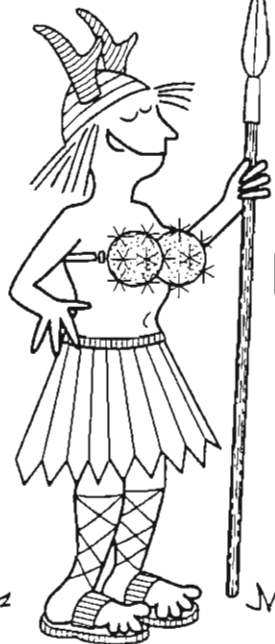


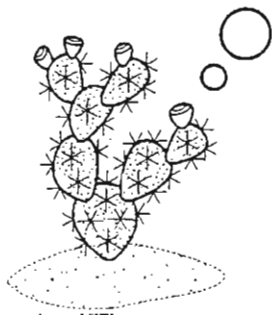
OPUNTIA

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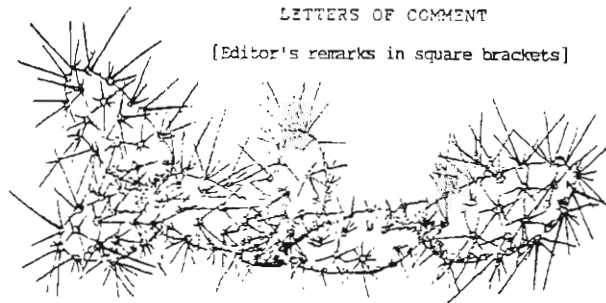
I am Opuntia, busty goddess of the verbal barb and champion of the downtrodden.



And I thought I was a prickly pair.



[Editor's remarks in square brackets]



OPUNTIA #24

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ART CREDIT: The unmistakable style of Teddy Harvia (701 Regency Drive, Hurst, Texas 76054-2307) on this cover.

EDITORIAL: The 1995 Aurora Awards were, as always, not very representative of the best in Canuck SF due to the low number of nominations and votes. This turns them into essentially a random-number draw. The same sort of problem occurs with Hugos in the less popular categories, so it is not the fault of Canadian SFers alone. What got me started on this diatribe was seeing John Mansfield passed over in the Fan Achievement (Organizational) category. John, of course, chaired the 1994 WorldCon, which turned out to be an excellent one. A prophet without honour, etcetera.

Coming up October 6 to 8 (Thanksgiving weekend) is the BanffCon 95 convention in Banff, Alberta. Terry Pratchett is GoH. This is an occasional con, the last was in 1989. Small and better than average for new ideas on the program. Memberships are C\$35/US\$26 before July 22, C\$40/US\$30 by September 30, C\$50 at the door. Plus, you are warned, the entrance fee into Banff National Park. Write to Box 20001, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 4H3.

FROM: Holger Eliasson
Box 171
S-114 79 Stockholm, Sweden

1995-2-13

[To understand this loc a little better, Holger's zine is called HILDISVIN, where 'svin' = 'swine'. Just as the mascot of OPUNTIA is a genus of cacti, so it is that the mascot of HILDISVIN is the pig.]

Thank you for the latest OPUNTIAS. I've perceived a faint but still noticeable odour of pork hanging over those issues, and very probably the Pork of Ages™ at that. This of course feeds my feelings of ego-boo and self-esteem to quite unbearable levels. One gets to read about a Hog of War in Taral Wayne's well-written and informative article on the San Juan controversy. Just the type of stuff that I like to read, very well researched and about a curious yet amusing subject that few people would have heard about beforehand.

[Enclosed is a newspaper article] under the heading of "Short Royal Career for Swine!". One reads about a Canadian miniature pig named Selma, which in conjunction with the Chinese New Year celebrations in Gothenburg, was presented to the Queen of Sweden, and thereby received

[continued next page]

status as a Pork Royal, but only for a short while. You have noticed that according to the Chinese calendar, this year is the Year of the Pig.

But the Queen refused to have anything to do with the animal (such indignity!) we read, and didn't want to take it home with her. Now my only comment is whether the court and its officials even at one point contemplated the possible political disaster this hasty action might lead to, particularly if some Canadian officials would hear about it. Bearing Taral's example of the San Juan war in mind, the Bay of Pigs incident, and several other porcine-connected occurrences of armed hostility between different countries, we can only fear the worst. The offending swine was quickly donated to a local children's zoo, and as such the animal immediately transferred to the payroll of Gothenburg town, to the Parks & Streets Commission. Very similar to your line of work, I suppose. So it all ties together nicely. Now it only remains to be seen if the Canadian miniature pig Selma can live high off the hog as a town employee, with official status alongside all the other employees in the Parks & Streets Commission.

FROM: Chester Cuthbert
Winnipeg, Manitoba

1995-3-5

I've never corresponded with Joseph Major but I appreciate very much his congratulations on page 4 [of OPUNTIA 23]. My situation would not be so enviable if I hadn't had the responsibilities of my father's family and my own which forced me to take actions that my own inclinations would not have made necessary. I discovered that what I did for my dependents always benefitted me. I never could accept Ayn Rand's philosophy of selfishness; altruism pays better.

[As I grow older, I've learned this very thing too. Do a favour and it will be returned, sometimes years in the future, but ultimately you will benefit. Look after

others and you will be too busy to be brought down by your own worries.]

