

OPUNTIA

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Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines.

PEAK OIL REDUX

by Dale Speirs

Meanwhile, Back At Wall Street ...

A friend in the petroleum industry told me about this one. I looked it up because I thought he was kidding me, but no, Mark Shenk, a Bloomberg.com columnist, really did write (2008-09-12): *"Bloomberg's survey of oil analysts and traders, conducted each Thursday, asks for an assessment of whether crude oil futures are likely to rise, fall or remain neutral in the coming week. ... The oil survey has correctly predicted the direction of futures 49 percent of the time since its start in April 2004."* In other words, had they flipped a coin, their accuracy would have improved by one percentage point. Or, what would be easier to do, just take the opposite of what the experts said for slightly better odds.

As the Panic of 2008 intensifies, commodity and blue-chip stock prices plunge far past their fundamental values. Speculators caught by margin calls (borrowed money to buy stocks or commodities) have to sell at any price to pay back their loans, driving oil down past its real value and shoving blue-chip stocks into the remainders bin. World oil production has declined since 2006, but the economic disaster has destroyed demand below the supply, Peak Oil notwithstanding.

Doomsday Is At Hand! Film At 11, But First This Important Commercial Message.

The End Times are always with us, but the Armageddon we thought we were going to see was pre-empted by a different one. I grew up in the Sixties listening to pundits predicting that nuclear war was inevitable and we wouldn't make it past the 1990s without the USA and the USSR going at it toe-to-toe. Somehow that got swept aside when oil became too cheap to meter.

The dot.com boom, said WIRED magazine, was going to be different, but it turned out to be the same as a century ago when railroads that didn't have tracks or depots sold watered stock that flooded the market. The dot.coms didn't have tracks or depots either but they had Web sites, although actual sales didn't matter when the money was in flooding the market with watered stock. It used to be illegal to sell millions or billions of shares with no change in company basics, but that changed when the Boomers agreed that government regulations against watered stock were inefficient. After the dot.com money vanished in a flurry of electrons, the Boomers agreed that everyone was entitled to own a house, even if they didn't have the income to pay the mortgage. After all, they're not making any more land. Of course, everyone forgot that it wasn't the land, it was the house, of which they were making too many.

And so we come to Peak Oil, first predicted by M. King Hubbert in 1956, and correct so far. Oil is in a unique situation. Gold futures don't matter because gold is not essential. Grain futures do matter if there was a crop failure last year, but one good rainfall will bring supplies back to normal. Houses and Web sites are easily manufactured, and often go into over-supply. Credit and bank reserves are pure fiction, created by re-arranging electrons in a Wall Street computer and destroyed the same way. But oil matters. All food and other supplies are delivered by vehicles burning oil derivatives such as diesel or gasoline. Electric trains don't run to the farms that produce the food, or to the stores that sell it in the last mile. Diesel trucks are the lifeblood of supply; and all the ethanol or canola will not save them anytime in the near future.

It must be remembered that it is in the near future that we will be living. It is nice to do a bit of hand waving and predict that twenty years from now all our vehicles will run on biodiesel and every town will be served by electric trains getting their energy from solar cells and wind turbines. But the agony will be in getting there.

Having said that, I don't believe Peak Oil will be a sudden Armageddon sweeping millions to their death in the next few years. The survivalists, like creationists and UFO nuts, will always be with us, but can generally be ignored.

Hubbert made the point, often forgotten by pundits and talking heads, that Peak Oil doesn't mean the oil is all gone; half of it is still to come. It only means that cheap easy-to-get-at conventional oil won't be found as fast as the existing supplies are used up, and the new oil will be expensive unconventional oil from offshore rigs, the Arctic, oilsands, and shale. The transition will be agony for those who were brought up in a world of cheap fuel, cheap imported goods, cheap travel, and cheap everything else. Adaptation to a lower standard of living will be slow and accompanied by much shouting and finger-pointing. But it will be done because unlike human laws, the laws of nature cannot be circumvented by ignoring them or clapping hands in unison and wishing upon a star.

