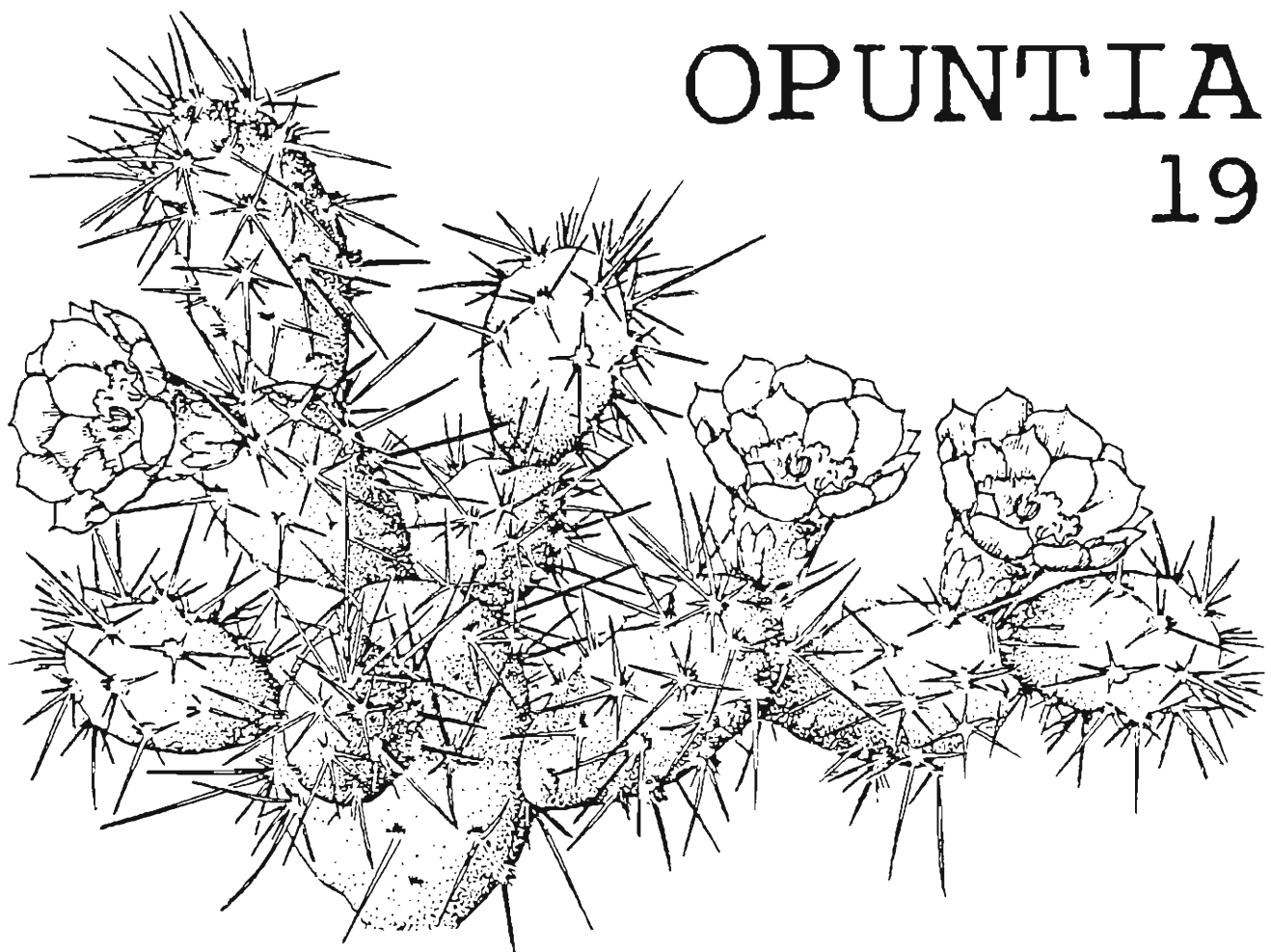


OPUNTIA

19



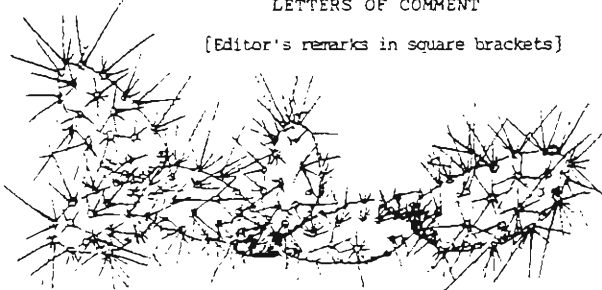
OPUNTIA #19

May 1994

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

ISSN 1183-2703

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



CONADIAN is, of course, Canfandom's biggest event this year. I've booked my vacation around the Labour weekend this year, shocking all my co-workers, as for the last fifteen years I've only ever vacationed in February. The hotel room is confirmed, and I'll book a flight in June after I find out what my property tax is. (Calgary has done its first re-assessment in eight years, and a lot of central city homeowners such as myself are facing an increase due to increasing property values here, while outer suburbs lose value.) I don't intend to drive to Winnipeg; I've made that trip across southern Saskatchewan too many boring times. 1200 km of treeless plain is bad enough doing in one day on the way out there, not to mention doing it again on the way back while tired.

The latest news out of Winnipeg is that 150 dealers have reserved to date and 175 art panels, with more still coming. Membership estimate is about 4000 to 4500.

ConAdian memberships are C\$165/US\$125 until July 15, and C\$35/US\$30 for children 12 and under. Mailing address is Box 2430, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4A7.

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

1994-3-10

Garth Spencer's Victoria fanhistory now includes my brief initial involvement with B.C. fandom. In August 1977, I moved from Orillia, Ontario, to Victoria, and soon saw a notice of a Trek club starting up. This was the United Federation of Canadian Star Trekkers, founded by Cat Middlemiss, Dan Cawsey, and Tony Sine. I was one of their first members, and for a while we had a great time partying, gathering for workshops, working on various projects, and staging mall displays and shows. There were plans to get to at least one V-Con, usually foiled for lack of money. The club suddenly found that Cat and his wife Lois had disappeared, absconding with most of the club's possessions and its treasury, which had several hundred dollars in it. Lois had some medical problems, and Cat was a struggling artist with a slick tongue, so we weren't too surprised to find them and the money gone. The club staggered on anyway. We later discovered that Cat was no artist at all, but was claiming the products of his younger brother as his own. However, those days of finding out about fandom were amongst the happiest of my life. I finally had some friends with a common interest,

[continued next page]

like Cat, Dan, Tony, Joanne van Heteren, Stephanie Lightbody, Pat Kilner, Paul Delaney, and Lynne Fonseca. Paul was at one time the second-in-command of both the UFCST and SFAV. Paul and Lynne live out here now, and Paul's worked with me on past Ad Astras. They have two kids, and live in Beeton, Ontario, north of Toronto.

