

# BROKEN TOYS 6

Broken Toys is a personalzine by **Taral Wayne**, and in no way implies that my other zine, New Toy, is a dead letter, just more bite than I can chew at present. The letter column this issue is strong, but I worry that it depends too much on my wheedling a loc out of the same six or eight people every issue. As has been the case for more than 20 years now, I live hand to mouth at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto Ontario M6K 1S6. Or loc me at [Taral@Teksavvy.com](mailto:Taral@Teksavvy.com) The date is mid **August 2012**, and this is ExtraTaraltorality (or Kiddelidivee Books & Art) **255**. Copyrighted past, present, future & in all parallel Dimensions, even including the one where Nicholas Cage is a great actor.

## Screen Captures

I've been thinking lately. This is always a dangerous thing to do, but sometimes the change of pace is refreshing. I've been thinking about many things of great profundity and significance, but also about fandom. For instance, this year I'll not be able to lose the Hugo in person, so I have designated Robert Sawyer to go to the Hugo Reception, drink up the free booze, eat the Black Forest cake, shrimp scampi and fruit cup, sit in the front row at the award ceremonies and **not** have to get up on stage nor say anything *for me*. I consider his doing this for me a great favour ... though I'm not entirely certain why. However, should someone tamper with the ballot and I be declared the winner of this year's fanart Hugo, I've indicated to Rob that he should *not* show the audience a rude finger, and may say something to the effect of, "doubtless, Taral won't be displeased by this token of regard."

I've been thinking about *Drink Tank*. Do you realize that in a few more issues and not even counting art – I will have racked up the impressive score of contributing to a Hugo-winning fanzine **100 times?** ... What, you *didn't* realize? Oh well, I guess it's not all that impressive a performance, then. It has left its mark on me, however, and I've been contemplating a sea-change. *Should* I retire from *Drink Tank* when I reach the magic number of 100? Mike Glycer thinks I shouldn't, that *Drink Tank* is good exposure for me. I countered that if it's such good exposure, why wasn't I up on the stage with Chris when he won his Hugo, accepting one for Best Fanwriter? I will have to give further thought to all this. Perhaps it would make a good article in *Drink Tank*...

I've also been thinking about Arnie Katz. More specifically, about his fanzine, *Fan Stuff*. To begin with, there is no competition between us to produce the most issues of our ensmalled, fannish fanzines. Arnie's goal of *weekly* issues will win that race, hands down. I only aim to

publish once every month or six weeks. But I believe there's more difference between *Fan Stuff* and *Broken Toys* than just frequency. Like me, Arnie talks about fandom in his zine. But Arnie talks "theory" and tells the reader what he thinks fandom should be. He discusses issues that, in his mind, are burning the very foundations of trufandom-as-we-know-it from under us. Matters of profound importance are examined at great length and in deadly earnest. Distinctions are drawn. Standards are set. One can almost imagine readers' brows knitting and readers' chins grimly nodding in agreement.

All this has been going on in Arnie's zines for more than 40 years, that I know of. Nothing has been settled yet.

I, on the other hand, like to poke a little fun at fandom. On occasion I am dead serious, but only over matters in which I feel greater involvement than in those that don't affect me and which I cannot influence anyhow. For example, righting the gender imbalance in fandom. For another example, banning people from cons for inappropriate behavior. And for a final example – drawn from recent controversies – the relevance of advice from Boring Old Farts to the modern, ambitious young fanzine editor.

Oh, yes, all fearfully important matters, but while everyone else is tearing up the scenery over them, I'll just have a little fun over here by myself, thank you.

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## Mars Needs Brains

Browsing Mike Glycer's blog the other day, I saw that Greg Bear had made a statement to CNN about the landing of the Curiosity rover on Mars. No doubt CNN needed their quota of filler for that day's Big News Story, and who better to go to for sound bites about science than a science fiction writer? Why not? After all, to CNN, there is probably little difference between science and science fiction...