After The Empire Falls.

One book that has become popular lately among Peak Oil and credit crisis fanatics is not actually on that subject. **Reinventing Collapse** by Dimitry Orlov (2008, trade paperback) is a commentary by a Russian who witnessed firsthand the collapse of the Soviet empire from within, and who later moved to the USA where he saw the same warning signs beginning to appear. Orlov doesn't waste time on theory, although he does spend some time comparing the two empires. His point is that the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath will provide valuable advice for when our time comes. The USSR was better prepared than the

USA for a collapse because the former had less distance to fall. The USA will decline from a higher life style, making it more difficult for Americans to accept the drop from a McMansion in a far-flung suburb to a low-rent housing tower.

Glasnost allowed Russians to talk freely about problems as long as they spoke of them as separate, discrete, unrelated problems. The USSR collapsed when its peoples realized that those were not separate problems but all interlinked in the old political system. The USA currently deals with its problems as isolated and unrelated. The Federal Reserve bails out banks but has nothing to say about Peak Oil. Municipalities fret about paying for new roads and utilities to distant suburbs, while not stopping to ask why they should do so if the suburbs are untenable.

Orlov reports that when the USSR collapsed, the first victim was money. No one wanted paper fiat currency, and the only way to get anything was barter. He found he could trade a 500 ml bottle of vodka for 10 litres of gasoline. The Russian experience was that when an economy collapses, access to physical resources and connections to influential people were more important than cash. Eventually, after hyperinflation ruined savings and pension plans, everyone settled into a new economic equilibrium at a lower level, ie., poorer.

Gold bugs have traditionally claimed that when Doomsday arrives, gold will be the only accepted currency. But it wasn't accepted after the fall of the Soviet empire because there was nothing it could buy.

Hyperinflation is something that few North Americans have personally experienced. Canada has never had it and the last time the Americans experienced it was during the 1776 Revolution (when the phrase "Not worth a Continental" originated). Some immigrants can tell stories about buying a loaf of bread with a wheelbarrow full of money in the Old Country, but for the most part hyperinflation is something we read about as taking place in Zimbabwe or some former Soviet republic in central Asia. The Americans have exported most of their debt to the rest of the world. If the rest of the world decides to cash out American dollars while there is still time, then the USA will be lucky if they can keep their inflation rate in low double-digits. Even at that rate, fiat currency quickly devalues, and it becomes better to keep one's assets as gold, rare stamps, or, best of all, preserved food.

One area where the American experience will diverge from the USSR in the event of a collapse is housing. Under Communist rule, all housing was owned by the state. You had to live where you were told, but it had the advantage that once assigned a unit, only the Party could remove you. When the Party collapsed in 1989, there was no one to say you had to leave. The vast majority

of Russians therefore were not displaced by bankruptcy or foreclosure, and whatever their other woes, at least had a place to live. When the Russian economy collapsed, everyone stayed where they were, and the only homeless were migrants from other areas, mostly ethnic Russians evicted from other republics. It may have been poor quality housing of concrete apartment buildings with peeling paint, but it was sufficient unto the day. Orlov notes that this helped preserve Russian society from disintegrating into anarchy, since neighbourhoods stayed relatively intact and the inhabitants banded together for mutual self-defense. In the USA, where housing is mostly private property, those who rent will be at the mercy of landlords, those still paying a mortgage will be at the mercy of banks, and those who can't keep up with property taxes will be at the mercy of the municipalities. The current sub-prime mortgage crisis will be a walk in the park come the day.

Transportation after the 1989 collapse of the USSR meant public transit and bicycles, pretty much the same as it was before. The Russians were set up for this because central planners did not like urban sprawl and kept the cities compact. Americans will find their hinterlands cut off as cars become too expensive, so railroads, canals, and waterfronts will slowly revive. Getting around town will revert to bicycles, hitchhiking (for a fee, so the driver can buy gas), jitneys, and public transit.