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

1994-3-21

Harry Warner might have a different viewpoint in reference to numbered fandoms, but I was always informed that I was in 8th Fandom, which is somewhat substantiated by Robert Bloch's THE EIGHTH STAGE OF FANDOM having been published by Advent not much later than that time. I recollect getting together with Colin Cameron to establish 9th Fandom, which was to be speedier than 8th had been. Colin and his friends liked to do jet-propelled drawings. Since numbered fandoms were chiefly just said into existence, we had the concept going steadily enough in several fanzines that we were living in 9th Fandom. CAVEAT EMPTOR, EQUATION, and MACABRE all promoted the idea along with Cameron's zine, and I think we got Gregg Trend to mention it, although it may have been just on his lithographic proofs.

FROM: Don Fitch
3908 Frijol
Covina, California 91722

1994-3-17

A few issues back you mentioned the possibility of losing a big bundle of money as a serious danger facing con producers. As I understand it, the idea of a con book is that there does exist a technology of procedural and organizational patterns which virtually eliminates this danger. Nothing is entirely foolproof, of course, and I'm willing to entertain the possibility that some people who decide to put on a con are foolish. If they have such a guide, any disaster resulting from not attending to it would be

more clearly their own fault, which may be why they resist the idea.

[An excellent point I don't recall having been made before. Ignorance may be bliss, but it can also be used as an excuse.]

Rodney Leighton may only be partially right about the economy being the cause of the paucity of zines that trade. Another aspect seems to be that the standards of expectation have rapidly become much higher in portions of that microcosm: colour covers, issues at least quarterly, circulation in the thousands. This costs a lot of money and time. Intentionally or not, it's becoming a business proposition, even for many of those who really aren't interested in making a profit. Personally I tend to avoid those zines which don't trade, on the grounds that I'm not likely to be interested in people who aren't interested in what other people in the group have to say, even though this probably means that I'm missing some good stuff. The idea of paying the cost of production (as Warner's SPACEWAYS and the Coulsons' YANDRO did) but I particularly avoid zines priced noticeably above the probable cost of production. The current FACTSHEET FIVE probably isn't a good indicator of the zine world. Seth has made it into a semiprozine, concentrating on small press, and can't afford to trade, even for the publications he reviews, so a large number of genuinely amateur publications are starting to ignore it (regrettably, in my opinion). This doesn't differ much, except in magnitude, from our own fanzine fandom. We've always had a few faneds who really liked to get subscriptions, or who accepted only pre-arranged (i.e. "up to my standards of quality"), or all-for-all, or page-for-page trades, or insisted on a publishable loc for every other issue. I've always considered such a strict quid pro quo approach a bit inappropriate in fandom, as in friendships, but it's always been part of the overall pattern. That it's much more prominent in the zine world, in the media fandom publishing world, and perhaps becoming more so in 'real' fanzine fandom is only to be expected.

FROM: Robert Lichtman
 Box 30
 Glen Ellen, California 95442

1994-3-29

I'm one of those people Robert Coulson refers to in his letter when he writes " ... in the late 1950s and early 1960s a group of people entered fandom who were fans of fanzines". Buck overstates slightly here; the people who came in did so randomly, not as part of a group. In my own case, it was a matter of happenstance that I got interested in fans and fanzines rather than in serious discussions of SF. The first fanzines I got were the fannish ones, and that's because I selected them from the fanzine review columns appearing in several of the prozines at the time since they sounded more interesting. And, in actual fact, they were. There were very few serious zines then, as now, that were of any quality. When I entered fandom, I had just missed the long run of Redd Boggs' excellent SKY HOOK, probably the best ever serious sfinally oriented fanzine. Nothing really came around to replace it until Bruce Gillespie's SF COMMENTARY much later on, and while an excellent fanzine it lacks a certain panache that was SKY HOOK.

It's skewing things by asserting that fanzine fans make the majority of complaints. It may seem so, but this may be because fanzine fans leave printed records of their opinions, while other kinds of fans don't do that so much. This biases the situation in disfavour of fanzine fans, who I don't think complain any more than any other group.

Brian Earl Brown doesn't get it quite right when he says the first six numbered fandoms covered only 15 to 20 years. They covered more like 33 years, from the beginnings of fandom around 1930 to the folding of QUANDRY, 6th fandom's leading fanzine in 1953. Others claim 6th fandom continued through around 1955 or 1956, but I don't want to get into nitpicking. Harry Warner Jr.'s four numbered fandoms more or less parallels BEB's chronology but from a more global standpoint.

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

1994-3-29

Individuals who were fans of SF fandom, not of SF, began turning up earlier than the late 1950s and early 1960s. One who bragged about never reading SF was Jack Wiedenbeck, Battle Creek's fan artist of the 1940s, whose multicolour airbrush fanzine covers remain unique to this very day. I believe several of the less prominent New York Futurians of the late 1930s were in fandom only through friendship and political sympathy with the big names in the club. The same is probably true for two or three female fans in Los Angeles during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

I think any amateur publication that grows out of an interest in some specific sort of fandom qualifies for the name of fanzine. I violently disliked Mike Gunderloy's extension of 'fanzine' to political screeds, religious tracts, lunatic fringe pamphlets, and other periodicals in FACTSHEET FIVE and his book about fanzine production, because they've been around for centuries and qualify as propaganda, not fanzines. I believe the movies became the first large field to inspire what we call fanzines, since certain stars inspired fans to publish clubzines about them. Later the newsstand publications about movie stars became known as fan magazines, and I assume that is where SF fandom got the designation for its earliest publications.

