

For better or worse, this is the 4th issue of *Lost Toys*, begun on **May 18th**. I'm still **Taral Wayne**, like it or not. I live at 245 Dunn Ave., Apt. 2111, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1S6, which is as good a place to live as any. And I can be reached with flattery or death threats at Taral@bell.net This is **Kiddelidivee Books & Art 282**, a fact of very little importance.

LOST TOYS 4

I'm not really in the mood to repeat myself, or do another issue of *Lost Toys* that resembles the previous three. For one thing, I've not yet developed a real interest in what I'm doing. I feel that, by belonging to *TePe*, I'm doing Arnie a favour. And that, by dropping out, I'd be disappointing a few of the members. I'm not sure how long that's going to carry me as a member, however. Also, I'm still wary of duplicating too much of my effort by publishing both *Broken Toys* and *Lost Toys* (there was also one issue of *Stolen Toys*, but ask about that some other time). Finally, a dark cloud of apparent futility has settled over me, of late.

It pleases me that I can entertain as many fans as I do with my foolishness ... I honestly appreciate the encouragement I get from certain quarters. But it has become all too clear that nothing I can do will ever be more than marginal to most of fandom, since I don't socialize widely or reach a huge readership. Worse, fans seem to be reverting to an earlier somatotype, where they read huge amounts of criticism, reviews and analysis of science fiction again, with apparent pleasure. I would have thought they had grown as blasé as I have with this sort of fare, after several decades of it. But no. Evidently not.

Perhaps wanting to be a BNF is a hollow goal, but it was a goal, nonetheless. At present, I don't seem to have a goal, and I have little enthusiasm for my fanac. Until I find something to renew my motivation, I may be rather a drag. A wet blanket thrown over the flambé. But I'll try to carry on with *Lost Toys* for at least the next two or three mailings. By then, I may have found some other hopeless mountain to climb.

In *Vexed*, **Eric Mayer** wrote, "I don't compose *Vexed*, I accumulate it." It has been my method of composing *Broken Toys*, as well. When I write something new, I might set it aside for my apazine as well as my personalize. Or, while I browse through the current mailing, something may catch my eye, and set me to writing a mailing comment. Or I may simply sit and extemporize for a while. What I *don't* do, is *plan* an issue. For that matter, I don't really plan *Broken Toys*, either. It, too, mostly just accumulates from month to month. I was rather surprised by the lack of comment hooks in the last *Teep*, though. Obviously, comment hooks are in the reader's eye, and not an objective judgment on other members' contributions. But as I browsed through the last mailing, page after page, I rarely felt compelled to begin dancing on the keyboard. It was me at fault, rather than the *Teep*. Perhaps my mistake was to read the mailing first, intending to go back to it and then write mailing comments later. By "later," unfortunately, the novelty of the mailing had worn off. I won't make the same mistake twice. This time, I merely egoscanned the mailing, expecting to write comments on the first, *thorough* reading.

I do love mountains, but like **Eric**, I have never actually climbed one. I've hiked mountain trails, including up to an altitude of about 11,000 feet on the trail up Mt. Whitney, in California. But arduous as that may be, it is not climbing. I have little desire to cling to pitons and dangle from ropes, while arctic blasts whip around my body, driving ice pellets that sting like birdshot into my face. That's just crazy, and I would only try such a fool stunt if I was a Superman.

Also like **Eric**, there were times in my life that I played games. They didn't make much of an impression on me when I was very young – I was an only-child whose family moved often, and made few friends – but I admit to a certain fascination with games that came and went. When I was around 12, my parents went through a phase of playing Clue or Monopoly with their friends. I was never invited to sit in, but kept the boards and the markers for decades, finally giving them away only a few weeks ago! When I was in school, I met a few fellow classmates who were also into games. But we didn't play them so much as *invent* them. We spent all our time making up boards and writing rules. They tended to be gory fantasies, where a misstep could lead to falling through a hidden trap door into a vat of acid, or cannibals would turn you on a spit over a fire. After a while, though, the sudden explosions, man-eating plants, vampires, spring-loaded spikes and other forms of adolescent Hollywoodesque mayhem grew tiresome.

