

# The Interesting Times

Issue #1 \* September 2016

## DECLARATION OF WORLD GOVERNMENT COMPLETELY IGNORED BY THE WORLD

SPUZZUM (IT Press) – A communiqué unilaterally declaring a world government was been ignored by all governments and news media since it was broadcast in spring.



The communiqué was dated April 1, 2016 and signed by Charles Horst, apparently distributed from an undisclosed location in Spuzzum, B.C.

“This doesn’t surprise me in the least,” Charles Horst admitted to a mostly empty room, rented for a press conference from Madame Rosie’s Highway Restaurant and Good Time Saloon. “It’s hard to be taken seriously if you don’t behave according to people’s stereotypes, such as fielding an army, or cornering people with restrictions on their rights to property, or even

having a history of full-time employment, let alone a professional background. Maybe I should deploy a few divisions of shareholders or execute some hostile takeovers, like, oh, the Koch brothers?”

Initiatives of the World Government of Spuzzum include: encouraging the mining of plastic residue and other industrial feedstocks from oceanic gyres, from junkyards, toxic waste dumps and abandoned properties; generating power from rain; allowing people to issue their own currency, backed by so many hours of their skilled labour, and expiring by a given date; colonizing high latitudes, if and when their climates become more habitable; publishing a propaganda organ, titled *Interesting Times*; combating the real power behind terrorism everywhere; and launching legal actions against Unidentified Flying Objects, for violating air traffic regulations, causing crop damage, and generally creating a nuisance.



(recent photographic evidence from Australia)

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## Masthead

Welcome to *The Interesting Times* #1, dated September 2016, a propaganda organ of the World Government of Spuzzum. Actually this local edition is a zine distributed by Garth Spencer at [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com). This zine is available for contributions in the form of articles, letters, illustrations, or other zines in trade.

## Pictures

“Featherface” (Brad Foster) ..... p. 1  
Air traffic hazard ..... p. 1  
Some guy pulling a face (me)..... p. 2  
Copyright-free illos ..... pp. 5 & 6

## Editorial



The object of amateur publishing, amateur journalism, fanzines, or any zine is to communicate. However, as I determined, there are limits to communication.

My latest fanzine was an attempt to explore and come to terms with the vague pressure to live up to some standard of performance, if only I could figure out what the family meant by claiming I lacked “common sense”. Asking people directly what this was – or what the social norms are, or why temp agencies don’t call me back – only showed that they didn’t understand what I was asking. That probably says something about the environment that shaped me, and the environments that shaped them. Either not everyone is pressured to live up to undefined standards, or not everyone thinks about it.

This fanzine returns to the core of fannish endeavour – having fun and doing neat stuff, as Karl Johanson put it: things like imagining (or reporting) all sorts of silly things going on

which can amaze, entertain, edify and embarrass us.

That sounds rather like the daily news, I know. But (I hope) *Interesting Times* will come across as news from a recognizable, but distorted alternate universe, and thereby entertain you.

## Language invented by Toronto woman, only has 125 words

Sonja Lang invented Toki Pona in 2001 with the intention of creating a vocabulary under 125 words. Today, over 2000 copies of a Toki Pona book have been sold (now available on Kindle), and an online presence including:

- [Facebook group](#) (2500+ members)
- [Private group – Toki Pona only!](#) (152 members)
- [www.okipona.net](http://www.okipona.net)
- [#tokipona chat \(IRC freenode\)](#)
- [Toki Pona forums](#)

As the Facebook group puts it, “Toki Pona is a language that simplifies ideas to their most basic elements. If you are hungry, you 'want eat'. To teach is to 'give knowledge'. Training your mind to think in Toki Pona can lead to deeper insights. The micro-language filters out the noise of our excess thoughts and points to the centre of things.”

The odd thing is that languages have vocabularies of *thousands* of words, if not tens and hundreds of thousands.

For more information, see the [Facebook group](#) or contact: [sonjaaa@gmail.com](mailto:sonjaaa@gmail.com)

## Letters

(The following letters responded to my previous zine, *The Art of Garthness*.)

### **Lyn McConchie, July 7, 2016**

Yup, live your own life. Me, I march to the beat of my own drum, which gets me odd looks now and again, but deletes stress from my life and I like it that way. I know how the system works, it's just that sometimes I can't be bothered.

On club stuff: if you find you've stopped doing something, it tends to be a) you haven't time, b) you don't enjoy it, or c) you don't feel it's really that useful. In the case of a) find time by dropping something you care less about. Or b and c, why are you bothering? Leave it.

*((Largely so I have the satisfaction of completing something, however meaningless and trivial it is.))*

And the following paragraph to you personally, but may be used if you wish.