Most large Soviet companies survived the collapse because they got all their supplies in-house due to the inefficient distribution network under Communism. They provided food, medical care, and housing to their employees in lieu of decent wages. In general, they each built their own little empires during the Soviet days that were briefly highjacked by the oligarchs during the collapse but are now being reclaimed by the Russian government. Hopefully American corporations will be able to form up their own enclaves before the supply lines collapse and cheap supplies can no longer be imported from overseas. Out-sourcing will become difficult when a load of equipment parts is shipped from China for \$8,000 per container as of mid-2008, more than double what it was the year before.

In the USA, the most common type of stranded asset (an asset that can't be used for lack of transport or equipment) will be the large farms of the western states. No giant 4WD tractors will be able to seed the land, no even bigger combines will collect the harvest, all for the lack of sufficient fuel. Smallholdings will re-emerge in fertile, well-watered areas. Orlov didn't mention it but one thing I would expect to see under such conditions is a revival of the Old West, with vast areas of common grazing and gangs of cowboys fending off rustlers. Russia, a fertile land which fed itself before Communism, could not do so when the USSR collapsed because collectivization and mechanized farming were too dependent on central command and supply of fuel. It was only allotment

gardening that prevented mass starvation, supplemented by factories and offices which kept good canteens as a type of pay in lieu of unpaid salaries. Few Americans in the cities have gardens, and none of their cities have more than three days food supply.

Come the collapse, durable goods with little plastic will be preferred, especially the kind that can be repaired by a home handyman. Disposable goods with short lifespans or which cannot be easily fixed will disappear. I would add that older vehicles will fetch a premium, the kind that don't require computer chips in the engines. Back when I drove Volkswagen Beetles, a non-mechanic such as myself could change the ignition points with a screwdriver, but my Honda Civics will be unrepairable if the computer chip fails and the dealer can't get a replacement.

Soviet health care slowly declined after the collapse and then became for-profit only. No money, no care. Since Americans are already at this stage, they won't notice any change, but it will certainly hurt Canadians, who are used to visiting their doctor without getting a bill. Big pharmaceutical companies will dwindle away for lack of supply, and traditional herbal medicine will return.

Orlov observed during his time in Russia that the safest place to be was where the people had no ideological or religious passions, which allows the do-gooders to stir up identity politics and promote their pet causes. Outward conformity was a survival trait, and in a grand collapse, the proud individualists will suffer most. Survivalists will be picked off one-by-one because local residents will know who they are and the size of their hoard of food and supplies.

In Russia the most valuable jobs in the immediate aftermath were in asset stripping, which will also be the major employment of Americans. All those empty suburban homes will have their copper wiring stripped out (actually, this is already happening), the toilets and sinks go to plumbers, and the wood will have a hundred uses. Russian housing stayed intact because it was still occupied, but the obsolete factories were soon stripped. Distilling will be a good industry to be in. Alcohol will always be in demand, vodka in Russia and moonshine in the USA. Private security companies are (Russia) and will be (USA) a growth industry, as police forces run out of resources to investigate all but the most serious crimes.

Russia has been through the collapse that the western world still fears will be coming its way. Orlov repeatedly makes the point that to survive a collapse you must forget about due process of law and "every man is the master of his castle". You and your

neighbours will band together by necessity, and you will associate with people you would rather not know in better times. The Russian experience, however, does demonstrate that an economic collapse is not the end of civilization.

Alberta's Good Fortune.

Some regions of the world prosper because they are located on natural trade routes, others because they are port cities, and, as is the case with Alberta, they have the right type of resources and a stable government. Which brings me to the trade magazine **Oilsands Review** (September 2008) (\$13 for single copy by mail, from June Warren Publishing, #300, 5735 - 7 Street NE, Calgary, Alberta T2E 8V3) Full-colour glossy monthly, 126 pages, and available at newsagents everywhere in Alberta, although I expect they don't get much business from Croydon or Monrovia stockists. Alberta's conventional oil is rapidly dwindling, so our economy stands or dies on the oilsands. This is one of many trade magazines devoted to the petroleum business in western Canada.