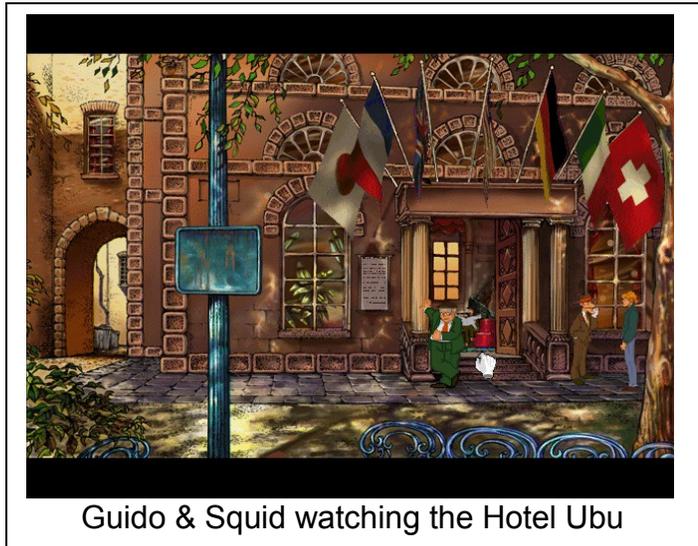
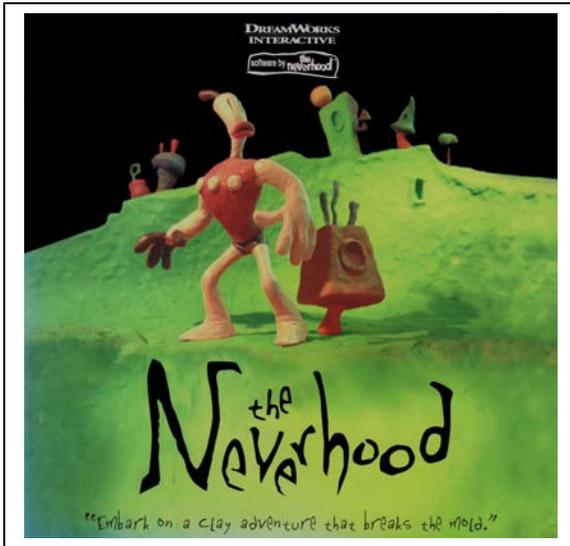
I remember a few years later, when I was a freshly minted science fiction fan, there was a fad going around Midwest conventions. Fans would sprawl on the floor, hunching over sheets of graph paper, consulting Xeroxed sheets of rules and rolling dice. Later, Dungeons & Dragons would have commercially printed boards, real cards, professional looking rule books and specialized 12-sided, hexadecimal, low-friction, glow-in-the-dark dice ... numbered in Hebrew if you so desired. But I remember when D&D was still do-it-yourself.

I had little to do with gaming during the years D&D grew into a national pastime. Arcade games, when they came into fashion, failed to coax the dimes and quarters out of my pockets. *Pacman*, *Donkey Kong* and *Space Invaders* were merely an exercise in hand-and-eye coordination, with no sense of adventure. Early computer games were somewhat similar, in that they emphasized targeting moving spaceships, trolls, tanks or lemmings in order to tote up a huge score. The graphics grew consistently more impressive with time, but the basic idea tended to remain the same – target practice.

There were a couple of games that caught my imagination, though. Both were adventure games that were set in imaginative worlds that could only be explored by solving problems from one end to the other. Some puzzles were trivial and amusing, others downright baffling, but solve them you must. One of the games was *The Neverhood*, whose stage was a vast, clay landscape of slapstick mountains, crazily constructed bridges, mysterious tunnels, leaning buildings and goofy characters who were animated by stop-motion. The soundtrack was an memorable mix of Yiddish folksong and brazen jazz. When I finally came to the end of the game, and was offered the choice of restoring “God” to his throne, or succumbing to evil by taking “His” place, I was sorry it was over.

The other game was *Circle of Blood: Sword of the Templars*. It was a more serious, if less visually rich game, whose backgrounds were reminiscent of the best days of UPA animation. You played the game as George Stobbard, a journalist visiting Paris, who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time ... a lot. A clown passes George while he is having coffee in an outdoor café, then rushes out of the café again, seconds before an enormous explosion turns everything black. George comes to in the midst of a mystery whose solution he pursues all around Paris, as well as in Spain, Ireland, Syria and finally Scotland! One must be careful of Guido and Squid, though. If they kill you, you are really killed! The mysterious Templar who had been disguised as the clown-bomber is no less dangerous. But the real treasures of the game are the offbeat characters you meet along the way. Many are there to provide

clues, but others just to pique your interest. I finally battled my way to the end, saving the world from a hideous conspiracy to use mystic forces to conquer the planet. It took a surprising effort to get all the way to the end, figuring my way through numerous failed attempts not to be sealed alive in a desert cave, or jailed for burglarizing a museum of antiquities, but when all was done I felt almost as though I had done all those things – raced along the top of a speeding express train, thrown knives in a seedy Middle Eastern bar, exchanged barbs with a rude French desk clerk, searched an abandoned archeological dig in a castle in Ireland for clues, been battered by a goat, chatted with a batty old lady who played piano in a rundown *pension* and many, many other things. The game has become almost as much a real memory to me as some Worldcons.