There are exceptions to Robert Runté's study, but I found it interesting.

Andrea Paradis' update on the National Library's exhibit is also interesting. Allan Weiss, Lorna Toolis, and Peter Halasz have written to thank me for the copies of my notes on SF&F books by Canadian writers which I sent to the Merril Collection, and which will assist them in supporting this display.

I told John Robert Colombo there were some errors in his book YEARS OF LIGHT but that they were not serious enough to mention. It is unlikely that the book will ever be reprinted. It is a valuable source of early Canadian fandom history, really a surprising accomplishment by a man who is a literary rather than a fandom personality.

[YEARS OF LIGHT is a trade paperback, 195 pages. It can be had from Dundurn Press, Suite 301, 2181 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4E 1E5. Price \$16.04 in Canada and probably add a couple of bucks for postage elsewhere. They accept Visa and Mastercard. A recommended fanhistory.]

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

1995-3-6

Best thing in OPUNTIA #23 had to be Runté's article. I like to see good relevant sercon and this one is epochal. I hope you sent the issue around to various SF clubs. It would be particularly nice if LASFS should see it. The boom-and-bust cycle was something I first saw mentioned in SIGMA OCTANTIS, and their writer seemed, judging by his style, to have originated the concept. This is what I consider good reading to've arrived in my mailbox.

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

1995-3-10

Robert Runté discusses the 200 limit. Never having been in a club that even approached that limit, I can tell you the same fractionating happens in groups of 30 or 40. As in our own FOSFA (Falls of the Ohio SF&F Association), which has had a crisis every two years leading to a split off of a group, until we reached our present status.

[The Calgary Philatelic Society membership has been stable at about 225 for a decade. Is the 200 limit just an SF thing?]

As for "each group willingly surrender[ing] the executive to any faction that could mount a fresh slate to relieve them", I am reminded of the charming custom of our neighbouring club Lexington SF Association where each Dictator organizes the coup by which the succeeding Dictator comes to power. This has led to LexSFans running around with water pistols on fortunately understanding relatives' farms.

You note declines in cactus and stamp groups. And while more people are bowling than ever before, the number of bowling leagues is declining. You note the trend for the proliferation of categories of zines to outpace the proliferation in number of zines. This parallels the pattern in the for-profit world. I see magazine sections overflowing with magazines, almost all in interests that do not interest me. Doubtless the World Wrestling Federation fan or the rebuilt Volkswagon Beetle fan, or any of the other specialized groups who now have large colourful magazines devoted to their field, see it much the same way.

[Out of curiosity, I checked my favourite newsagent and found they had four different VW magazines, each specializing in one aspect ranging from hotrodding Bugs to dune buggies to restoration of stock creampuffs.]

FROM: Harry Andruschak
Box 5309
Torrance, California 90510-5309

1995-3-9

I notice a couple of comments about the Internet and the amount of 'bandwidth' on it. My own current activity is to call one BBS on a daily basis. By keeping to this narrow focus, I am not overwhelmed by the amount of traffic out there.

Note to Harry Warner Jr. about FAPA. In the old mundane apas, the job of Official Editor and Central Mailer were separate. The Official Editor published the Official Organ, and the Central Mailer mailed out the bundles. The O.O. was mailed separately from the bundles of amateur magazines. FAPA being much smaller, it was decided to reduce the number of officers way down to four, and combine the functions of O.E. and C.M.. I learned this from Don Wollheim. Also, I spent a couple of years in NAPA, the National Amateur Press Association that was the model for FAPA.

FROM: Rodney Leighton
R.R. #3
Pugwash, Nova Scotia B0K 1L0

1995-3-4

Excellent article by Professor Runté. As I was reading it, I was thinking that it could apply to fanzines and fandom in general, from what I've seen. I was delighted to see that he brought that into the essay. I learned some things from this. However, I wonder where the 30-something or 40-something person who discovers SFandom fits? Or the 30-something people who publish monster fanzines for six or seven issues fairly close together and then essentially vanish, published every 2½ years or so?

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

1995-3-5

Good to see the Pig War history made a favourable impression. I think Taral captured something about this region, a sort of Lotusland feeling that makes desperate antagonisms look sort of, well, silly.

I guess the answer to the 'bandwidth' of Internet is to treat it like a smorgasbord; pick and sample what appeals to you, take what you need, and let the rest go by. I understood that to be the concept of congoing, almost immediately. I suppose that is the only way to deal with contemporary fandom or other leisure interests.

Robert Runté's article seems to identify what I miss from my first fan group: a synergy from the members' knowledge, skills, and interests that not only fostered camaraderie, but our mutual personal growth. It helps me understand why I'm so prone to nostalgia after living and working some years in a larger, apparently more productive fan group, why contemporary fandom mostly looks like fakefandom to me. I find the synergy missing here and now. I wish I could foster a synergetic group but it seems unlikely. And what else should I do?

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

1995-3-10

I'm surprised at Runté's mention of "the normal two year life cycle" of clubs. Neither of the stf clubs I belonged to back in the 1950s had any activities beyond a monthly get-together. They each had a club fanzine, but those were basically the work of individuals rather than a club effort, and one of them lasted long beyond the life of the club. EISFA, being a college club, ended with the departure of the members. ISFA lasted a bit longer; I'm

not sure how many years, but most of them were without any club activity, even a fanzine. Ten years? Something like that. Possibly its most famous members are the present leaders of ALCOR, the organization that will freeze your head so you can be revived in some future century. (But when club meetings began to turn into discussions of how to properly freeze people, Juanita and I quit.)