I lift most of Bear's comments from File 770:

*"Earth was still cooling down from its natal heat, still barraged by asteroids, and life, if it developed at all here, was probably getting the crap kicked out of it on a regular basis. Starting over again and again from scratch, or not starting at all. Until something big hit Mars and sprayed the seeds of Martian life across the gulf of space to land on Earth. We've analyzed small meteorites knocked loose from Mars. They fell onto Antarctica, and some scientists have taken the very controversial view that there is evidence of life in them. Not proven, not certain, but ... We may all be Martians. Wouldn't that be utterly cool to know?"*

CNN probably thought the idea was Bear's own. Which is no fault of his, I add.

The notion that life didn't originate on Earth, but was brought here by meteors or space dust, has been around for decades and is called "Panspermia." The standard model is that spores of life drift throughout interstellar space, seeding receptive planets. Bear's sound-bite for CNN is merely the *Martian* version of Panspermia, and it is almost as old as sightings of Martians operating three-legged war machines.

If you think about it, though, Panspermia is no answer at all. Attempting to explain the origin of life on Earth by saying it came from Mars, or even farther away, doesn't actually explain the *origin* of life ... it just puts the problem off another step. Okay... so life on Earth came from Mars. So where did life on *Mars* come from, then? Jupiter? The Andromeda Galaxy? An old soft drink bottle found in the dumpster behind a convenience store in Fresno?

But, as a science fiction writer, Greg Bear is one of those "experts" that science-dim media homes in on whenever it needs a statement to broadcast – he has to say *something*. He has to feed them something pretty mind-bending too, because if the media is disappointed they'll turn to some other "expert" next time. And what could be more quote-worthy than "Earthmen Come From Mars!!!"

Yeah, right... and "Women Come From Venus ..."

*At this point I ended my article, but my ever-vigilant proofreader, Walt, thought I should mention that had the CNN news team wanted a **genuine** expert opinion, they might better have consulted a certain fur-clad lady of my acquaintance. Well, yes, I wrote back to Walt, I **could** have mentioned that Saara Mar has been to Mars and back – more than once – and doubtless could have told the news team whatever they wanted to know. However, I have become reluctant to mention my better half to other fans, who seem to develop a sudden cough and abruptly change the subject whenever I do. Although my acquaintance with Saara is perhaps the one truly unique feature about me as a fan, flaunting it is not generally well received by fandom. I am at a loss to say why this is so, but am hesitant to alienate fandom – so to speak – any more than necessary.*

*That was why I decided **not** to take Walt's advice and finished this piece as I originally intended, by **not** mentioning you-know-who at all.*

*And Saara, who regards fandom as a rather quaint but harmless human pastime, indulgently agreed.*

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## Tough Room

Into every life some rain must fall. It's been my month to endure a grey drizzle on Mike Glycer's File 770 blog. For example, an exchange with a fan who shall remain nameless here, but who seems to be a generally earnest and humorless individual whom even Mike seems to find exasperating at times.

The original comment that inspired our humorless friend was a news item about a couple of fans who were married with Patrick Stewart officiating, who then pronounced them "engaged." I joked that the crowd was then "enraged" by the joke made by Patrick Stewart.

A while later, I checked in with File 770 again and found that a highly distraught outburst had been posted after my "enraged" pun.

In full, this was the land mine left for me:

*"I dislike dealing with you, Taral, ever since the deliberate insult you paper-mailed to me without provocation, but from this viewpoint, you're acting as a jerk, perhaps under the illusion that this will make*

*you an interesting curmudgeon. If that's the case, it isn't working. You just look as if you're acting as stated. Mike may be of different opinion, and it's his website, but based on whatever credibility I have here, I would politely ask that you stop raining on other peoples' parades all the time, and that if you have nothing constructive to add, please add that lack of constructivity in another conversation on another site. I saw that video, you didn't. Everyone there was pleased by the line, and I'm certain that the couple found themselves privileged to have their union blessed by a man whose work they so admired."*

I immediately sent Mike the following:

*"Mike, you may not have seen this post, put up about an hour ago. But apparently I've been invited not to leave comments on the F770 blogsite... When did you lose control? Hostile takeover? Leveraged buy-out?"*

*"You can leave it up. Personally, if anyone is branding himself a jerk, I'd say it was Mr. Humorous, and my response entirely satisfies me."*

I withhold the name of "Mr. Humorous," since to publish it would serve no purpose. I posted this reply to him:

