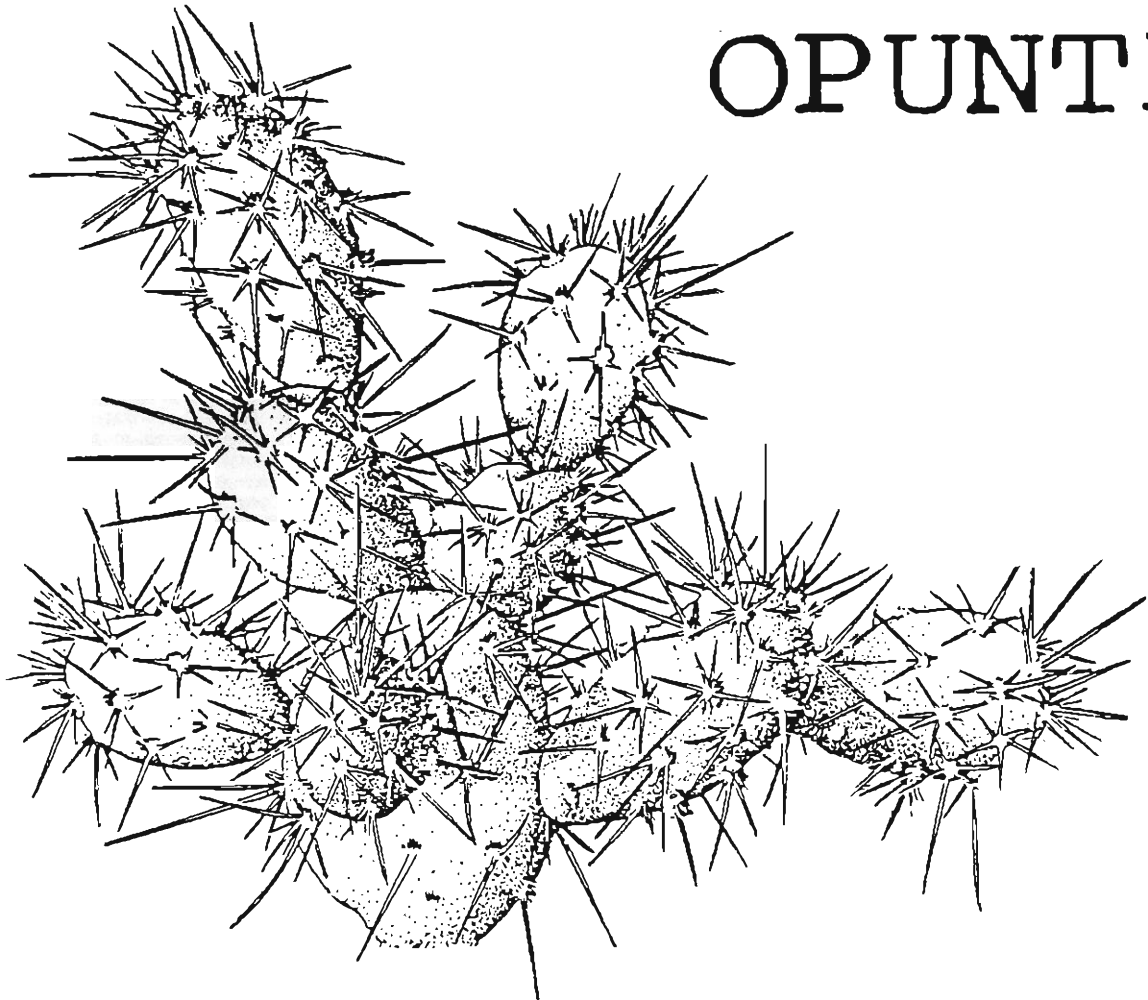


OPUNTIA

17



OPUNTIA #17

January 1994

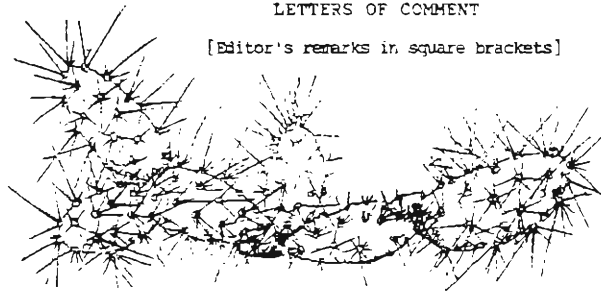
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OPUNTIA is published irregularly by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7. It is available for \$2 cash, letter of comment, or trade for your zine.

EDITORIAL: The 1994-1-2 CALGARY HERALD ran an article out of the OTTAWA CITIZEN by Francine Dube on zines. The article was reasonably well-written and gave a basic idea of the zine world and how it operates. I'm not certain if the publicity will be beneficial or not. It is nice to see a sympathetic account of our little ghetto, but will history repeat? SF fans had a quiet enclave and are now an obscure minority in back of the mediafan crowd. The barbarians who mobbed the gates are not just ignorant of pre-Star Trek history, but may not even realize that it even exists, and the SF world did not begin with movies and television. One disquieting trend I've noticed is the number of zines that do not trade; they expect cash for their issues. This is evident mostly in non-SF zines with no idea of The Usual.

Received in the New Year's mail was a flyer advising that Mike Diana was busted by the State of Florida on obscenity charges for his zine BOTTLED ANGEL. Much talk therein on censorship, how we should all rally around, etc., but on seeing his work (badly drawn cartoons of bestiality and other perversions) I find I have no sympathy for him. Not so much because his zine is disgusting, but because he is stupid for publishing such material under his own name, then becoming indignant when the authorities charged him. If you intend to knowingly publish actionable material, common sense dictates taking at least minimal precautions such as a pseudonym and remailer address.