The most interesting thing in Garth's latest fanhistory installment was the Up at Myles' House worldcon campaign. While it was going on, I thought it was the most entertaining thing con fandom had ever produced. In fact someone would do a fine service by hunting up the material and turning it into a reprint article. Otherwise, the material about Canadian cons caused me to think once again that a publisher should launch a new series of

[continued next page]

annual volumes. We have JANE'S FIGHTING SHIPS and so on, so why shouldn't there be a ready reference annual called JANE'S FIGHTING CONCOMS?

FROM: Buck Coulson 1994-3-30
2677W-500N
Hartford City, Indiana 47348

The nature of a fanzine depends on what the editor is a fan of. SF fandom invented the term, though not the publications. Earlier editors of fanzines were called amateur publishers and there were a lot of them. More recent ones have adopted the fannish term.

No, I didn't forget the fanzine review columns as recruiting agents; we didn't get that many recruits from them. From reviews in other fanzines, yes; from reviews in the promags, no.

[Buck went on to mention that he had a heart attack March 18 but was out of hospital in time for Millennicon. We trust all will be well.]

FROM: Garth Spencer 1994-3-26
Box 15335
Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 5B1

... a subject I've been trying to identify in my fanhistories. I've never seen a lack of in-group politics, precisely, but after a while politicking supersedes the fellowship, with which (I imagine) a fan group begins. Fans seem to be drawn to a world where they can do what they want, the way they want, without meeting externally imposed standards and requirements. I kept bumping into fans who felt that was what fandom was about, in opposition to mundania. I think a little taste of "I can do what I want" is all the incentive some people need to start

politicking, at the expense of everything else. The problem I have tried and tried to point out is that you can't entirely escape requirements and limitations. Conventions bring this out very clearly. But we keep getting people who really, really want to run cons, zines, and clubs in a way that just won't work.

FROM: Mark Harris 1994-4-7
44 Howard Avenue
Passaic, New Jersey 07055

It is true that many newer zines don't have any concept of The Usual or of trading zines for locs, which is too bad since I think that's one of the most valuable legacies of SF zine fandom. I have sometimes written quite substantial letters of comment and never seen the zine in question again. This makes me sad, because I felt I was expressing an interest, and isn't that the chief coin of this realm?

FROM: Walt Willis 1994-4-10
32 Warren Road
Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 OPD

Buck Coulson's letter in OPUNTIA #18 gives me a whole new slant on the history of fandom, with the statement that "in the late 1950s and early 1960s a group of people entered fandom who were fans of fanzines. Some of them read the professional SF, some of them went on to sell it as well, but a lot of them had no particular interest in it. They were interested in the fanzines and in making friends in fandom". It's always hard to recognize oneself as an historical phenomenon, but really I think Buck must have in mind myself and what is now known as Sixth Fandom. In which case I would put the beginning of the trend in the early 1950s, with the substitution of [my zine] HYPHEN for SLANT. It's not quite true that we had

by Garth Spencer

That Was Then, This Is Now

Andrew Murdoch described Victoria fandom in early '93:

The four major (and, to the best of my knowledge, only) clubs in Victoria are the Resolution, the Science Fiction Association of Victoria (SFAV), the Japanimation Club of Victoria (JAC), and the Shire of Seagirt, the local chapter of the Society for Creative Anachronism.

The JAC is, obviously, an anime appreciation club which gathers once a month at Camosun College to take a look at the latest videos available and discuss their favourites ...

As you well know, SFAV is a purely social club (as opposed to a club that produces things like a fanzine). All club funds are directed towards parties, trips (like picnics to Saltspring Island), and the like. ... A large number of SFAV members are also members of the Resolution, and so there are lots of joint events. Bowling tournaments happen routinely between clubs (Resolution usually triumphs), and recently there was a well-attended dinner at a local motel where we rented a 100-inch projector TV and viewed several episodes of "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine". SFAV is attributed (sic) with bringing the weekly ritual of FRED ... to Victoria from Vancouver's BCSFA. ...

At present, there are only two independent fanzines I know of. The largest is *Under the Ozone Hole*, edited by John Herbert (former editor of *Atavachron*) and Karl Johanson. UTOH recently won the 1993 Aurora Award for best fanzine (after two published issues, surely a record), which they attribute to having the sent the zine to people

no particular interest in SF. I know of only one of us, Max Keasler, who fits that description. The rest of us, including myself, retained an interest in SF, as witnessed by the publication of Damon Knight's reviews in *HYPHEN*, later to be reprinted in hard covers. It was just that material about SF was not often so well written, or so well received by our readership. Even Damon Knight's reviews did not attract the same interest and reader participation as the material we published about fans. But we never set our face against SF; in fact, we often felt guilty about the way we appeared to ignore it. So I would dissociate myself from the "complaints about the changes in fandom" Buck mentions. I regard discussion about SF as the true metier of fandom, and my energies, such as they are, are currently directed to bringing together the various aspects of fandom. That was the message of *BEYOND THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR*, so widely misunderstood.

"Marching to Victoria" was frightening in its revelation of what can happen to ordinary decent people caught up in a fan feud. It's a bit reminiscent of what has been happening in the Balkans. Garth seems to make every attempt to be fair, but I wonder how many of the participants will give him credit for that, or whether he will be regarded with hostility, like the United Nations troops in Bosnia or the British Army in Northern Ireland.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Chester Cuthbert, Alexander Vasilkovsky, Henry Welch, Brant Kresovich, David Drew, Harry Andruschak, Murray Moore, Michael McKenny

such as Robert Runté ... The other is *Dimension*, edited by Don McCaskill, which is primarily aimed at being a forum for all the clubs and fans in Victoria.

... Being a member of SFAV, I can relate to some of the tales. The one that stood out was about going to the Lettuce Patch restaurant after the meetings. You might like to know that the Lettuce Patch is still a fixture in SFAV. Every Tuesday night, SFAVians (along with Resolution members and miscellaneous fen) gather in the Lettuce Patch for TED (Tuesday Evening Delirium), have dinner, and go to a cheap movie. I'm not so sure that it still fits the description of "Glorified Hamburger House", but it is still a place of fannish pilgrimage.

(Andrew Murdoch, ca. March '93)

There are at least two other small SF clubs on Vancouver Island, the U.S.S. Wyvern and the U.S.S. Malaspina, in Comox and Nanaimo respectively.