*"Each to his own taste, but we are surrounded by people we don't take a shine to – and live with it. "From my point of view" is a perspective that I seem to share with at least some other people, who have said that I \*do\* amuse them. But, as one Roman playwright said, (I'll translate so as not to seem more intellectual than I am), 'I only tell you what I heard. Jupiter himself can't please everybody.'*

*"As for an insult I mailed you without provocation, I have no memory of it, or what would inspire me to write it. How long ago did that happen? Perhaps it wasn't meant to be insulting. Maybe it's time you stopped dwelling on it."*

Geez -- you'd think I had been *at the wedding* to make my wisecrack, not merely writing in reply to a blog posted by a second-party who *also* hadn't been there. Where do you draw the line?

Another point causing me some puzzlement ... it must have been years since I mailed anyone a letter by surface, and I don't ever recall corresponding with the gimboid on the F770 blog at all. It isn't outside the bounds of possibility, by any means, but since gaining the magical power of e-mail, I've seen little need to communicate by sending sheets of paper back and forth. I do have a fair memory for my regular correspondents, though. Whoever this guy is, he couldn't have been a regular. He may well be festering over a single letter he read in 1982, for all I know.

That ought to have been the end of it ... but it was not to be. After my post, The Humorless One wrote again. I'm sure that when Jesus turned the other cheek, all it accomplished was to invite another smack, along with the insult, "coward!" In my case, the response was that I was lying when I said that I didn't remember whatever dreadful offense I had committed. By that line of reasoning, I was guilty or I was lying, but there was no *innocent*.

Despite knowing better, I wanted another swing at the guy, and wrote back to Mike. But Mike wisely said that we had both said enough, it didn't make pleasant reading, and:

*“...you do not actually need any further defense.”*

By that, I take Mike to mean the other guy did himself more damage than he did me. At least, that's what I prefer to think Mike meant, and not “your defense was already paper-thin and in danger of begging the case.”

Of late, this is not the first time I've injected a bon mot into a deadly earnest situation, and reaped a whirlwind of trouble for it. It seems something I'm compelled to do – the literary equivalent of hiding a nervous smile with your hand at an awkward social moment. But, I don't think I'm driven by a neurotic inability to confront serious and emotional subjects – I think it's more that I see other people driven to display empathy where perhaps none is required. I want to break up the mood by reminding the crowd that nobody has died here, and that not all the world's woes are our own. I am a humorist by choice, a self-elected clown.

And, every comedian knows, sometimes you play to a tough room.



Ned Brooks, 15 July -- [nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

I have an autoimmune malady, but it's "Lichen planus," which affects the skin, mostly the mucus membrane part of the skin. It's in remission now, and I have two topical steroids in case it flares up. I also have "idiopathic neuropathy" (Latin for "we don't know why it hurts") in my feet, especially the left one. Not pre-diabetic however, at least tests show no sign of the sugar/insulin imbalance. What I have in my foot is not "pain" in any usual sense - it's something like the sensation in skin that has been sunburned. I had wondered if it could be some odd form of gout, but gout is caused by crystallization of a blood component in the foot joints, and my blood tests show no such problem. The only drug I take daily is Niaspan, which is supposed to elevate the HDL cholesterol.

My understanding of the use of a cane or crutch is that it is used to as to reduce the load on the bad leg. I was on one for a month after a muscle tear in my left calf.

My mother used a walker for a while. I take a cane when I go to walk a mile around the local street loop - but just in case, and to fend off dogs. Whatever is wrong with my feet is in the skin (though nothing can be seen) rather than the muscle or joints, and is no worse for walking.

Heh - you faked my signature, it looks nothing like that!

No one will find anything of value in my attic - it has no flooring, and the heat would be very bad for paper collectibles or typewriters. Those baseball cards must have been in a dry attic that was shaded from the summer sun. I have a lot of stuff in the basement - I keep it dry, and even a damp basement would be fine for storage as long as the item was sealed in plastic film.

Canada having troops in Afghanistan is no dumber than anyone else having troops there! The entire invasion and occupation has done nothing but enrich both the arms merchants and the Taliban (who are bribed to keep the bad roads open to the supply convoys).

To writers of Stevenson's era, "queer" was an adjective used to describe anything puzzling - not necessarily just a person. I think A. C. Doyle has characters use the word to describe a news story or an artifact or a clue. It had no sexual weight. I suspect that it came to be used of homosexuals when they became noticeable by dress or manner.