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



FROM: Garth Spencer
Box 15335
Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1

1993-11-11

Just got a note from SF Canada. I had completely missed the topic of possible conflict of interest in their handling of the CSFFAs, but they didn't. So, as Diane Walton writes to tell me, Dennis Mullin will handle nomination and voting chores in 1994, as he did in 1992. His address is 69 Donald Street #6, Kitchener, Ontario N2B 3G6. SF Canada is still underwriting the effort.

Your comparisons of fannish conventions to philatelic conventions always struck me as, what shall I say, faintly naive? No ... off the beam? No, that's not it. What I'm groping for is that there's a level of with-it-ness that is sometimes surprisingly low among SF conventioners. Especially but not exclusively neos. I have been trying to express this for years, without satisfactory acknowledgement. You were responding to it yourself, I know, but I suspected there was a reason for some fan types to go into this act, and your articles describing aquarium and stamp shows didn't address that issue.

[continued next page]

I've been chewing over the feeling that the sudden break between fannish and media fandom about 1970 or so was and was not a replay of the previous shifts in fandom's centre of gravity. In Moskowitz' or Warner's histories of fandom, you will find references to First through Sixth Fandom, which I take to mean general shifts in the prevailing activities, centres of interest, and hot topics, right across North American fandom and conceivably beyond. Not despit, but because of the sparsity of fans across significant distances. Social distance in fandom was defined not physically but by postal communication and interconnectivity.

I need to check that hypothesis. To the extent that it is valid though, it would explain what I see as a crisis in contemporary fandom. I thought in my naive neohood that fan groups were about doing things together, having fun doing them, forming a society of friends. With the rapid growth and differentiation of fandom, we have a greatly increased social distance, greatly lowered interaction and interconnectivity, much less motivation or scope for fandom being generally a society of friends. No wonder oldpharts like me are alienated; if the neofen don't piss us off personally, their lack of common ground or interests will. And no wonder 'space cadet' behaviour in con-running keeps happening; much less likely they'd hear the hypothetical Unwritten Guidelines of Successful Conrunning, and much less likely that they'd be receptive. Space cadets, based on my observations, are precisely the people addicted to the biggest, grandest, most grandiose sell unaware of the concept "cut your suit to fit your cloth" and unsympathetic to it anyway.

It's taken me some years to unstick my concept of media-fen from the image I have of space cadets. It's also taken me some years to part with the illusion that I just had to provide some information and people would adsorb it.

So what's next? A few fans are going to get with it, from

oldphart and neofandom. More are going to get fed up because they can't get what they want by the ways they want to do fanac. I anticipate that fandom will tardily recognize the current Babelsque situation, stop pretending to be one interest group, and stop coming together. This will have serious economic effects on large conventions, and a political crisis will rise for Worldcons and large perambulating regionals. Say, sometime in the next century. I said earlier that the change since 1970 in fandom both was, and was not, like previous changes. It is, because the centre of gravity in fandom perennially moved. It isn't, because now fandom is Balkanized. If gamers, costumers, and other subfandoms choose to go their own merry way, several subfandoms will not be able to gather, play together, and correct each other's norms of behaviour. Star Trek and gaming fans are numerous enough to support conventions of their own. Filkfans? I don't know.

[There seems to be the beginning of a consensus that this may be so. I note, for example, that zineish fans like Harry Andruschak are sticking to zinecons such as Corflu. In Alberta, there seems to be a distinct split between comixcons, Trekcons, relaxicons, etc. with only one or two gencons like ConVersion left. The gamers of Calgary long ago left to their own annual con. ConText went twice for the literary fans; litocons may be marginal for most of Canada due to the thin population but elsewhere, say the denser populated areas of USA, have a good run at it. It has been commented elsewhere that the coming generation may stick with computer networks, with no interest in SF-type cons (as opposed to trade shows or dealer bourses) and no social skills. The Balkanization of hobbies has happened before. Until a few decades ago, there were considerable numbers of clubs combining stamp and coin collecting; now there is little communication between the two, and collectors belong to either a stamp club or a coin club. About a decade ago, aquarium clubs in denser parts of USA and Canada began splitting into cichlid clubs, koi clubs,

marine clubs, guppy clubs, etc.. This trend is not yet common in most places, but in some areas is noticeable, such as Ohio or greater Detroit. There are no national or international general aquarium shows, but huge shows for a particular group of fish such as cichlids. So it may be that eventually Worldcons will implode. Since I keep reading complaints about how huge they are, members can't find their friends in the mob, too many panels to go to, and other whining, this may be a good thing.]

FROM: John Thiel
30 North 19th Street
Lafayette, Indiana 47904

1993-12-22

My first impression of OPUNTIA is that sercon must have a secret appeal to people to elicit so many letters of comment. Fiction fanzines don't seem to have that many. Why don't you put a piece of fiction in one of these issues, just to see how people'd react?

[At the moment I have no plans for fiction or poetry but may do so in the distant future as .2 issues. Those who yearn for fictionzines are well advised in taking up NEO-PHYTE (\$3 for a sample copy or The Usual from Jeff Behrnes, 11220 Hooper Road, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70818) or PROBE (R4 per sample or The Usual from SFSA, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa).]

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

1994-1-6

The fan Hugos were always a bit out of place but they're Traditional. So they'll be kept. The other fan awards are not quite as traditional, but conventions seem to enjoy giving awards (or at least con committees do; the convention itself may be indifferent) and fans expect them.

I don't know if there are any fanzines which made a profit, but YANDRO broke even for something like twenty years. We weren't trying for a profit but we had other uses for our money, so we did expect to break even. The fanzine was regarded as unfanish because we charged money for it, but the circulation seemed to keep going up anyway. Eventually, in later years, we didn't need to break even and were putting out bigger and more infrequent issues and not being as strict about finances. But it was paying its way when it won a Hugo, and we did go to the trouble of getting a bulk mailing permit to keep down expenses, since the circulation was over the required 200 by then. Whether any other fanzine ever paid its way or not, I don't know, but it could be done and was done at least once, and the fanzine that did it was on the final Hugo ballot for the first ten years that there was a final Hugo ballot. The inevitability of losing money on fanzine publishing has been overemphasized.