As for being 59, prolonged snicker, I turned 70 last April. (And I'm a cripple with several medical problems) So far this year I have out a Sherlock Holmes book, and two novellas, then, depending on publisher scheduling, I could have another two Sherlock books and a third novella, plus a fantasy novel plus an sf/disaster novel - all or any - also out in 2016. Meanwhile I've completed a new Sherlock book this year which is yet to be revised, will be revising several of my sold books, and writing another novella, several stories, and a new sf/disaster book by Xmas. I also have a small farm, write for my local newspaper and three magazines, (2-NZ, 1-UK) and contribute a steady trickle of smallish items won in a variety of puzzle contests (I do about 100, yes, I do mean 100, each week) to several local charities - in lieu of the cash I never have. Maybe you *should* stop putting off that visit to the doctor.

Re Lloyd's comments - sigh. I know. Of late I'm thankful that I don't live in America - with the possibility of President Trump, in the UK - with Brexit, or in Oz - with no one in politics seeming to know where the whole place is going from the current elections. And of course the golden rule only applies to whatever group of people are discussing it at the time. You forget The Wizard of Id's definition. Whoever has the gold makes the rules. Which can be extended to fit almost any group that feels it's being disadvantaged by any policy, and to any politician who feels they won't be re-elected if they don't do something *about* that policy. And in a way, the first group have a point. Why should they accept less for their families, possible unemployment for them, and more civil unrest? The truth is that most people just aren't that altruistic when it comes down to them and their family against some stranger.

The future is like life, as you say; the only thing we can predict with certainty is that some unpredictable things will occur. And with life the only totally predictable thing is - that we won't get out of it alive. Things change, people change, countries change, you go with it or get left behind. My problem is with 'certain things' changing, as in I still use and prefer to use my VHS recorder. I find it far more versatile to watch programmes I've taped. DVDs I find less enjoyable, and watching them far less flexible. I prefer my free-standing enclosed fire to a heat pump. (and on checking, it's cheaper too.) Thunder, my cat, also loves the fire; he wouldn't even understand a heat pump. It irks me that so much computerization isn't that compatible; that's what technology should be FOR, to make things easier and quicker, not to add six layers of complexity because this isn't compatible with that, and *no* - to the last six people who've phoned to offer me their unwanted services/gadgets, I *don't* have a credit card; it's a philosophical statement. (I daresay that *does* make me weird, it also makes me solvent.) I don't borrow money (except 50¢ from a friend last week while shopping because I was out of change.)

*((After one experience going into bankruptcy I am not eager to hold a credit card again. So many transactions online require such exposure, I may bend my rules and get prepaid cards for specific, budget-limited transactions.))*

My mother used to say 'if you can't pay cash you can't afford it.' I don't have a debit card either, I don't like the connection to my bank account.

*((That speaks to a significant change in social norms. We are of an age to observe how modesty seems to be replaced by self-exposure, thrift and frugality by conspicuous consumption, not to mention a debt economy ... but a sociologist would be better qualified to observe and evaluate all this.))*

Yes, I know it's said to be 'secure'. Sure, until the next ace hacker gets a bright idea the bank hasn't considered... No, I'm not a pessimist, just a believer in not tossing out stuff that works because something new, shiny, and untested has appeared on the horizon. What does being an old reactionary get me? heh heh, a freehold farm, a stress-free life, the ability to

live inside my income without much strain, peacefully watch my videos in warmth and comfort, read books, write books, and admire the brilliant sunsets we're getting this week because it's winter and rather wet. Life may be real and earnest, and sometimes I'm left panting as I try to stay up, but I also find it fun, interesting, often engrossing, and occasionally lucrative, but always worth being alive - and that beats the alternative hands down too!

see *Lyn* at her site and blog -  
read updates on her writing and farm.  
all at [www.lynmconchie.com](http://www.lynmconchie.com)

### **Lloyd Penney, July 22, 2016**

Thank you for another *Art of Garthness*, issue 15. Is 15 the highest number a zine title of yours has gone to? Congrats on keeping personalzines going in fanzine fandom. There aren't many left. I will do my part to help with that by creating some loccol content.

*((I seem to recall that Maple Leaf Rag went to 30 issues, although I admit I sent out only half the copies of the last issue. I debated changing the title and numbering once again, with this issue, and went with it because I think I pushed my agenda for AoG as far as it could go.))*

Life is a learning process for us all, and we pick it up as best as we can. Social norms might be hard to realize, but grasping them, and then monitoring them for slight and gradual changes is a challenge for all, especially as we get older, and the rate of change seems to accelerate in our subjective eyes. And, I think at some point, we eventually say screw it, I am tired of keeping up, and I'd say we're at that age. Many do see the changes in social norms, and make the conscious decision to say yes or no to personal changing along with the social norms.