Several older Victoria fans have paired off (Paul Delaney and Lynne Fonseca; Stan and Katie Hyde; Bernie Klassen and Paula Johanson, Karl Johanson and Stephanie Lightbody; or Veronica [née Hipse] Vander Heiden). Some have moved out of town (Dixie Mueller [formerly Sackett], Wendy Hourston, Craig Yuill, Garth Spencer, AnnDel O'Brien, or Stan and Katie Hyde); some are still around, like Dave, Karl and John.

Karl and John's *Under the Ozone Hole* is Canada's current fan newzine, published on a semi-quarterly basis.

There are no plans (to my knowledge) for another Victoria convention.

Rise of the Filthy Pros

After *Tesseract's*, Press Porcépic's first SF anthology, *MLR's* lettercolumn discussed the *Tesseract's*² book release. Press Porcépic

announced that a third *Tesseract's* anthology was planned, and started a new SF imprint, Tesseract Books. The first book release, Elisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* (translated by Jane Brierley), became a mass-marketed title in the States, through a Chicago distributor.

Porcépic has since relocated, still in Victoria, and is now Beach Holme Press.

After the second ConText in Edmonton (1991), Canadian SF writers formed SWAC (now SF Canada) and started publishing *Communiqué*. This is now co-edited by Aaron Humphrey in Edmonton and Dale Sproule in Victoria.

Some fans have become frequently published authors, including Sally McBride, Dale Sproule, and Paula Johanson (who continues to write SF reviews for Alberta and Victoria papers).

Conclusions

Revising this history ten years after its first appearance, with ten more years of fanhistory for comparison, has thrown some light on what was happening in Victoria through the 80s.

What I witnessed teaches me that

A) most fans are not active, which is a great liability for any activities. Somewhere in the last several decades the cultural idea "entertainment" has changed from "something you do" to "something given you". I think this was at the heart of problems we saw in Victoria.

Bernie used to say that any two fans, given *not* enough time, can do anything; three or more, trying to be organized, will get nowhere. Maybe that was why VISFCSC also just sort of disappeared, after I stepped down as SFAV rep.

At any time, of course, the really active fans are a minority in any community. The situation was exacerbated in Victoria

because it was so small a fan community. Up to the early 1980s, Rebecca Reeves was SFAV's intelligent, well-intentioned, high-strung lady who worried about quite a number of things. She learned the hard way that SFAV had maybe *one* actifan at any one time, and the club relied entirely on him or her for anything to be done or produced. Rebecca did her best but had a lot of concerns she did not express clearly to the club. I clearly remember her organizing SFAV meetings like classrooms, or formal business meetings, when what the members wanted to do was sit around and bullshit. She couldn't get them to listen.

The SFAV president who followed was *too* relaxed — he let most club activities slide, organized some parties and video nights and nothing else, and still figured after a year that he had done a good job.

All that I noticed, at the time I was volunteering for SFAV, was how little the members and I were communicating. I hadn't learned that it wasn't enough simply to present information, ideas, articles, even entertainment to people who might have an interest in it. You practically have to *pay* them to take things in. Either I was offering people what they didn't want, or I wasn't making myself very clear.

When I finally read *The Enchanted Duplicator*, I came across the moral that you attain "Trufandom" only by your own, unaided efforts, which I should have applied to editing *FTA/Phoenix*. Given this fact, it is amazing that there are still conventions, despite all that works against them ...

Some fans enjoy active entertainments, but the couch potatoes tend to overwhelm them in a small fan community. My early impression that fans are only too willing to respond to ideas, opinions, dialogues, is *not* supported by my experience outside of Victoria.

I now understand what Rebecca was up against.

B) *there are some certifiably insane people wandering around in fandom.* As I feared, they try to hold events so overblown and ill-supported they can only turn into disasters — and which threaten to discredit any other fans, at least in the same town.

Why was the Constellation convention concept so grandiose? I think now they took too seriously an image packaged and marketed by groups like LucasFilm. Somebody, somewhere, sold them a bill of goods; somebody gave them a completely unrealistic set of expectations about What a Con Should Be, among other things — and gave them little or no idea of how to support it. A Big Con was their idea of the only way to go, and we were insulted when they tried to sell that idea to us.

It's also clear that they were possessive and suspicious. They rejected criticism and suggestions from the fans who could help them ... in Victoria, or in Vancouver, or in Edmonton.

What is there to do with wild-eyed fen? What can clubs and fan communities do, when a similar fiasco is impending? I have *no* idea.

The space cadets are not as numerous as I once feared. There are a lot more people who are merely awkward in executing an event, and who display rather more control-seeking behaviour than competent task performance.

C) Modest as it's always been, Victoria has rarely acted like one group. It has always been several small, overlapping, sometimes conflicting groups. And the couch potatoes do *nothing* to defend themselves, or each other. It isn't even a concept.

and

D) It isn't that Victoria is a particularly isolated community. The strange misconceptions some fans generated there, some fans will generate anywhere.

It took me years to understand that we experienced a generational shift in fandom, which occurred about a generation

earlier in mainstream society. One aspect of this is that generations that made their own entertainment are followed by mass-media-trained fans, who just sat there and stared. This is *not* to identify the latter group with mediafans. Star Trek and other groups are equally plagued by marginal, apathetic, and sometimes obstructive "fans".

Revising this history has also been faintly embarrassing. To a great extent this chronology reveals my fallacies, hidden agendas, and patterns of behaviour since repeated in other fan groups.

It is a fallacy to think that pushing pieces of paper at people gets a message across to them.

It is a fallacy to think that compiling screeds and reference documents, as I did after Constellation Con and Westercon 44, repairs or prevents any problems.

You want to know my agenda? My hidden, ulterior motives? I had taken fandom to be my community; and since I kept seeing the community breaking down, I sought for ways to shore it up.

I encountered a sort of fellowship. It was, for a brief time, open, supportive and welcoming; a society of friends who *didn't* have a stick up their ass. In Victoria, this was big news. My agenda was, and is, to find out what *worked* here, for a while; and to help my circle of friends work again, if I can.

Why does a fan group *work*, when it works? I still don't know, and I haven't found out how to help an ailing fellowship to work.

Not the way I've been trying to, at any rate ...