The cover story is Highway 63, a two-lane road connecting Fort McMurray, the capital of the Athabasca Tar Sands, with the south, and the only realistic route in by land. There is a secondary highway 881 which roughly parallels 63 but is a much longer route. Highway 63 has 50,000 daily users.

Before the boom it was adequate to service the remote northeast of Alberta. Now it is a death trap, with a steady stream of semi and pup trailers, oversize loads, and road trains sharing the road with workers hoping to make it rich (\$100,000 per year is considered minimum wage up there). The previous premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein, was a showboater who didn't really care about Alberta's infrastructure, and as a result we are now struggling to catch up with years of neglect as the oil boom continues. In 2007, Klein jumped (he says) or was pushed (the Tories say), and the new premier, Ed Stelmach, is trying to remedy the situation by twinning Highway 63 and building an expanded rail line to take some of the freight off the road. In the meantime, people are dying, with an average of one death every fortnight on the highway. The article writer concludes though, that most of the accidents were preventable and were the driver's fault. Commonly cars will try to pass a line of semis on a curve or hill, or drive too fast for conditions and skid off the road.

"Sector Watch" is a regular feature that follows stock market activity of oil companies. The columnist notes that energy company stock prices did not gain as much as oil prices, but suggests they will rise even as oil prices decline. Bargain hunters on the Toronto Stock Exchange will snap up such shares because it is better to buy petroleum company shares than try to beat the mad money directly in futures contracts. Your results may vary.

There is an article on the Shell Oil play at Cold Lake, an underground oilsands deposit south of the Athabasca Tar Sands in east-central Alberta. In downtown Calgary or Edmonton, you may overhear from time to time petro-executives talking about "sag-dee". This is steam-assisted gravity drainage (SAGD), commonly used to extract bitumen via horizontal drilling. Underground brackish water, plus recycled water from previous heating cycles, is flashed into steam. The high-pressure steam is pumped down into the strata to melt the bitumen out of the sands. Bitumen does not flow naturally, which is why it has to be melted. The mixture is then pumped out, the bitumen separated for conversion into synthetic crude oil, and the water returned to the boiler. Although the article is about Shell Oil's operation, the majority of Cold Lake production comes from Imperial Oil, as ExxonMobil is known in Canada. (All their service stations are branded Esso, but in each province they operate one service station under the Exxon name to protect their trademark. The Alberta Exxon station is in my old hometown of Red Deer.)

Another article discusses the problems the petroleum companies have in dealing with the local inhabitants of Cold Lake and their efforts to co-operate with them and provide social programmes to ameliorate the inconveniences. Difficulties range from seismic crews forgetting to close farm gates to water wells suddenly going dry. The oilfield operators do what they can to resolve the conflicts.

NIMBY, surprisingly, is not one of them; most Albertans are well aware of the economic importance of the oilsands, but it is the other annoyances that stir up trouble.

Meanwhile, back at the Athabasca Tar Sands, which are oilsands like Cold Lake but exposed at the surface, a couple of articles discuss the tailings ponds. Syncrude Canada is looking into recycling its mine tailings. The Tar Sands are mined from open pits and most of the area is rehabilitated back to natural areas. However, the bitumen extraction process produces very fine microparticles, which have to be settled out in tailings ponds, hazardous to aquatic birds because of the thin sheen of oil on the surface. Propane-powered cannons are used to scare the birds away. About half of the tailings are kaolin, a fine white clay used to produce coated paper used in glossy magazines, or as a component of concrete. Divers in the tailings ponds are needed to repair underwater pipes or pumps. There is zero visibility, so they weld by feel, wearing the same type of suits that divers use who go into radioactive ponds at nuclear reactors. They come out of the water with their suits covered in bituminous gunk. And you think you have a lousy job.

“Profits From Pond Scum” looks at the idea of using algae to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Currently the industry uses sequestering, pumping carbon dioxide and other emissions down into old oil wells. This not only gets rid of the emissions but

repressurizes the well and allows a few more drops to be lifted out. Algae growing in ponds can absorb carbon dioxide and then be converted to ethanol. Alas, it turns out that a single production facility would need a 1,024 sq. km pond.