Guido & Squid watching the Hotel Ubu

Eric remembers watching *I Love Lucy*, but says he was mystified by the notion that Ricky Ricardo could have been an important bandleader. In fact, Desi Arnaz was an important bandleader in the early 1950s. There have been vogues for all things Latin American (except dictators) at various times, and the most recent in memory was the fad for Brazilian and Cuban music just after World War II. Arnaz may not have been the biggest act out of Cuba, but he was well known in his day. He was also one very smart tortilla. Rather than remain performing in clubs, he moved into television, selling CBS on the idea of a domestic situation comedy that he and his wife would both star in and produce. His intuition was right on the money. The Latin Americana thing grew stale and fell out of fashion, perhaps propelled along its trajectory to obscurity by the victory of Castro's communist guerrillas in Cuba. Arnaz was right in another way. With an accent as thick as guacamole, he could probably not have succeeded in Hollywood as a leading man – comedy was his *métier*.

And then **Eric** runs out of pages in which to complain about Hugos and FAAn awards. You know what? Good. I've done my bellyaching and I'm tired of it. It's time to move on.

Beginning a zine with the subject of toilet paper, as **Robert Lichtman** does, seems an unlikely ploy to generate comments. Oddly enough, he brings to mind several nearly-amusing stories about toilet paper in my own experience. Although flushed with excitement over the chance to tell them, I think it would be better if I not take the plunge. Most people's revulsion for the the use toward which toilet paper deep-seated, and should probably be respected. Is there really anything funny about a lifelong obsession to save money by reducing the amount of paper one uses down to two squares at a time? Or is the time I plugged Marc Schirmeister's new, low-flow toilet in the middle of the night, and had to wake him up because I was unable to find the plumber's friend, anything to laugh at? Perhaps it would be best if we wiped this topic from the page, and washed our hands of it.

Are apas really for the purpose of getting to know one another better? Since I can think of no other reason, I suppose that will have to do until a better reason comes along. I've been in my share of apas – *FAPA*, *AZApa*, *Oasis*, *Canadapa* (I think), *Mishap*, maybe one of the BC apas, *TAPs* (Toronto), *Vootie* (funny animals & undergrounds) and *Rowrbrazzle* (funny animals). Perhaps I've forgotten one or two along the way. I was a member of most of them for only a brief while before I lost interest, and the deadlines became burdensome. Many of them blur in my mind. All in all, I'd have to say they did not serve the purpose of helping me to know anyone.

The apas I stayed with longest were probably *FAPA*, *AZApa*, *Oasis*, and *Rowrbrazzle*. I was in *FAPA* for about two years, I think, and published a couple of different titles. *The World For the World Is Twiltone* was an ambitious attempt to create a minor genzine, with mailing comments that lasted no more than two issues before I began to fall behind. Next, I started a less ambitious zine that was mainly mailing comments. Yet, *March to the Beat of a Red Shift Drum* also grew to larger proportions and greater ambition in its last issue ... then promptly expired. Quarterly mailings of *FAPA* continued to pile up, each the size of a telephone book, with print hardly any larger. Finally, griping about a rise in membership dues from something like \$3 to \$5 annually, I dropped out. Hey! \$5 was a respectable sum of money in 1978! **Robert** will no doubt check back to see if I've gotten the dues right, and that the correct figures aren't \$3 to \$4, instead, and will tell me that I never contributed *Red Shift* to *FAPA*. But that's alright. Everyone needs a hobby, and that appears to be Robert's.