Finis

I was rereading Harry Warner's book ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, a history of 1940s fandom published by Advent in 1969. In a brief section on wartime Canadian fandom, Harry had a passing mention of a Depression-era Albertan fan. The entire mention is: "Although Allis Vilette of Alberta had turned up in the letter section of FANTASY MAGAZINE as early as 1934, ...". Naturally I was interested in this mention, particularly because it was so strange to have an SF fan in this time and place. The prairies of western Canada were suffering through a double whammy of economic disaster and the worst droughts recorded. In Alberta, the political situation was unstable. Social Credit was preaching monetary reform, few had any respect for established order, and a mob could be stirred up on the slightest provocation. And yet there was this lone voice in a backward agricultural province writing letters to a zine.

My first stop was to check the Henderson's Directories at the University of Calgary Library for any mention of Vilette. The Library has directories from the earliest days as part of the Northwest Territories to provincial status in 1905 and through the Great Depression up to modern times. But I found no listing for Vilette. These directories are based on census and voting lists, and include children of the house and tenants. But no listing for her.

Next I wrote to Harry Warner. He replied (1994-2-28) as follows: "All I can find in my fan history notes about Allis Vilette (and that's how the last name is spelled in the notes) is that he or she, probably she, was writing letters to FANTASY MAGAZINE from Alberta in 1934. I note that the July 1934 issue of FANTASY MAGAZINE was my source.". Harry went on to suggest that I contact Sam Moskowitz for more details, which I did. Sam was a fount of information and his reply (1994-3-17) was as follows:

"Of course I remember Allis Vilette. She was a regular letter writer to SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST/FANTASY MAGAZINE. Though they printed the full address of other letter writers, for some reason they only printed 'Alberta, Canada' as her address. She was thoroughly familiar with the SF of her period, comprehending all insider references to writers and stories."

"She had initially been a subscriber to THE TIME TRAVELER, one of the very earliest of fan magazines beginning in 1932, but there was no reference to her in their nine issues. When their subscription list was taken over by SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST, she was carried along. Her first letter appeared in the February 1933 issue of that magazine, and she recommended that they carry over some of the departments that had run in THE TIME TRAVELER, particularly the Scientifilm department of Forrest J. Ackerman. Her letter in the April 1933 issue commended the editors for publishing the altered version of "The Woman of the Wood" (from that which had previously appeared in WEIRD TALES). She thought the A. Merritt story was "terrific". She also thanked the magazine for Ackerman's column on Scientifilms."

"Her in-depth knowledge of SF was revealed in her praise of "Alicia in Blunderland", by Nihil (P. Schuler Miller) which absolutely cannot be appreciated by anyone but a longtime reader of SF. "Too good for description", she described it. (Oswald Train reprinted this in hard covers in 1983 with an introduction by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach. It may still be obtainable from Don Grant, who bought out Train's stock.)"

"A feature "Famous Characters in Science Fiction" had been run by SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST, and Thos. S. Gardner had written that they had left out the lead character in THE MOON MAID by Edgar Rice Burroughs. She corrected him in her letter of September 1933, where she noted that to be listed a character had to be featured in four stories, and THE MOON MAID was only composed of three."

"She was appreciative of seeing a "woman" writer of SF. Rae Winters appear as the author of a chapter of COSMOS, the novel written by 18 authors in 17 installments, "unaware" that it was a pen name of Raymond A. Palmer, in her letter in the October 1933 number."

"In her letter in the June 1934 issue, she complimented the editors on the "steady improvement" shown in FANTASY MAGAZINE. She liked the satires on SF such as "The Sky- laugh of Space" by Ormia. The October/November 1934 issue saw her renewing her sub with a dollar for twelve more issues, characterizing herself as a "scientifeminist". She highly praised the September 1934, Second Anniversary issue which contained an original short story by A. Merritt, "The Drone". Her last letter appeared in the February/March 1935 issue, in which she coined the word "scientitown" after commenting that she thought the Clay Ferguson cover (a montage of four SF and fantasy magazines) printed in brown was most effective."

"I don't recall Allis Vilette turning up in any other fan magazine or professional magazine reader's column. There are other suspicious elements, such as her really impressive knowledge of SF; the fact that she appeared only in SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST/FANTASY MAGAZINE; the failure to give even her town of residence, let alone her address, though complete addresses were given of other letter writers; her coining words a la Ackerman; all lending suspicion that she may have been a pen name of one of the editors. She never had a word of criticism in any of her letters of anything in the magazine. I would surmise that Allis Vilette was a pen name of Forrest J. Ackerman, who was one of the editors of both THE TIME TRAVELER and SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST, and that no prehistoric Canadian SF fan ever existed. Allis is a very unusual first name. Ackerman used the pen name Allis Kerlay in a play review in his fan magazine IMAGINATION! of March 1938."

"What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. Hoaxes and careless writing often will send a sincere historian down the road to no return."

IN PLAIN BROWN WRAPPERS:

An Incomplete History of Canadian Apas

by Taral Wayne

(Ed. note: Taral Wayne has been a fan, fanwriter, fanartist and sometime convention organizer since about 1971, when he joined the Ontario Science Fiction Club in Toronto. He sent me this article as his response to a discussion in Maple Leaf Rag around 1986, as to which was the oldest extant Canadian apa. "In Plain Brown Wrappers" first appeared in Harry Andruschak's Intermediate Vector Bosons #3, in 1981, and later in Torus #3, the former Toronto fanzine, in April 1988. Internal references to fandom in 1981 have been left as is. —Garth Spencer)

Liking obscure titles, I was tempted to call this article "Grim Travellers in Dawn Skies." I refer, of course, to an excellent song by Bruce Cockburn about busy people blind to the beauty of the world around them. "Grim travellers" on Air Canada jets share flights with the mail in "dawn skies", suggesting that apas, too, are all too often "grim". That Cockburn is a Canadian song writer is an extra shade of irony. Remembering how undeveloped most fans' musical tastes are, however, I fell back on a more obvious title. Though it isn't half as clever or witty, and therefore completely lacking snob appeal, at least it will spare Andy a flood of letters asking what did I mean by that. Consequently, he will be grateful and not ask me to write another article for him.

