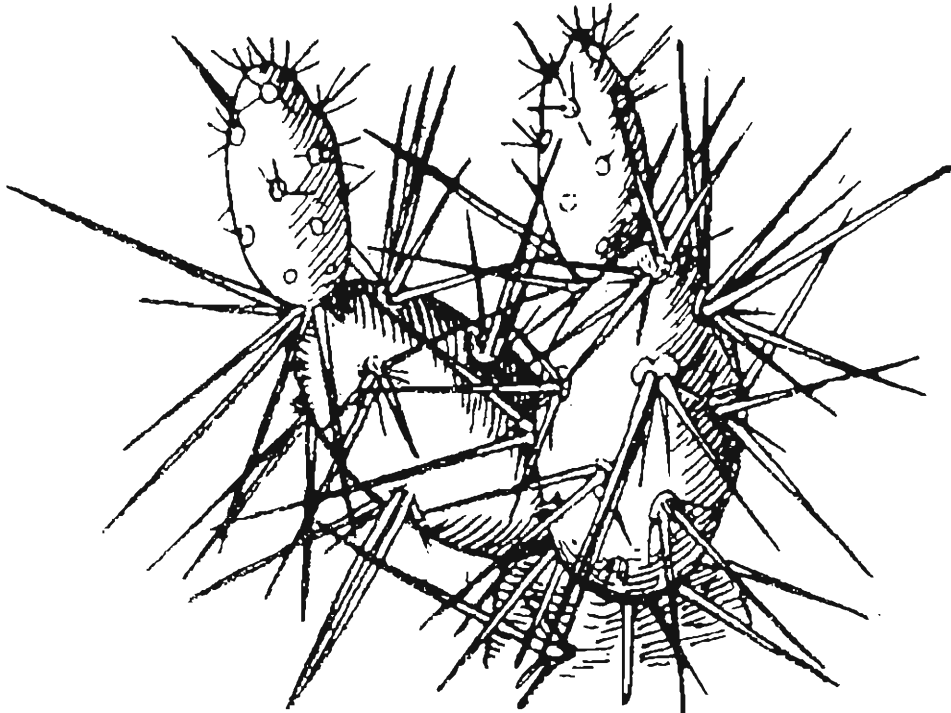


# OPUNTIA

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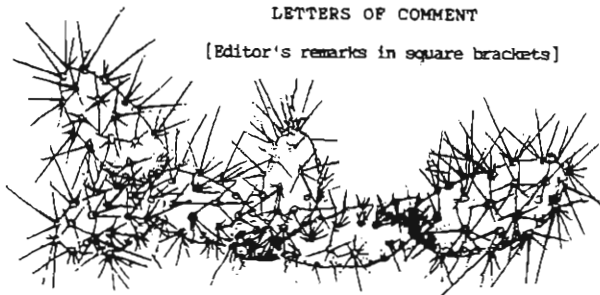
[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

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ART CREDIT: The cover depicts Opuntia russellii, by an unknown artist, from the book THE CACTACEAE by N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose.

WHY YOU MIGHT GET THIS LATE: As I type this up (the editorial is always the last section prepared) the Canadian Union of Postal Workers is on its third day of a strike. It could be settled the day I take this issue to the printers, or it could drag on for weeks. For the last week prior, CUPW had been threatening to walk out on a day-to-day basis, since they were in a position where they could walk out anytime, already having served official strike notice. Canadians took this warning seriously; the volume of mail decreased 50% in one day after the first threat was made. The Internet is starting to look good. Not that good, as my server at work keeps crashing, but eventually I may buy a computer and switch OPUNTIA to a listserver or password-restricted Web page. But not just yet. I drive a 10-year-old Nissan Micra with 200,000 km and no reverse gear, so a new car will come first. But all that is for some future perzine issue.



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

1997-9-21

Here's followup to letters from me and Murray Moore ... Tommy Ferguson left Toronto permanently for Belfast on September 17. He's got a few things to look after family-wise there, but he does plan to move back to North America. He's looking at Seattle as his new base. Tommy enjoys doing fanzines, and Seattle has been a recent fanzine-publishing hotbed.

There are so many things we take for granted every day, so to see a history of some of those everyday items such as rubber stamps and pencils is interesting to read. It's not that we don't care about these items, but that we don't think about them in such a detailed way. When we do, with these articles, perhaps we'll see them in a different light.

John Held's stamp art history mentions a Yoko Ono. I don't think I have to ask the question, but wonder if this art career came about before she met John Lennon.

[Yes, she was a well-known figure in the avant-garde.]

FROM: Robert Lichtman  
Box 30  
Glen Ellen, California 95442

1997-10-21

FROM: Carolyn Clowes  
5911 West Pay Drive NW  
Depauw, Indiana 47115

1997-9-19

Good stuff about rubber stamps by John Held Jr. Former Glen Ellen fringe-fan Donna Nassar, who used to be married to Paul Williams, was an avid stamper. Through her, I helped found the first rubber stampapa, though I wasn't a member myself. I suggested its name: RAPS the Rubber Amateur Press Society. I have no idea if this group is still going. Donna did several terms as its Official Editor before passing it on to others, and I've lost contact with her since she remarried.

Rubber stamps: fascinating articles on their origin and art. As John Held's article points out, everyone can participate in their art. The medium isn't intimidating or expensive, and it's accessible to all. It's good to see a no-tech office technology hijacked from mundane use for decoration, self-expression, and just plain fun. In this era of 'personalized' letters generated by computers, metered bulk-mail, two-letter abbreviations for states, and additional digits in American zip codes, rubber stamps are a happy defiance.

