tyranny of the transit system schedule and routes. One wonders though, if television or computers would have arrived that much sooner, since they require specialized metal and silicon manufacturing techniques which are not that obvious at the time. One important note is that in our timeline, the automobile was not successful outside cities until the roads were upgraded from gumbo to good gravel. The Great Depression delayed this, which is why so many rural areas still used horse-and-buggy transportation even in the late 1930s. It would have also delayed long-distance electric trains.

Re: trying to break through and become professionally published but not being able to be professionally published because you haven't broken through. As you suggest, print-on-demand seems to be the wave of the future, and the advent of on-line booksellers makes it easier to find an audience. The future seems to be that audiences will be worldwide by interest, not local by geography. The same thing appears to be happening with video, as television networks continue to lose viewers while the next generation is watching YouTube. I've talked to some Calgary-area musicians who say they make more money peddling their own CDs after performances than the royalties they were getting from a record company.

Re: why solar power didn't take off in the 1980s as was predicted at the time. As you write, the cratering price of oil, down to \$10 per barrel, killed off alternative energy and set the stage for SUVs. Alberta's economy had a heart attack in 1982 and fell dead to the ground, and those of us who survived the gruesome decade of the 1980s are still trying to purge it from our memories. Calgary became the Cleveland of Canada, and only spending on the 1988 Winter Olympics kept us from becoming the Detroit of Canada.

You ask for suggestions on alternative histories that would have allowed solar energy to boom during that era, assuming the same American presidents, and the fall of the Soviet empire. The only obvious change would be that Reagan starts one or more wars in the Arabic world a la Shrub, the Islamic revolutions spread faster and stronger in reaction, and the price of oil therefore stays high. This would encourage alternative energy development to stay on track to the solar power boom of 2000.

Third World tropical countries would be major beneficiaries of mass solar power. Outsourcing by North American companies probably would have been faster to countries with both cheap labour and cheap electricity. Farms of solar panels set high on poles would have the advantage of shading the ground and allowing more plant growth, converting some marginal desert ranges into slightly better pastures, enough to increase the meat supply slightly or allow more crops.

Having said that, I think that even the most optimistic solar power scenarios would only have a 10% to 20% effect on petroleum. Solar power is good for base loads, such as building electricity and electric trains, but point-source energy is still needed for transportation. Everything you buy is carried at one point or another by trucks, and battery power is not suitable for line-haul semi-trailers. Smart cars and electric cars are good for cities, but heavy hauling still has to be done with internal combustion engines. However, even 10% reduction is something, especially if the oil prices stayed up and prevented the advent of SUVs.

Re: your comment to Fred Lerner that Northern Illinois University did away with paper journals and went electronic, but you can only read abstracts of journal articles because you are not a student. The same thing happened at the University of Calgary Library but their electronic journals are available in full on the library terminals to anyone. You can't get to the journals from an outside computer, but the library is open to the general public, so I have no problem accessing the articles even though I am not student or staff. This is how I manage to collect all the references I cite in my sercon articles. I copy the citation and a brief summary onto 3x5 index cards for my library, so that I can still use them years from now. I have index cards from my student days at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, still readable, while those computer systems are long gone. Semper Papernet!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

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

2008-03-21

The idea that the Earth is not overcrowded because there are large empty spaces between the urban areas seems shortsighted to me. The only really empty spaces are barren deserts. A modern human takes up a great deal more space than where he stands, or his house lot. He also takes up proportional space where his food is grown, his lumber is cut, his stuff is manufactured, where his car can run, where his garbage is dumped, where his children are educated. Even the oceans and jungles are overloaded trying to absorb the carbon dioxide we generate with fossil fuels. If the surface area of the Earth that is in use one way or another were divided by population, even the poor of the Third World countries take up several acres each, and a middle-class North American a great deal more.

[Both my parents grew up in rural areas that in their day supported a far larger population than now, and could once again. Subsidized irrigation farming in California and cheap diesel fuel for long-distance hauling destroyed the large market gardens we

had locally because the supermarkets could import produce cheaper than local farmers could grow it or store it over the winter. Jobs were concentrated into eastern cities by protective tariffs. Provincial governments "rationalized" services such as health care and schools into massive centralized operations in cities, instead of keeping them in rural areas. (The Eckville hospital I was born in was closed, and any Eckvillian becoming ill has to go to Red Deer, 50 km away.) The Canadian prairies could once again support a large population as they did before 70% of the Canadian population wound up in southern Ontario. I don't expect rising fuel prices to reverse the trend anytime soon, but eventually it will become cheaper to manufacture or grow items regionally rather than import from the other side of the continent.]

FROM: Ken Bausert  
2140 Erma Drive  
East Meadow, New York 11554-1120

2008-04-17

OPUNTIA 64.3 arrived with a singed edge on one side due to a fire in the mailbox it was in, according to the note inside the envelope from Canada Post. I often worry that some vandals are going to do something to the mail boxes so I always drop my important mail inside the post office.