“What Refiners Want” discusses the problems of delivering crude oil from the oilsands to refineries scattered throughout Canada and the USA. Refineries are built to handle specific types of crude oil, whether Ras Tanura light from Saudi Arabia or Western Canada Select heavy from Alberta. Each type of oil requires a different chemistry to distill into fuel or lubricants. As the supply of light oil continues to dwindle, more and more refineries are shutting down for a few months to convert over to heavy crude.

“The Contrast Of Time” looks back at the ancient history of the Tar Sands. The first commercial extraction was from a processing plant built in 1930 at Bitumont, 90 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. It produced 300 barrels of syncrude a year and is now a provincial historic site. When the big modern extraction plants started up in 1967, they used giant bucket-wheel excavators, since replaced by 3-story-tall shovels that load 2-story-tall trucks.

The Panic of 2008 has driven oil prices down, but has not disproved Peak Oil theory. We have run out of easy oil, and even the Saudis are now shipping heavy crude. The Alberta oilsands will continue because they must.

BOOK REVIEW: LITERA SCRIPTA MANET

by Dale Speirs

Authors Of Their Lives by David Gerber (2008, trade paperback) looks at letter writing by immigrants and how they maintained connections with loved ones forever left behind in the Old Country. This is an academic tome and is sometimes heavy reading. Gerber starts off with a discussion on the methodologies used by other researchers on the subject, and settles a few scores with some of his academic competitors. Eventually he moves on to the topic at hand.

We who today can quickly communicate by telephone or e-mail, or get on an airplane and land on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean the same day, may not appreciate what letter writing meant to immigrants in the 1800s. It was unlikely that an immigrant would ever return to the Old Country, and the only communication was by letters that took months for a reply. Most immigrants could write but not compose; they agonized over what to say and how to put it on paper. Gerber notes that they never before had to think about how to communicate. Back home, they spoke with family and friends in a natural way, face-to-face. In the new land, they were not able to use body language and tone of voice to communicate. They had to think not only of “I”, but also how “you” (the recipient of the letter) would read it. Anyone can write formal business letters. It was difficult for an immigrant

writing to his father or sister, whom he knew he would never see again, in a manner that didn’t come off as excessively emotional or uncaringly dispassionate. The Papernet is not good at communicating emotion.

The study of immigrant letters in archives shows that literacy was more common than often believed. The Polish peasant settled in New York City may not have known English, but he could write letters home in his native language. The Finns who settled west-central Alberta subscribed to Helsinki newspapers and kept up their correspondence. At each end, letters were commonly read aloud to family and friends, and extracts published in the village newspaper. The postal service was one-to-one as far as the envelope was concerned, but the letter was many-to-many. There was a practical reason for many-to-many letters as well, the high cost of postage. In those days, trans-Atlantic postage was often a day’s wage, while today even at minimum wage a stamp is only ten minutes labour to earn.

One thing that confuses many people about literacy is that reading and writing were traditionally two different skills. Most immigrant letters were written by men because in the 1800s women did not receive much schooling. However, many women who could not write could still read. Modern readers of old letters often note mis-spellings and grammatical errors, but not all were the result of ignorance.

The English language did not solidify into its present form until the late 1800s, so many apparent errors are just natural variation.

Long before Internet users started talking about cyberspace, Papernet users such as immigrants were talking about “in the mail”. This was a culture that existed not in a country but in the exchange of letters. Gossip spread back and forth across the Atlantic not only between the writer and the recipient, but also between villagers in the Old Country and groups of immigrants. Some writers specified in their letters for the recipients not to quote remarks about friends in the new lands, because then it would get back to them and make life difficult.

For the first generation of immigrants in a family, the news of the Old Country was important, but for the children born in the new lands the names were only names. When the older generation died off, the network of letters collapsed, leaving only oral tradition and anecdotes that in turn faded away. “In the mail” culture continues to exist to this very day, but writers leave and new ones enter. I can relate to that. My mother kept up an extensive correspondence with her relatives in Finland (she was Canadian-born of Finnish homesteaders). As her executor, I enclosed a copy of her funeral service to each letter received after her death from the Old Country, trusting that the Finnish relatives could read English, as I certainly had no Suomalais to read their letters. Thus our family correspondence faded away.