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

1997-8-31

When I was a boy, I had a toy set of rubber type and a wooden thing into which they could be inserted to create small statements onto paper. But I was too impatient to spend much time at the tedious task of inserting the type into the form rightside up and getting them squashed down uniformly flat for even printing. Since then, the only rubber stamps that have been involved in my life were the small devices that dime stores used to sell with rotating belts to make possible the stamping of the current date and a few abbreviations. Each of these had a group of years which made them useful for a half-decade or longer. I used to mark with these the date of arrival and date of response on fannish mail. I haven't seen one on sale for years.

[I'm surprised to hear that, as they are sold in stationer shops here in Canada. In fact, I use one to number the pages of OPUNTIA. I cut off the year and month belts, leaving only the days belt. As long as this zine doesn't go over 31 pages, then I'm okay for a fast and easy method of pagination.]

I ALSO HEARD FROM: John Held Jr, Chester Cuthbert, Scott Crow, Chuck Stake, A. Langley Searles, Laura Lombardo, Sheryl Birkhead, Teddy Harvia, Buck Coulson, Guy Miller, Henry Welch

ALIEN VISITORS AMONGST US  
by Dale Speirs

As anyone knows who has travelled to countries with different cultures, there can be many booby traps that an innocent tourist can step into. Language and politics are fairly obvious danger zones that most strive to avoid, but there are always subtle unwritten rules that one may not be aware of until offense has been created. Sometimes such transgressions are only comic and do no serious harm, such as an Englishman asking a North American woman if he can knock her up. SF has often used the theme of culture shock and misunderstandings in its stories, where aliens and humans are put into conflict by their different values and cultures.

Dr. Gene Scott is a televangelist in the USA who is, as I understand it, a colourful chap and religious madcap extraordinary. As I don't own a television set I'm not sure if his broadcasts reach Canada, nor do I care really. But as a stamp collector, I have heard of him; he makes the pages of the weekly philatelic newspapers every so often.

Scott burst onto the philatelic scene in 1985. "Burst" is the correct word, for his arrival set off an explosion of controversy that took several years to die down. Even today his name stirs up angry words from stamp show officials who had accepted his stamp exhibits. Considering some of the lunatics who have enlivened the organized philatelic world, this is a bit of an understatement.

First some background about how stamp shows or PEXes (Philatelic EXhibition) operate. Under the existing system, there is an international society known as the FIP, from its French acronym. The FIP sanctions all international stamp shows, and each country may host a show every ten years. (Canada's most recent show was CAPEX 96; the USA has PACIFIC 97 in San Francisco.) In each country, the national society hosts one or more national shows, depending on population. The Americans

04  
have several shows sanctioned by the American Philatelic Society. Canada has only one national show per year, sanctioned by the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. I will add with a bit of pride that ROYAL 97 ROYALE is being hosted by the Calgary Philatelic Society; I am on the show committee. Each country has numerous local annual shows put on by municipal stamp clubs.

To enter an exhibit in a national show requires a silver medal or better from a local show. To enter an FIP international requires a national silver. As an exhibit goes up each step, the judging standards become harder. Philatelic exhibits are not judged against each other but against standards such as research, completeness, and presentation. In one show it is possible to have several gold medals to be awarded, a dozen silvers, and numerous bronzes.

If ever a stamp exhibition has been robbed in North America I cannot recall reading about it. Even a local show can have \$100,000 or more worth of stamps on display, and national shows may have millions of dollars in stamps in the display frames. Every show has security guards, and the stamps are locked into frames that hold sixteen 8½ x 11 pages, not something that a thief can smash and grab, much less an organized gang of armed bandits. More importantly, every stamp that has been photographed can be easily identified by its perforations and thus is impossible to fence to a knowledgeable dealer. (Try it yourself. Tear a stamp from a sheet and look at the perforations under a magnifying glass. Every perf will tear differently, with paper fibres sticking out in unique patterns.) To sum up then, exhibiting stamps at a show is fairly safe as far as security is concerned.

And so we come to Dr. Scott, or rather, he came to us. Not too many televangelists collect stamps; Dr. Scott apparently finances his collection by selling prints of his artwork. He arrived at ARIPEX 85 (ARIZONA Philatelic EXhibition) with an exhibit called "Denmark: The Skilling Issue". One item in the display was worth a mid-six figure price by itself. The exhibit took a gold.

It also brought home controversy to Scott because he had it guarded by armed personnel. Besides being unnecessary, it was an insult to show organizers. Scott was a quick learner, to give him credit, and future exhibits were not accompanied by goons. By late 1985, Scott was winning everywhere. In a three-week period that year, three different exhibits took Grand Awards (a best-in-show award) at three shows, something that had never happened before in the history of philately.

Scott also stirred up trouble because he hired others to do the work in preparing his exhibits. A stamp exhibit is supposed to be written up by the exhibitor, not a paid researcher. Scott carefully skirted this rule by having his researcher do all the grunt work in collecting the data about the stamps and then preparing a rough draft. Scott revised the draft, so the exhibit writeup was technically his.

At ROMPEX 88, Scott put the cat among the canaries by refusing an award for his exhibit which he considered was too low. Refusing a medal is unheard of in philatelic judging. It is a popular pasttime for exhibitors to grumble and complain about the judging, but nonetheless they will accept whatever they can get, even if they feel they should have done better. Scott ticked off more than a few APS judges.

In an interview published in the April 1989 issue of PHILATELIC EXHIBITOR, Scott said, "We need to recruit new people to the hobby and I use my TV program to do that. Many shows have had additional attendees because I've talked about them." Incidentally, that interview has a photograph of him with an attractive brunette (Christine Shaw) who is described in the caption as a good friend.

Scott never made the same mistake twice, and eventually learned the rules of philately, written and unwritten. He reminds me of first-contact alien stories or time traveller stories, where the characters must try to learn the rules without any guide. Philately was an alien society to Scott.

Scott managed to keep a lower profile over the next few years; at least I didn't see his name in the philatelic weekly newspapers. He was out there no doubt, a busy pot-hunter (philatelic slang for medal chasers).