I couldn't, anyway. There is only so much history to apas in Canada, and the entire subject can be covered by a handful of facts, a few anecdotes, and an off-colour joke or two. Before 1972, there were no apas in Canada, though there were a few Canadians in apas. Probably the first Can fan to write a mailing

comment was Les Croutch, who published a zine called *Light* for many years in the 1940s. *Light* began as a carbon-copy list of books and magazines Les had for sale, and was called simply *The Croutch Magazine Mart News*. I think he changed the name and joined FAPA with the same issue, the 108th. At a later date, he changed the numbering to match his entry into FAPA. Les was probably the only Canadian in apas until the early 50s, when the Derelicts of that era, Boyd Raeburn, P. Howard Lyons, Gerald Stewart, one or two others perhaps, also joined FAPA and SAPS. Canadian fandom in other places than Toronto was growing quickly in those years. Gina Ellis in Calgary, Norm Clarke in Ottawa, and Norman G. Browne in Edmonton were in FAPA. Gina and Norm Clarke (now married) were in FAPA as late as '72 or '73, as was Paul Wyszkowski of Ottawa. By the late 60s, though, the energy of the Canadian fandom of the fifties had been dissipated, and that would have been the end of this history had not a new generation of fans sprung up from the ashes of the old in Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. Present Canadian fandom is, in fact, coasting on the initial impetus of fannish upwelling of just over 12 years ago.

The curtain rises on apa history in Canada when a comics and SF fan named Vaughn Fraser proposed CANADAPA, on some historic but forgotten day in 1972. His objective was the unification of Canadian fandom through an apa of 25 members, 60% of whom must be Canadians. It was mailed bimonthly, and has continued through over 50 mailings to this present day. Not smoothly, though. At first, there was a fair representation of SF fans in CANADAPA, including such luminaries in fandom of the time as Mike Glicksohn, Susan Wood, Richard Labonté, and Rosemary Ulliyot. The other half of the contingent pubbed crudely by comparison, and probably alienated the SF fans with a lot of talk about the X-Men, Jim Steranko, and a bit of the sort of pornography that sophomores use to shock their juniors of

one or two years. After a dozen mailings, the comics fans were left to themselves, and CANADAPA ceased to be the albumen of Canadian fandom in even the slight degree that it had been.

It continued undisturbed, however, until 1976 or so, when it was obvious that its members were losing interest, and that newer people, found somewhere in the woodwork of fringe fandom, were coming to the fore. Fraser retired as OE and the office was filled, one after the other, by a succession of OEs that somehow ended with a minac strike, a fight waged secretly against the Ontario SF Club, and an interruption in mailings. CANADAPA appears to have stabilized again. Its newest OE is making heroic efforts to recruit new members from fandom, but by working against the grain of the apa. The membership is suspicious of fandom, and has generally flung ordure and epithets at any fan who has dared to pass beneath their tree. The result of this is, after an illustrious beginning, that only such insignificant members of Canadian fandom as Mike Hall and Robert Runté have been found in CANADAPA since.

Meanwhile, most of the Canadian fans contemporary with the founding of CANADAPA had gafiated, and the newer generation went about its business in blissful ignorance. Not a word was heard about apas in Canada again until 1975, when an apahack from Phoenix came to Toronto and joined the New Derelicts. Patrick Hayden had already formed one apa, AZAPA, and promptly suggested founding another, ONTAPS. After about two weeks of toying with the idea, apathy reasserted itself in Toronto fandom, and the idea was hastily buried lest someone complain that it stunk. The insidious influence of an apahack had its effect at last, though. First one Derelict was inveigled into some of Patrick's many apas, then the others follows suit. Shortly, all of us were involved in MISHAP, APA-50, AZAPA, SAPS, RAPS, TAPS, et al. Before long, we couldn't keep track of our trades with each other, and founded an apa just for

Toronto fans to ensure each other copies of all our own apazines. CO-OP lasted only six mailings before failing, due to the lack of a willing OE and too many zines withheld from secret apas.

Susan Wood, out in Vancouver, had been talking about the need for a feminist's apa, but was too busy to found "Bread and Roses." Janet (Small) Wilson and Victoria Vayne founded it for her, but the name of the premailing stuck, so that it has been known as A WOMEN'S APA ever since. AWAPA was open to both sexes from the beginning, to the chagrin of the more ardent feminists who couldn't talk about sexism with someone of the opposite sex listening in. A private extension of the apa, SUB-SET, was hastily arranged. Its need finally vanished once the women of AWAPA voted to discharge the male members from the body politic, and indeed did suffer a slump. It was revived again, a very private apa with about ten members, separate but overlapping with AWAPA.

A spin-off of AWAPA was SPIN-OFF. At first conceived as a frivolous feminist apa, it has since become an ordinary invitational apa with no feminist pretensions. Its founder, Karen Pearlston, cannot be bothered to belong. The same can probably be said about all the original members.

Other spin-offs from AWAPA emerged, MIXED COMPANY for example, but these have drifted like their parent out of touch with the rest of fandom.

A WOMEN'S APA and its relatives are technically Canadian, but as geography was irrelevant to the purpose, and the membership international, I'm not apt to count them. For the purist, though, AWAPA, SUB-SET, MIXED COMPANY, and SPIN-OFF were conceived and first collated in Toronto, with Toronto fans as the first OE's.

Patrick Hayden, the corrupting influence that led so many Toronto fen to sin, was not to be denied the honour of founding a Canadian apa, since his first child, the Arizona apa, grew

querulous and uncomfortable in reaction to many of the hot-headed statements made by the Derelicts he had introduced. Consequently he, the Derelicts, and other friends founded OASIS. An invitational apa, its first mailing was out in August 1977. Its members, the hand-picked cream of many apas, got off to an encouraging start, with a thick first mailing stapled in two parts, but by the 5th mailing it too had grown querulous and uncomfortable, but not for Patrick. The bad vibes took their toll of a few members, who were dispensable, though. A particularly lax minac rule allowed members to "express continued interest" and get away, mailing after mailing, with no minac. The apa was handed on to a new OE, and it became irregular as well. There have been only 19 mailings in the three and a half years of its existence, speaking eloquently of the neglect of this hexaweekly apa. Its abuse has become rather a virtue lately. The discord died as the members mellowed, and it is presently a relaxed, easy place to stay in touch with friends, much as FAPA is the graveyard of an older generation of burned-out fans.

