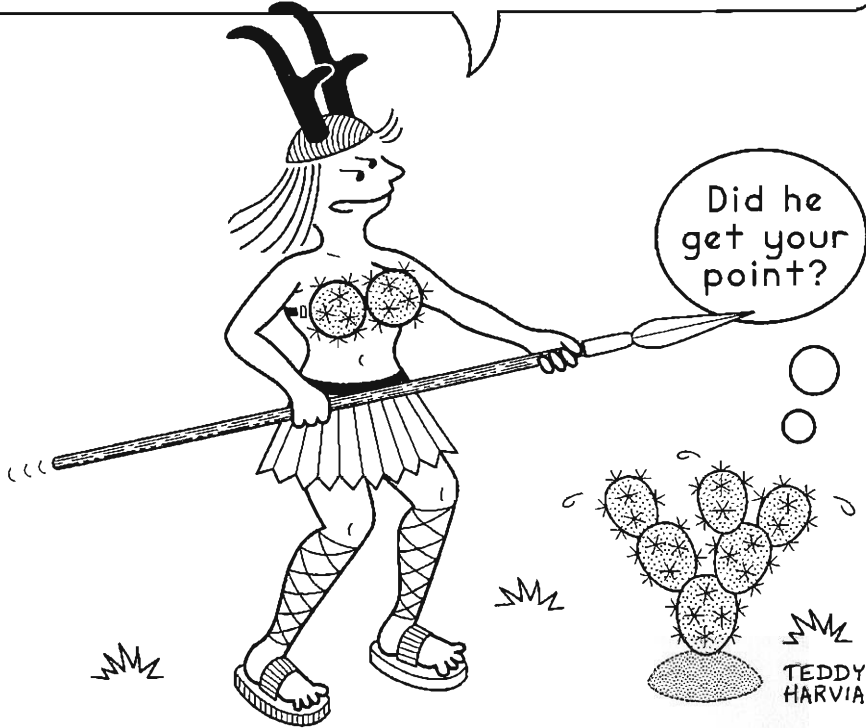


OPUNTIA

47.5

He claimed a woman couldn't handle a spear and I said if he thought he was man enough to take it away from me, I'd give it to him.

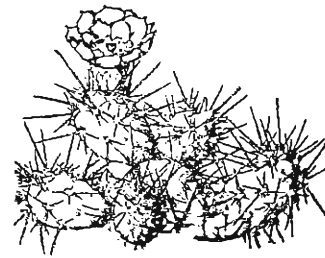


Did he get your point?

TEDDY HARVIA

ISSN 1183-2703

[Editor's
remarks
in square
brackets]



OPUNTIA is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, and x.5 issues are perzines. It's all very simple, really.

FROM: Ken Miller
Box 101
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940-0101

2000-12-13

COVER ART CREDIT: Teddy Harvia, 12341 Band Box Place, Dallas, Texas 75244-7001.

I ALSO HEARD FROM: Murray Moore, John Held Jr, Chester Cuthbert, Garth Spencer, Robert Lichtman, Scott Crow, A. Langley Searles, Russ Forster, Baby Nous, E.B. Frohvet, Henry Welch, Cliff Kennedy, Teddy Harvia, Martha Shivvers, Antonio Kruger, Ken Faig Jr

The preparations for protests [in Calgary against the World Petroleum Congress] reminded me of what happened here in Philadelphia when we had the Republican convention this summer. I was in a group art show downtown which opened on the second day of the convention. When protestors chained themselves together in several main intersections, the head of our artist group was unable to get through, so the opening was cancelled. This was awful for me because I left work early and took a train to get there. Then the protestors overturned a dumpster and spread trash all over the street. Good way to make your point!