*((There is probably some point to describing social norms of the moment, to the same extent as there is some point to compiling standard dictionaries, and for much the same reason. That doesn't mean people feel the need - only that there is one. See the Subcultures section later in this zine.))*

I am glad Graeme is taking on this [WCSFA's] website, with all the details he wants to put in it...he's lucky he has the time to do this,

seeing he's retired. So many of us aren't retired yet, and I can honestly say that I expect to be working to survive long after I turn 65. I also have to find work because Yvonne retires in less than a year and a half. Life does happen, and all our fannish activities have always taken time out of our busy schedules. I do put together a list of conventions in the Toronto area, and I can send that list to you and Graeme, if you'd like. My list not only contains SF conventions, such as they are these days, but also furrycons, toy collectors' conventions, gaming cons, media SF cons, anime cons and more.

The more I see the idea of Donald Trump becoming American president take shape, the more concerned I am. Neither candidate is angelic, but so many are seeing Trump as the reincarnation of Hitler, and other fanciful notions. It happens from time to time, but this is another time when the machinations of the world convince me we're off to hell in the proverbial handbasket. Reality does suck at times. We live in the relative safety and sanity of Canada, and good for us for that.

*((Nothing is forever.))*

While I have struggled to find employment, Yvonne has been regularly employed, and has thriftily put some money away for a vacation. We were saving for some years to go to the London Worldcon in 2014, but we couldn't save enough in time. Yvonne wisely kept saving, and now, we are less than a month away from going to England for two weeks, the first vacation we've had in a long time, and our first overseas non-Worldcon trip. We will have lots of touristy, Harry Potterish and steampunk fun during those weeks, and we are so looking forward to it. It will take away, at least for a short time, the stresses of not working, and having to find something real soon now. We were able to purchase our £££ at a reduced rate thanks to the Brexit, and we will enjoy ourselves that much more.

*((Guess I'll have to see about starting my own group: Steampunk Viking Hosers, maybe. Or Heathen Geeks. Latest version: Steampunk Viking Klingon d'Oyly Carte and Marching Society.))*

My loc...you're right, we do find other things to enjoy, and that's why Yvonne embraced Harry Potter fandom, and why we both embraced

steampunk. Other enthusiasm and other communities have indeed arisen, and caught our eye. In the long run, it is being busy and indulging your whims that is important.

Caught the end of the page, and that usually means I have done blethering, at least for the moment. Thank you for this issue, and seeing what day it is, have a fun and relaxing weekend. I am sure you're already working on the next issue.

*((How did you know that??))*

*We also heard from Clint Budd, Taral Wayne*

## The Spencer Report

My last day of regular work was on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. I should be terrified, being 59 years old, but actually it is somewhat a relief. Now I go job-hunting again, as I did before: updating the resume, shopping it around wherever jobs are advertised (electronic communication makes this a lot easier), refreshing some temp agencies with the new resume and my current availability, checking out schools and colleges and municipalities and hospitals for their job listings ... and following up in a week to see if they want to interview me ... and advertising my freelance services with cards and handbills and posting ads on campuses ... and not getting many hits ...

If I had *wanted* to get ignored or rejected most of the time, I would be an artist, or an actor, or a freelance writer. But life is not about what you want, is it?

Of course the first thing to do, when informed that your services are no longer required, is to sign up for unemployment assistance, in case your bank account won't tide you over. Here in Canada we have two levels of assistance: Employment Insurance, based upon your most recent level of earnings, and social assistance.

(I told you all that in order to tell you this: so many people have shown up in the news, with bizarre, lethal gaps in their common knowledge – or even in their basic life skills – that it might be worthwhile for us all to write down the things we tend to take for granted, and gather the material somewhere accessible and well-known, like a website or Facebook

page. Some of the material is practical, material skills, some of them bureaucratic, some of them cultural or medical. You can think of other kinds of necessary information.)

In other news, I got a new optical prescription, and asked my dentist to look at a dental infection. Some of the several tasks of life are attended to, even if I don't feel very competent.

## Getting Up and Going

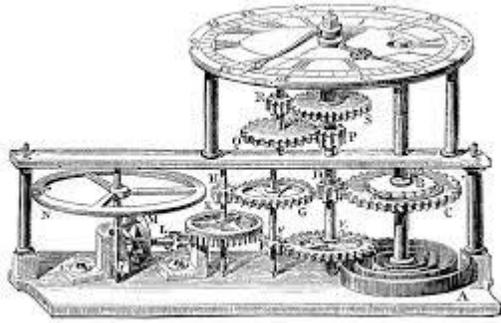


Appareil pour écrire en chéris de fer.