In early 1977, Mike Bailey in Vancouver proposed APA-V. This seemed to come to nothing, unless it inspired Fran Skene to found BCAPA a year later. The first mailing went out in April 1978. By May, the monthly BCAPA had 15 members; by July, it had filled its roster of 25. A few out-of-town members have always belonged, but mostly it has been a preserve of local fandom. It had begun something of a slump, I believe, by the 20th mailing, when a new influx of members boosted the roster and the page count. The Derelicts had broken up, and the remnants for a while thought to move to Vancouver, and joined the apa in preparation. Edmonton fan had left BCAPA prior to this (possibly causing the slump), and when the Toronto fans left the apa it slumped again, like an electron returning to ground state.

BCAPA has a sister in VANAPA, begun in December shortly after the first. With many of the same members, it is not much different, but Vancouver fans characterize the one as sercon and the other as faanish. BCAPA, the one I was a member of for about ten mailings, was reported to be the sercon of the two, but from my experience I would more readily label it "mundane" and VANAPA as "silly" and "mundane". Both apas are insular and rather superficial.

Edmonton fandom, the result of the fusion of the indigenous club and emigrants from Decadent Winnipeg fandom, was not to be outdone by Vancouver or Toronto as a hotbed of apacreation. DADAPA was founded in 1979 by David Vereschagin as an apa dedicated to Dadaistic principles. If I hadn't mislaid my Official Organs I might be able to guess how many mailings of DADAPA there have been, but thus is history unmade. They will show up some day, found in the Vatican Library next to the lost poems of Sappho or in the mouth of a mummy in a Mexican catacomb. As an apa dedicated to Dadaistic principles, DADAPA didn't live up to its ideal. Vereschagin eventually expressed dissatisfaction and left, complaining that it was predictable and ordinary. Its star attraction, Keith Fenske, was almost expelled because he deliberately flouted the maxac rule because it was a *rule*. He eventually left, too.

Around May 1980, FEWMETS was born. Founded by Lorna Toolis or Sheree Carton or somebody in Edmonton, it is an invitational apa that I know practically nothing about, for the simple reason that I have never been invited to be a member. A local right-wing fan with a fetish for sharp objects *was*, and declined; a fan who has, to my knowledge, virtually no experience in fandom, and who was judged substandard material for the Dorsai Irregulars; so we may be able to draw conclusions about FEWMETS from that. In apology for the deplorable lack of information, I can offer one irrelevant datum: the name FEW-

METS was used once before, as an AZAPazine I published myself.

Back in Toronto, with some egging on, Mike Wallis founded TAPA in June 1980. It was meant originally to encourage the large neofan community in Mike's building to try fanpubbing, but this part of the experiment seems doomed to failure. The exposure to fanzines does not seem to have taken, so that as Toronto members drop out, they are replaced by friends of Mike's who are sick of languishing on the waitlist of MINNE-APA. Monthly mailings quickly reached the point where they had to be stapled together into two volumes. There have been ten so far, and there is a sizable waitlist. Far from having an unblemished growth, however, TAPA has institutionalized picking on the OE for minor peccadillos of official conduct, and dissatisfaction with the apa among different cliques has reached crisis proportions. Hints of a splinter apa have been dropped, with sound of one hand clapping.

A comics fan started history rolling, and another comics fan hoped to found an apa nine years later. Jim Shedden had been in BCAPA at the time the Derelicts were members, and is the current OE of CANADAPA (1981). He wasn't satisfied with any of the apas he was in, which led him to thinking that one more in a country as large as Canada surely wouldn't hurt. He circulated a one-shot, *This Sure Ain't DNQ*, but got no response. His apa died without a name or a mailing.

Along about the middle of 1980, I had become pretty impatient with OASIS, and determined to start an apa of my own. It would be invitational too. Unlike OASIS, it would have a minac rule, but almost no other rules at all. EXTRATERRITORIALITY was to concentrate the quirky, eccentric fans I was interested in all in one place, including several of the Derelicts and other friends of mine. All of one mailing was produced. Although it was unconventional, it was not a first-class effort,

and it sank in that few of the many people whom I had pressed to join were interested. Faced with a choice between finding other prospective members and throwing good money after bad, or cancelling XT in disgrace, I chose disgrace as the better part of valour.

If I've consistently given the impression that apas in Canada have been a dismal, unimpressive lot, founded on vain hopes, potential squandered by strife and indolence, and striking only for their mediocrity, it is not to laugh. There is a moral buried in here, somewhere under the low humour and innuendos. I can think of few exceptions to the rule that *all* apas are banal! To which quality, much of the spread of the institution credit can be given by this cynical, Old Fan and Tired ...

CANADIAN APAS (FROM 1981 TO 1994)

Garth Spencer

A word of explanation: If the word "APA" means nothing to you, think of a BBS conducted on paper and by mail. Now forget that analogy, because it doesn't really hold.

An Amateur Publication Association (the words to the abbreviation vary) was a deal whereby a few fanpublishers could produce a limited number of self-publications for each other, and a central mailer or Official Editor undertook to collate and mail out the copies. If you participated in an APA, you were expected to produce a "minac" (minimum active contribution, let us say) of X many pages, up to Y copies, at Z frequency. You would then receive a parcel of collated apazines, called a "mailing." In order to facilitate the process, APAs sometimes charged dues for postage.

This system offered certain advantages to people who wanted to correspond with other fans, in days when fans were widely separated but postal costs were already rising. As practised in fandom, people set up APAs with a particular theme or regional purpose in mind, such as the Fantasy APA, the Toronto APA, the Arizona APA. As things worked out, such APAs tended to drift rather far from their original purpose.

It appears that the "sercon" and "faanish" types of fanwriting need to be explained. Fandom is, or once was, supposed to have a certain spirit ... at one time, the watchword was serious-and-constructive, which was the phase of fandom that produced literary criticism about SF in fanzines. Later, there was a more lighthearted, party-spirit phase, which is one of the meanings of "faanish." In a world that looks like a collaboration between Victor Appleton and William S. Burroughs, this is not a bad perspective to have.

Since Taral Wayne wrote "In Plain Brown Wrappers" in 1981, some changes have occurred. The following is an account, as best I can compile, of what has become of Canadian APAs since 1981.

Only one Victoria APA ever existed, to my knowledge: CLAP-TRAPA was a fiction APA begun in 1981 and folded in late '82, after three mailings. Paula Johanson started this legal-length APA to bring together the local fans who were interested in writing and comic art. Unfortunately, the pressure from various events at the time, not only the Constellation Con crisis, put an end to CLAPTRAPA and some other fan activities.