It has now become a legal issue whether the use of "gay" or "queer" with regard to a particular person can be complained of as slander or libel - it is no longer illegal, and we all know people who are openly homosexual, so is it still an insult?

I read that about the hazards of sitting - hard to say just what it means. People who have to be on their feet all day complain of foot pain. I suppose I was lucky - my job fell somewhere in between. I did sit and type reports or computer code a lot, but I also walked quite a lot from the office building to the wind-tunnel and back - all indoors, but several minutes and up or down three flights of stairs.

Best, *Ned*

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Ron Kasman, 15 July – [ron.kasman@gmail.com](mailto:ron.kasman@gmail.com)

Thanks for sending me the fanzine. I am sad to hear about your health issues but I am glad that they are getting handled. I heard a funny line from a comedian. He said that in his youth there were certain words you didn't say to girls. Well, now you can say those words but you can't call them girls.

*If you can use words like that around them, you may not be able to call them "ladies," either.*

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Eric Mayer, 16 July -- [groggy.tales@gmail.com](mailto:groggy.tales@gmail.com)

Another fine issue of Broken Toys. I know I said in my loc that the last thing you want to see is a skunk turning its tail towards you and then I get to that skunk on the last page. So maybe I was wrong. Man, is she wearing anything under that tail?

I guess I already commented on Back in the Walk of Life. As I said, I'm happy you got a free walker but I'm sorry you need a walker. Holy shit.

You also mention neuropathy. That's frightening. I hate to say it but my dad had neuropathy in his legs for the last eighteen years of his life and the pain never ceased. The only drug that would touch it was oxycontin which the doctors wouldn't prescribe regularly because it was addictive. Never mind that the neuropathy wasn't curable and thus there would never come a time when he didn't need pain relief. At the end of his life, when he was in hospice care, they finally relented and gave him a pain patch, mostly for the cancer he had, and one day he said to me, "I'd rather not be dying but at least I'm finally rid of the pain." Bastards! Now he had peripheral neuropathy and you said there are many types, so hopefully yours isn't quite as bad, but the symptoms you describe are essentially the same.

And please don't tell me restless leg syndrome and involuntary leg kicks while nearing sleep suggest incipient neuropathy because I have had those forever. Well, that's it. From here on in, no more aging for me.

It sounds like your doctor is actually trying to help you. That's good and, sadly, not always true. When I was in Rochester, NY none of my docs would take seriously my complaints about weakness in my left leg. It wasn't until I moved to PA that I found a sympathetic doctor who sent me for an MRI which revealed I'd had badly herniated disks which had probably caused nerve damage in the leg. Might've headed the damage off if the Rochester docs had been willing to find out what the problem was before it became too late. But what are crippling disabilities compared to the definition of fandom? I mean, really. Going on about such drivel. Are we not fen? Or whatever we're supposed to call ourselves. I like the idea of fandom by invitation only. We all form our own fandoms anyway.

Yeah, the square footage of our cottage does sound small. That was how it was described in the real estate listing by previous owner and I never gave it much thought. No doubt, it is smaller than many, if not most apartments, whatever the size. But it has the great advantage of not being an apartment. We are a bit more insulated from intrusive neighbors.

I read about those baseball cards. Neat. My dad once got permission from a farmer to go through the attic of an old abandoned post office the fellow was about to have demolished. He'd been housing migrant workers there. There were bags full of mail which, for some reason, had never been delivered. Mostly it was advertising from the 1800s, which was interesting in its own right but featured only the same, common, low denomination stamps. However there were some first class pieces with very nice stamps. So called "Black Jacks" picturing Andrew Jackson for example. Nothing worth a fortune but it was cool finding them in the wild as it were rather than buying them.

So Canada wants to start wasting money on its military? That's too bad. But not surprising. Heck, some US politicians will probably figure now we need to spend even more because, hey, that country we share that long border with is arming itself to the teeth. Or will that give us an excuse to invade? I'm sure Canadians would love to be liberated and enjoy US freedoms like freedom to die from lack of health care.