I joined *AZApa* because Patrick then-just-Hayden had moved to Toronto from Tucson. He belonged to the Arizona apa and wanted all his new friends in Toronto to join. Patrick was then a very persuasive young man, so that even though most of us in T.O. had no idea what an apa was, we ended up belonging to this one anyway. At the time, I was a seasoned old veteran of fandom, who had been fanning his ac for at least four years. I, at least, *knew* what an apa was ... though I had never belonged to one. We stayed with *Azapa* for perhaps a year, then Patrick and some of the other members fomented a nasty little fight that led to all the "cool" folk splitting off into *Oasis*. I stayed with *Oasis* until the end, two or maybe three years later, when it was put into the trustworthy hands of Gary Farber to run. It was dead inside of three mailings. Ironically, I had run in the same election on a platform of making the trains run on time. But I wasn't cool enough to be OE, or maybe it was the allusion to Benito Mussolini that doomed my campaign. I had also oafishly proposed that *Oasis* invite the unknown David Langford into the apa, and was told by the other members that anyone I thought worthy of membership most certainly wasn't.

But I'm not really bitter. It makes a great story.

I could have joined *Vootie* right at the start, but it was around 1975 and I had only just heard of apas. I wasn't sure how one actually belonged, and knew it would cost money that I didn't have at the time. So I unfortunately put it off until just before its demise. At least I was in on the groundwork for *Rowrbrazzle*. Marc Schirmeister kicked off this funny animal apa, and ran it for the first 30 mailings or so before handing it over to Fred Patten. Unlike *Vootie*, which advertised itself as mainly a comics apa – any comics but superheroes, that is – *Brazzle* was oriented more toward funny animals, and was less about undergrounds per se. This orientation quickly spiraled out of control as *Brazzle* became a furry apa, in which big-foot comedy took a back seat to anthropomorphic adventures, melodrama and downright porn. The membership also underwent a rapid turnover in the first ten mailings, and thereafter never seemed to change. It may have been his disappointment with the way *Brazzle* developed that led Schirm to leave as OE after several years. Or, he may have simply gotten bored with the same old same-old, as I did. In any case, I dropped out about the same time Schirm stopped being OE. *Brazzle* went on, and on, and on, and still struggles along, in the hands of Edd Vick ... I think. It changed had very little over the years until it began to decline around after Fred's stroke. From the

days when it was a three-or-four-part mailing, totaling 300 or 400 pages, I gather it has shrunk to about the size of a stack of three or four comic books today.

So here I am in the Teep, a.k.a. “Arnie’s Apa,” or formally known as The Electronic Press Apa. Given my past experiences in apas, what could I have been thinking?

Steve Green reports that a friend of his is starting another on-line “magazine” for horror/dark fantasy. There are so many of these now. They must serve a purpose, allowing people who cannot sell their fiction or essays to *Analog* or *F&SF* to see their name in print, in a manner that *appears* to be genuine publication. But, to me, they only blur the line between fanzines and real magazines. Virtually anyone can start such a thing, but without the litmus test of selling copies and paying contributors, such magazines may only be a *pretense* of publication.

To me, a *real* magazine must *pay me* for my work. If nobody will pay for my work, that is a persuasive suggestion that it is not worth buying. In addition, magazines have to be impressive and professional enough that readers will buy copies or subscribe. By selling a story to a real magazine, you know the editor thinks your work will help sell his magazine better than another would-be author’s submission. That’s an important test, I think, because – with the Internet – anyone can publish *anything*, and one can count on most of it to be crap.

Speaking of crap, my own short story, “The Canaries in the Dark,” is still gathering dust at *Weird Tales*. Although their initial response was that they would read the MS in two or three weeks, it’s been about four months now. I sent a gentle reminder two weeks ago, but received not a word in reply. This might not be an outright rejection, but it’s a long way short of an enthusiastic acceptance. I suppose I’ll have to wait another month or two and then approach the editors again, cap in hand, to ask if they had found a moment to read my feeble effort.

I think **Wolf van Witting** is quite right to be confused about how the early universe could have inflated suddenly, yet somehow not violate the rule that the speed of light is an absolute limit. I have read hundreds of pages on the subject of inflation, and not one goddamned cosmologist has confronted that paradox to my satisfaction! I think there may be some gobbledegook about the expansion happening in other dimensions or between existing pockets of space or whatever, but it all sounds like evasion to me. Did you know that one of the original authors of inflation and dark matter has retracted his theories, saying he doesn’t think either one exists? How is the layman to make sense of all this, when the scientists can’t make up their minds?