TAPA was much the same as Taral described it while I was a member, from 1982 through 1985 or so, although I didn't notice much sniping at the OE. Apazines varied vastly in the means of production, quality of reproduction, and quality and kind of contents. What gradually dawned on me was how ... well ... mundane and uneducated was the level some people fell to. Arguments periodically arose over who said what to whom. Mike Wallis, by the way, was OE of TAPA until about 1987. The October 1986 mailing of TAPA was down to 22 pages. As I got fed up with TAPA, and later sold my mailings to Paul Gerber in Victoria, I have no later information on this APA.

Taral himself started another Toronto APA, GRIFFONAGE, which was a limited-distribution APA for more fannish or sercon fans in the city. This folded when Taral found himself more committed to other activities, the level of contribution failed to sustain the APA, and Bee Stuckless, the next OE, moved to Newfoundland.

Several times between 1983 and 1987 I heard from Lexie Pakulak in Calgary, who was trying to start up QUILL, an apa for would-be writers to practice in. Advertising QUILL never seemed to stimulate enough response.

Several other Alberta APAs appeared after 1981. Rob and Derek McCulloch, originally of Grande Prairie, founded a goodly number of APAs almost simultaneously. Many were still going in 1987, with new OEs. One was GALACTUS, a comics-oriented APA, later OE'd by Len Wong in Vancouver; another was BONDAPA, for James Bond fans. Derek McCulloch moved to Berkeley in about 1986 or 1987.

CANADAPA folded in December 1984, after Harland Ronning of Saskatchewan stepped down as OE and Joanne McBride assumed the duties.

As one of the last members wrote me in 1986 or 1987:

Yeah, I've heard about how CANADAPA folded. Paul Stockton and some other friends of mine were members in the last mailing. Shortly after it had officially died, I idly mentioned to Robert Runté that someday I'd like to see about getting a revival started, and did that seem too impertinent?, what with my never having been a member of the APA. When next I turned around, Robert had reported this in New Canadian Fandom. You gotta watch what you say around that guy. Paul (Stockton) is telling me I should revive CANADAPA from Berkeley. The irony appeals to me, but I'm too much of a Canadian nationalist (though more low-key than Robert) to try OE'ing a Canadian APA from a foreign country. That can lead to all sorts of bad things. As far as I'm concerned, it's okay for a Canadian to CM an American APA (as I did with WAPA), 'cause that's a guerrilla action ..."

(Derek McCulloch, 86/87)

In November 1986 I heard from a Gary Thomas, then starting up REVERIE in Edmonton.

Shortly after *Maple Leaf Rag* began publication — in 1984, I think, actually — one Jeff Lewis talked about starting up SCAPA, an APA for fans with alien-being personas. But as far as I know, it never got off the ground (like some other Jeff Lewis projects).

Colin Hinz (formerly of Saskatoon, now in Orillia, Ontario) made noises in about 1987 that sounded like he wanted to revive DADAPA, maybe retitled NADADAPA or CANADADAPA. I swear I didn't make up these names.

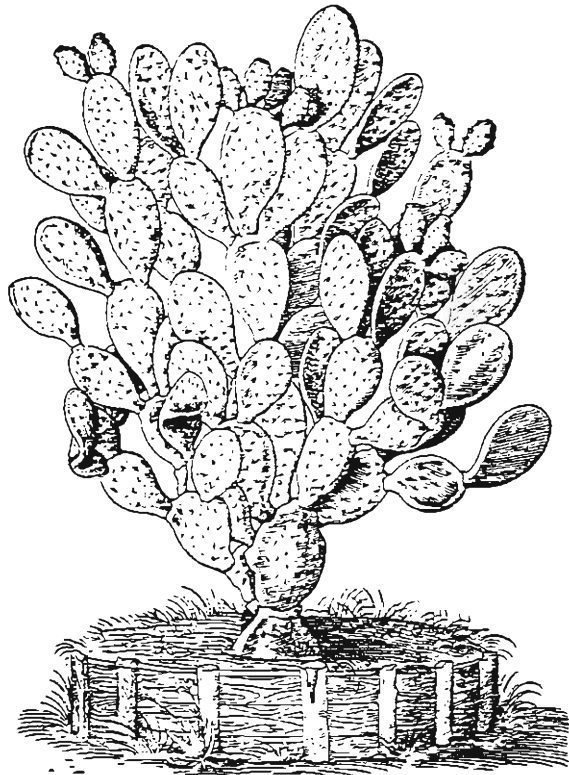
A list of APAs (which I hoped was a current list) was printed in *The Last Maple Leaf Rag*, in 1987. Out of the Canadian APAs listed then, I have no information on GALACTUS or TAPA. VANAPA has not survived. BCAPA survived until at least 1989, usually OE'd by Tam Gordy, but has been in suspension for a few years. Again, the apazines varied vastly in their means of production, quality of reproduction, and quality and kind of contents; and most of the contributions struck me as, well, Archie Bunker's first crack at creative writing. Some interesting things happened in BCAPA — Ed Beaugard's and Beth Finkbiner's (now Miller) contributions — and every issue. Tam featured a fantasy serial featuring an all-purpose protagonist, who was sometimes Jewish, a werewolf, or a reincarnated eternal hero.

Janet Wilson was OE of MIXED COMPANY while she and Robert Charles Wilson were living in B.C. in the early 90s. I have no word on MIXED COMPANY since about the time the Wilsons moved to Toronto.

APApexy (OE: Grant Duff) and APArition (OE: George Park) are still going strong in the Ottawa area. They can be contacted c/o the Ottawa SF Society, A.G. Wagner, 251 Nepean St., Ottawa, ON K2P 0B7. Collation parties are held, I believe, monthly.

From the first you have probably been thinking, "Haven't BBS systems replaced APAs?" Well, no, no more than they have replaced fanzines. For one thing, not everybody in fandom has, or can afford, a computer and modem and a BBS account. For another, what little I have seen of BBS systems indicates they have one major disadvantage compared to print media — people don't go back and read what other people actually said. This can lead to misunderstandings, and to hasty, pointless and sometimes legally actionable remarks. It happens so often there is a BBS term for it, "flaming".

Fans make this mistake all the time in apas, too, but they don't have an excuse then.



engraving by Matthioli Sanese (1568)