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead
125509 Jonnie Court
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

2000-12-28

Canada, basically the same as what your agent said, the tree owner is liable if he knew the tree was a hazard, but not necessarily so if the tree looked okay. Calgary Parks Dept. keeps a computer inventory of all boulevard trees (about 300,000), identified right down to the individual tree. Hazard trees are inspected and removed if required. The history of each tree is kept on computer, so when I clear a broken branch in a windstorm, it goes on record.]

I take it that a riding is a political district? In Canada is there a term limitation or can a candidate be perpetually returned to office?

[A riding is a federal, provincial, or territorial constituency. The term was borrowed from England, where it originated via Yorkshire's famous three ridings. In Canada, elected officials can stay in as long as their constituents re-elect them. However, non-elected positions such as Senators, the Governor-General, and the Lieutenants-Governor (who are appointed by the Prime Minister) are subject to restrictions.]

[Also, and this is where we get a lot of screamers, you have to rake up any leaves that fall on your property, even if they are not from your tree. We get calls from people who want a big boulevard poplar cut down because they don't like the autumn cleanup. It's a hard life for all of us.]

I asked my insurance agent about trees which fall over or lose parts over the fence. He said that, contrary to popular belief, if the tree was not in such shape that the owners had been warned it would fall and ignored the information (ie., negligence), the homeowner is responsible for whatever lands on your side of the fence regardless of whose tree it is. I thought it would be the responsibility of whoever owned the tree; not so.

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

2000-12-05

[Tree damage and liability is a complicated matter. In the Parks Dept., we have a thick textbook on tree law that we refer to. In

Re: Calgary car chase. Did any of the cars run into a wall of boxes which just happened to be empty? Were any of the police driving filthy cars of some rare model?

Did the police officer who

started the chase have to leave a takeout meal after taking only one bite? Did the minivan burst into flames as if it were full of open cans of gasoline when it hit the telephone pole? How many people jumped to fire escapes or off bridges as the last moment? Did any of the cars go up on two wheels? Did any of the cars jump the curb and hit a fire hydrant? Did the chasing vehicles weave through traffic between cars arranged in alternation like traffic cones? Was there anyone transporting something fragile, say a large sheet of glass, who managed to save it from the pursuer, only to have it destroyed by the pursuing police? Did the police try to stop the minivan with two police cars parked in a V, which he could easily crash through? All these are from EBERT'S BIGGER LITTLE MOVIE GLOSSARY (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1999, ISBN 0-8362-8289-2).

[My favourite was some movie, title mercifully forgotten, in which a car soars off a cliff after missing a curve on a mountain road that had no guardrail or any other obstacle to strike. In mid-air, without having touched a thing, it detonates like a tactical nuke.]

Not that it would work in real life anyhow. At the rate at which TV cops wreck cars, how many of them would be in the force for more than one month? "Hooker, your vehicle, liability, and insurance bill has just passed \$1 million. I'm transferring you to the cellar."

[I have friends and relatives in the Calgary Police Service and the RCMP who tell me that constables have been suspended for such things as blocking a fleeing vehicle by approaching it head-on (policy is to always approach from the side or rear; a head-on crash is the worst possible vehicle accident). Any kind of impact gets the constable a safety review board appearance.]

This segues into one of the basic problems of thrillers; they have to focus on a single character for optimum dramatic efficiency. This is at odds with the trend in real criminal cases. Very few murders are committed by one of six upper-middle-class suspects, all with equal access to the method of killing, similar motives, and parallel alibis. I cannot imagine Jessica Fletcher, Lieutenant Colombo, Jim Rockford, or T.J. Hooker, much less their literary colleagues from Mike Hammer to Remo Williams, being able to solve the Unabomber case.

FROM: Sue Jones

2000-12-14

Flat 5, 32/33 Castle Street
Shrewsbury SY1 2BQ, England

Good to see I'm not the only one wasting time playing cards on the computer. I've never gotten into Hearts, but my Freecell

playing has progressed to game 3461 as I write this. Mind you, I had to cheat and skip game 1941; I suspect it is impossible to win, but maybe I just haven't solved it yet.