SF fandom has taken a back seat in my life – although it was a large and important part of life, for a long time – and now I am making new friends and acquaintances. There used to be a self-image in circulation, that fans were a little more intellectually able and rather more accepting of people outside social norms, but neither seems to be the case, actually. Maybe it was just that the fans with real get-up-and-go, so to speak, had got up and left, by the time I came to the big city.

## Gonna Write Real Soon Now

Several writing projects have also been on the back burner. What's the hold-up? Well ... even after a normal exposure to a wide range of stories, songs, movies and television shows, there are things about telling stories that I haven't quite learned. Some things about plotting, pacing, story logic, characterization and motivation and responses. Granted that I have written several short stories, and at least once nearly completed a novel ... I have yet to write enough crap to write really well, or even to perceive the difference.



Here's an example of one of my story ideas: I seem to recall that Finnish mythology mentions a thing called a "sampo", an undefined little engine or mill that could be used to produce literally anything. (Ahrvid may correct me if I misremembered this.) Nowadays, either with nanotechnology or by 3D printing, it almost seems possible to create a literal *sampo*. Of course, any real technology has some requirements and constraints, such as materials and feedstocks and energy requirements; are they enough to spark story ideas? If these technologies are on the market, who can afford them, who can legally operate them, what kind of benefits and what kind of hazards would we face? (And just to be Canadian: is this a federal or a provincial problem?)

This is just the sort of thing I am having trouble translating into people, acting in situations, and into consequences and story logic.

Try again and keep on trying. At least I know how to research the fiction markets.

### **Contribute Life Skills Notes to "The Common Lore of Our People" (on Facebook)**

In fact, compiling information about life skills was a book project I talked about here. But the sense of being out of my depth meant that I did not meet my deadline for a first manuscript (the first of September). So now I have a couple of Facebook groups with titles like "The Common Lore of Our People", to which I shall invite people to post their ideas of common-sense wisdom.

## Obituaries

**M. ALEXIS PAKULAK** (February 7, 1957 – August 6, 2016)

"Memorial Services were held at McINNIS & HOLLOWAY (Chapel of the Bells, 2720 Centre Street North) on Thursday, September 1, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. If friends so desire, memorial tributes may be made directly to the Canadian Diabetes Association, #204, 2323 – 32nd Avenue N.E., Calgary, AB T2E 6Z3 Telephone: (403) 266-0620, ext. 112, [www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca). Condolences may be forwarded through [www.mcinnisandholloway.com](http://www.mcinnisandholloway.com).

*McInnis & Holloway Funeral Homes website*

Lexie Pakulak, a friend in Calgary, passed on this month. Her husband Steve Pikov gave me the news. I got to know Lexie when she was an active fan, attending conventions in the Northwest, and participating in apas such as BCAPA and Mixed Company. After moving from Toronto to Calgary and meeting Steve, they became involved in one of the early NonCons in Calgary.

Lexie was a published writer, and had been a teacher in a writer's group in Calgary, until illness confined her to a wheelchair and a nursing home. She was in medical treatment at the time of her demise.

If Lexie was an example to me, the example is to make the best use of your available lifespan. It may be cut short.

*Garth Spencer*

## Classifieds

Contact Garth Spencer for advertising information at [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com).

### **WRITE FOR INTERESTING TIMES!**

Travel the world! Eat steak! Fight the Belgian World Domination Conspiracy and the evil Cult of Kali! Just contact me at [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com)!

**Art of Garthness (freelance secretarial, copy editing and proofreading services)** by arrangement with Garth Spencer at 4240 Perry Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA V5N 3X5. You

can also contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Anarcho-Surrealist Party</b> – the original Facebook group for those who can't believe in one-dimensional politics anymore and want to do something creative. Search Facebook or contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Alien Abductees Anonymous</b> – a Facebook group for aliens who are unfairly confined to this planet. If you are such an alien, look for us on Facebook or contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Paragon Investigations</b> – for all your paranormal research, detection and litigation needs. Our skilled and experienced staff are ready to serve you! Contact fruvousfox@gmail.com
<b>Steampunk Viking Klingon Operetta Society</b> – auditions monthly. Contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Heathen Geeks</b> meets up monthly. Mead! Shieldmaidens! Operetta auditions! Mead! Authentic Viking tabletop games! Rituals featuring mead! See our Facebook page or contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Second Reformed Anarcho-Surrealist Party with a Hot Tub in the Backyard Society Inc.</b> - The iconoclastic and original splinter group! Contact me at garth.van.spencer@gmail.com.
<b>Bavarian Illuminati (Local 391)</b> – We know how to get things done! Bury \$3,125 in your backyard and one of our underground agents will contact you.