The prospects of losing large amounts of money by publishing fan biographies probably aren't overemphasized. I bought the fan-published WEALTH OF FABLE about ten years after first publication and my copy was #593 of 1000. I don't know; maybe the publisher could break even by selling half of his print run, but I doubt it.

FROM: Lloyd Penney
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

1994-1-8

The book about Leslie Croutch, YEARS OF LIGHT, is strangely constructed. The first 60 pages of the book are comprised of four stories and snippets from issues of LIGHT. The next 120 or so pages are appendices, the first four of which are about Croutch, and the last three are general pieces about the state of pulps, fanzines, and fandom in Canada.

FROM: Joseph Major
4701 Taylor Boulevard #8
Louisville, Kentucky 40215-2343

1994-1-7

Garth Spencer's comments about the problems of the CSFFAs touch on some universal problems. It is not just the CSFFAs that seem to have fallen into this void. His comments about the fan awards strike home. One has but to think of what happened to the FAAN awards to have doubts about the continued progress of their current incarnation.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

1994-1-7

When I read about the Star Wars litigation, I couldn't help thinking how far SF has come: millions of dollars, years of work for attorneys, possible action by the highest court in the land. Sharp contrast to the best publicized imbroglio in the early years of the prozines, Don Wollheim's campaign to get payment for a little story from Hugo Gernsback. However the Ewoks dispute turns out, I feel sure it will mean greater difficulty than ever for a unknown to get anyone in the movie or television industry to pay attention to a script.

You don't seem to have quite understood my point about losses in fanzine publishing and con sponsorship. In the former case, the losses are inevitable, unless the impossible happens and some old geezer likes a fanzine so much that he bequeaths a lot of money to its editor in his will. But the con has a fighting chance of breaking even or finishing in the black if the sponsor keeps a tight enough hand on spending, estimates accurately the probable attendance, and does the right things when dealing with the hostelry, program book advertisers, hucksters, and so forth.

[But as Garth Spencer has documented time and again, all

those procedures you mention are often ignored or goofed up, leaving someone to take an unexpected hit in the purse. Not just a few tens or a hundred dollars like a fanzine publisher, but thousands or tens of thousands. A single publisher can keep complete control; a SF con member might suddenly find himself liable for debt he did not incur or have any control over.]

The Aurora problems that Garth chronicles in his latest fanhistory chapter (lack of awareness of many candidates to lots of potential voters) are probably insoluble. The CD-ROM disc that was produced before this year's Worldcon, containing samples of the creativity of nominees for Hugo awards, tried to address this problem. I doubt if this method will ever create a fully informed body of voters. Many fans won't want to pay the considerable price for a disc, and I imagine it's quite a strain to read one novel after another off a computer monitor.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Gary Deindorfer, Joseph Nicholas.

CHRISTMAS CARDS RECEIVED FROM: Joe Maraglino and Linda Michaels, Harry Andruschak, Alexander Vasilkovsky, and Arthur Hlavaty.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas are now respectable homeowners, having purchased 15 Jansons Road, Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England.

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS #25 (\$2 an issue from Jim Romenesko, Box 1334, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201) This reviewzine is well-printed. Not an attempt to emulate FACTSHEET FIVE with countless capsule reviews but rather it takes an in-depth look at a few zines or concerns of zinepubbers and provides the background to the story. The issue at hand starts off with Pete Jordan and his perzine DISH-WASHER. Pete wants to wash dishes in each of the fifty American states, no worse than any other goal in life. An interesting point is made by Romenesko is: "I predict there will be huge growth in the number of personal zines focusing on the workplace as we move toward century's end. More educated people will have to settle for lousy jobs (folks with Master's Degrees will be selling you Gap clothes) and they'll use zines as their way of dealing with their low-level jobs and dashed dreams. The creative sort who works at the neighbourhood Starbucks coffee joint to pay rent will get added value out of the experience by using the daily grind as fodder for publishing."

This gets me to thinking about the Economy of Abundance and what to do with all those surplus workers. As Chester Cuthbert has mentioned, unemployed people are essentially unnecessary people whose work wasn't required for the economy. Granted we would all like to be homeowners, have a nice car, etc., but perhaps we chase the wrong things in life. Lower pay may force many people away from the accumulation of material goods, but it may also make them realize that other things should take priority. Publishing a zine is an expense, but perhaps cheaper than needing a psychiatrist; it can be an inexpensive way of relieving stress and consequent medical problems. Automation is disrupting the traditional jobs as we descend to the bottom of the current Kondratieff long wave; what better way to replace them than home publishing? As an aside, the City of Calgary recently revised its business taxes to make it easier for people to work at home; it is expected that within a decade 40% of all Calgary businesses will be operated out of a home, mostly nontraditional businesses relying on computers.

LOWER ROSEDALE REVIEW #2 (The Usual from C.F. Kennedy, Box 40, 90 Shuter Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K6) A reviewzine. It mentions a number of tapes and small-zines (Kennedy's term). A discussion of small press and why one should never give up the struggle to get things published that you think are worth publishing.

UNDER THE OZONE HOLE #6 (The Usual from Karl Johanson, 4129 Carey Road, Victoria, British Columbia V8Z 4G5) A rather frivolous zine that certainly packs in substance to go with the humour. News and locs, Runté everywhere, Kennedy conspiracies, etc. Largest circulation of any fanzine in Sooke.

MORGGING BORGUS #8 (The Usual from David Drew, 207 Lake Lucerne Way, Calgary, Alberta, T2J 3J5) A genzine of miscellaneous items, starting off with an essay about morals, a rather boring story intended to shock by its disgusting images, and a reprint about the Economy of Abundance. Said reprint fails in the usual way; how do we make the transition to a moneyless society? And who will scrub out the toilets? (yes, we know there will be no shortage of airplane pilots but someone must still do the dirty jobs. They can't all be automated.)