He re-appeared again in the December 20, 1996, issue of MEKEEL'S WEEKLY AND STAMPS. The occasion was ANPHILEX 96 in New York City, a staid unashamedly elite show put on by the worst snobs in philately. Scott appeared on two days of the show, accompanied by a cameraman and three spectacular models named Kimberly, Melissa, and Tara. (No sign of Christine.) The women wore low-cut backless miniskirts that would have been daring in a strip club. The sensation they made at the stamp show I'm sure you can well imagine. They faithfully followed Scott around the exhibits, cameraman in tow, and a jittery Show Chairman acting as a docent and trying to keep his mind on the stamps. A few grumbles were heard around the hall, but were quickly silenced by the rest of the menfolk who knew a good thing when they saw it. Bearing in mind that the average age of stamp collectors is retired and bald, this was certainly the way to heat up the show. The women were quickly dubbed the Belles of St. Gene's.



THERE ARE NINE AND SIXTY WAYS ...

by Dale Speirs

... of distributing zines. Zinedom for the most part does not distribute via subscription or newsagents sales only. Yes, I know there are a lot of small-press magazines calling themselves zine which do so. I review some of them myself. But they are not the genuine type of zine available for The Usual, that term meaning \$2 or \$3 to cover postage for a trial copy, trade for your zine, or contribution such as art, an essay, fiction, poetry, or letter of comment.

The most common method is The Usual. Not far behind is the apa (amateur press association). With this method, x number of zine publishers form a group and name one person as Central Mailer or Official Editor. Each zine publisher sends a certain number of copies of his/her zine to the C.M., who then collates the zines into bundles and sends a set back to each participant. Some apas require 150 copies of your zine, while others have a lower count. The Fantasy APA, for example, sets a limit of 65 members and a requirement of 68 copies. This was originally the average number of copies that could be printed on a hectograph, but still serves the useful purpose of constraining publishing costs for members. The history of apas dates back to the 1800s, and there are still numerous apas today. They are also used to distribute other things as well. I came across a article in the March 1997 issue of POSTCARD COLLECTOR which mentions that QSL cards are sent out by apas. QSL cards are used by ham radio operators worldwide to verify each other's contact over long distances.

In that article, Bill Judnik writes: "Until the early 1970s, most QSL cards were explicitly marked "Post-card" and they were used as such. When postal fees for sending these cards started increasing, more and more hams started sending their cards to regional bureaus in one outer wrapper. The bureaus, in turn, would sort them and mail large packages for all their

operators to other regional bureaus, who in turn would distribute them to the collectors in their region. This practice is nearly universal today, because the postage expense is minimized."

Exchanging zines directly by mail is sometimes replaced by hand delivery. SF fanzine publishers often hand out copies of their zines at conventions. John Held Jr, writing in March 1997 about the Pacific Rim Artstamp Congress (San Mateo, California, February 22 and 23) in his report mentioned a zine publisher who took this one step further.

"A surprise guest was mail art pioneer Dana Atchley, who produced stamps in the late Sixties. More important, Atchley was the producer of the ACE SPACE ATLAS, an assembling zine soliciting multiple pages from his correspondents, which were then compiled into one work. In an unusual twist on this concept, Atchley then hit the road to hand deliver the finished copies."

A round robin zine is one which circulates amongst its readers as one copy only. Each go-around, the reader inserts a new page(s) and takes out the one contributed in the last cycle. Round robins are used more in letter packets, many of which still circulate today, whereas round robin zines are rarer. They were once popular in Britain. H.P. Lovecraft belonged to THE TRANS-ATLANTIC CIRCULATOR in the early part of this century. THE SCOTS THISTLE, which began in 1885, was still circulating a century later. In the August 1968 issue of THE STAMP MAGAZINE (page 723), I came across a report about THE PHILATELIC CIRCULATOR, which celebrated its 500th cycle that year. It was published by the Invalid and Lone Collectors Society, a group of stamp collectors in Britain whose purpose is obvious from their club's name. The CIRCULATOR articles were often illustrated by the actual stamps and postmarks, and blank pages were attached at the end for members' remarks. After each cycle of such a zine, the previous pages are usually bound into a permanent issue, but one can imagine that the CIRCULATOR pages may have had some of their illustrations returned.

A HISTORY OF STAR TREK CLUBS IN CALGARY  
by Jennifer Jessop

[Editor's note: As all but a few OPUNTIA readers live outside Alberta, I have added some explanatory notes on Alberta geography in square brackets. It should also be noted that Bowness, Silver Springs, and Scenic Acres are suburbs in northwest Calgary.]

This article is the result of three years' worth of interviews, research and procrastination. I wish to thank all those people who were willing to be interviewed and cross-checked and questioned. Their names are mentioned in round brackets under the title of each club or society for which they were interviewed. The clubs themselves are mentioned not in alphabetical order but rather in a roughly chronological order depending on when they began.

Lethbridge Association of Star Trek Fans - 197?-mid-1980s (April Gorman, Paul Quinnell)

LASTF was the only active Star Trek group known of in the early 1980s for southern Alberta. Calgary members included April Gorman, Brian Pain, and Paul Quinnell. Most of the Calgary contact with LASTF was through correspondence, as all meetings were held in Lethbridge [which is about 210 km southeast of Calgary]. At Non-Con in 1984, after the premiere of ST III, a large LASTF meeting was held, during which the Calgary members requested a local chapter. When denied, they split off and formed what eventually became STARS-Starbase 1. LASTF eventually became a mail-order organization and disappeared from view.