## Calendar (local)

### September 2016

September (into October) – Uuintar-manuð (Winter Month). The great sacrificial feast was at full moon and lasted three days. It is traced to a victory over the Thuringians in 531 A.D. This celebrates an Irminsul set up by the Saxons on the Unstrut River in 531 per Widukind of Corvey's 10th century work, 'Deeds of the Saxons' book 1. There was also a celebration on the full moon of Uuintar-manuð, seen as the beginning of winter, one of the two Heathen seasons of the year. Saxon calendar

Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2016: VCON 41 at the Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel (Surrey) in Greater Vancouver, BC. (Chair: R. Graeme Cameron.) Theme: "Muppets, Puppets, and Marionettes" - everything from giant puppets to stop motion models to Supermarionation. (Secondary theme: "The Small Press Cabal" – small-press publishing in Canada.) Author GoH: Robert J. Sawyer. Supermarionation GoH: Jamie Anderson. Film Design GoH: Eric Chu. Editor GoH: Karl Johanson. Godzilla FanGoH: Stan G. Hyde. Artist GoH: TBA. Master of Ceremonies: Spider Robinson. Room Reservations: Sheraton Vancouver Guildford Hotel, 15269 – 104th Avenue, Surrey, BC CANADA V3R 1N5. Reservations via [www.starwoodmeeting.com](http://www.starwoodmeeting.com) Memberships: CURRENT RATES for Full weekend Memberships - Adult = \$60; Senior = \$45; Adult Student = \$45; Teen (13-18) = \$35; Youth (9 – 12) = 35; Child (infant to 8) = Free. See <http://vcon.ca/>

### October 2016

**October (into November) – Blod-manuð** (*Blood Month*). **The slaughtering of the animals for winter meat and skins for clothing, celebrated at full moon.** Saxon calendar

**October 9** - Leif Eriksson Day; Lisette Bolduc's birthday

October 10 (approx.): Canadian Thanksgiving

**October 15: Winter's Night**, sacred to Disir (foremothers), Ancestors, and Alfar. Honor the dead, ancestors, and elves. Toast with milk. Offer honey & cookies (grains). The beginning of the thinning of the veil between the living and dead which reaches its peak at Twelfth Night of Yule.

**October 28** - Remembrance for Erik the Red.

**October 28:** Samhain at 251 East 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, sponsored by Vancouver Pagan Pride

October 31: Hallowe'en / All Hallow's Eve / Winter Nights / **Feast of the Runes**. Sacred to Odin, and Loki as Odin's blood brother. A blót to honor Odin's ordeal on the world tree, Yggdrasil, to discover the runes. Recommended lore: Poetic Edda, [Hávamál](#) (Sayings of the High One). Summer's End!

## Freedom of the Press

*Askance* 37, John Purcell,  
askance73@gmail.com, 3744 Marielene Circle,  
College Station, TX 77845 , USA. The reason I  
go to bed in the morning.

*Billiard Balls Moved by Invisible Fairies*, April  
2016 With George Wells, Richard Dengrove  
and Garry Tesser. A philosophical and fannish  
meandering conversation at a convention. I  
think.

*Broken Toys* 49, Taral Wayne, May 2016,  
<http://fanac.org/fanzines/BrokenToys/>  
“Should you wish to contact me, I park my  
butt at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto,  
Ontario, M6K 1S6 Canada. Or e-mail me at  
[taral@bell.net](mailto:taral@bell.net).” The penultimate issue! Soon to  
be a collector’s item!

*Christian New Age Quarterly* (winter and spring  
2016 issues), PO Box 276, Clifton, NJ 07015-  
0276, U.S.A. Editor Catherine Groves  
contacted me by mail in June 2016. Rodney  
Leighton referred her to me, but neglected to  
say word one about the content of *Art of  
Garthness*. Contents include a range of  
Christian and new-age topics, as advertised.  
CNAQ also offers advertising space for a fee.

*Fornax* #8, February 2016, C. Rector  
“*Fornax* is a fanzine devoted to history,  
science fiction & gaming as well as other areas  
where the editor's curiosity goes. It is  
edited/published by Charles Rector. In the  
grand tradition of fanzines, it is mostly written  
by the editor. ... If you want to write for  
*Fornax*, please send email submissions to  
crectorATmywayDOTcom, with a maximum  
length of 7,000 words. No fiction, poetry or  
artwork please.”