I don't have much to say about sex. My attitude is like yours – I don't care what you do but I don't necessarily want to hear about and, no, in my opinion that doesn't make me a prude. I'm trying to recall when I was growing up and I think the term for gay was "queer." Funny how things change so fast you can't even recall crap like that.

That's about it for my fanac for tonight.

Best, *Erie*

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John Nielsen Hall - [johnsila32@gmail.com](mailto:johnsila32@gmail.com)

Is that Niphedipine you are taking? I was on that for a long time. I came off it because my gums were overgrowing my teeth and bled, not painfully, but certainly unpleasantly. And that's not all. I don't want to embarrass you here, but I had a problem in the pants region, whereby things were very stiff and

uncomfortable for many many hours without any cause or encouragement at all, ( I swear, your honour. Not so much as a naughty web page) and I couldn't remedy the situation by what might seem the obvious method, and I was, of course, unable to pee. It was among the more unbearable torments I have suffered in too many years of less than optimum health. And it took a long while for the truth – that both these problems were side effects of prolonged Niphedipine use- to be admitted. I don't know what Doctors are like where you are, but over here, they tend to be very reticent about possible side effects of medicines, while the " Please Dont Think of Suing Us" information leaflet inside every pack lists so many things that might happen, you wonder if you might not be better off just letting the disease do what it will. Nowadays, I have a combination of various other BP meds, the most common side effect of which is very dry skin and/or eczema. This has been a Public Service Announcement.

*Nephidrine came with a xeroxed stack of sheets explaining its use and possible side effects. Curiously, I don't see priapism listed... "erectile dysfunction" is. Of course, I suppose a permanent standing ovation could be considered a "dysfunction," but I had the impression the meant something more like "absent without leave." Fortunately, the wages of many years of private sin and advancing age has done all that ahead of time, and I am pleased to say that the medication I take had had largely no effect in that department one way or the other.*

*Nephidrine also causes – yawn – drowsiness.*

I see that you don't subscribe to the idea that expressing ones sexuality might be a healthy and normal thing to do. The thing is, while I sympathise with your reticence , the amount of ignorance about sexual behaviour in supposedly educated and liberal societies like ours is just amazing, and a lot of it comes down to people not utterly unlike yourself not wanting to know. I tend to the view that more openness etc. is a good thing, although trying to educate people does tend to make the putative educator look a bit of a tit some of the time.

And, like you, I find the willingness of some people to give public demonstrations of technique just a bit over the top.

*As for the healthy expression of one's sexuality, there are degrees... Should a friend of mine be in the mood to discuss his lover's unwillingness to wash his balls before oral sex, I would probably listen with sympathy. Mere bragging at the bar is another matter. Maybe it's just me, but I've found that there's nothing as unsexy as someone else's sex life. Or maybe it's a daily dose of FurAffinity, where every conceivable sex fantasy is illustrated in loving detail by hundreds of horny, I suspect still-virgin, furry artists...*

*The strange thing is, whoring goes on in FurAffinity just like in real life except that there are no pimps!*

JOHN

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Graham Charnock, [graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk](mailto:graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk)

There is nothing better than tales of one's own illnesses unless it is the smell of ones own farts. Especially when they tie in with my own condition and thus precipitate a loc. I am really sorry for your problems, Taral, but your story of finding a walking frame is a touching one of people's basic charitable

natures. I have on and off issues with diabetes. I have two doctors, and one tells me I have it and the other says I haven't. Guess which one I tend to go with. I have a severe alcohol problem which degrades my liver and I think any blood test aimed at defining diabetes tends to get compromised by this. So basically I don't trust any diagnosis. I also have neuropathy, but not to a disabling or painful level. I first noticed this after a painful period of gout several years ago, which has not really resurfaced. As I say it is not painful, just a constant discernible tingling in the extremities. That too led to itching on the sole of the foot. I suspect it might be part of your compound of diseases. Part of my alcohol problem is that I have not yet learnt to write while sober, and writing is as important to me as breathing, so while I intend to continue to do both I'm afraid I'm stuck with it.