ETHEL THE AARDVARK #52 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, Melbourne, Victoria 3005, Australia) A clubzine with all the usual news, an extended letter column, and an extensive history of Dr. Who.

HABAKKUK #C3,V2 (The Usual from Bill Donaho, 626 - 58 Street, Oakland, California 94609) An Old Phart regenerates into an actifan. Some bits about Baycon 1968, a few book reviews, and lots of locs.

TEXAS SF INQUIRER #51 (The Usual via Alexander R. Slate, 8603 Shallow Ridge, San Antonio, Texas 78239-4022) A clubzine; this ish has an extended Worldcon 1993 report and an item about American comic strips altered for the Australian market. Lots of locs.

MARCHING TO VICTORIA

Part I

by Garth Spencer

(a previous version of this article appeared in Maple Leaf Rag, #12, Feb. 1985.)

Once upon a time, around 1974 or '75, some high-school friends were trying to form an SF club. The founders of SFAV, the SF Association of Victoria, included Stan Hyde and Lynne Fonseca. They called it NOVA at first; this was changed to "SF Association of Victoria" when the conflict with the upcoming PBS show became apparent. At this point they were some poker players who sometimes talked SF, and who planned a never-published clubzine. After three meetings, they abandoned Robert's Rules of Order. I think that set the tone for the next ten years: loose and informal to the point of shapelessness.

According to one of Stan's early articles (*FTA/Phoenix*, Aug. 1983), he and other SFAVians had originally inquired about maybe setting up a branch of BCSFA in Victoria. They met Daniel Say, who told them approximately that BCSFA was bored and boring and why didn't they start up their own group? So they did.

Note: the city of Victoria had less than a quarter-million people, which is important both to understand the relative size of our city's fan groups, and to understand what happens to attempts to do a con here. Greater Victoria had about 170,000 people; the outlying "western communities" added things up to about 225,000. In the 1950s, the population was described as "newlywed or nearly dead". The adolescent and young-adult population has since risen, but

it's still true that services to retirees form one of the bases of the local economy, along with government, tourism, the University, and CFB Esquimalt. If "economy" isn't too strong a word, that is.

Victoria was lousy with bookstores, new and used, but comparatively poor in comic shops. These things may have helped shape the character of local fandom; SFAV was almost exclusively science-fiction-oriented. There were also, presently, a Star Trek club and a daughter group to SFAV at the University of Victoria, UVicSFA.

One Cat Middlemiss was briefly a member of SFAV, until he had some kind of falling-out with Paul Delaney. Cat started what he called the "United Federation of Canadian Star Trekkers", a year later than SFAV arose, and was president until the day he walked off with much of the UFCST's library and possessions. Bernie Klassen wrote in 1985 that this group was forced to set a lower age limit at 16.

SFAV in the late 70s was a group of 20, maybe 30 fans, ranging from high-school to college age, who held small, informal meetings (10 to 12 people on the average) in members' homes. They barely had any visible activities until *Up the Tubes* was published in June and July of 1978, edited by Stan Hyde, and basically a solo effort. Then the zine folded.

By the late 1970s, SFAV held summer shopping-mall displays, fall Open Houses, joint dinners and parties with other clubs like the United Federation of Canadian Star Trekkers, and some joint charitable events for a local telethon. Individual activities included SFX amateur films, modelling, writing, drawing, collecting of SF publications; club activities included dances, beach parties, filed trips and picnics, swimming, potluck dinners, and attending SF/F film premieres with the other clubs. Dues were \$8/yr, and gave

one a membership card, fanzine subscription, and discounts at some local stores.

When I joined SFAV, about 1979, the Victoria fan groups seemed to be joined by a sort of collegiality; there may have been no more than 50 or so members in all the clubs together, many members held dual memberships, and several executives, I believe, even served in more than one club at once. Things looked different, and more divisive, to Bernie Klassen.

When I arrived in town in 1980 (Bernie Klassen later wrote), sheer chance dictated that I got involved with the ST group instead of with SFAV (of which I had no knowledge until some months later). The UFCST numbered something like 25 or 30 members and SFAV was about 10 or 15 higher in population. By this point there was a certain amount of cross-over between the two groups; mostly in the person of Paul Delaney and his wife Lynne Fonseca. Paul had been instrumental in bringing Greg Benford to Victoria, and was probably the most active non-fanzine fan Victoria has ever produced (although Paul was also active in SFAV's *From the Ashes* and *Phoenix*). Paul had the ability to coalesce about himself much of the loose fannish energy that was about at the time. In 1980, Paul, Bev Cooke, and a few others rounded UVicSFA, the University of Victoria SF Association. This group was formed mainly in order to gain access to the university facilities, with an eye towards a convention.

(Bernie Klassen, *The Central Ganglion*, Dec. '85)

The UFCST

Karl Johanson joined the UFCST in 1979, on seeing a Star Trek mall display. Karl, his sister Paula, and friends like Bernie Klassen, Bev Cooke and Al Hargreaves became known as the "Johanson Clan" (the Johanson parents sort of adopted their children's friends), and the Clan seemed to enter the fan community as a group.

At that time the club had 30 - 50 members (25 - 30 by Bernie Klassen's estimate, as of 1980). Karl writes that he participated in quite a number of UFCST activities with Bernie (e.g. editing *Trekkada*), with Dan Cawsey (e.g. almost finishing a float for the Victoria Day Parade), and with the whole "Johanson Clan" (e.g., the making of *Dawn of the Living Socks*).

... in (SFAV's) desperate search to discover what a science fiction club was *supposed to do*, the fanzine was again suggested as a way of giving the club direction ...