Wolf brings up the interesting idea of selling gravity. Gravity is pretty much given away, because the sheer mass of the Earth makes it inescapable, so the idea of selling it seems absurd. But is it? Suppose you live in a zero-G environment, such as a huge space habitat in orbit around the Earth or some other planet. It has been shown that gravity is essential to our physical well-being, and that extended time spent in zero-G seriously impairs your health over the long term. It is easy to imagine that inexpensive accommodations in an orbital habitat could be tacked on like so many sausages, and would float in free fall just as the bulk of the habitat would. But costlier accommodations might well be in sections of the habitat that would be put under a spin to provide a degree of artificial gravity, anywhere from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ G. And most expensive of all would be the luxury apartments whose wheel would be so expansive as to not only affords more personal space, but also simulate full terrestrial gravity. Would gravity not be for sale, then?

One thing that must be remembered about business is that there are two fundamentally different kinds ... that have a tendency to collapse into one. The first, innovative sort of business provides or creates

good and services that are new. The other prevents you from using existing goods and services unless you pay for them. Although the first sort does exist, by nature it cannot last long. After a while, other people know how to build telephones, make movie cameras, process meat or use movable type, and the creator loses his advantage. To continue making money, the creator goes to the law and asks for a monopoly ... that is, a deal to prevent others from doing what he's doing, even though they also know how to do what he can do.

Perhaps it's simpler to look at it this way. Picture a village by a stream. The people living by it are farmers. They can see fish in the water, but they are always in the middle of the stream and out of reach. Then, one day, one of the villagers wanders upstream a couple of miles and sees where it becomes a waterfall, and that the salmon jumping the rapids are easy to catch. Now, you and I might run back to the village and tell everyone that there are all the fish we want, ready for the catching. But a businessman would keep his discovery to himself, then talk a few big bruisers into working for him. He would position them around the waterfall to keep people away from it, then sell his fellow villagers the fish that only *he* can get near enough to catch. In time, he becomes rich and uses his riches to influence village politics, so that he becomes boss. That's how business works. And how kings get started.

Even if it starts with creativity, once the new product or idea catches on, the essence of business is preventing other people from using that idea for their own needs, or from going into the business themselves. Business is most often putting a fence around what people need or want, then charging them to go through it.

I'm grateful that **Diane Crayne** commiserates with my experience with the TePe covers. I'm sure every fan artist has horror stories to tell. But what puzzles me most is that of all the better-known fanzine artists, Marc Schirmeister's work seems to get the shortest shrift. For reasons known only to himself, Marc seems to send most of his work to fanzines that shrink his complex, compulsively detailed drawings to fit into a three-column format about two inches across. The drawings look like thumbnails, but no amount of clicking on the image will bring them up to full size! I really don't know why editors do that. Can't they see that they are reducing a carefully organized tableau to a murky smear? Can they not give the art two columns, at least? Or would that demand too much of the publishing software?

I would dearly have loved to rake through **Diane's** bag of late Roman coins. But I can guess that it consisted mainly of late 3rd and early 4th century bronzes about the size of a dime, often very worn and rather irregular in shape. Bronzes of that sort are by far the most commonly found, and are sold quite cheaply – as little as \$10 when they are offered unsorted and unidentified. By examining such caches closely, you can sometimes find bargains. Often, though, the incrustation, corrosion and wear is so acute that it is impossible to identify the reigning emperor, which is the most fundamental thing you want to know about a Roman coin. However, it is easy to generalize about them. They are usually *antoniniani* of a late date, roughly 260 to 295 AD. They were first minted about a generation earlier, with a substantial silver content, but after 30 years of steep inflation, there was almost no silver left – 2% or less, washed over the surface and soon worn off, leaving behind nothing but a chestnut-brown base metal. About 295 AD, though, the emperor Diocletian reformed the coinage, abolishing the cheap bronze *antoniniani*. This did not stop the inflation, however, and in a few more years the reformed coinage reverted to a cheap bronze disk about the size of a dime, this time with not even a silver coating. We don't know for sure what they were called by then, though they might have continued to be known by the old names. We refer to them by size, and value relative to each other. So AE 2, AE 3, and AE 4 – AE standing for the Latin word for bronze. Late *antoniniani* and AE3s and 4s are by far the most commonly found Roman coins. They were struck by the hundreds of millions every year and still

turn up by the thousands. In fine shape, they can still be worth \$40 or \$50 – although most are corroded slugs worth almost nothing.