Are there really fewer SF clubs now? It may depend on how you categorize convention committees. A good many of them are more or less permanent organizations which have meetings throughout the year related to their convention activities. There are also WorldCon bid groups, which are temporary but which must stick together for more than Runté's two-year life cycle. WorldCons are bid for three years in advance and a bidding group must be formed some years before that in order to become known.

I don't see that the increasing number of zine categories has much bearing on the number of fanzines. I don't believe that very many people were drawn into SF fandom simply because they wanted to publish something and stf was the only area open: The people who publish comics fanzines are interested in comics, and never had any particular interest in SF. COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE tried for ten years to get comics fans to support SF magazines and failed utterly, despite anything the editor could do. The editor had been a SF fan and comics fan both, until his work put him mostly into the comics field. He still came to some SF conventions but his readers didn't. Stf fandom is a hobby like any other, and one doesn't take up a hobby unless one has some interest in the activity. Star Trek fandom is booming because vast numbers of people see the television shows. But they aren't SF fans, they're Star Trek fans. SF fandom is handicapped by reliance on a written medium, and the competition of Internet within that medium.

FROM: Arthur Hlavaty 1995-3-5
 206 Valentine Street
 Yonkers, New York 10704-1814

I disagree with Vicki Rosenzweig's statement that increased bandwidth is the problem, in television or on the Internet, or at least I would emphasize that it's also an opportunity. Television was even worse when there was nothing but three networks desperately trying to fill each unforgiving minute with whatever would draw the largest audience. The answer, as Vicki suggests, is better means of filtering the available material. I likewise endorse Henry Welch's suggested ways to refrain from further widdling in the Great Information Stream.

Thanks for reprinting that marvelous 1948 article [from the GLOBE AND MAIL]. It may be the International Standard "Sci-Fi Weirdos Invade" Story, and it no doubt should be kept under glass in Paris. There's even a bit of prose malfeasance to pick on, the remarkable suggestion that David Kyle publishes Monticello, New York.

FROM: Walt Willis 1995-3-12
 32 Warren Road
 Donaghadee, Northern Ireland BT21 0PD

Runté was interesting about the life cycle of the SFclub. The main problem that faced Irish Fandom was that of keeping the club small. We were periodically plagued by uncongenial people wanting to join us. Usually this could be dealt with by lending them books. There would almost invariably come a time when they stopped coming rather than return the books, but once we had a lady who believed in fairies and wrote poems about them. Our congenial group was saved by Madeleine, who sacrificed herself nobly by taking her to the pictures on fan nights, and eventually she got the message and stopped coming. It was incidents like these which make one realise how important Madeleine was to the existence of Irish Fandom as a close-knit society for over some forty years.

FROM: Henry Welch 1995-3-11
 1525 - 16 Avenue
 Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017

Robert Runté's article on life cycles of organizations was very good. I'm still trying to break the Milwaukee groups of the habit of screening and apathy. There are brief signs of viable life but I'm not having anywhere near the success of a John McBain.

FROM: Tom Feller 1995-3-10
 Box 13626
 Jackson, Mississippi 39236

I found Robert Runté's analysis illuminating. My knowledge of clubs is based on the Chimneyville F&SF Society and several short-lived clubs here in Jackson. CFSFS lasted fifteen years, which is well above the average. The club survived the departure of its founder when she decided the SCA was more to her liking. However, it never had the problem of growing larger than 200 members. At its peak, CFSFS never had more than 25. In the last few years, we failed to address the problem of recruiting new active members to replace the ones who developed other interests.

I witnessed an example of Robert's distinction between a club founder and a leader of an ongoing club. An intense, energetic local Star Trek fan founded a Trek club and had considerable success for the first few years. She was a great promoter and recruiter. However, after a few years most fans found there really wasn't a whole lot to do. There were only four meetings a year to which general membership was invited. There was a fanzine but she preferred to reprint professional articles on Star Trek than develop contributors. She had an inner circle which did all the club's work. The vast majority of members had no say in how the club ran. For instance, she committed the

[continued next page]

club to putting on a three-day convention without consulting the general membership. (I know. I was one of them.) The result was quick burnout by the members of the inner circle, and eventually the founder burned out as well.

FROM: Mark Strickert 1995-3-8
ELCA Copy Centre
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, Illinois 60634

Fan history? Cannot relate, though can sometimes be interesting reading nonetheless, especially where fan politics and other behaviour disorders parallel my experiences in radio fandom. The most obvious difference in the two fandoms is the relatively higher percentage of antisocial people in the radio hobby.