Best Wishes, *Graham Charnock*

*"Nothing better" or "nothing bitterer?"*

*Actually, I was confused for a moment, wondering when Graeme Cameron (of Vancouver, BC) started drinking heavily, but gradually the fog over my mind clarified and I made the equation in my head, "Britfan" = "unrestricted libation of alcohol."*

*Yeah, the itching is another one of God's gifts to those he has already afflicted with Neuropathy. Maybe he thought it was funny that if, on top of excruciating agony, the victim also had to scratch? God is also childishly amused by facial tics, slurred speech, incontinence and untimely detumescence. What a card.*

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Lloyd Penney, [penneys@bell.net](mailto:penneys@bell.net)

Many thanks for issue 5 of Broken Toys. Here's another attempt to boost the local, and make it look like a general conversation amongst the readership. If nothing else, it's worth the try.

*I've been considering ways to improve the response from my readers, and one idea I've hit upon is to highlight with bold font in a large box, the name of one person who hasn't ever locced. The one weakness of the plan is that I only write about a couple of dozen locs every year myself – less than one loc per fanzine and way less than one loc per issue. I might find **my** name in a box one day.*

I think Arnie keeps redefining fandom so he can himself try to keep track of it, but I have always found fandom more than any of us ever experience or even hear about. It's also generally anarchical in structure, so trying to define it or place it in a cubby hole is anywhere between tough and futile. We may have to go the Damon Knight route, and say that fandom is what I point to and call fandom. It's as good as any.

Except that it ends with John Scalzi winning the fanwriter Hugo, and Randall Munroe on the fanartist ballot...

It wouldn't surprise me if someone in either provincial or federal government is threatening your supply of necessary pharmaceuticals. I've been seeing my doctor as well, and I may have some x-rays and ultrasounds soon. My suspected heart murmur is finally been laid to rest, and I did ask for blood tests to look at diabetes or that pre-diabetic state you referred to. Makes you wonder how they come up with all these trade names for drugs...a bag of Scrabble tiles, perhaps? Given the various aches and pains

Yvonne and I have, she is looking at a cane to assist her with her walking, and I'm not far behind. We hope to go to the London Worldcon, and given how much walking there will be, a walker or cane, or even a scooter might not be a bad idea, especially for Yvonne.

Steven's replacement of the AC system at home...that's why we haven't seen him in a while. We had to get a new AC for our apartment, and it's meant that we've survived the hottest days of this summer so far. Eric is right, there's nothing fandom won't fight about. We're mostly alphas or alpha-wannabees, and sometimes, it's worse than the schoolyard, and about as mature.

*In fact, the main reason none of us have seen Steven in a while is that one of his sisters and his brother-in-law are moving back to Australia, where Andrew was born. For the last six months his family has pretty much demanded he spent every moment possible with the departing loved ones, and being a dutiful son he's done just that. After all ... once they're gone, he won't see them until he can save up to visit Australia himself someday, in the remote future ... Possibly next year.*

I agree about the fanzine review being the other currency of fandom, and I wrote reviews for John Purcell's *Askance* for a number of years, but there was little response to them, and I didn't think I was that great a reviewer. I gave it a shot, and others should too.

Reviewing fanzines is difficult and, over time, erodes the will to live. There is only so much to say about why we publish fanzines and what is the best way, before unthinkingly dishing out egoboo. Also, being a rigorous reviewer is a wonderful way to piss people off and make enemies.

I would have some words with that British military expert...as far as I can ascertain, Canadian troops did a fine job in Afghanistan. They kept things very quiet, and maintained good relations with the local Afghan nationals. As soon as the American troops took over from the Canadians, everything went straight to hell because the American troops had that old colonial attitude of 'we can push them around to show them who's the boss'. I doubt many Canadians approved of the war there, and for one, I am glad we've done our bit and gotten out.

I wonder if the author didn't have a point about biting off more than we could chew, though. It's not as though the province of Kandahar is pacified, or the streets of Kabul safe.

Too much sitting? Guilty as charged. Given how harmful it is, maybe I should have died a couple of years ago. Most of the jobs I've ever had were sit-down-at-a-desk jobs, and I've had some interviews lately, and may have another one of those jobs shortly.

Done for the moment...off it goes to your e-mail. Many thanks, and perhaps see you at another pubnight in the future.

Someday... though I hesitate to show up with a walker the size of the pocket battleship, *Graf Spee*.