The 1800s were an era in which slow and expensive postal service gave way to fast and regular mails. Paper to write the letter was difficult to find and poor quality, ink was homemade, and reed pens or quills were standard. There were no rubber erasers to correct mistakes, and wax was used to seal the letters. Letters had to be written at the end of the work day, when the writer was tired, and by the light of flickering candles, very hard on the eyes.

Correspondents had to know how the letter might travel. It was not a matter of simply popping a letter into the street box (there were none). One had to go to the post office and consult with a clerk as to what the best and cheapest route would be. To mail a letter from Toronto to London, England, might involve sending it via Montréal and Halifax, or else overland to New York City and thence to England. One had to specify what ship the letter would go on, which meant consulting the shipping news. Studies on the dates that immigrant letters were written show that before the postal reforms of 1840, letters were written to synchronize with the rare mail pick-up by couriers. After 1840, when daily regular service began to spread, letters were dated more evenly throughout the month. Exchanges of current mailing addresses were common and important, especially in the new lands where immigrants moved house frequently.

Gerber concludes the book with a detailed study on the lives of four immigrants whose letters back home have been preserved. This section of the book is not so much postal history as it is social history.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world. SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive, a genzine is a general zine]

File 770 #153 (US\$8 for five issues, from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine about SF fandom, who did what when and to whom, convention reports, and letters of comment.

Alexiad V7#3 to #5 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, random jottings, candy bar reviews, convention reports, and letters of comment.

The Knarley Knews #129 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 18345 Skyline Blvd, Los Gatos, California 95033) The Welch family has just moved from Wisconsin to California, where Henry was busy finding a place to rent, passing his bar exam, selling the house Back East, and a myriad of details. Also in this issue are articles on the ethics of money, the Bushmen of Africa, libraries, Jeeves the RAF airman being demobbed, and lost of letters of comment.

Mark Time #87 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 1051, Orange, California 92856) This issue is devoted to public transit, with transit fan reports on riding the systems of various cities, weird passengers en route, and a proposed New York City subway line that seems a long time coming.

The Fossil #337 (US\$10 per year from The Fossils Inc, c/o Tom Parson, 157 South Logan, Denver, Colorado 80209) Always good reading about the history of zinedom over the past century. This issue has articles on some zinesters of the 1930s et seq, including pulp writer Robert E. Howard's involvement with the Lone Scouts apa.

Plokta #39 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, England) A pilgrimage to the grave of Alexandre Dumas, detourning a photo to make a comic strip, personal notes, and letters of comment.

Beam #1 (The Usual from Nic Farey, Box 178, Saint Leonard, Maryland 20685) SF genzine with articles about the Corflu convention, a look back at century-old bad fiction published in non-SF pulp magazines, and what it was like to be a dot commie just before Silicon Valley went bust in 2000.

Ethel The Aardvark #136 to #138 (The Usual from Melbourne SF Club, Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Victoria 8005, Australia) SF clubzine with local news, book, zine, and television reviews, all from a club that seems quite active and enthusiastic.

Sugar Needle #33 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 5750 Lake Resort Drive, Apt. F109, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37415) Hand-printed zine devoted to the topic of candy. This issue has proposals for imaginary candy that aren't but should be.

Moshassuck Monograph Series #12 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) A detailed look at H.P. Lovecraft's genealogy, as well as a brief consideration of his use of it in his weird fiction. HPL was quite interested in his ancestry but added a few too many lines of descent that weren't his in the hope of finding some more illustrious intellectuals in his bloodline. Alas, as Faig points out, his ancestry was "*sturdy yeomen and their wives, earning a hard living from the soil.*"

Psionic Plastic Joy #12 (The Usual from Jason Rodgers, Box 1683, Nashua, New Hampshire 03060) Collage and detourned art, interspersed with articles on a proposal to replace the Twin Towers with a Gaudi hotel, a reprint of the Monty Cantsin rant against add-and-pass-on mail art, cinema verite (better known to today's general public as reality television), and RFIDs considered as the mark of the Beast (if you don't know what an RFID is, look it up and be frightened).