FROM: Michael McKenny 1995-3-15
424 Cambridge Street South
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 4H5

OPUNTIA 23 was fascinating reading, especially the main article by Robert Runté. The following comments are by no means intended to be confrontational, but merely to provide a few additional thoughts to what was a splendid article. As one residing in Ottawa, the national capital, I am well aware this is allegedly the undisputed centre and Mecca of the country in a mundane sense, in the opinion of a great many people, especially the media here. Yet I'm aware that in reality there are a lot of interesting things going on in Montréal, Halifax, Winnipeg, Toronto, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver, and Edmonton. The article could have used a few more dates. However, at some unspecified time Edmonton is called the centre of Canadian fandom. I was active in Canadian fandom, though typically at a local and regional level for much of it,

for 25 years. I had not heard of Edmonton fandom until the golden years of Halcon and Maplecon, and as we declined it was V-Con that seemed to be doing very well, and now Ad Astra. To one living in the Middle Kingdom or Urbs Romana, Athens, or Alexandria, it is self-evident that he's dwelling at the centre of the world, but one ought not be surprised that everyone else may have alternative interpretations.

The Ottawa SF Society flourished for many years as an exception to the few years of college age mentioned in the model from Edmonton, though our predecessor of the same name founded in 1948 may much better fit it. A number of fans at least double college age provided leadership and energy for quite a while, and, in another sense, though more slowly, fit the model of problems due to falling off of membership recruitment.

FROM: Harry Warner Jr. 1995-3-11
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I'm sure there is no single simple explanation for why almost all local fan groups disintegrate after a few years. The presence of a particularly volatile personality in a club or too sharp division between sercon and faanish membership cliques must be responsible in some cases. There does seem to be some tentative evidence that a local club may survive in a large metropolitan area if it sponsors some major undertaking that creates responsibilities and duties for many members. LASFS and NESFA, for instance, have their own buildings. Both groups sponsor an annual convention of medium to large size. Such undertakings increase considerably the amount of egoboo available to members because there are so many special assignments and titles for individual fans to bask in.

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Many years ago I did a fanzine article about my theory that there is a natural limit to the size egoboo available from mainstream fandom and this accounted for the tendency of it to split into subfandoms. This was happening many years earlier than most of today's fans believe, long before Star Trek. I theorized that creating a subfandom automatically boosted the supply of egoboo because each subfandom had its own BNFs, popular fanzine editors, specialized writers and artists, and so on, satisfying the egoboo needs of those who couldn't find enough in general fandom. This seems vaguely analogous to Robert's references to 200 as the top limit for a local fan club.

I'm glad to see you gave John Robert Colombo's book about Les Crutch some publicity. Les was a very nice guy who would have been delirious with joy if he could have known that someday he would be the subject of a semi-scholarly book. We corresponded for years although we never met. Les has never received the proper amount of credit for digging out neofans in Canada and giving them exposure and publicity in his fanzines.

FROM: Taral Wayne 1995-3-22
245 Dunn Avenue, Apartment 2111
Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6

John Robert Colombo used my collection and recollections extensively. I read the manuscript to correct some glaring errors. There were two Ted Whites, for example, one in New York, one in Montréal. The New York one was famous for editing AMAZING and 1960s fanzines. The other a nobody. John didn't know it and mixed them up.

Meanwhile, in Furry Fandom, I read that Rich Chandler, editor of GALLERY, a fanzine I contribute regularly to, has gotten Hugo fever. Is fandom ready for a furry zine on the award ballot? Don't laugh. There are enough furrries to at least put GALLERY on the ballot if Chandler

can organize a bloc vote. Ted White'll revolve in his future grave.

[The whirring noise of the not yet defunct Mr. White spinning in his grave would be drowned out by the loud raucous laughter emanating from Calgary. I'm not much for media fans or other non-traditional SFers, but would greatly enjoy seeing them win the fanzine category, just to watch the indignation and huffiness of certain palaeofans.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 1995-5-6
412 - 4 Lisa Street
Brampton, Ontario L6T 4B6

An excellent article by Robert Runté. It should be read by those who'd like to see a club start up in clubless cities like Toronto.

FROM: Beulah Wadsworth 1995-6-5
#206 - 1356 Meadowlands Drive East
Nepean, Ontario K2E 6K6

The article by Robert Runté is just what the Ottawa SF Society needed to get a committee for revival going.

FROM: Teddy Harvia 1995-6-3
701 Regency Drive
Hurst, Texas 76054-2307

Being dyslexic, I misread your announcements as "The Society for the Prevention of History of SF Fandom". That sounds like a better idea to me.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Murray Moore, Robert Lichtman

HOW I CELEBRATED WORLDWIDE PARTY #2
by Dale Speirs

Benoit Girard, who publishes THE FROZEN FROG out of Québec, established the Worldwide Party a couple of years ago to celebrate SF fandom. The Party is held on June 21 at 21h00 local time. Sf fans are requested to raise a glass at that moment and toast their fellow fans around the world. The idea is to get a wave circling the planet of fans raising a toast. Franz Miklis and others took this idea and ran with it, producing quite a celebration. BOFs who complain because no one cares anymore about faanish traditions of yesterdecade should understand that here is a new faanish tradition in the making.

Since I work an early morning shift, I wasn't able to set up a party. The time of 21h00 is dangerously close to my bedtime hour. However, I did have a modest celebration.

I decided that I would toast the four corners of the compass. Originally I planned to use a glass of Jolt Cola, a favourite drink of shift workers to help keep us awake. (I don't know if it is available outside North America; it is a cola drink that advertises itself as having all the caffeine and twice the sugar of any other drink.) I don't drink alcoholic beverages. But a glass of Jolt before I go to bed is rather counterproductive, so instead I went with root beer.