[As of 2001-04-29, I'm up to game 5805, working strictly in numerical order from game #1 and not skipping any. So game 1941 is solvable. There are some games that take me days before I solve them. I hope to get all 32,000 games before the computer dies of old age. My longest winning streak is 39 games.]

FreeCell Statistics		
This session		
won:	3	100%
lost:	0	
Total		
won:	39	100%
lost:	0	
Streaks		
wins:	39	
losses:	0	
current:	39 wins	

Best Times		
Fastest Mine Sweepers		
Beginner:	39 seconds	Dale Speirs
Intermediate:	93 seconds	Dale Speirs
Expert:	346 seconds	Dale Speirs

FROM: Rodney Leighton
R.R. 3

2000-12-20

Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0

Being one of the 37.2% who did not bother to vote [in the November 2000 federal election], I suppose I should keep quiet about your election/political report. However, since you are sending these things all over the world and are purporting to be providing accurate coverage, I thought I would mention a couple of things.

[I'll hastily correct one error; the Marxist-Leninist faction did indeed run some candidates in the election.]

Tories also form the provincial governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Alexa McDonough [the NDP party leader] is not married to that Tory. They don't even live together. I agree that it is kind of strange bedfellows and the fact that a 56-year-old woman makes no secret about screwing a member of an opposing party says something about morals, ethics, and society. A politician is a politician. Doesn't matter a whit what label they wear.

[I didn't mention it, but for non-Canadians, 1) the current party leader of the Québec Liberals was the former federal Tory party leader, 2) the former Premier of Québec, who was party leader of the Parti Québécois (separatists), used to be a federal Tory cabinet minister, 3) the Premier of Alberta, who is party leader of the Alberta Tories, was a Liberal when he was Mayor of Calgary immediately prior to entering provincial politics (his signature was on my paycheques), 4) the party leader of Alliance (federal) was a provincial Tory in Alberta but now represents a British Columbia riding, 5) the Alberta Liberal leader was a former Tory minister and 6) the Premier of Newfoundland resigned so he could be elected in the federal election and be anointed a cabinet minister by the Prime Minister (who, to his credit, has always been a Liberal).]

[I won't mention other party leaders unrelated to the federal election, such as: 1) the British Columbia NDP Premier (since replaced) currently up before Court of Queen's Bench for money laundering, 2) the former Saskatchewan Liberal Premier serving life for murdering his ex-wife, and who recently lost his bid for early parole, 3) the multitude of former Saskatchewan Tory cabinet ministers doing hard time for fraud, and 4) a multitude of Nova Scotian Tories who are, as the saying goes, known to police. My father grew up in Saskatchewan, and he liked to say that his province's politics made Louisiana look like Baptist Sunday school. John Diefenbaker (Tory Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, who represented a Saskatchewan riding) once remarked that the only thing protecting opposition parties in Saskatchewan was the game warden.]

FROM: Joseph Nicholas 2000-12-20
15 Jansons Road
Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England

You speculated that you might be able to outrun the wave-front formed by the fall of a hanging glacier into one of the lakes you visited. I have to tell you that even if you caught the first movements of the fall, you almost certainly would not make it to safety in time. You'd be better engaged standing there admiring

the destruction as it swept towards you. A recent documentary in BBC 2's HORIZON science series dealt with just these types of phenomena. Amongst the various people interviewed were two fishermen, the only two who survived a tsunami caused by a massive rock fall into an Alaskan coastal inlet during the 1960s. Their boat rode its crest onto the shore. When the tsunami struck the shore, it erased the tree cover, not to mention all other life, plant and animal, up to 50 to 80 metres.

Nor was this the first time such a rockfall had happened at that particular site. In the geological record it is apparently possible to detect the effects of a massive undersea slip from southern Hawaii which savaged the eastern coast of Australia some tens of thousands of years ago. The programme gleefully speculated that another giant landslide may be imminent, this time when the western side of Gran Canaria parts company with the rest of the island, splitting along the line of the existing volcanic vents, and causing a wave of such depth that when it reaches the Americas it would destroy everything on the seaboard east of the Appalachians.