By this time, two attempts at clubzines had gone *down the tubes*, so to speak. In 1978, a group of active fans had joined the club ... among them were Gary Harper, Dixie Sackett, Garth Spencer, David Thomson and Paul Delaney. As well, long-time members of the club, like Lynne Fonseca, Linda Thompson, Geoffrey Edwards, and myself were anxious to do more than just get together for movies, cons, and meetings.

(Stan Hyde, "Up the Tube?", FTA, ca. Aug. 1983)

In 1979, the memory of *Up the Tubes*, plus a summer surge in membership, catalyzed a new zine: *From the Ashes*, a monthly dittoed newsletter, and FTA was followed in November by *Phoenix*, a more genzine-style quarterly (also dittoed at the University of Victoria). Gary Harper edited both SFAV zines until the end of 1980; Paul Delaney, the

fannish dynamo from Australia, took them over in February 1981. A new four-member executive took over FTA in May, while Dave Thomson edited *Phoenix*.

After Paul Delaney joined SFAV and the local Star Trek club, SFAV became as active as it ever did, became something more than a social club with an SF focus. Delaney became an important local organizer, the moving force behind the zines, the regular events, and the liaison with the convalescent children at the Queen Alexandra Solarium. He was probably the driving force behind Victoria's two minicons.

Delaney told me in the winter of 1984-85 that the executive at this time tried to act as a rudder, more than anything; taking care of business, managing the club account and setting meeting times; and they sought to accomplish the club's functions without overstructuring it. (The UFCST had reacted to the Middlemiss incident by trying to set up a constitution safeguarding against EVERYTHING, which effectively strangled the young club.) SFAV, on the other hand, seemed to go to the opposite extreme.

About this time, I had read somewhere that most offices or nonprofit enterprises seem to depend on one feisty, overworked woman to accomplish most things. I had seen this in action at *The Martlet*, the student paper at UVic. Later, I thought Paul Delaney was the active, overworked person who got things done in SFAV. So much was to the good. To the bad, he seemed to take responsibility for *all* of SFAV's initiatives. Other members then apparently became dependent on him, both to think up activities and carry them out. At any rate, they went along with his proposals.

Although SFAV members were encouraged to participate in activities, generally they didn't. It appeared to me that Paul could not *delegate* effectively; either that, or else other

SFAVians were *not* really into organized activities ... such as hosting a radio-telephone SF discussion on CJVI, between Jack Williamson, Michael Coney and Joe Haldeman.

Our First Con

It was sometime in 1980 or 1981 that UVicSFA (SFAV's daughter club at the University of Victoria) was founded, by Bev Cooke and Wendy Hourston, with at least the encouragement of Paul Delaney. Almost immediately, UVicSFA became involved in Fair-Isle, Victoria's first convention.

Victoria's first one-day minicon was held at the University of Victoria's Student Union Building on March 14, 1981. At that time, this two-story structure had some largish meeting rooms available. SFAV and UVicSFA held "Fair-Isle" one Sunday, and featured F.M. Busby, Gregory Benford, and Michael Coney, and attracted some 475 people. There was a modest but sufficient program, featuring SF films, games, an SF writing workshop, a huckster's room, a group author's interview, and a trivia quiz.

The local fan community arranged for Gregory Benford to speak on a phone-in show on a local radio station, the night before Fair-Isle. Unfortunately the phone-in show paired up Benford with a "white witch", that being Friday the 13th. "The Fair-Isle concomm weren't thrilled", Rebecca Reeves writes, "but Dr. Benford actually took it very well, much to his credit."

Fair-Isle was a success, attracting over 400 members (many of them first-timers to such activities), made a fair profit, and brought together SFAV and the UFCST for the first time to work on a common profit project. The following summer, Paul and Lynne left for

Pinawa, Manitoba, and UVicSFA and the UFCST joined forces to produce a second convention.

(Bernie Klassen, TCG, Dec. 1985)

Both clubs made over \$500 each. The reception was generally favourable, with only a few sour notes — the con was held within a few weeks of Rain (Vancouver's relaxicon), and *BCSFAzine* #94 "condemned" Fair-Isle for not having an alcoholic consuite.

(The BCSFAns somehow hadn't registered the fact that no consuite was advertised, and a number of SFAVians were minors. Rebecca Reeves, among others, wanted to make it clear that minors were welcome — and safe — in SFAV. No-one established *why* SFAV had to be open to minors, when these members sort of drifted away.)

With the profits from Fair-Isle, SFAV bought a duplicator. What did they get? They got a ditto machine, at \$150. (Bernie Klassen later indicated that he got his first mimeograph, at about this time, for about \$90.) Rebecca maintained (in *From the Ashes*, April '81) indicated that "Xeroxing turned out to be too expensive, and a Gestetner system would have been too messy and too big for storage", and at the time, \$150 was the best price in town for a ditto; and "considering the almost non-existent participation in zines on the part of the current SFAV membership ... I think it was for the best.")

Although use of the machine was offered to the other clubs, as far as I knew up until 1985, only I took up SFAV on the offer. In this way I turned out *Scuttlebutt*, my first perzine, until the Reeves gave up custody of the ditto machine and I sort of inherited it. Bernie Klassen later wrote how the UFCST got a copy of their zine done by ditto and were very unenthusiased by the results.

Rebecca Reeves wrote later that during her executive's participation in SFAV,

we had quite an extensive trade network built up with numerous zines across North America. There was even one in Australia ... We did everything possible to encourage this. It was shortly thereafter that those remaining with the club decided they really didn't care for trading ... or for producing a zine, for that matter."

(*From the Ashes*, April '81)

Victoria has never been a great fanpubbing centre, before or since, until the mid-80s when I went crazy.

Trekkada, the fanzine produced by the UFCST, came out first in '78, and has come out every year or two since. That is perhaps a bit unfair. There have been two years with two issues produced in them. *Trekkada* was very much in the ST fanfic genre, and never really achieved its full potential as a fanzine — though it did often contain some fine in-jokes and satires.