Calgary is still in its rainy season, but as 21h00 came near, the skies, while cloudy all day, did break up some. This time of year it is light outside until about 22h00, so I decided to do my toasting in the backyard. My neighbours are a mixture of immigrant families, elderly folk, and white trash. I wasn't about to stand exposed to view on the front lawn, to be seen by them apparently toasting the passing clouds or invisible personages, so I chose my backyard. The two large trees that normally screen the yard unfortunately went after a recent snowstorm, which reduced my range of action. I therefore huddled in the

corner by the house, with a large lilac to the east and high fences north and south. Now if this were a typical zine report, someone would have walked in the back gate to read the meter just as I toasted the lilac bush. In actual and more boring fact, I was able to toast the four directions of the compass without interruption or observation. At 21h00, I faced east, stared the lilac straight in the flower bud, and toasted all SF fans in that direction. Since they were ahead of me timezonewise, I thanked them for toasting me and gave them many happy returns. Facing west, I hoped that fans would celebrate a good Worldwide Party and gave them best wishes. I faced south and cheered fans that direction who were, even as I was, raising a glass (I hoped). Then to the north face and again cheers to fans.

I like the idea of the Worldwide Party so much that later on I hope to introduce it to the philatelic hobby. The first postage stamp was issued by Britain on May 6, 1840. About January 1996, I am going to send out letters to all the philatelic periodicals explaining the origin of the Worldwide Party, and proposing that philatelists have one of their own on May 6. And why not?

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO NEOZINES

I got the information too late for the July 1st deadline, but I'll mention it anyway as preparation for next year. In SF, the tradition has been to let neo zine publishers sink or swim on their own, or even to drive them out with KTF reviews. At Underground Press Conference '95, a program called MentorNet was set up, whereby experienced zine pubbers would register to help out a neo with positive criticism and advice at a one-on-one level. Ashley Parker Owens (of GLOBAL MAIL, Box 597996, Chicago, Illinois 60-659) and Batya Goldman (of UPC '95) are the leaders. The mentor program runs for a year, is done by mail or email, and requires the mentor to be respectful even if they do not agree with the neo's zine contents.

WHO INVENTED THE HECTOGRAPH?

by Dale Speirs

At ConAdian, the 1994 WorldCon in Winnipeg, I bought a copy of Harry Warner's book A WEALTH OF FABLE, which is a history of 1950s fandom. This prompted me to go back and reread the earlier companion volume ALL OUR YESTERDAYS, a history of 1940s fandom.

In ALL OUR YESTERDAYS is the following statement on page 23: "The inventor of the hectograph for obvious reasons has concealed so well all trace of his identity and details of its discovery that I have been unable to determine the date on which he unlocked this secret of nature. But the devilish things must have been available before the turn of the century."

At this point I must stop the narrative before it even gets started, in order to explain what a hectograph is. Most fans of today have never heard of a hectograph, or might confuse it with spirit duplicators because both were commonly used with the same messy purple ink. Those of us who attended grade school before the photocopier will remember exam papers or announcements handed out in that lovely purple. Also known as the hektograph, chromograph, or velocigraph, it can be described as follows, the definition taken from the AMERICAN DICTIONARY OF PRINTING AND BOOKMAKING (1894).

"A method of producing copies from a compound of glue and glycerine. A thin, even slab of this is cast, upon which the paper to be copied is laid face downwards. When it is judged that the sheet has been there long enough it is lifted, the bulk of the ink having soaked in the meantime into the upper layer of the glue and glycerine. Other sheets laid upon it and gently pressed take off enough ink to secure a perfectly legible facsimile, and this the compound continues to do until from twenty to fifty copies are ready. In some cases even one hundred copies have been printed."

SP fans generally hectographed with some mixture of gelatin poured into a pan. Properly done it can be quite nice and an expert can produce 100 copies, hence 'hecto-' in the name. It also leaves one's fingers and much else a purple colour, the most commonly used aniline ink. The mimeograph soon displaced hectographs, which were only used by poor fans and by revolutionaries who were on the run from police and could not carry much with them. One sample of hectography and how to do it appears in the January-March 1988 issue of NEOLOGY, published out of Edmonton, Alberta (since defunct).

Whenever I start out on some historical research, I first turn to the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY. This massive set of volumes gives earliest known usages of a word along with the definition. For 'hectograph', this was in February 1880. The quote was from PRINTING TIMES, about which more later. With a date to work on, I spent some time wending my way through the stacks of the University of Calgary Library, checking through books and periodicals of 1879 to 1881, searching old dictionaries to see when the word first appeared, and running a CD-ROM search on the computer database.

THE TIMES of London has been indexed, and I found a quote in the August 18, 1879, issue, page 10:

"CHROMOGRAPHED DOCUMENTS AND THE POST. For merchants and others who employ any one of the new copying instruments which, under various names — the chromograph, hectograph, velocigraph, &c — have recently been so widely adopted, it may not be superfluous to mention that the German Post Office has just given formal notice that copies of documents taken by these processes are treated and charged as letters, and are not conveyed in Germany at the cheaper rates of postage applying to books, circulars, or newspapers."

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CD-ROM and computer searches are fast but inadequate. The difficulty is that database indexes are still primitive. Modern books and periodicals are indexed by keywords, but older material will be a long time coming onstream, for who will do the labour of paging through them? I find that keyword selection is often inappropriate, and often I get no finds or thousands of finds but trivial. Reminds me of Stephen Leacock's diatribe on using indexes, where the student of Napoléon eagerly looks up page references only to find they are citations such as " ... thin as Napoléon ", " ... fat like Napoléon ... ", " ... tall as Napoléon ... ", or " ... short like Napoléon."