[A word to the wise OPUNTIA reader; now is the time to buy Calgary real estate, which is a kilometre above sea level and several thousand kilometres inland. Also, we have most of Canada's oil, the lowest income tax in Canada, no provincial sales tax, and a sunny, dry climate.]

I had sometimes wondered what you wore at work, and had some vague notion of you seated behind a desk, probably without a tie, issuing instructions to distant work crews. Having read the account of your activities during the storm, I now envisage you in fluorescent yellow overalls and a hard hat, perhaps with a fluorescent orange waistcoat with "PARKS DEPT" written on the back in large black letters. Am I even close?

[Fair enough. I wear denim (tough and resists accidental tears) in normal weather, with steel-toed safety boots. In winter, a bright yellow insulated parka; in rain a yellow slicker. On roadsides, we wear orange glowvests with a fluorescent yellow X on the back. For overhead work such as tree pruning, we wear blue hard hats with flip-up faceshields. Our trucks are marked "PARKS", but the clothing are generic unmarked safety clothes from the lowest bidder.]

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

2000-11-10

Fanzines seem to be specializing in travel reports recently,

particularly to areas that fans don't normally visit. It might be interesting to get a medium-sized map of the world, and stick into it a thumbtack in the spot covered by each new fanzine trip report. I suspect that most of it would soon become almost completely covered by the tack tops.

You puzzled me several times with your mentions of Kootenay National Park. I certainly haven't been there or anywhere else in Canada, I don't think it is a thriving fan centre, so why did the word impress me as so familiar? I still haven't figured out for sure, but I suspect I may have heard it when listening to weather reports from Canadian AM stations, some of which give fairly good reception at night in Hagerstown. They seem to include oddly-named locations in preference when they're running down current temperatures.

[About all I can think of is that many regions of Canada with heavy vehicle traffic are mentioned in forecasts for the benefit of travelers, even if the area has few people residing there. There are only three practical highways across the Alberta-British Columbia border, via Crowsnest Pass, Kootenay, and Yoho. All of these are thinly populated but heavily traversed. This means lots of semi-trailers and tourists, so there would be a demand for weather reports, especially as the mountains have treacherous, mercurial weather even in summer.]

I'm finally out of danger from the many fans who have threatened to drag me kicking and screaming into the 20th Century during the past six decades. These comments will create the last loc I'll write in this century and this millennium. In fact, it's conceivable that I'm writing the last loc anywhere in the world before the chronological turnover. As I type, it's already January 1 in about three-fourths of the world. I can't believe there is much chance anyone except me is thinking about loc-writing rather than socializing in the next four to seven hours. I've already published the first fanzine dated 2001, advance copies of which I circulated two years ago.

It sounds like [Parks Weekend Trouble Call Supervisor] is a decent sort of job since you don't seem to have any superior hovering over you in the hopes of catching you goofing. I'm surprised at the lack of episodes involving angry citizens. Apparently people are less touchy in Alberta than they are in Maryland, where repair crews and government workers must endure all sorts of criticism when they arrive to do something that must be done near someone's home.

[The screamers afflict the District Foreman, of which I used to be one until I took the weekend shift. People blow up because of tall grass on playfields when the mowers are behind schedule, or dandelions in the park seeding into their lawns. Those are non-

emergencies referred to the weekday maintenance shift. I've not had problems with broken branches or an irrigation leak because we in Trouble Calls pride ourselves on rapid response. If we can't fix it immediately, we will at least secure the site and talk to the homeowner. One thing I learned years ago is to talk to citizens face-to-face. People who don't hesitate to scream over the telephone will show more courtesy when I knock on their door and talk to them. The unfortunate secretary-receptionist at the Parks Area Office gets most of the screamers, since she takes the first contact with citizens during regular business hours.]