BCSFazine Digest (2008 June) and BCSFAzine #422 to #425 (\$3 from Garth Spencer, Box 74122, Vancouver, British Columbia V5V 3P0) SF clubzines with news and letters of comment.

Extranjero #7 (The Usual from Kris Mininger, Calle Obispo 4B, Plasencia 10600, Caceres, Spain) This issue records a trip back to the Old Country, ie., the USA, taken by American ex-pat Kris and his Spanish wife Lola. Both experience a bit of culture shock.

Statement #359 and #360 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) Sf clubzine with club news, letters of comment, and lots of astronomy news.

Bored Waitress #2 (The Usual from Manly Banister, 3765 rue Ethel, Verdun, Québec H4G 1S2) Assorted random doodles but no real narrative.

Forty Two #86 (The Usual from Mark Strickert, Box 1051, Orange, California 92856) Perzine with personal diary, letters of comments, and zine reviews.

Gar #11 and #12 (The Usual from Ross Priddle, 734 - 2 Avenue NW #402, Calgary, Alberta T2N 0E3) Mail art collage zine.

The Ken Chronicles #8 (The Usual from Ken Bausert, 2140 Erma Drive, East Meadow, New York 11554-1120) Perzine with concert reviews, Joni Mitchell on vinyl (she attended college in Calgary, by the way), a trip to Daytona Beach (where ordinary vehicles can drive on the beach), a family reunion, and a horror story about the Sheraton hotel in Dover, Delaware.

Xerography Debt #23 and #24 (US\$3 from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 11064, Baltimore, Maryland 21212) Lots of zine reviews by multiple reviewers in #23. For issue #24, there are letters on the state of zinedom, the post office, Turkish zines, and calls for contributions.

Banana Rag #38 (\$15 for two issues from Anna Banana, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) Mail art zine which also includes some sample sheetlets of artistamps. News of things related to bananas, mail art news, checklists of recent mail art shows and publications, and some zine and book reviews.

For The Clerisy #73 and #74 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, New York 14068-0404) Reviewzine of mostly older books that deserve renewed attention.

Musea #165 (The Usual from Tom Hendricks, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) Discussion of the world sharing one culture through the Internet, a proposal for an Arts Olympics, and a list of his YouTube videos.

Banana Wings #34 and #35 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7ES, England) Thoughts on running British SF conventions, the decline of SF prozines, convention reports, judging the Arthur C. Clarke Awards, a look back at some old magazine SF, and letters of comment.

The New Port News #241 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with commentary on a wide range of topics.

This Here #8.5 (The Usual from Nic Farey, Box 178, Saint Leonard, Maryland 20685) This is a letterzine to put into print the letters of comment for issue #8, which had been published in March 2001. Seven years by the calendar, an era by what happened a few months later in Manhattan, when Peak Oil was for fanatics, and New Orleans was sinking but no one worried.

As The Crow Flies #9 (The Usual from Frank Denton, 14654 - 8 Avenue SW, Seattle, Washington 98166-1953) Perzine with road trip reports mixed in with some book reviews.

Quasi Quote #6 and #7 (The Usual from Sandra Bond, 40 Cleveland Park Avenue, London, E17 7BS, England) Genzine with events of her life, a collector tells of the one that got away, carrying toilet paper to foreign countries, a convention report, and some zine reviews.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V9#1 and #2 (The Usual from Southern Fandom Confederation, c/o Warren Buff, 2144B Ravenglass Place, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612) SF clubzine with news about fandom in the southern USA, plus lots of convention reports, and letters of comment.

Vanamonde #748 to #762 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Single-sheet weekly apazine with commentary on numerous subjects.