But 'hctograph' did produce one hit on the database, an abstract of a 1983 article by M.V. Demchenko in the periodical UKRAINS' KYI ISTORYCHNYI ZHURNAL. The article is about the spreading of Marxism by Kiev students and Marxists in 1889. "So eager were the newly converted to spread the word of Marx that they copied his publications by hand or hctograph and circulated the copies throughout the region."

This brought me back to the OXFORD dictionary. For their definition of 'hctograph', they supply six quotes. The earliest is from the 1880-2-15 PRINTING TIMES and reads: "A multiplying process based upon the use of the glue plate ... used in the hektograph and other similar processes." This periodical not in the University library unfortunately. Then several quotes from English newspapers which the U of C has in microfilm. Here I began to realize that a non-SF researcher will come up with a totally different history of the hctograph than would Sam Moskowitz or Harry Warner. From THE TIMES of 1882-2-13: "The manner in which the political hctograph manufac-

tures, reproduces, and multiplies public opinion." And THE STANDARD of 1884-5-6: "The police discovered the first number of a new Socialist paper ... printed by hctograph." Or THE TIMES again, on 1890-3-27: "They had helped to hctograph this address to the Russian people."

Come the Revolution, it would seem, the police will identify suspects by their purple-stained fingers. But as an advantage, one can travel innocently with a cookie pan, a few packets of gelatin, and some well-hidden tubes of aniline ink. A letterpress or mimeograph are much harder to hide or explain away. As long as you hide the ink, it is easier enough to pass off gelatin powder as tomorrow's dessert.

I began checking back runs of Victorian-era periodicals in the U of C Library, circa 1879 to 1881. One hazard of this kind of research is that one is constantly diverted by interesting articles on completely unrelated subjects. ATHENAEUM, NATURE, THE GRAPHIC, BLACKWOOD'S, SCRIBNER'S, and a host of others irresistibly remind one of Samuel Johnson's remark "No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes than a public library." But nothing there.

There was still the matter of the PRINTING TIMES quote. I shifted my search to the Calgary Public Library, the largest circulation of any library in Canada. The University library is open to the general public, but services such as interlibrary lending can only be used by staff or students, of which I am neither. I use the public library frequently for reading current periodicals but never borrow books. My CPL card had long since expired, so first I had to renew it. The \$6 annual fee was no big deal, but I had trouble getting a card because all my identification is in the address of my post office box number. The CPL needed a street address, so I had to go home and get a utility bill to prove my place of residence. That done, I quickly got my new card and went up to the Interlibrary Lending desk.

After filling in the forms and being told that it will take several weeks to search for the issue of PRINTING TIMES (no surprise there), I checked the CPL stacks for what they might have.

And came up with something completely unexpected. On the stacks was the 1972 book THE ORIGIN OF STENCIL DUPLICATION, by W.B. Proudfoot (publ. Hutchinson of London, ISBN 09 109280 9). Proudfoot had retired from long service in the Gestetner company, and wrote a history of that outfit in his superannuation. He was a good writer, and did not simply concentrate on the life and times of David Gestetner and his company. Proudfoot starts off with a history of copying and duplicating: "It is usual to find on such investigation that the Greeks had a word for it, or that the Chinese invented it several thousand years ago. Stencil duplicating, however, remains a unique invention of the nineteenth century A.D."

Indeed, until the late 1800s, the average business office either had copy clerks handcopying letters and documents exactly as ancient monks, or used a process where letters were pressed against a damp sheet of paper and a copy made by ink offsetting. Carbon paper appeared as early as 1823 but was not popular because it was difficult to use with quill pens. Its success had to wait until the 1870s when the typewriter arrived and made it practical.

This is a theme that Proudfoot begins to show, that the new methods of duplicating had to await the proper technology. Letterpress was all very well for books or other mass-produced items, but no office was going to set type just for one letter. Thus it was that handcopying lived on 400 years after the printing press arrived.

The same delay applied to hectography. The idea of dissolving gelatin in hot water, letting it set in a tray, then pressing an inked page against it followed by blank pages was not new. The earliest forms of this method did not succeed because the ink was not suitable. Not until

aniline-dye inks appeared in the late 1870s did the process become popular. The hectograph developed alongside the stencil methods.

In Proudfoot's book I found hints toward an answer for Harry Warner's mystery. Proudfoot writes that in the late 1870s the hectograph "... was probably more popular at that time in Germany where the dyes were made and where its introduction was associated with the name of Alexander Schapiro. In Germany the process was originally known as the Schapirograph." Proudfoot goes on to talk of William Ritzerfeld, founder of the Ormig Company, Germany, "the original home of the hectograph". Later in the book when he gets to Gestetner, he mentions in the biography of David Gestetner: "1877 saw him back in Vienna, where he went into business with his Uncle Leopold making and selling the hectograph process. Uncle Leopold was a glue and gelatine manufacturer." Gestetner's first patent, by the way, was for a modification of the hectographic method.