Also from the UFCST was a version of FTA called *Stardate*. In its original conception, it was to be a monthly newsletter for the club, listing upcoming events and such. Under the editorship of David Gordon-MacDonald, it became anything but frequent, and began running a serial, stories, bad puns, worse cartoons, newspaper clippings, and very little in the way of club news. Never very distinguished, *Stardate* ran seven issues and quietly folded.

The only other fanzine around at the time was Garth Spencer's "exterior to frame of reference"

humour *Scuttlebutt*. Also called *The Black Marxist Lesbian Quarterly*, *The Perfect Paper*, etc., *Scuttlebutt* ran news and views mostly of interest to Discordians and conspiracy freaks. Not a bad fanzine, just one that was rather opaque (to non-Discordians and non-conspiracy freaks). *Scuttlebutt* was simply and cleanly laid out, and for lack of art, Garth discovered the copyright-free illustrations books at the local library. It became interesting to see 18th century woodcuts surrounded by bizarre text or titles.

Garth eventually folded *Scuttlebutt* for lack of response and \$\$, and went on to produce *The Central Ganglion* along with yours truly and Paula Johanson. TCG was an inter-club newsletter with a revolving editorship — which may read better than it actually functioned. The editing worked quite well, even surviving Paula and I moving to Edmonton for a mercifully brief while. But as a zine designed to break down the years of conditioning keeping the clubs in town apart, TCG did not fare so well.

(Bernie Klassen, TCG, Dec. 1985)

Janet Reedman, a sometime member of SFAV, occasionally produced horror/fantasy fictionzines, but contact with her was sporadic. *The Silver Apple Branch* was periodically listed in market newsletters such as *Gila Queen* or *Scavenger's Newsletter*.

In April 1981 the former executive (Gary Harper, Paul Delaney, and Lynne Fonseca) were replaced by a new executive (Rebecca and Barbara Reeves, Kris Snyder, and Dave Thomson), known as the Gang of Four. Largely at Rebecca's insistence, the meetings became more formal, or

she tried to make them so. One gathers that it didn't work, then or later.

Some of the best times I had in SFAV, from around this period onwards, were after the meetings, when a gang of us would repair to a glorified hamburger house, and chew the fat. Dixie Sackett, Douglas "Mac" MacInnes, Paul Fryer and Don Carruthers would pile into each other's cars and go to the Lettuce Patch; so would I, trailing a pile of fanzines I brought along to play Show'n'Tell with, trying to carry on a conversation the while. Although invited, the Reeves sisters never showed up at these gatherings. I think now they missed something.

That summer, Rebecca insisted on something which meant changing the name for the next minicon. The 1982 con was to be held by UVicSFA and the UFCST, but not officially by SFAV (although naturally SFAV members were involved). Rebecca got SFAV and UVicSFA to draw up an agreement that the name "Fair-Isle" *only* be used on cons they *both* held.

No-one knew a reason for this. Several years later, I learned the reason — Rebecca had been listening to a lawyer. The lawyer, whoever he was, listened to her concerns that SFAV would somehow be held responsible for anything called "Fair-Isle II"; he kept talking about the kinds of things that could go wrong financially and how SFAV executives could be held personally liable for the debts incurred. Rebecca's way of getting SFAV and UVicSFA to sign an agreement would have made sense, if she was overcoming some resistance; but at the meeting, she met none.

The second convention had some problems in the beginning. First, for lack of anything better, it was being referred to as "Fair-Isle 2". SFAV, who had been asked to participate in the planning and running of this con, but had declined, were a bit milled at the

choice of name. "Change the effing name or we'll do Something Nasty to you!" was roughly the way it was put to members of the concom. The members of the concom were shocked, yes, shocked and appalled! at this turn of events. Fair-Isle 2 had only been a name of convenience, and there was, in fact, a sizable segment of the concom agitating to change it. SFAV [*read: Rebecca - GS*] felt, however, that they had propertarial (*sp?*) rights to the name, and that it was only to be applied to conventions jointly sponsored by themselves.

(Bernie Klassen, TCG, Dec. 1985)

Notice that apparently, neither the lawyer nor Rebecca thought of ways and means to *prevent* damaging financial losses. Such as the normal, conventional measure of *setting up a non-profit society*, with the limited-liability protection of a corporation, under the provincial Societies Act.

What we had here, I think, was a case of no communication. Merely because it is no-one's particular job to pass on good ideas.

In October Rebecca resigned from the executive, saying she had tried to lead SFAV in a direction in which the members apparently did not want to go — i.e., getting more active, and more organized with it. Barbara soon left too. At that point Douglas "Mac" MacInnes became president.

Rebecca wrote Bernie some years later that one of the reasons she segregated herself from SFAV was the rampant misinformation that flies around. I still think she failed to communicate effectively with SFAV ... but then, neither had SFAV, with her. I had cause to appreciate her position a lot better in a few years.

FTA/Phoenix

Due to cost considerations, and a poverty of contributions, SFAV's fanzines were consolidated into a bimonthly in Jan. 1982. First Kris Snyder, then Mac edited *FTA/Phoenix*. After some hesitation I elected to edit FTA from July onwards.

By mid-1982, one person was acting as club librarian, SFAV Information Officer, clubzine editor, SFAV's representative to an inter-club coordinating committee, and contributor to a short-lived inter-club newsletter. That was me. I also developed plans for a fanzine list, a faneditor's guide, a collection of Victoria fanwriting, even a fandom guide based on our trade information.

It is helpful to know that at the time, I was unemployed, out of university, and discovering that Victoria did not have a lot of job openings. All this overactivity was, of course, compensation.