[Several other people reported the same problem. If anyone with a damaged copy of #64.3 would like a replacement, I have a few spare copies. Just drop me a line and I'll be glad to send a replacement. I never mail out all the copies of an issue at once and in the same place for just this reason, but I have been putting batches in street boxes in the early morning just before the scheduled pick-up. However, as a result of this incident, I'll now start mailing them inside postal stations.]

I don't see that you publish any x.4 issues but go from x.3 to x.5.

[The missing decimals are for possible future use.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney  
1706 - 24 Eva Road  
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2  
2008-03-16

[Re: World Fantasy Convention in Calgary 2008] The WFC, when it was in Ottawa many years ago, informed local fans that if they insisted on coming, they would not be let in wearing a costume, or with toys or other fannish detritus we tend to carry with us. Some people were turned away at the door. In 2000, when it was in Montréal, admission was expensive but less stringent, and none of the crazy fans the Ottawa WFC was afraid of showed up. Many of Montréal fandom were not interested in

such an event anyway. I was not at Ottawa, but my wife Yvonne and I ran the Green Room in Montréal.

[I haven't noticed anything in the Calgary WFC progress reports about excluding costumed fans but who knows on the day? I realize we're all supposed to be kind and tolerant of each other's sub-genres, but I wouldn't mind attending a convention in Calgary where there were no overweight Klingons telling news reporters that they are going to be neurosurgeons someday instead of clerking in a convenience store. It is politically incorrect to suggest that Regency dancing, fat women wearing corsets, and filk singers be banned from SF conventions. The response is that fans are interested in such things, therefore they should be allowed. I'm interested in philately and horticulture, but I don't propose that conventions should have panels on the Penny Black or the best method to grow cacti.]

I have been to SF conventions where there weren't any dealers selling SF books or magazines. I do not blame the head of the dealer bourse or the convention; they sell the tables to those who want them. The last few years I ran a dealers' room, I tried to provide the greatest variety of merchandise I could muster. In the long run, I sold the tables to those who wanted them, and almost none of them were booksellers.

[I think specialized bookselling, as opposed to Chapters/Indigo superstores, is well and truly an Internet business now. Even a semi-Luddite like me buys most of his books on-line. I can't see how a book dealer could earn back his costs at a convention.]

FROM: Joseph Major 2008-03-14  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040

[Re: supposed lack of female SF writers] There are plenty of them. They are all writing for romance novel lines about Sexy Aliens. When they get bored, they switch over to the romance fantasy line and write about Sexy Vampires™. While waiting to get our cat to the veterinarian, I read a romance fantasy about witches. It would have been a novella if the scenes of hot sex had been cut.

[What always amazes me when I go into Indigo is that they have a section for NASCAR romance novels. I don't mean a few NASCAR novels mixed in with other romances; I mean an actual section of a bookshelf like mysteries or SF.]

[Re: locust fans] They attend SF conventions because they can get food and lodging for a whole weekend for the cost of a membership, or a share in a membership bought by one guy in a

gang who buys a membership and then makes badges for all the rest of the guys. They get to see the rest of the gang, all the other guys who go to cons to eat in the con suite and sleep in the video room. Once when younger, I imagined the Travelling Trufen. They would show up for a convention on Thursday and not leave until Monday, going off to the next convention. They would take one room with a dozen or more people in it, never go to any of the programming or anyone else's parties, perhaps even use copied badges. But they would be at every convention.

FROM: Franz Zrilich 2008-03-12  
4004 Granger Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256-8602

[Re: empty lands in North America] If you were to fly back and forth over Medina County at night, you would be convinced no one lives here other than within 1 to 3 miles of the Interstate highways. You would be right. Do the same for the entire state of Ohio, and you'd swear no one lives here. Entire counties would be blacked out at night, and largely in fields.

**I Also Heard From:** Brant Kresovich, Joel Cohen

**SEEN IN THE LITERATURE**

noticed by Dale Speirs

Boykoff, M.T. (2008) **Lost in translation? United States television news coverage of anthropogenic climate change, 1995–2004.** CLIMATIC CHANGE 86:1-11

*“Eminent climate scientists have come to consensus that human influences are significant contributors to modern global climate change. This study examines coverage of anthropogenic climate change in United States (U.S.) network television news, ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News and NBC Nightly News, and focuses on the application of the journalistic norm of ‘balance’ in coverage from 1995 through 2004. This study also examines CNN WorldView, CNN Wolf Blitzer Reports and CNN NewsNight as illustrations of cable news coverage. Through quantitative content analysis, results show that 70% of U.S. television news segments have provided ‘balanced’ coverage regarding anthropogenic contributions to climate change vis-à-vis natural radiative forcing, and there has been a significant difference between this television coverage and scientific consensus regarding anthropogenic climate change from 1996 through 2004. Thus, by way of the institutionalized journalistic norm of balanced reporting, United States television news coverage has perpetrated an informational bias by significantly diverging from the consensus view in climate science that humans*

*contribute to climate change. Troubles in translating this consensus in climate science have led to the appearance of amplified uncertainty and debate, also then permeating public and policy discourse.”*

Speirs: This is common in Canadian mass media as well. In an effort to appear objective, the mass media present the lunatic fringe in opposition to an issue and give them equal time, thereby negating the value of the truth. Gasoline prices have to go up to force conservation, but the media will present some hard-working labourer who always has money for beer and cigarettes but complains he can’t afford to commute to work in his pickup truck. The mass media never lie but they know how to edit the truth.