It would interest me to see **Ross Chamberlain's** drawing of the Tucker Hotel sometime. The only floor plans I'm familiar with are the ones that Bob Shaw drew up, and they were rather lacking in drama. For that matter, many of the jokes had dated so much that I didn't understand them. In Ross's comment to me, he asks if that is a depiction of Joe Phan and the Shield of Humour on the side of the main hotel. I'm happy to report that Ross still has 20/20 vision ... at least while wearing his reading glasses. For laughs, I added it in the same manner that many downtown building in Brasilia and Mexico City have colourful, native-inspired murals on their sides. But instead of an Aztec theme, I picked *The Enchanted Duplicator*, done in a Bergeronesque style.

Like **Ross**, I struggled through a lot of classics in my 20s, but gradually gave up the vice as my 30s wore on. I forced myself to read an abridged *War and Peace*, for example. Abridged though it was, it was interminable, and all I remember of this supposed landmark of literature is that there's somebody named Pierre in it, and Napoleon is driven from Moscow. The rest was all cracker-barrel philosophy and soap opera. I also read some stories by Dostoyevsky, which were brisker and more memorable, and Nicolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*, parts of which were pointed and funny. I read the entire *Gulag Archipelago* as an act of contrition, I guess. Whatever guilt I bear from my span on Earth has been entirely expiated by that feat of endurance. I read *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a devastatingly funny and bitter short novel, and started two or three others ... all of which I abandoned part-way through. By that time, Solzhenytsin was becoming quite a bore, and Russian literature in general had worn out its welcome on my bookshelves.

That's just Russian literature. I also read a bit Voltaire, some Rabelais, Swift, Goethe, Marlowe, Melville, Elliot, Dickens, Scott, Machiavelli, Dante, Cervantes, on and on and on. Some of it I thought was crap. George Elliot, for instance, and Rabelais. Some of it was curious in one way or another, but some, such as Melville, held my interest only intermittently. Cervantes simply went on far too long for the modern reader, his context lost long, long ago. Generally, I don't regret reading any of it, but there's precious little I would care to re-read today.

I made a special point to read all the major Greek playwrights – Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes – whose works are still extant. I read prose translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I read Petronius Arbiter's *Satyricon*, the *Golden Ass* by Apuleius, verses by Catullus and browsed through the *Metamorphoses* by Virgil. I discovered that I didn't like poetry very much, but that filthy language could still be high art if it was Latin. I read a bit of Cicero and found him a stifling bore. I consumed Caesar's *Conquest of Gaul* about four times. I've read the plays of Plautus, who is actually very funny – if you've seen *A Funny Thing on the Way to the Forum*, you are already familiar with the 3rd century BC Roman playwright. Finally, I've read *The Twelve Caesars* by Suetonius and the spurious *Lives of the Later Caesars* more than once. I was determined to learn as much as I could about Roman history, you see, as part of my hobby of collecting Roman coins. Generally, the less high-fallutin' the author's aims, the better it reads today.

Oddly, I never delved into Plutarch, Thucydides or either Pliny. Never too late, I guess.

Arnie Katz had a dream! Well, of course, I don't believe that, and neither do you. His "dream" was merely a clever frame to discuss some ideas about his fanwriting. I must confess to having dreams a little like the one he describes, though, where my computer fills up with eerily fluorescent windows that multiply but do nothing, and won't go away. Even turning off the computer doesn't get rid of them ... then I realize it's a dream, and wake up in a severely irritated mood. But that's neither here nor

there. Also like Arnie, though, I sometimes wonder if I haven't reached the bottom of the well of inspiration to write for fanzines.

I've written a bloody lot in the last several years. My writing spate began around 2005, I think, and continued more or less unabated until late last year. But then, I realized that most of the ideas I once had, clamoring at the back of mind to be immortalized in keystrokes, had been used up. The cupboard is nearly empty. There are one or two more that I can reach if I stretch right to the back of the cupboard, but clearly the last sheet will soon be in the laundry. Then what?

Most fanwriters would probably not recognize this problem. There's always another dinner, always another party, always another con to describe in an uninspired, pedestrian narrative. Failing that, the average writer can puff a book he's recently finished, or disparage the work of an author he's never read. Or he can bitch about the Hugos, and promote written science fiction to the disinterested viewers of TV Sci-Fi. In a last, desperate attempt to fill pages, the fanwriter can narrate the day-to-day episodes in his mundane life. The dirty little secret about fanzines, you see, is that few people read them for creative writing. The readers merely look for gossip about the people they know or have heard about, topical items about conventions and clubs, and even essays about science *fiction*, most of which is drearily uninspired. Fanzines are mainly the trade journals of quick, but small, minds.