USS Equulus NCC-1603-A (Starfleet International) - 1982 to present (April Gorman, old RECON issues 1983-present)

Originally based in Wetaskiwin [about 230 km north of Calgary], the ship had contact by newsletter only. Members came from throughout Alberta: Edmonton, Calgary, Grand Centre, Medley, and Lethbridge. In late 1983, April Gorman, having previously received Equulus newsletters, was offered captaincy of the Equulus as an active Calgary-based ship by Adm. Elizabeth Rose (commander of the USS Kestrel in Vancouver). Equulus meetings were first held at April's house in Bowness on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. Jeff Campbell became first officer. Then other people joined in a lump in 1985 and meetings moved to April's house in Silver Springs. During this time the ship was not actively fundraising but concentrated more on gaming and costuming. Many costume contests were won, both by individuals and by the ship as a group. As the ship grew, it became a prominent part of the fan scene in Calgary. The ship's logo was designed circa 1985.

In the mid-1980s, the demand for Star Trek con guests grew, but ConVersion [Calgary's general SF convention] policy was that Star Trek was media SF and therefore not acceptable as a theme. After intense lobbying, Equulus was able to get Bjo Trimble and Sonni Cooper as guests for ConVersion 3 in 1986. This success convinced the Equulus that they could put on their own con. A group of members became the S.T. Con committee which was made a separate entity from the Equulus.

In general, the membership was older in contrast to STARS. Individuals spearheaded different projects such as the newsletter, S.T. Con, costuming, first constitution and members' handbooks, gaming, and the flag project. For a brief time during 1987, the USS Bonaventure in Edmonton, led by Howard Gibbins, was a shuttle of the Equulus after having first met them at Non-Con in Red Deer.

The meetings moved to Siege Perilous in October 1988 and then to Nightfall Books in the summer of 1990, at which time the Members' Handbooks were completed.

The Shuttle Project started in the fall of 1990. Brian Pain designed and drafted the plans, Beverley Cote donated her basement for construction, and she and Margaret Deem were the construction team assisted by other members. The shuttle was named Chiron and it debuted at S.T. Con 1991, followed by appearances at Vulcan Days in May 1991, Confederation 1 in June, Bridgeland Days and ConVersion 8 in July, 25th Anniversary of Star Trek in Space and Time in August, 66 CFR [radio station] party at Jimmy Dean's in September, Southland Jumbo Video in October, S.T. Con 1992 in March, and Vulcan Days in June. It was donated to Vulcan Museum in summer 1992.

In 1991, two new groups, the Astra and Toronto, became shuttles of the Equulus for one year. After Nightfall Books closed in June 1992, the meetings moved briefly back to April's house in Scenic Acres, then to the University, and then settled down at the Sentry Box. In the fall of 1993, the meetings relocated to the Unitarian Church, and two years later moved to the offices of Campbell & Martin where they continue at present.

In 1993, April was promoted to Admiral by Starfleet International, and she handed the Equulus over to Jeff Campbell. Beverley Cote became First Officer. Due to S.I.'s new, meticulous Admiral Rob Lerman, the Equulus was to be decommissioned (among many ships throughout North America) due to lack of registered S.I. personnel; ten full-paid members were required. The Astra had the required ten registered members and continued to represent S.I. in Calgary. The Equulus was not decommissioned while Adm. April fought for a proposed "Ship Registry", but this Registry never materialized. In 1995, the Equulus, unwilling to pay large amounts of money for an unreliable newsletter, disappeared from Starfleet International.

In 1994, the fanzine project got underway. Unlike the early one in the 1980s, it was a collection of new short stories written by Calgary fans. In the fall,

the name was voted on, PEN TREK being the winner. (The first runner-up was SHIP IN AN INK BOTTLE.) The first issue was presented at S.T. Con 1995 and PEN TREK 2 at S.T. Con 1996. PEN TREK 3 appeared at Earthstation Edmonton. The Equulus tradition of having a dealer's table at the cons was re-established, with PEN TREK being the main attraction.

In 1995, Adm. April Gorman resigned from Starfleet International but remained Admiral for the Equulus as the ship itself was no longer in S.I.. The upgrade of the ship from Enterprise to Nebula class was completed in 1996, and the Borg ship project was completed in time for display at the Star Trek: First Contact premiere at Sunridge Mall [in northeast Calgary]. The dealer table tradition continued at Earthstation Edmonton '97 (with the crew also participating in the banner parade of Alberta clubs), Western Canadian Robot Games, ConVersion 14, and Vulcan 5.

The first newsletters were 8½ x 11. No name other than Starfleet was used as a letterhead. The first newsletter of the active Equulus came out in June 1984. The format was 8½ x 14 with no name. In 1985, the newsletter was named RECON X, published bi-monthly as 8½ x 14 folded and typed. From 1987 to 1989, editors were Nancy Taylor, Jeff Campbell, Grant Campbell. It was 8½ x 14 with colour covers. During this time the RECON X fanzine came out as a collection of short stories and poems that had been printed in previous RECONS. There was also a regular exchange of newsletters with STARS and later (until early 1990s) with other groups: the ships USS Astra, Avenger, Bonaventure, Challenger, Czar'ak, Deinony-chus, Malaspina, Omega, Stargazer, and Voyager, and the groups Final Frontier and S.T.A.R.S.. From 1989 to 1991, the editor was Grant Campbell. During this time the RECON returned to white covers. From 1991 to 1994, the editor was Leni Pearce. Regular features included Vulcan's Forge, and reports on NASA and other scientific activities. In 1994 the RECON became quarterly.



From 1995 to present the editor is Jennifer Jessop. Regular features include the Trek Free Zone (showcasing other genre television shows) and Barry Yoner's ongoing modelling tips and advice. The newsletter exchange was revived with the RECON going out to the USS Astra, Bonaventure, Sol, Chrysalis, and Majestic, and the Final Frontier, Starfleet Canada, VAST, and the Maquis of Beiseker.