Sullivan, R.J., et al (2008) **Revealing the paradox of drug reward in human evolution.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON 275B:1231-1241

*"Neurobiological models of drug abuse propose that drug use is initiated and maintained by rewarding feedback mechanisms. However, the most commonly used drugs are plant neurotoxins that evolved to punish, not reward, consumption by animal herbivores. Reward models therefore implicitly assume an evolutionary mismatch between recent drug-profligate environments and a relatively drug-free past in which a reward*

centre, incidentally vulnerable to neurotoxins, could evolve. By contrast, emerging insights from plant evolutionary ecology and the genetics of hepatic enzymes, particularly cytochrome P450, indicate that animal and hominid taxa have been exposed to plant toxins throughout their evolution. Specifically, evidence of conserved function, stabilizing selection, and population-specific selection of human cytochrome P450 genes indicate recent evolutionary exposure to plant toxins, including those that affect animal nervous systems. Thus, the human propensity to seek out and consume plant neurotoxins is a paradox with far-reaching implications for current drug-reward theory. We sketch some potential resolutions of the paradox, including the possibility that humans may have evolved to counter-exploit plant neurotoxins."

Younger, N. (2008) **If the Armada had landed: A reappraisal of England's defences in 1588.** HISTORY 93:328–354

*"The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 stands as one of the greatest triumphs of Elizabeth I's reign, but, the success of the navy notwithstanding, received wisdom presents the land defences as woefully inadequate. This article shows that the existing picture of the English preparations is flawed in several ways and that they were better organized, more efficient and more willing than has been recognized. The privy council was called upon to deploy limited forces to defend a long coastline against an unpredictable*

*attacker, and the evidence shows that they contrived to maximize the effectiveness of the available resources whilst balancing the calls of military practicality, financial necessity and political constraints. In this context it is well worth remembering that the land forces were very much the poor relation of England's defences: it was the well-supplied, increasingly professionalized fleet which was England's first line of defence. Not only had it provided England's advance strategy, as in the case of Drake's 1587 voyage to Cadiz, which successfully prevented the Armada sailing that year, but its strategy of hustling the Armada down the Channel was a great success: in Howard's words, they 'course[d] the enemy as that they shall have no leisure to land'. As Leicester asked, at the very height of the crisis, 'If [the queen's] navy had not been strong and abroad, as it is . . . what case had herself and her whole realm been in by this time?'"*

Comeau, F., et al (2008) **The occurrence of acidic drugs and caffeine in sewage effluents and receiving waters from three coastal watersheds in Atlantic Canada.** SCIENCE OF THE TOTAL ENVIRONMENT 396:132-146

*"Pharmaceuticals, by design, induce biological responses in animals and humans at very low doses, making their presence in the aquatic environment an issue of concern. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs commonly found*

*in wastewater are discharged on a continuous basis into the waters of two coastal watersheds in Atlantic Canada. Ten acidic drugs and caffeine were observed in the final effluents of sewage treatment facilities in Millcove (Halifax watershed), and Trenton (Pictou watershed), Nova Scotia. Naproxen and ibuprofen, two highly used non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and caffeine, were the predominant compounds. Naproxen, ibuprofen, salicylic acid (metabolite of acetylsalicylic acid), diclofenac (NSAID) and gemfibrozil (lipid regulator) were also detected in the low ng/L range in the receiving waters of treated and untreated sewage outflows."*

Speirs: Salicylic acid is a metabolite of Aspirin, so the presence of this along with caffeine suggests that the local fish will be wide awake and not have any headaches.

Huerta-Fontela, M., et al (2008) **Occurrence of psychoactive stimulatory drugs in wastewaters in north-eastern Spain.** SCIENCE OF THE TOTAL ENVIRONMENT 397:31-40

*"The occurrence of several psychoactive drugs in water resources from north-eastern Spain (NE-Spain) has been evaluated. Most of the studied controlled drugs (8 out of 11) were found in both influent and effluent samples from several wastewater treatment plants. Cocaine and its metabolite were detected in wastewaters*

*at concentrations ranging from 4 ng/L to 4.7 µg/L and from 9 ng/L to 7.5 µg/L respectively while concentrations of amphetamine type stimulatory drugs ranged from 2 to 688 ng/L. Removal percentages were estimated by sampling eight WWTPs (n = 4). Cocaine and benzoylecgonine removal percentages were higher than 88% while those of amphetamine type stimulants varied ranging from 40% to more than 99%. Daily variability was also evaluated by performing a sequential survey, which revealed important fluctuations in the concentrations of nicotine, paraxanthine, amphetamine and ecstasy during the week. From the total concentrations found in wastewater influents estimations of the cocaine and ecstasy consumption were performed. For cocaine the results were approximately 14 doses per 1000 inhabitants (15–64 years old) per day and for ecstasy, approximately 4 doses per 1000 young adults (15–34 years old) per day for ecstasy."*

Speirs: On the other hand (or fin), the Spanish fish will be too buzzed out to care.