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

2000-12-13

Re: World Petroleum Congress protester Tooker Gomberg. As expected, Mel Lastman was re-elected mayor of Toronto in a landslide [in the November municipal elections]. However, Gomberg received about 105,000 votes. If there's a message for Lastman there, and I think there is, I doubt he'll listen. If that didn't humble him a little, this \$6 million paternity suit against him should do the trick.

2001-01-05

Both [my wife] Yvonne and I signed the petition to get Alliance

leader Stockwell Day to change his name to Doris.

Our CUFF trip report seems to have some measure of popularity. Already we're nearly a quarter of the way through the print run.

[Lloyd and Yvonne won the 2000 Canadian Unity Fan Fund. Their CUFF report is now available from Lloyd, cheques payable to him. Price is \$10 and all proceeds to CUFF. Besides their trip report, they have included a history of CUFF since its inception, so this should be a valuable fanhistorical document.]

Anyway, that's all for now. Scratch Walter [the Parks cat] behind the ears for me.

[Done. Walter said to say "Purrrr".]

FROM: Dianne Bertrand
9109 Deschambault
St. Léonard, Québec H1R 2C6

2000-12-22

I voted Marijuana [in the federal election] because a Red Pig (Liberal) always wins in St. Léonard. In January 2002, we will be Montréal, like many other localities. I will lose a part of my mail art address!

FROM: Terry Jeeves
56 Red Scar Drive
Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England

2001-01-20

Sawyer's lecture posed some interesting points. I think he's right that media SF is debasing true SF. I can't bear to watch the clones of STAR TREK, with their sociological slants and humans converted into aliens.

[I've done a fair bit of Trekkie bashing myself, but I have to allow them the humanoid aliens as a matter of practicality in filming the shows. Many observers have remarked that media fans would never have been literary fans anyway. As long as we still have good books to chose from at superstores or via mail/Internet order, then it matters little what the barbarians are doing.]

FROM: Eric Lindsay
Box 640
Airlie Beach, Queensland 4802, Australia

2000-12-17

The concept that you could go for a walk on a trail [in the Rocky Mountains] and expect to find someone else along in ten or fifteen minutes astounds me. When we drove the back road from Alpha to Clermont [in Australia], we saw one other vehicle in four hours. When we camped at Bladensburg National Park, we saw two other

vehicles during a three-day stay.

-10-

There are entire shires here with a population of under 400 and an area approaching 100,000 square kilometres.

[Most of the Rockies, and the rest of Canada for that matter, are as empty. The trails I walk in the Rockies are short loops for day trips. There are hundreds more for overnight hikes into the remote mountains but I do not take them. I make day trips out to the Rockies since Calgary is only an hour to Banff National Park, and 2 hours to Yoho N.P.. I just go for the scenery and flora, which is the same on the day loops as the backcountry trails.]

We don't need to mark our desk calendars with the World Wide party. It comes with a permanent computer alarm. Maybe you need to organize an opt-in reminder list that e-mails everyone a few days prior?

[The old-fashioned diary calendar is faster to write and access the data (just flip the pages) and never crashes or is disabled by viruses. In 2000, I tried posting notes on listservers about the WWP, but I found that people who knew of it were going to celebrate anyway. The rest were Internet nerds who didn't and wouldn't understand how the WWP is supposed to function, and just used the announcement as a comment hook to veer the conversation thread off topic.]

FROM: Judith Hanna

2001-??-??

15 Jansons Road

Tottenham, London N15 4JU, England

[Re: deep time exploration] It reminded me of the last time I visited my mother in Western Australia. "Read this, dear", she said, passing me VOYAGE OF THE GREAT SOUTHERN ARK by Maggie Red Morrison. It is a tectonic history of Terra Australis, that wandering chunk of old Gondwana, showing which continental plates used to join together where, and the paths they followed around the globe as they collided, broke up, tilted, sank, grew and lost continental shelves. Weeks later, I flew across to my sister in Sydney, reading the geology as it unrolled life-size below.