Star Trek Association for Recreation and Speculation  
October 1983 to 1991 (Paul Quinnell, April Gorman)

Originally called Starbase 1, being the Calgary Chapter of LASTF, STARS was led by Wendy Classen. Their meetings settled at Parkdale United Church. Through word-of-mouth recruiting, the group grew. Late in 1984, Starbase 1 split completely from LASTF, the name changed to STARS and a logo developed by Brian. The group's purpose became directed towards community work and the Alberta Children's Hospital became the charity of choice. 100% of any fundraising profits were donated to the Hospital. Annual activities were held such as carol singing at Christmas and Tribble Hunts at Easter with each child receiving a tribble. This was an outcome of a play created by STARS dubbed The Trouble With Tribbles. Hundreds of tribbles were made which were given away after the play to the children.

Paul Quinnell took over in 1985. The focus changed towards paintball and lazer-tag. Profits from fundraising changed to 50% for charity and 50% for ship activities, confirmed by a majority of voters. Some who had wished to keep the original 100% of profits for charity split off to devote time to the Equulus. Membership of STARS became younger and meetings were held at the Alberta Science Centre Star Theatre. In 1987 they had to leave because of redesigning and met at Siege Perilous for a short time before moving to Nightfall Books. For several years, STARS held Star Trek weekends at Village Square Leisure Centre, with two days of entertaining youngsters, with lazer-tag,

Survival Mazes, and Klingons. Klingon Coercion Theatre player, a group who presented amusing skits at cons, joined just before the premiere of STAR TREK IV at Jack Singer Hall, a big event with Equulus and STARS personnel sitting together. Circa 1989, the focus changed completely to group activities, such as the Bow River Raft Race for three years starting in 1987, laser-tag, etcetera, and charity work was dropped. Profits from items sold at dealer tables went to laser-tag and paintball activities. In 1990, Pam Bowyer and others split off, wanting more community involvement, and they started USS Astra.

In 1989 or 1990, members of a new group, Starbase 36, left brochures around at STARS meetings, hoping to attract members. Nothing came of this and any further activity is unknown. In July 1989, ConVersion saw the premiere of Club Fed, the popular room party that ran at both S.T. Con and ConVersion for several years. In 1990 Paul Quinnell stopped being President. Justin Porteous, Marianne Przesek, and Tony Norman took over successively. STARS disbanded at the end of 1991.

The newsletter was two or three pages initially and was started with the formation of STARS. The 1987 editor was Cory Dvorin, who changed the newsletter to magazine format and named it THE GUARDIAN. The 1988-90 editor Dan O'Driscoll changed the look to the newer Next Gen PADD design. After the July 1990 edition, THE GUARDIAN reverted to the less expensive newsletter format.

S.T. Con - 1988-1996 (April Gorman, advertisements in the RECON)

The original committee consisted of Nancy Taylor, Brian Pain, April Gorman, Anita McCann, Jeff Campbell, and Chris Wedge. The official charity was the Foothills Hospital Burn Unit. Nancy Taylor chaired the first convention in 1988 at the Marlborough Inn, with guests Bjo Trimble, Sonni Cooper, Gregory Brodner, and Diane Carey. The membership was at 150.

S.T. Con 1989, chaired by Nancy Taylor, was at Westward Inn with Diane Carey and Sandy Fries. S.T. Con 1990 (Anita McCann, Brian Pain) was at Holiday Inn downtown with Ann Crispin and Mike and Denise Okuda. S.T. Con 1991 (Anita McCann, Brian Pain) was at Ramada Hotel Calgary Plaza with Shane Johnson, Guy Vardaman, Susan Sackett, and Dave Hutchinson. The con featured the unveiling of the Chiron shuttle, and the Starfleet wedding of Marg and Carl Deem.

S.T. Con 1992 (Jeff Campbell) at Ramada Inn with Erik Stilwell, Ann Crispin, Betty Bigelow.

S.T. Con 1993 (Anita McCann) at Ramada Inn with Ron Moore, Margaret Wander-Bonano, Tanya Huff, Michelle Sagan.

S.T. Con 1994 (Nancy Taylor) at Sandman Inn with James Martin (DS9 illustrator).

S.T. Con 1995 (Bev Cote) at Marlborough Inn with Mark Lenard and Ann Crispin.

S.T. Con 1996 (April Gorman) at Sandman Inn with Esther Friesner. This final con featured a Klingon wedding, and the auction raised \$1645 for the Burn Unit.

#### Starfleet Canada - 1987 to present (Nancy Taylor)

Started by Nancy Taylor to fill the lack of communication from Starfleet International (SI), Starfleet Canada (SC) officially commenced on April 1, 1988. It served mainly as an information source. It was originally intended to work in concert with SI. However, SI disapproved and therefore SC became a separate entity. Unlike SI, SC is not rigid with any hard and fast rules. An information service for overt and covert Trekkers, SC has ships and individuals across Canada and in other countries including Brazil, Columbia, Mexico, and USA. There are no meetings except for the executive to put out the GALAXY GAZETTE. The executive are Nancy Taylor, Shirley Fudge, and Marie Fudge. All proceeds from dealer tables at conventions go to the group's charity, Discovery House. Items from tables have included etched glasses, frames,

mugs, pins, dragons, and Classic Trek fanzines.

The newsletter GALAXY GAZETTE is 8½ x 11 with colour covers. SC's main means of communications, it is a quarterly publication that features "Did You Know" (news on the actors, upcoming episodes, and other projects Trek-related), and the "Technical Section" (with hard science, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN as a source). It also has articles, art, and occasional short stories from different groups across Canada and beyond. Each year a theme is picked for covers, such as "game show hosts of the future" in 1994.

#### USS Astra NCC 77210 (Starfleet International) - 1990 to present (Pam Bowyer, Jennifer Morse)

The Astra was started by Pam Bowyer as a shuttle of Equulus based in Starfleet International. Meetings were originally held at Nightfall Books but then moved to the University, the Sentry Box, Moose Lodge, and finally to the Museum of the Regiments. Meetings are first and third Mondays of the month at 730 pm at the Museum.