Just about the last thing 90% of fanzine readers care about is the fanwriter's innermost thoughts and feelings, or his flights of fancy. If anything, such self-indulgence will provoke outright hostility. Once this is recognized, much about fandom becomes self-evident.

And therein lies my problem. My stock of fan gossip is very limited. Since I am not involved in programming for local cons, running fan funds, author readings, costume workshops or editing on-line "magazines," I am not much in-the-know about anything. Similarly, I barely fraternize with other fans these days, leaving me nothing to say about parties, pubs, pissing contests or other excuses for fans to come together and stir the breeze.

Yet I have much that I do want to write about! It just isn't about *those* things. Maybe sometime I'll write about just what it is that I *do* want to write about. But, for now, it's time to move on to ...

Murray Moore's *Madness*. Apology for not reading my fanzines, accepted. Er, that was an apology, wasn't it? Actually, I don't think it was.

Honestly, the way you describe which fanzines you read – zines printed and handed to you, apazines you get in the mail, on-line lists you belong to – and which you don't, I'd almost think the rules were written explicitly to **exclude** *Broken Toys*. But I know that's not true, because your rules also excluded *eDitto*, *Fanstuff* and *Askance*, where broad swathes of fandom's best fanwriting are overlooked. Well, it was **your** *Fanthology*, and I guess if I don't like your editorial criteria, I can publish my own sometime. This is unlikely, however, since I have more things to do now than I can manage. I have to note, however, that it is highly ironic that unless a person was a contributor or attended Corflu, the only version of *Fanthology* 2013 available is a digital copy downloaded from eFanzines.com. I can only remind you your own words, "*I cannot loc what I do not read, and I rarely read fanzines not handed nor mailed to me.*"

On a less disputatious note, I don't think Robert Heinlein did attend Torcon II, and don't recall how I might have given **Murray** the idea that I thought he did. Something I said, not said carefully enough, or not read as it was meant. I have certainly met Heinlein elsewhere – Mid AmeriCon for certain. Then again, maybe Heinlein was at Torcon. Most of the cons I've attended have blurred in my mind, and those moments bumping into the fossilized remnants of Science Fictions' Golden Age are not among the most vivid. Seeing Poul Anderson across a room, or Lester del Rey delivering a drunken address, do not

compare at all with the time Victoria Vayne and I surprised Moshe Feder with a lifesize Coca-Cola Christmas stand-up, or that Balticon where we found a stolen tombstone in an empty corridor late one night.

As an aside, why are there so many ways to spell “Graehaeme?” **R. Graeme Cameron** isn’t the only one who is looking forward to reading *Ah, Sweet Idiocy*. Every now and then someone comes forward with the idea of reprinting Francis Towner Laney’s masterpiece ... and I have to talk them out of it. Seriously, though, there’s been no progress since last month. The 500 or 1,000 words I have yet to write are reluctant to come forth. The muse has her back turned to me, and is facing the corner in a sulk. To tell the truth, while publishing the material through Amazon or Lulu probably makes the most sense, I don’t know the first thing about doing it, and fear the trial ahead.

As for *ASI* giving a glimpse into the fandom of an earlier age, it will do that ... but only a glimpse. For all the impact the document had on fandom, in fact it is a very narrow window into early Los Angeles fandom, leaving unseen many things that Laney was not himself involved with. What Laney records is mainly a lot of bile and back-pocket politics, with an occasional mention of editing the latest issue of *The Acolyte*. That, and the once-important pulp authors Laney fawns over. The impression you come away with is that fandom consisted only of a couple of dozen teen-age kids in their mid-twenties, arguing over inconsequential details of their club constitution in a seedy rented room full of dirty, second-hand furniture.

But *The Louche Knight* will eventually get done. For the record, this is from my introduction:

When one pictures Francis Towner Laney, the image of a shabby Don in piecemeal armour and a windmill on the horizon comes to mind. The windmill’s arms wheel lazily in the hot, stagnant air of 16th century Castile. Our knight isn’t tilting at dragons, however. Francis Towner Laney is tilting at fannish immaturity, fatuous fan politics, hypocrisy, egotism and homosexuality. To be honest, it’s not a pretty picture. Our knight is not innocent himself of all the vices he has sworn to fight. Far from it, he may be his own worst enemy. Francis Towner Laney is not a knight of valor and purity, but in fact a very *louche* knight.