Trying to make fanac compensate for mundane frustrations did not work. It was one thing to edit my own zine, where I could please myself. But I felt that I could *not* just please myself with the clubzine; I was responsible to the club. But I could *not* get more than a few SFAVians to contribute, and none to give directions for the zine. I kept getting "You can do what you want", which wasn't a meaningful response, to me. I kept asking Kris Snyder (the acting secretary/treasurer) for a budget, for a figure as to what SFAV could afford to spend. She kept saying we weren't spending money on anything else, which wasn't an answer — and she was the most responsible exec. around.

I had gotten the impression, from reading SFAV's fanzine library, that all fans were actfans, only too ready to express an opinion. I had an idea that clubs were, by definition, meant to promote activities, and that the club members

wanted to make a fanzine together. Doing things together was the whole point.

What we had here was another case of no communication.

Our Second Con

On February 27, 1982, UVicSFA and the UFCST held Imagine at the University, which meant that most SFAVians also worked on it and attended. It was a small success, again, featuring (among other things) the preview of a local amateur movie — *Dawn of the Living Socks*. I'm not making this up; ask Robert Runté, or write Karl Johanson for a tape.

There were only two little bitty problems. The announced ProGoH, Jack Williamson, had to cancel (Canada Post and the U.S. Mail refused to get his ticket to him in good time). The second problem was that this minicon was held *on the same weekend* as Rain 4. Robert Runté, the FanGoH, noted that only two out-of-town fans attended. In consequence, Victoria and Vancouver fans agreed that their subsequent cons *definitely* be held some weeks apart.

Other than that, though, it seemed like Victorians could hope to build a reputation for good, small cons. Imagine attracted about 375 people, and also made a profit for the clubs. Robert Runté talked about Victoria maybe working up to a "full-scale regional" convention. There was even talk of Victorians holding a V-Con some day. There was even talk (as Robert Runté wrote in *New Canadian Fandom*) of Victorians holding a V-Con some day.

To this end, The Vancouver Island SF Convention Steering Committee was mooted at a SFAV meeting on April 18, 1982. The object of this inter-club group was to carry forward documentary experience on local conventions, from one to the next, to prevent stupid mistakes and to authorize the

cons put on by the represented clubs. When VISFCSC was finally constituted, the representatives were Garth Spencer (SFAV), Bernie Klassen (UFCST), and Bev Cooke (UVicSFA).

Then came the Constellation Affair.

The Constellation Affair (Short Version)

My potted version of this story goes like so: in early 1982, some local mediafen we hardly knew appeared, announcing that they were going to hold a "real" media convention in Victoria, meaning at least 1500 attending, ten Guests of Honour, two hotels, shuttle flights from out of the country, supporting memberships, etc., etc. It appeared to the local clubs they had nothing like adequate capital or experience. Victoria hotels (and fans) could not (and cannot) support conventions with four-figure attendances. The local fans (and fans as far away as Moscow, Idaho) who heard of Constellation Con '83 kept saying "cut back, cut down, get real". Subsequently, they were harassed.

The upshot was that in February 1983, Constellation Con showed up as a one-day event in a Jaycee Hall ... still charging \$25 memberships.

The Constellation Con committee eventually suffered a fiasco, not simply by authoring their own misfortunes, and alienating local fen, but because they managed to acquire a kleptomaniac for a treasurer.

The Constellation Affair (Long Version)

UVicSFA included, among other members, an FRP gamer, Nicholas Conder. Other members were sort of aware of his sister, Cary Bucar, a Star Wars fan, and Dave Olden, a UFCST member. All three went to the 1981 Worldcon in Chicago.

They were overheard saying, at a Hallowe'en party *chez* Johanson, something to the effect of "Gee that was great we ought to do something just like it here!"

Just after Imagine, in Feb. 1982, Paula Johanson got a phone call from Cary. She said, approximately, "Hi I've been phoning some hotels and writing some pros and it looks like I've set up the con for 1983 can I get you to contact the clubs for me to help with fundraising and planning?"

In April, Ian Fleury (a UFCST member) presented the plans for "Constellation Con '83", a.k.a. "VictoriaCon One", at a UFCST meeting. Dave Olden gave a presentation at a SFAV meeting. They claimed that Constellation would be a three-day con, Feb. 18-21, 1983, occupying two hotels with 1500 attendees, featuring eight Guests of Honour, eight "special guests", and multi-track programming. Dave claimed that Jerry Pournelle and Damon Knight were confirmed.

At this point the clubs were already planning their own 1983 convention. Concept. February, it appeared, was the only time window open to them. Cary's Constellation Con committee appeared to have no conrunning experience, no capital, and little idea of Northwest cons and how they worked. The clubs' reception was cool.

Cary Bucar sent a letter to the various clubs, in April 1982, saying:

"IT IS COMPLETELY AND REALISTICALLY POSSIBLE TO PRESENT MORE THAN ONE S.F. ORIENTED CONVENTION IN THE SAME CITY EVERY YEAR. As long as all those involved at both ends come to a common agreement to aid both causes through advertising and joint ventures."

The letter claimed "all immediate hotel facilities have been finalized." The letter also said all committee decisions had

been finalized, and invited the clubs to participate with volunteer effort and money.

Bev Cooke, among others, took this to mean that no input on programming was sought from the clubs; only gofering and more money to pay for GoHs.

Karl Johanson presented figures at one point (from the early planning for Expo '86) indicating that the maximum potential draw for a Victoria SF con would be 700 people, tops, at the best of times. Neither the planners, nor the clubs, could afford the costs incurred if Constellation Con did not pay for itself. The date given was only a week before Rain 5, in Vancouver. Robert Runté later speculated in NCF that American convention fans (practically the only fans to whom Constellation was advertised) would rationally go for the more established con.