Charities and events included the Calgary Charities River Festival, Canadian Paraplegic Association, Herald Xmas Fund, Alberta Children's Hospital, the War Amps, and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. In 1993 they settled on the Sharp Foundation (Society Housing Aids Restricted Persons). Astra members take shifts at Glenmore Bingo in support of Sharp.

Group activities included from 1990 a group persona of Medusa Jones Emporium specializing in biological commodities, with members of Astra each having personas as different 'commodities'. Medusa is the illegitimate daughter of Cyrano Jones. A lot of individual and group costuming, especially the Egyptian Theme of S.T. Con 1993, has won them awards. At conventions, fund-raising for Sharp has included slave auctions, and the Web of Doom, in which people are subjected to horrors such as having to listen to the Barney theme song.

Attention has not just been given to Star Trek but to British SF, Twin Peaks, X-Files, anything vampire and Star Wars. They have also presented the club's game, Andromeda Cubes, at several different events. The annual Captain's Masquerade Ball began in 1994. Earlier Halloween events included "Murder at the Masque" in 1992 and a costume party at Earl's Tin Palace in 1993.

In April 1996, Phil Bacon was voted Captain after Commodore Pam Bowyer became Region X Co-ordinator. Jennifer Morse became First Officer. In July 1997, both resigned to take a break. The future commanding officers are to be voted in at the next AGM.

The newsletter ASTRADIEM is a bimonthly, folded 8½ x 14. Editors were Shawn McLennan (1990-93), Phil Bacon (1993-95), Mike Rieger (1996). In 1997 there was an Editorial Committee with Rob Lowther as head.

USS/STS Deinonychus NCC-2920 (Independent) - 1990 to 1994 (Jim Pearson)

Started by Jim Pearson after having left Equulus. It was originally based in Drumheller [about 138 km east of Calgary, in the Red Deer River badlands, which are a rich source of Cretaceous dinosaur fossils]. The ship soon gravitated to Calgary. Its motto was "You Can't Get There From Here!". The ship had sporadic meetings and events, but made regular appearances at cons with dealer tables. The main ship projects were a 60+page technical manual of the Deinonychus and high-quality graphics of many ships in the Trek universe. The official charity was S.T.A.R.S. air ambulance. [Not to be confused with the Trek group STARS. It is a helicopter medevac operating through southern Alberta and supported by a non-profit organization.] Jim continues the dealer tables today as an individual effort.

The newsletter was THE CRETACEOUS TIMES, size 8½ x 11 and published from 1990 to 1994. Edited by Jim.

Klingon Defense Force 1990 to 1992 (Stephen Savage)

The KDF was started by Mike Shaw (President/Captain) and Stephen Savage (Cultural Advisor). Charity fundraising activities included the Calgary Food Bank, the Alberta Children's Hospital, and the School Milk Fund. Imperial costuming was used by all members and won many costuming awards. Knowledge of the Klingon language was encouraged. Role-playing was also popular within the group. The entire group were made honorary members of the Town of Vulcan, for which the response of the group was to make Mayor Bill Yee an honorary Klingon. [Vulcan is 110 km southeast of Calgary.] The group ended in December 1992. Individual members continued in separate groups: IKV Warlord (KAG), the Renegades, and IKV Calgary (KAG).

IKV Lethal Fury (Klingon Attack Group) - 1991 to 1994

The IKV Lethal Fury started in 1991 but became active in 1992, commanded by Andy Gagnon (Lt. Kor vestai-Valkris) in Edmonton. The Lethal Fury was the prairies' representative of KAG Canada (part of KAG International) until the IKV Warlord was commissioned.

IKV Warlord (Klingon Attack Group) - 1993 to present (Jennifer Jessop)

Commissioned by John Gannon (Admiral K'Tan zantai-Dyzala) in 1993 upon moving to Wainwright [425 km northeast of Calgary], the Warlord became the flagship of KAG Canada, and represented southern Alberta and Wainwright. The Lethal Fury continued to represent Edmonton and northern Alberta. For costuming, members are free to develop their own look as a Klingon, whether Imperial, the Classic "Human Fusion", or variations such as Romulan Fusion or even (one member's choice) Bajoran Fusion. Upon transferring from the Lethal Fury, Jennifer Jessop became Communications Chief and newsletter editor while co-ordinating activities with S.T. Con 1993 (dealer table, panel, and costume contest entry: Best Group) and the CALGARY HERALD newspaper, but retired from active duty after the con.

Dave Williams (Lt. Dragh vestai-Gor) then became the Executive Officer of the Warlord. Soon after, John Gannon moved away and the Warlord went AWOL. Jennifer Jessop and Stephen Savage restarted meetings in the fall of 1994. The Warlord presented some Canadian content with the "USS Voyageur" at S.T. Con 1995 (Best of Show), and the following year with the Babylon 5 presentation at ConVersion 13 in July 1996. Two weeks later, Jennifer attended Toronto trek 10, and entered the Masquerade Ball as Ivanova (BS), representing the Warlord. Jennifer became Captain in the spring of 1996, and Stephen took over in June 1997. Currently there are 14 members.

The newsletter is IKV WARLORD NEWSLETTER, and is one page at 8½ x 11. It first appeared in 1992-93 under Lethal Fury, then resumed in 1996. The ship is also served by the Squadron newsletter FIREWATCH, and the national newsletter THE DISRUPTER.

#### IKV Kalgary (Klingon Attack Group) - 1993 to 1994

Commissioned in the spring of 1993, it was the second ship to represent Calgary. Led by Mike Shaw (Lt. Cmdr. Kargon), its activities are unknown. The ship was decommissioned by KAG in the fall of 1994.