The plane took off from Perth, on its narrow strip of sandy coastal plain, and climbed over the Darling Scarp, where the slab of Gondwana that became the Indian sub-continent used to attach. The flat West Australian plateau that I grew up on is the Yilgarn Shield, one of the oldest exposed land surfaces on Earth, pretty much eroded right down to its Precambrian granite base by eons of wind and rain, overlaid by mere inches of ironstone laterite cap and sand. When I moved to London, England, and encountered actual topsoil, whole feet deep, it was a major shock. I knew about topsoil in theory, but it was something you had to build up intensively with compost and manure on thin sand and gravel.

Salt lake beds on the flat and treeless eastern wheatbelt/goldfields below were the remains of ancient river courses. Having read so in the book, I could pick out how the lines of flow once ran, not something you realise on the ground nor looking at normal maps. As we headed towards the Great Australian Bight, where Antarctica used to attach, I could see how the two diverging lines of cliffs mark two successive coastlines. The Nullarbor desert used to be an inland sea. It was never lived on by the Aborigines, mainly no doubt because of too-poor pickings, but also for fear of the devil spirits whose calls could be heard echoing from the limestone caves that honeycomb beneath the desert.

The plane sailed over the turquoise Southern Ocean of the Bight to South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, with its red patches of iron ore. To its north, chains of dry salt lakes, all below modern sea level, run south from Lake Eyre almost to the coast. These are the remains of the inland sea the first white explorers were sure must exist because all the rivers east from the Blue Mountains ran inland. They were quite right; the inland seas did exist, just a few hundred thousand years before the European invasion. One of the ecological debates going around was whether an engineering project to cut through the strip of land that separates the southernmost lakebed from the sea and let the water through would be (a) worthwhile revitalisation of desert waste, or (b) typical human techno-freak vandalism destroying part of Australia's unique desert

ecosystem. Despite being a deep-dyed eco-freak, I reckon I'd go with (a) in this debate; nature wants land to have water available. Australia has more desert than it needs.

Onward, over the Flinders Range, that old reef where Ediacarian soft-bodied fossils can be found, towards the New South Wales border. As we go on, green lines thicken and get denser, then join together and take over. Cloud hides the Blue Mountains, their ridges what is left of an ancient plateau carved up by rivers, and Sydney, where we land.

Geologically, an old country, deep time. Earliest human settlement now thought to be about 60,000 years, before modern humans reached Europe. But, my, what a lot of damage we (and our sheep, rabbits, motor vehicles, chain saws, and bulldozers) have managed in a mere geological instant.

COWTOWN VIGNETTES

by Dale Speirs

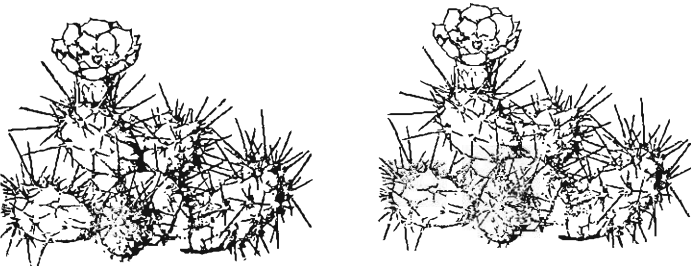
Busy As A Beaver.

2001-01-20

And so to work on the weekend shift as Parks Trouble Call Supervisor. Our dispatcher advised that the riverbank pathway behind the downtown federal building was blocked by a fallen tree. I drove over and, after a bit of traffic trouble (the area is in Chinatown, the most densely populated section of Calgary), found the location. Beavers had dropped a 30-cm poplar from the riverbank, and were working on other trees at night.