Back to the University library, this time to check references for the German aspect mentioned above, and to go back in the periodicals a couple years more to 1877. Now I must mention that I was not doing all this in one day. My story so far has compressed a couple of month's work, as I did research only when I was at either library for other reasons. The University has the more extensive library, but the two libraries co-ordinate and tend not to duplicate each other's stacks except for standard items. The public library computer and CD-ROM is so overloaded that it often takes a full minute just to display the next screen. Timesharing in more ways than one. The University library has the only free carpark on campus, so if I am not there fifteen minutes before opening I won't get a parking spot. Such is life so full of care.

Rechecking all the references in the two libraries for an account of Schapiro, Ritzerfeld, or Ormig led nowhere. Guessing that they may have been Jews, I also checked the ENCYCLOPAEDIA JUDAICA and other such books, but nothing.

[continued next page]

and so my research hung fire for a few weeks. Seven weeks and \$5 for photocopying) after I requested the Inter-library loan, I came home from work to find a message on the answering machine that the PRINTING TIMES extract was in. It came via the Smithsonian, and was more correctly THE PRINTING TIMES AND LITHOGRAPHER, with a beautiful and ornate title page. As always, I was sidetracked by interesting articles on such topics as the Anti-Spelling Reform Association, who took Dr. Johnson as their model in the ongoing and still extant dispute between etymology and pronunciation. There are details from the police blotter about a fight between two French journalists (one of whom had his thumb bitten off in the altercation) and the unfortunate Mr. Mortimer, sent up for criminal libel.

But to what I was looking for: "Letter-copying Process. Herr Adler has communicated to the Vienna Photographic Society a multiplying process based upon the use of the blue plate, consisting of gelatine, glycerine, and water (though the last-mentioned ingredient is present in a smaller quantity than usual), used in the hektograph and other similar processes. For writing or drawing Herr Adler uses a concentrated solution of alum, to which, in order to render the writing or drawing visible upon the paper, a few drops of some aniline colour are added. Before laying the writing or drawing upon the gelatine surface pass a damp sponge over the latter, and allow the moisture to sink in for a few minutes, so as to have a greater effect upon the alum. Then lay the written side of the MS. downward upon the gelatine, and, after the lapse of a few minutes, on removing it the writing will be found reversed and eaten into the gelatine film as if it were engraved. By means of an India-rubber roller a little common printing-ink is spread over the plate. The ink is absorbed by the lines sunk by the alum, and rejected by the rest of the moist surface. The paper to be printed is laid down upon it, and smoothed over by the flat hand. When removed this paper will have upon it the first impression of the writing or drawing. For each succeeding

impression the plate must be inked, as in lithography, with an India-rubber roller. It is alleged that a considerable number of impressions can thus be taken."

This extract doesn't take me further back than I had gone on my own, but it does confirm my impression that hectography was perfected by Germans or Austrians in the 1870s. It was the Internet of its time, if I might indulge in a wild and probably unsustainable metaphor. It appeared at a time of newly-introduced technologies coming together in a synergy. Just as WIRED blathers on about the combined effects of all that computer hardware ('seamless' is one of their favourite words), so it is that a century ago there developed another combination. Carbon paper had to wait for the typewriter. Hectographs had to wait for aniline inks. Just as the original Apple computers gave way to fancier models, so did the hectograph give way to spirit duplicators and mimeographs. Computers have been responsible for thousands of layoffs, as in like fashion the hectograph did away with the livelihood of clerks who did nothing but handcopy business correspondence. As in the 1990s, the 1870s were the downswing of the Kondratieff long wave, the 50 to 60 year economic cycle. As in such downswings, technological innovation intensified, as businesses sought to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

The innovations in communications technology were intended for businessmen, but were quickly adapted for revolutionary purposes. The hectograph and the Internet were both designed for The Establishment. Both were co-opted for The Revolution, and both became a favourite of hobbyists. In its lifespan, the hectograph was used by SF fans just as not a few fanzines are snuck off today on the office photocopier and computer. More so actually, since it is easier to set up a kitchen-table hectograph, while not many people have their own personal photocopiers.

I leave it for someone to complete the story of the hectograph; I suspect you'll need to read German sources. I hope this article answers Harry Warner's question.

Prophetic stories turning to human approach

Sci-fi no longer pie in the sky

By NORMAN HARTLEY

Science fiction fans, tired of being laughed at as lovers of monsters and little green men from Mars, are fighting back.

Journalists who go down to TORCON 2, the 21st World Science Fiction Convention in Toronto this weekend, prepared to make fun, will be greeted by a display making fun of them for having always misunderstood the extraordinary phenomenon of science fiction.

In 1948, 200 sci-fi fans gathered in a cramped studio on Queen Street East for TORCON 1 and the press made jokes about monsters.

This year 3,000 fans are here from many countries and the display shows the press is still making fun.

But the conference makes it pretty clear that somewhere along the line, the mocking outsiders have missed a very big point.

For one thing, too many of the early science fiction writers' predictions have become science fact for the mockery not to sound a bit hollow.

With men walking around on the moon and repairing spaceships in orbit, it's pretty hard to make snide remarks about the plots of the several hundred books on display at the convention.

But in other ways too, the public is only just beginning to catch up with the sci-fi fan.

Ecology, a fashionable concern at the moment, is old hat in science fiction where stories warning of what will happen if we don't marshal the world's resources more intelligently date back 40 years or more.