The national newsletter for Klingon Attack Group ships was THE DISRUPTER. It is a thick newspaper, usually at least forty pages, 8½ x 11, full of art, pictures, articles, reviews, and reports. The editor is J.J. Reischl.

#### Shuttle Celestia NCC-? (Starfleet International) - 1995 to 1996 (Chris Kamke)

Under Captain Daryl Viau, the Celestia split off from Astra, which became the mother ship for the shuttle.

The Celestia only became recognized by Starfleet as the group, with 25 members, was disbanding, and so they never received its official call letters/numbers.

Departments were three: Medical, Sciences, and Command. Each focussed on a charity, but S.T.A.R.S. air ambulance (of the Medical Dept.) became the major charity for the shuttle. The group activities included three scavenger hunts (organized by Chris Kamke), outings to the Planetarium, a garage sale, garbage pickup in Glenmore Park, mask-making workshops, laserquest meets (and challenges to the Astra), and scuba diving lessons. Although the Celestia's existence was fairly short, it was "a lot of fun - a really good time". The newsletter was ARCANA CELESTIA.

[Jennifer Jessop can be contacted at 333 Silver Ridge Crescent NW, Calgary, Alberta T3B 3T6.]

#### KINGCON '97: AN AUTOPSY REPORT by Brian A. Davis

[Reprinted from FIXED LINK #3, August 1997]

I can now say that I have experienced a new type of convention. KingCon '97 turned into "Con-voy" when the entire convention was relocated to a new site in the middle of events. What led up to this? Read on, my friends.

Since its inception, I have attended every KingCon. Held annually in Saint John, New Brunswick, this SF convention bills itself as a "science fiction, fantasy, gaming and new technologies convention". For the past couple of

years, I have seen the quality of the convention steadily decline.

This year was supposed to be the turn-around for the convention. We were told that Barbara Hamby was confirmed as the Guest of Honour, the USS Kasimar was bringing their replica of the original Star Trek bridge, and attendance would be large enough to fill their new venue at the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre.

Due to the series of misfortunes, miscommunications, and self-destructive infighting, the hoped for turn-around did not happen. In fact, the opposite occurred. In the spring there was a falling out among KingCon Society Board of Directors and their Chairman. This resulted in the resignation of the majority of the KingCon Society Board. This event threw plans for KingCon into turmoil.

On June 11, Brian McGee (KingCon '97 Chairman) released the following statement: "Barbara Hamby just canceled. She is canceling everything for the next few months, not just KingCon. Her fiancée is sick and will be in treatment for several months (I don't know what for, but it has her worried even though they now know it is treatable)".

The decision was made to not bring in a replacement GoH. This would relieve a large expense from overburdened finances. It was felt that the USS Kasimar's bridge replica would be a big enough draw to compensate for any loss of attendance resulting from the lack of a GoH. Personally, I was only interested in Barbara Hamby.

On the Tuesday before the convention (July 8), I received word from Brian McGee that "... the (replica Star Trek) bridge canceled around 10 pm last night (Monday). Basically they do not want to do it. The Kasimar gave reasons, but they boil down to the fact

they do not want to come up (it sounds like someone had been fear mongering amongst them saying the con will fail, scaring them into thinking they and the bridge will be stuck in Canada with no way home)."

After these two blows to the convention, the expectation was that "We will likely have 200-300 people now, without the bridge." This overly optimistic assessment of the situation facing the convention would lead to its downfall.

I arrived at the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre on that Friday afternoon to prepare the inCONsequential Convention table. Our table was reserved in an area set aside for conventions, and SF clubs and societies to advertise their events. We were the first to arrive (and the only ones, as it turned out). On the other side of the room were tables for the expected dealers. In an area that could have easily accommodated thirty merchants, there were four. These were the first warning signs. After setting up, I was drafted to volunteer at the registration booth. This is always enjoyable, because I get to see old friends from out of town as they arrive. A chess tournament is held in conjunction with KingCon each year. I took over the counter handling the chess tournament registrations.

There was no program book this year. Lack of finances was the cited reason. Registrants received a double-folded 8 1/2 x 14 sheet of paper thanking the sponsors (who were also surprised at the lack of a program book). The rest of the information was very similar to what was already included on the pre-convention flyers.

As the evening progressed, it became apparent that attendance was very low. My Friday evening panel on Babylon 5 did not draw a single attendee. I think that they were lost in the convention (or locked in a stairwell). Eventually, I sat on the couch outside the room and struck up a conversation about B5 with some passing friends. I was having a great time.

The next day's convention attendance was not much better. I watched the registration area for a few minutes on Saturday morning. There were quite a few people who left when they found out that there was no Guest of Honour or Star Trek Bridge.

I left the registration area to find the indoor walkway to the Hilton Hotel. Going up instead of down, inConsequential Chairman Derek Nichols and I took a wrong turn. For the next few minutes (I'll never tell how long) we found ourselves locked in the stairwell with no way out, short of setting off the fire alarm. A more insidious trap I have never found. All of the stairwell doors were locked from the inside. There were no signs on any floor warning that this was a fire exit only. Eventually, a woman walked by the door we happened to be leaning against. Violently pounding on the metal door, we scared the poor woman out of a year's growth. Looking in, she hesitated before opening the door. I don't blame her.

It was just after this when I was told by one of the concom that the Convention Centre management wanted KingCon out. It seemed that they were not happy with the low attendance. Management had serious doubts about the convention being able to pay off their bills. Having worked registration, I suspected that this might be true. Discussions were taking place with the Convention Centre management and KingCon's Chairman at the time.

At 12:00 pm, the concom announced to all in attendance that the convention would be moving to the Colonial Inn (2 kilometres away). They had been given until 2:00 pm to clear out. Everyone was stunned at the news. This had never happened to a convention in the Maritimes. In fact, I had never heard of it happening anywhere. Credit goes to everyone in attendance. The entire convention pitched in to help tear down, pack, and transport the convention, now called "Con-voy", to the new location. Some were having more fun than before the announcement.