I set to work with a saw and cleared the tree back, in between dodging inline skaters and joggers on the path. The cut branches were tossed back down into the river for the beavers. As I was working, a couple of Parks staff from the nearby Olympic Plaza drove up on the pathway, having had a separate duplicate trouble call. Between the three of us, we quickly finished the job.

Dan looked at the other, not yet fallen trees that the beavers had been chewing on. "Should we drop them with the chainsaw as well?", he wondered. Since those trees were well down on the riverbank, there were no targets for them to hit, and therefore they were not a hazard. So I said to Dan, "Leave it to beaver".



A mild, sunny day at work, with temperatures at -5°C and no wind. I got a trouble call that wasn't really a trouble call. All Calgary parks are zoned for dog control, with signs indicating no dogs allowed, allowed on leash only, or off leash. Dee called me from the Parks North Area office and wanted me to check Bowmont Natural Park for dog signs, as she had gotten a citizen concern about dog walkers in that vicinity.

Bowmont, despite its name, is in the Silver Springs community, not Bowness, which is directly across the river. Silver Springs creeps up to the edge of the escarpment overlooking the valley, but the slope and riverbank are preserved as a natural area. This was not altruism by the developer to preserve a bit of nature for its housing tracts. Unlike most bland developer subdivision names, Silver Springs is called that because there really are springs along the slopes and riverbanks, making construction impossible. The springs still seep through the winter, producing sheets of ice that build out and down. The pathway system leading down into the park is one long 45-degree skating rink in winter, 3 metres wide and a kilometre long. You can go down to the river in 30 seconds flat, but unless you bring climbing gear, the only way back home is a several-kilometres walk to a dry coulee upstream. All the local dog walkers therefore drive to a parking lot off the 85th Street NW bridge, down on the bottomlands.

More SUVs in the parking lot than you can shake a stick at, although if you attempted to shake a stick in that park, some playful golden retriever would try to snatch it out of your hand. There seems to be a correlation between owning an SUV and a large dog. I never see a toy poodle hopping down off an SUV tailgate. Retrievers are most common, with collies, German shepherds, Belgian shepherds, and Dalmatians in lesser numbers.

I meandered around the park but found no dog control signs of any type, which information I relayed via cellphone to Dee for her further use. I have walked around this park many times before in summer, when its myriad of river channels and backwaters are filled, but this was the first time I had seen it in winter. The Bow River is a shallow mountain river which shrinks considerably in winter, retreating to its main channel and leaving all the backwaters dry. When I stood on the channel banks in summer, the backwaters didn't seem deep, only about waist-high. I now followed the impromptu footpaths made by dog walkers along the beds of the freeze-dried channels, and found the banks were higher than head-height. Beaver dens, now dry and vacant, were common all the way along the bases of the banks. Many of them had been further excavated by dogs, who could still smell the scent, but of course the beavers had long ago moved out to the main channel. Leave it, the beavers did. And so did I.

My box number is located at the main post office in downtown Calgary on 9th Avenue SW. One day last year, I had stopped off to pick up my mail and discovered Gordie Howe in the lobby autographing the NHL All-Star hockey stamps issued by Canada Post, one of which depicted his visage. I hadn't known he was going to be there, so other than briefly viewing the scene, nothing more came of it for me. I suppose I could have waited in line, bought some of the stamps, and had them autographed, but since I don't follow professional sports I had no interest in the matter. More importantly, my car was double-parked in the loading zone outside. The traffic commissionaires are always skulking about for revenue on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen In Right of the Corporation of the City of Calgary. She's a pretty nice gal, but she and the Mayor of Calgary can get their money from someone else's parking ticket.

A few days prior, the librarian of the Calgary Philatelic Society telephoned and told me that Bobby Hull was coming to the main Calgary post office on 9th Avenue SW to autograph the second NHL stamp sheet issued by Canada Post. One stamp, of course, bears his visage. The session was for an hour or so at 16h30. I parked my car at a distant LRT station and rode the train into the downtown core. I met Penny down there for the event.