Yours, *Lloyd Penney*

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John Purcell, [j\\_purcell54@yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)

As promised, here's that loc I've been meaning to write to your *new* issue.

Glad to see that *New Toy* isn't dead: just on hiatus then. Sometimes that's just how these things work, and that's fine by me. Besides, you've never been one to be at a loss for words, nor topics to write about.

Yes, I know Arnie Katz is redefining yet again; it seems that's a common theme in much of his recent writings and fanzines. Historically, fans love doing this: we love to natter endlessly about our hobby interest, and so Arnie is simply carrying on this long tradition. I tend to agree with your definition of fandom, Taral. Fandom is definitely an invitational interest group, and most fans that I have met over the years have been quite receptive to new blood. It always depends on how much a person – young, new, energetic neofan or old, fanned and tired veteran fan – brings to their fan-related activities. That is always the bottom line since the enjoyment a person gets out of doing something, no matter what it is, is dependent on their involvement to it. So there.

Man, your drug tale is quite an eye-opener. I thank you for explaining what you are dealing with – I freely admit to not knowing much about it before now, only that you had mobility issues in recent years – and that information definitely helps understand the drug regimen you are on. “Better living through chemistry” sounds like it could be your personal motto.

By the way, I really liked that segue into the third section of *Broken Toys #5*, in which you detail how you acquired that walker. Definitely serendipity lives. Good bit of luck for you!

Eric Mayer's letter describing his and Mary's cottage, then you with your apartment, makes our house sound positively palatial, and we're less than 1300 square feet. Of course, with three kids - two still at home, though one of those is about to move out - we need the room. But you live with what you need, sometimes only with what you can afford, and even some other times those two actually meet; most of the time they don't. Bugger.

*After she died, I lived by myself in my mother's city-owned townhouse for a year. It was 1100 sq. feet on two floors, and it was actually more room than I needed at the time. Not now.*

Thanks for the issue, Taral, and I look forward to your next one in a week or so. Keep this publishing rate up and you'll catch up to Chris Garcia and Arnie Katz Real Soon Now.

*My ambitions are far more limited than that. At most I aim for once a month, and it would be more accurate to expect six weeks between issues. In that same period, Arnie would publish 5 or 6 times and Chris 2 or 3. I'm also mindful that if I publish more often, I'll wear out the half dozen or so people I relay on to loc. John*

**WAHF – Kjjartan Aaarnorssssenn** (He's from Iceland. They spell everything with too many letters.)



There wasn't supposed to be an art show, but Dick and Leah said they would give space to anyone who brought art in exchange for something to auction at the Chicago Ditto. Okay, I thought. I brought something. No one cared to bid on it, but that wasn't my problem. I'd held up my end of the bargain.

More important to me, I also brought pretty damn near everything I believed had the slightest chance of selling. Art? Yes – that. Also t-shirts, several different mail order booklets, an expensive limited edition portfolio, a selection of custom nametags, black and white prints (that I also offered to colour), as well as flyers for all of the above. I hoped to sell everything but my “virtue,” and maybe sell even that – if I didn't have to pay *the buyer* too much.

I picked a nice, centrally located table in the “fanac” room. There was nothing on it. The “Canadian thing to do” would have been to pick the *second best* table, but I was in America and would do as the Americans do, and claim my right to the *choicest* spot. My t-shirts took up one entire end of the table. Laid neatly out, side by side, the coloured art made a moderately impressive display. I needed just a little more space, though, for the mail order booklets. They filled one end of the next table over. There were almost no exhibits in the rest of the room, so I thought, “why not?” The flyers, my portfolio and other merchandise took up the end of the table on the *other* side. Again, *why not?*

Leah *told* me why not. Most of the tables would be needed for computer equipment, ditto mastering, flyers and fanzines, not to mention Delphne-Joan-Hanke-Woods-Mori's artwork, (which hadn't arrived yet).<sup>1</sup> Reluctantly, I moved my whole kit and kaboodle to a single table that was half the size of the first, and necessarily made do. Leaning the art against the wall did most of the trick...