Give Me the Letter

UVicSFA disseminated a letter in spring 1982 throughout Canada, politely denying any involvement in Constellation by any clubs or club members in Victoria. This was as close as we got to the stage of countervailing factsheets flying in opposite directions, in Victoria. Constellation leaders afterwards complained that they never got to see the letter, which wasn't written to them in the first place. David Gordon-MacDonald, the UFCST's newsletter editor, went to a lot of trouble to fend off a former neighbour and current member of Constellation, who wanted a copy of the letter, or copies of club minutes — which David's club weren't giving him, not being sure of his allegiance. (Yes, people were really thinking this way.)

In any case, part of the letter was published in Linda Ross-Mansfield's zine *Northern Lights*.

Robert Runté wrote in NCF 6 that the UVicSFA disclaimer was perhaps the worst publicity that Constellation could have received. Paula Johanson remarked in *Atrazine*, her one-shot, that Linda Ross-Mansfield still had a perfect right to reprint parts of it in *Northern Lights*, her short-lived SF newszine. Still, when Constellationoids got wind of it, they thought they were being sabotaged.

The June 1982 *FTA/Phoenix* carried a loc from SFAV's president, "Mac" MacInnes, castigating local fans for fanfeuding, especially about Constellation. He began by pointing out the weaknesses in Constellation's program.

From the start, some of us were against it," he went on, myself included. I still am, as a matter of fact. The reasons are: Victoria is not a major city; there is limited access; there is insufficient manpower; there is improper transportation; it's too big to start with; the timing conflicts with another con; and the list goes on.

Then Mac turned around and complained that opponents of the program were descending to personalities, rather than sticking to the con's weaknesses. He thus ruled out of consideration the fact that the con's weaknesses stemmed from the personalities involved. He also ended by saying he would attend and assist should Constellation work out.

Paranoia City:

Over the fall and winter of 1982 and 1983, life got more and more paranoid for everybody. Dan Cawsey had an ink-bomb thrown through the window of his apartment. Paula Johanson got harassing phone calls.

At one point, names were added to the Constellation membership list which belonged to people like myself, Dan

Cawsey, Karl and Paula Johanson, and Bernie Klassen, who had not bought memberships and didn't want to. Apparently someone just lifted names wholesale from an old *Fandom Directory*.

The treasurer of Constellation Con '83, who shall remain nameless, set up computerized lists of who was to do what; computerized accounts that mysteriously failed to hold money when the concomm tried to write cheques; and other computerized files, most of which no concommers had access to.

Myles Bos and Laurie Bridgman (two local neos who who had been roped into Constellation before meeting the SF clubs in Victoria) went to NonCon, and met Robert Runté and Paul Delaney. (Paul had married Lynne Fonseca and moved to work at a nuclear power plant in Manitoba.) The story goes that the two trufen grabbed these innocents, stuffed them into a closet at NonCon, interrogated them and briefed them on the absolute need to a) trim down Constellation and b) make peace with the clubs — or their con was sunk.

At the end of October 1982 I was invited, quite out of the blue, to attend the first official general meeting of the concomm. They said they wanted an observer from one of the SF clubs in town. At the Jaycee Hall met about 20 people, giving different section reports when called to order. I discovered on reading my notes the next day that Cary had warped my mind into buying her line again. My questions about finances had not been answered; Cary had professed not to know, as I put it, what the flap was about. The next day, when I met Bernie and Paula at the University, she delivered this verdict: "You were snowed, Garth." Not hard to do.

After meeting Myles and Laurie, Robert Runté charitably sent Constellation a draft of a critical article slated for publication in *New Canadian Fandom*:

No con in North American has ever paid for more than four guests, and standard practice is for one ProGoH, one FanGoH, and occasionally a Toastmaster if the con can afford it. A few cons have been able to afford extra guests by accumulating funds over the course of several years of successful conventions, and others attract extra guests (unpaid) by building up a solid reputation as great cons.

(Robert Runté, NCF 6, Jan. 1983)

Robert said the concom was in desperate trouble, was doing everything in its power to defeat its purpose and ultimately threaten all Canadian fandom, and he recommended they drop the Empress, all the paid guests but the GoH, scale down to maybe 400 people, and achieve reconciliation with the clubs. Robert did think Constellation had done one or two things right — publicity flyers were good, when they came out, and a few concommers went to see other cons in action.

The concom read this piece and promptly called an emergency meeting in November, to which I, Karl Johanson and Dan Cawsey were invited. We got to read Robert's article. After the Constellation committee's optimism, Robert's criticism was a tremendously sobering experience. Several members of the concom simply refused to give it credence. Dan Cawsey and Myles Bos talked about patching things up, working out a labour trade.

A conference call with Robert Runté was arranged for the next day. I don't remember all that was said; only the fact that I was taken in *again* by the Constellationoids' sincerity;

Robert re-emphasized his recommendations; but (as I heard later), the treasurer went back to the concom and said "We've gotten Robert straightened out and everything's okay now."

It took a while, but the members grew suspicious of the treasurer's shenanigans and eventually broke their way into those files. By the winter of 1982 Constellation Con fell into struggling factions. Several members later fled the sinking ship, including Myles Bos, Laurie Bridgman, J.D. Waryk and Michael MacAleese.

Instead of dropping the Empress, the concom indicated that they dropped the Harbour Towers, kept the whole guest list, kept talking 1000 (then 800, then 400) people, still more than the Empress was prepared for; and did not achieve reconciliation with the clubs.

At a SFAV meeting on January 23, 1983, Dan Cawsey announced that Concept had been folded. As time wore on, he explained, Concept became more and more something to hold in spite of Constellation, to show them. Many Concept concommers were drained by the fighting with Them.

At the same meeting, J.D. Waryk gave a verbal and quite positive report, saying Constellation was only booking the Empress and expected 800 attendees. Two days later J.D. phoned me to say the con had folded; due to the treasurer's making private deals, the Empress asked for more money for block-booking from Constellation, up front, than they held.

On Feb. 18, *Monday* ran the story that the AMS had cancelled the booking ... and the con was now to be held at the Jaycee Hall. Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm were still listed as GoHs.

(to be continued)