Penny waited in line to buy

-14-

some of the NHL stamps, while I lurked about with my camera. I am editor of the CALGARY PHILATELIST, and my interest was only to get copy and photos to fill a few pages in the next issue. I saw a white limousine pull up at the curb, and went outside to take a photograph. As I got ready to take the picture, Bobby Hull stepped out of the car and immediately came over and shook my hand. I was so surprised I forgot to take the picture, as I had expected he would walk straight into the post office instead of chatting with onlookers.

I followed him in and clicked off photos of the autograph session. It took Penny about 20 minutes to work her way to the head of the line. I got a few snaps of her as Hull signed the stamp sheets, as well as a pose for a formal picture. As each person came up to the head of the line, a P.R. person would check what they wanted to have signed. Only philatelic material was allowed. A few people who had non-NHL licensed items were told they couldn't get them signed, only the stamp sheets and covers.

Hull sat at a table set up at the back of the box numbers in the lobby, and besides signing stamps also posed for pictures. A CFCN cameraman came by halfway through the signing ceremony and interviewed him briefly. Penny and I left before the signing was over, so I didn't get a picture of Hull going back into the limo.

I didn't recognize any other stamp collectors in the crowd, and I suspect that most of the audience were hockey fans, not collectors. This is the way of the future for new issues, one that many philatelists refuse to acknowledge. People not only don't collect by country anymore, they don't collect topicals as a stamp collection. Rather, the items are for hockey memorabilia collections, and the stamps will go alongside pennants, coffee mugs, posters, fridge magnets, and lapel pins. That is why postal agencies don't particularly care about the true philatelists, who are only a minute proportion of new-issue sales these days.

The Federation Internationale de Philatelie (the worldwide governing body of stamp clubs) can blacklist new stamp issues to its heart's delight but the people buying the stamps of today are not only not exhibitors, but will never join a stamp club. This explains the contradiction between the ever-increasing number of stamp issues and the declining number of stamp collectors in clubs.

SF fans were upset by the invasion of the media barbarians in the 1960s, who now dominate SFdom. At the same time Trekkies were storming the gates of fandom, topical collectors were swamping out the traditional country collectors in philately. Now even the topical collectors are fading out, as postal agencies around the world cater not to stamp collectors, but to hobbyists who want stamps only as associational material for their interest.

Elvis fans who buy stamps depicting him seldom branch out into other types of philately. The flood of Princess Diana stamps is not intended for genuine philatelists, but for 30ish housewives who dream of being married to a Prince Charming instead of a used-car salesman.

J'ACCUSE

2001-03-18

Driving through Confederation Park at work today, I was struck by the time-honoured Canadian tradition involving lost mittens and gloves. People who find them on the ground stick them up on the nearest tree branch in case the owner comes back looking for them. It's easier to spot them that way, whereas if left low on the ground or the base of a streetlight, the gloves would soon be buried in snow. It is sometimes startling for me to come idling along a pathway on Parks business (only City vehicles can drive on park paths), round a corner, and face a tree pointing an accusing gloved twig at me. I feel an undefined sense of guilt for no logical reason, as if the spruce was holding me personally responsible for the pulp-and-paper industry.

WORLD WIDE PARTY #8

by Dale Speirs

On June 21st, year 2001, will be the 8th annual World Wide Party. At 21h00 your time, raise a glass and toast your friends in the Papernet around the world. Have a party if you will, do a one-shot zine, prepare and post a batch of mail art, or whatever else you may think of. The World Wide Party was first suggested by Benoit Girard of Quebec and boosted by Franz Miklis of Austria. The idea behind a 21h00 toast is to get a wave circling the planet celebrating zineish friends and connecting everyone in the Papernet briefly by a common activity. Write to me (Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7) how you celebrated WWP #8; documentation to all.

TORCON 3

Toronto will host the 2003 World Science Fiction Convention from August 28 to September 1. Details from: Torcon 3, Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5W 1A2