Zine Reviewzines

The following zines are all review zines. There isn't that much overlap between them, since everyone in the Papernet has a different node on the network, and thus gets a different set of

zines in trade. It is impossible to get an accurate count of how many zines are on the Papernet, but it is safe to say that despite the Internet there are still thousands of paper zines out there.

Zine World #25.5 and #26 (Zine trade from Box 330156, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37133-0156) Lots of non-SF zines, enough to demonstrate that the Papernet is not yet dead. Also commentary on the zine scene, and lists of zine libraries, of which there are more than you might think.

Narcolepsy Press Review #3 (The Usual from Randy Robbins, Box 17131, Anaheim, California 92817-7131) Reviews of assorted underground and music zines and a few articles. I was interested to learn that Gene Simmons, of the rock band Kiss, had published SF fanzines circa 1964-65 when he was a teenager, and not only mentions this in his autobiography but also shows some of the covers.

The Zine Dump #19 (The Usual from Guy Lillian, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, Louisiana 71115) Reviews of SF fanzines.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

noticed by Dale Speirs

Begall, S., et al (2008) **Magnetic alignment in grazing and resting cattle and deer.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (USA) 105:13451-13455

“We demonstrate by means of simple, noninvasive methods (analysis of satellite images, field observations, and measuring “deer beds” in snow) that domestic cattle (n = 8,510 in 308 pastures) across the globe, and grazing and resting red and roe deer (n = 2,974 at 241 localities), align their body axes in roughly a north–south direction. Direct observations of roe deer revealed that animals orient their heads northward when grazing or resting. Amazingly, this ubiquitous phenomenon does not seem to have been noticed by herdsman, ranchers, or hunters. Because wind and light conditions could be excluded as a common denominator determining the body axis orientation, magnetic alignment is the most parsimonious explanation. To test the hypothesis that cattle orient their body axes along the field lines of the Earth's magnetic field, we analyzed the body orientation of cattle from localities with high magnetic declination. Here, magnetic north was a better predictor than geographic north.”

Speirs: I don't believe this. Herdsman and ranchers would definitely have noticed this. My father kept several hundred head

of cattle and I never noticed such a thing. Just to double check in case my memory was playing tricks on me, the next time after reading this when I went out to the mountains, I paid particular attention to the herds grazing in pastures along the way. The grazers were oriented at random. I think the authors of this study made some sort of statistical or methodological error.

Whitson, J.A. and A.D. Galinsky (2008) **Lacking control increases illusory pattern perception.** SCIENCE 322:115-177

“We present six experiments that tested whether lacking control increases illusory pattern perception, which we define as the identification of a coherent and meaningful interrelationship among a set of random or unrelated stimuli. Participants who lacked control were more likely to perceive a variety of illusory patterns, including seeing images in noise, forming illusory correlations in stock market information, perceiving conspiracies, and developing superstitions. Additionally, we demonstrated that increased pattern perception has a motivational basis by measuring the need for structure directly and showing that the causal link between lack of control and illusory pattern perception is reduced by affirming the self. Although these many disparate forms of pattern perception are typically discussed as separate phenomena, the current results suggest that there is a common motive underlying them.”

LETTERS OF COMMENT

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: John Hertz 2008-06-17
236 South Coronado Street, #409
Los Angeles, California 90057

Thanks for your zine statistics, particularly since Robert Lichtman says he's abandoning his. I keep saying that paper zines are a medium in themselves, not superceded by other media. We who find joy in them will do them.

[I only count paper zines in my statistics, and consider e-zines to be a different category, like oranges and potatoes.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 2008-07-19
1706 - 24 Eva Road
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

If you are appointed to be the editor of a clubzine, and I have done that before, your job is to provide for the paying members a fanzine with something they feel is worth the money. As the editor, you provide your vision of what the members want. If you're wrong, they will tell you, and if they say nothing, what you're doing must be what they want. If it isn't, they should

speak up with concrete ideas of what should be there. -16-

I Also Heard From: Tom Hendricks, Manly Banister, Phlox Icona, John Held Jr, A. Langley Searles, Jeanette Handling, Ross Priddle, Franz Zrilich