The management of the Colonial Inn bent over backwards to accommodate the move on short notice. Unfortunately, I and others found the facilities to be lacking. Each of the four main convention rooms was located at a different corner of the Inn. It was not a short walk to each area. Setup was not complete until close to 5:00 pm. By that time, the program schedule had found itself passing through the window, and KingCon had turned into a relaxation.

On Sunday, the concom attempted to get the program back on track, but everyone had either left, or they were waiting for the "Murphy's Law" (Bitch) Panel. At this event, comments were spirited, and emotions high.

Immediately following the convention, the KingCon Society business meeting was held. In the ensuing elections, most of the old Board of Directors were swept out. Some of the newly elected Board included members who had resigned in protest earlier in the year.

KingCon '97 is dead and buried. Hopefully, lessons have been learned. It is now time to move on. Next year can be a fresh start. On a personal level, I had a great time. A lot of my out-of-province friends were there, and we had a chance to enjoy each others company. This was a convention that I will remember for a long time.

Next year, KingCon will be held at Keddy's Fort Howe in Saint John, New Brunswick. The dates chosen for next year are July 10 to 12, 1998. The new KingCon Board of Directors can be reached at their new address: KingCon Society, 456½ Brian Lane, Saint John, New Brunswick E2M 1R5.

[Brian Davis can be contacted at 45 Charm Court, Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 7J6.]

## THE ECONOMICS OF DESPERATION

by Dale Speirs

Vulcan, Alberta, is a small town of 1400 in the dry wheatlands about 110 km SE of Calgary. The area was settled at the turn of the century, and the post office opened in October 1910. Somehow surviving the droughts and the Great Depression, the town began a long decline from the effects of farm mechanization, diesel trains, and paved roads. The first item meant that fewer farm workers were required, the second had eliminated rural roundhouses and service depots, and the third allowed people to shop in bigger towns for better selection and prices. Vulcan was not the only rural town so affected; the Great Plains of the USA and the prairies of western Canada are littered with dead or dying towns bypassed by history. But Vulcan was given one tiny out, for Hollywood inadvertently and unknowingly connected it to the Star Trek mania.

Vulcan was named after the ancient god of fire, but in 1989 a group of townspeople realized they could hitch their wagon to a star by making use of the connection. Vulcan has nothing to interest the tourist. The mountains are nearby but so are other towns. The area has no history to attract pilgrims. Louis Riel never came near the place. No aboriginal tribes had any particular legends about the area, as they did with Medicine Hat or Head-Smashed-In. In 1989 the Vulcan Association for Science and Trek (VAST) was formed in the county.

The sale of plastic pointy ears began, although many townsfolk were puzzled or annoyed by people wearing them. The Mayor of Vulcan, Bill Yee, did good business at his grocery store trafficking in Spock ears. Statues, artwork, and just about anything that could be connected with Star Trek were planned. Great hopes were raised for 1991, which was Leonard Nimoy's 60th birthday, Star Trek's 25th anniversary, and the 40th anniversary of the incorporation of the County of

Vulcan. Nimoy declined an invitation, but in November the CALGARY SUN tabloid and television station CICT sent ten busloads of Trekkies from Calgary for a party. The momentum started to grow. By 1992, Vulcan Ford Mercury was using the starship Enterprise in its car ads, and the plastic ear business was booming. There were some detractors. Female Elvis impersonator Joyce Barnes wanted nothing to do with pointy ears, so her bakery store was not among the believers.

Matters progressed well enough that VAST hosted VulCon 1 in 1993, held July 24 and 25. Greg Deitz was a driving force behind VAST, and many townspeople started manufacturing souvenirs. Just prior to the convention, in June, there was a Spock Days parade. Even the Liberal candidate (there was a federal election in 1993) wore Spock ears.

VulCon 2 was held in July 1994, with Trek writer Ann Crispin as Guest of Honour. Attendance was down but the next year VulCon 3 went ahead June 10 to 11. By then the townfolk were starting to build up a goodly number of permanent exhibits and displays, such as a scale model of a shuttlecraft built by the Calgary group USS Equulus, of which postcards were issued.

VulCon 4 was held October 19, 1996. Besides all the con activities, there was a murder mystery/dinner theatre at night. For VulCon 5 on August 30, 1997, much the same sort of activities went on except the dinner theatre was a comedy act rather than a murder mystery. Rather than a straightforward single admission fee as at regular SF cons, the tariff had a complicated pick-and-choose set of options for the theatre, workshops, and bourse.

Vulcan's economy has begun to recover in the past few years, not because of the Trek association but because the petroleum industry (on which Alberta's economy depends) revived, and because farmers switched to canola crops. But it seems likely the Spock connection will stay for a while, at least until Trekdom fades away.

These are the times that try fans' souls. The summer con-goer and the sunshine zinester will, in this bid, shrink from the service of Toronto, but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of fan and femmefan. WorldCon, like SMOFdom, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the more vigorous the bid, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. 'Tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Roscoe knows how to put a proper price on his goods, and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as WorldCon should not be highly rated. Cancun, with an army to obtain her WorldCon, has declared that she has a right not only to win but to sunburn us in all cases whatsoever. ... Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to Roscoe.

'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them. Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a Birmingham bid, and in the twentieth century the whole Scottish army, after ravaging the Dear Green City, was driven back ...

Not a place upon earth might be so happy as Toronto. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but trade with them. A man may easily distinguish in himself between fanac and gafiation, and I am as confident, as I am that Roscoe governs the world, that Toronto will never be happy til she gets the WorldCon. Bids, without ceasing, will break out til that period arrives, and Toronto must in the end be winner, for though the flame of bid parties may sometimes cease to shine, the fanac can never expire.



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