In Toronto this weekend, the science fiction fans are enjoying their joke at the expense of skeptical onlookers but it is a gentle joke.

are a lot more sophisticated now."

Walking about the convention floor, Mr. Tucker makes no secret of his enjoyment at watching the mini-skirted and long-haired girls but he is more cautious in his approval of the entry of sex into science fiction, a new trend which, he says, dates back only six years or so.

"Sex is the big new trend in science fiction," he said "but I think space stories still account for the biggest percentage of science fiction in books and magazine stories."

"But there is better characterization too. People are more human."

One feature of the convention is that not only the authors are experts; science-fiction fans seem to have the capacity to store incredible amounts of information about the genre.

One woman who spends much of her time helping the science fiction lore to circulate is Susan Glicksohn, one of Canada's leading experts and science fiction critics.

With her husband Michael, she edits an award winning science fiction fan magazine, *Energumen*, and teaches science fiction studies, while a doctoral candidate in Canadian literature.

At the convention opening she circulated wearing a "helicopter beanie"—

a little hat with a plastic propeller on top which several other delegates wore in fun, to play up to the outside world's image of a sci-fi fan.

"There's a very close relationship between science fiction's professional writers and their fans," she said. "Many of the leading writers began as fans and contributors to early fan magazines."

She sees a current trend away from stories about gadgets toward human problems created by them.

"Writers are starting to move away from the straight voyage-to-the-moon kind of story and are trying to deal with the human effects of future developments," she said.

But anyone who is curious to know how Canada's future looks to science fiction writers should look into Wilson Tucker's next novel which is due out shortly.

"It takes place in Canada about 300 years from now during the approach of the next ice age," Mr. Tucker said.

"When the story opens there is a huge glacier about to encroach the country and the Canadian and United States governments have bought Mexico and transferred all the Canadians there to live to save them from being crushed by the ice.

One of the most striking features of the convention is its good humor. Science fiction fans like to have fun; there is no generation gap and no shortage of things to talk about—from bio-feedback brainwave monitoring to speculation about sex life in undersea villages.

One man who is enjoying the variety of delegates is Wilson (Bob) Tucker, author of *The Year of the Quiet Sun*, a science fiction classic, who attended the Toronto convention in 1948.

"Back in 1948 we were mostly gawky young kids. Now there are far more women and girls and the kids who are the same age as we were then

FROM THE LAND OF THE PALE BLUE SNOW

by Dale Speirs

That novel by Wilson Tucker was called ICE AND IRON, a 1975 Ballantine paperback.

Some geologists argue that the Pleistocene or Ice Ages, is not over yet and we are still in it, enjoying a mild interglacial period. The Pleistocene was not a uniform reign of constant sheet ice that suddenly retracted and left the way clear for us. There were several episodes of glaciation, with warm periods inbetween of several thousand years. During the interglacials, life surged back into the northern lands, then was driven south again in the next continental freezeup. I agree with the idea that we are only in a Pleistocene interglacial, subject to the understanding that human-induced global warming, if it exists and is not just random temperature fluctuation, might disrupt what could have been the next glacial cycle.

Tucker has taken the idea of another glacial outburst in the near future and developed his novel around it. The continental ice has reached down to roughly the Trans-Canada Highway and is moving south at up to 61 metres per year. Not much being left for Canada to rule, we have been shotgunned into a marriage with the USA. There are scientific teams at the ice front, of whom Fisher Highsmith is a member of one. His task is to investigate the mysterious falls of bricks and other objects out of the sky, including human savages not of his time. The Fortean showers are rather neatly explained in a well thought out storyline.

Chapters of the novel alternate between Highsmith puzzling out why strange things are falling from the sky, and a far future where another interglacial has occurred. In that interglacial, savages are being hunted by neoMexican amazons moving back north into the new lands. The neo-Mexicans use a handgun which they think dissolves targets into atoms but actually sends the target back in time,

hence the Fortean showers. The objects fall out of the sky because in the next interglacial the terrain is at a higher altitude. A new Glacial Lake Agassiz has formed, dammed by the not yet entirely receded continental ice. Like its predecessors, the lake covers much of the Canadian prairies and adjacent portions of Ontario and American border states. The neoMexican soldiers are fighting on the shores of this new lake, and when they blast someone with their guns, they propel the victim and a bit of the terrain back into the past.

It was a bit annoying to have Tucker constantly writing of Canadian states rather than provinces; he was late in making it clear that the two countries had merged. Some of his geography is odd, but only a western Canadian would notice. He refers to a Fort Battleford located on Route 5; the town is not called 'Fort' and highways are called 'Highway', not 'Route'. But these are trivial details, just as the average reader would miss the references to smooth bourbon, Highsmith's favourite drink.

The neoMexican soldiers are all female, with men subservient. It should not be too difficult to guess how Tucker arranges the details of that society. Somehow the secret of projectile guns has been lost, no gunpowder or bullets. The blasters have to be grounded in order to fire. This is done by ramming the butt of the gun into the turf and firing from a prone position, which leads to some peculiarities in battle tactics.

Overall, ICE AND IRON was a good read, and I particularly liked how Tucker worked in a logical explanation of Fortean matters with the new ice age and our own present and past. The novel ends on an open note; Highsmith's world does not make contact with neoMexicans, although Highsmith moves to Mexico with a few ideas in mind about what is to be done.