Louche: [Loosh] (comparative more *louche*, superlative most *louche*) *n.* Of questionable taste or morality; decadent. Not reputable or decent.

One particularly scary detail of those Barbie and Ken dolls was the copyright information molded across their baby-smooth butts. Most kids probably realized they wouldn’t grow up that way. Whether or not they were pleased to grow up with *hairy* butts instead, is another matter.

But did you know that those G.I. Joe dolls had a deliberate error molded into their anatomy, to prevent cheap knock-offs from passing as the real thing? If you still have one, check Joe’s thumbs. You’ll find that the nail on one of them is on the inside, not where it should be. I noticed this as a kid, but it was more than 40 years more before I learned the reason for this “mistake.”

R. Laurraine Tutihasi was a bit confused by my statement that “Oak Island is a tiny little isle off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia, barely the size of Tom Cruz’s [sic] ego.” Hmm. I see how the reader might not see the double-ironic twist, that by saying an island is small because it is hardly as large as the movie star’s ego I might be saying the island was both large and small at the same time. However, the actual joke is that Tom Cruise’s ego could be as large as an island ... no matter how *small* an island, that’s still pretty enormous. I hope that’s somewhat clearer.

Less clear is that chipmunks have ever being called “antelope squirrels.” I have never heard or read of them called “antelope squirrels” ... not that I doubt Laurraine. *Somewhere they are*, I’m sure. But it appears not even Ross Bagdassarian knew of it, or we would have had to listen to “The Antelope Squirrels” sing “The Christmas Song,” year after year after year. I shudder to think of it.

Spruggle? Who publishes *Spruggle*? Damn it, I don’t see a name anywhere. Am I expected to know everybody who lives in Burnaby, BC? Thank goodness there’s a table of contents at the beginning of the mailing, so I see that, in fact, it is only **Garth Spencer**. Well, whoever it was asks why “we” – I presume he means the members of the Teep – shouldn’t write about Science Fiction if we want to. A fair question to which I have an utterly unfair answer. I won’t read it. I mean that.

I ceased to be a Science Fiction fan years ago. For a long time I continued to call myself one by association. As long as I acknowledged a slight connection to the SF community, and it acknowledged me, the misnomer didn’t bother me. But of late, it’s become increasingly clear that the SF community has lost sight of me even more than I’ve lost sight of it. There seems to be no purpose to pretending any connection. So I’ll say it again: I’m not an SF fan, I’m an amateur journalist.

Having spelled that out so bluntly, I admit to inconsistencies. I have written about Science Fiction myself. Not all that long ago, I wrote about collecting Isaac Asimov, about disliking H.P. Lovecraft, about eating Chinese noodles with Judith Merrill and about my friendship with Phyllis Gotlieb. What I think distinguishes these excursions into the genre is that I had something quite personal to say about each subject, not just the usual uninspiring “I like these books, so you should read them.” Press me too hard about the inconsistency, however, and I might just stop writing about SF entirely!

And when Photoshop makes infinite possibilities available for lettering, *it is too* worth bitching about. Sometimes I feel like the one-eyed fan in the land of the blind.

Joyce Katz writes what I’ve suspected for a long time, that most if not all gemstones can be synthesized at an affordable cost. So what keeps diamonds in the glass cases at Tiffany’s, instead of in plastic bubble packs at Wal-Mart? Snobbery and custom are a big part of it. Before the 20th Century, however, there *was no* tradition of giving engagement or wedding rings with the biggest diamond in it that the hapless groom could afford. The diamond industry created that tradition out of whole cloth rather than compressed carbon, and successfully sold it around the world. In fact, diamonds are not especially scarce. In ancient times, they were only found in Northern India. But they were not especially prized by Romans and Greeks, who preferred coloured stone, which could be polished or carved into cameos. The art and science of cutting diamonds to refract light would come later, and it is mainly the cutting that gives a diamond its value. If you ever saw a raw diamond, you would think it merely a bit of broken glass. Now that diamonds are found in abundance all over the world – in South Africa, Namibia, Russia, Canada, Australia and even the US –they no longer have the value of scarcity. De Beers and others in the trade, however, carefully control the flow of diamonds into the market. Otherwise, a small diamond might well be worth under fifty bucks. The gold in the ring would be worth a good deal more. In the old days, if you wanted a *valuable* gemstone, you held out for emerald or ruby! The day may soon dawn, however, when you can buy even rubies and emeralds from DuPont for the price of a movie rental.

Enough!

– 21 May 2014