<sup>1</sup> Joan Woods was one of those fans whose names constantly changed and grew. First she married another fan named “Hanke.” Then she added “Delphyne.” Later she began to sign her name to her art with a Japanese chop that meant “Mori.” If she followed the pattern set by many fans before her, she is probably just Joan Hanke-Woods today, or maybe even just Joan Woods. She seemed to drop from fandom's sight not long after winning her Fanartist Hugo... something else for which there is too much precedence. But, apparently, she hadn't dropped out entirely. Not long ago, the name “Delphyne Woods” popped out of FaceBook when I least expected it.

Delphyne-Joan-Hanke-Woods-Etc. arrived shortly after. Taking an identical table next to mine, she unpacked her matted drawings, one by one. *Competition* is the American way too... But what about international goodwill, eh?

The day went well, in spite of one or two minor setbacks. The *major* setback was that I sold none of my art. I can't say that I was very surprised. Fans arrive at conventions *pre-broke*. For the most part, it costs as much as they can afford just to be there, and whatever is left over goes mainly to hysterical bidding during the auctions for copies of one another's fanzines. As well, SF fans are notorious suckers for art that has to be spelled out to them – the longer the caption under the drawing, the bigger the laugh. With or without a caption, my own art is rarely able to raise a chuckle. Still, I lucked out later that Saturday. An unexpected philanthropist by the name of Paul Stinchfield bought nearly everything that wasn't nailed down. I had more than broken even for the con.

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It was most likely that same Saturday that I noticed a kid in a white t-shirt hanging around the fanac room. He was no older than 16, I was sure, and stood less than five-foot-five in his stocking feet. He seemed to be literally under my elbow whenever I turned around.

Dick Smith said later, "We think he wandered in from a bar mitzvah also being held in the hotel." As was common in those days of small SF cons, we were used to sharing facilities with everything from evangelist weddings to football teams on a bender.

There was a grubby-looking banknote in his right hand that drew my eye like a magnet draws iron filings.

It wasn't long before the kid came up to me and asked, "Got anything for a dollar?"

"Beg pardon?" I said.

"I only have a buck. Are those a dollar?" he said again, pointing to one of my mail order booklets. A price was plainly printed on the covers.

"No," I answered the kid, "They cost three dollars."

Next, the kid asked if the t-shirts cost a dollar.

"No," I said, patiently, "They cost \$15 each. See the sign taped up here, on the wall? \$15."

Next, he asked about the portfolio, the fanzines, the nametags, and I think even my half-finished can of Coca Cola. The refrain, "Is that a dollar?" began to grate on my nerves.

I patiently replied to each and every inquiry, pointing out the obvious. I wasn't prepared for the kid's final query, though. The kid wanted to know if I'd draw a picture for him.

"Is that for a *dollar*?" I asked, turning the tables.

He nodded. For a dollar. For one-hundred little copper pennies he wanted me to draw a dragon for him. Now, dragons are *not* really my forté. In fact, I haven't even liked them since little girls got it into their

heads that dragons were fun to ride... not to mention a fantasy of empowerment and domination – valuable lessons for their later, married lives. On rare occasions, I had tried to draw dragons and produced nothing more successful than a scaly manicotti with legs. You either have the knack or you don't.

I cast a glance to the table next to mine. Hanke-Woods was an artist who had the knack. She drew legions of dragons, covered reams of paper with dragons, rendered the cotton-picking things with her drawing hand tied behind her back, doodled dragons in her sleep. She may have been The Competition, but clearly this was a job for *her*.

"Joan? *Delphyne*, I mean. This gentleman wants someone to draw a dragon for him, and will pay the artist one entire dollar in negotiable legal tender for it..."

My neighbor artist was a little flustered, as anyone would be when confronted with such a remunerative opportunity. Actually, from what I had seen, Joan seemed a little flustered at all times. But she took the kid aside and began sketching a dragon on the cover of one of the fanzines from the freebie table. That seemed to be the end of the matter.

Ah, but it wasn't!

Later, Joan told me that she'd been paid the dollar, as agreed... but only by wrenching it of the kid's grasp. He had a grip on it like a literary agent on his percentage. All I knew at the time, however, was that five minutes after I thought I'd washed my hands of the kid, he was back at my table.

"Is that a dollar?" he asked, pointing at one of the exact same booklets I told him cost \$3 only fifteen minutes before.

And, clenched there in his grubby mitt, was his "only" dollar bill... again.

