

# CONFABULATION

## # 1

*Samples of Fanwriting and Faanfiction*

Edited by Garth Spencer

*(third edition)*

## Surrealist's Ball



CONFABULATION #1 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, July 2020) is the work of Garth Spencer, a fan now living at 4240 Perry Street, Vancouver, BC CANADA V5N 3X5. You can contact him for a copy at his address, or via his email at [garth.van.spencer@gmail.com](mailto:garth.van.spencer@gmail.com). Single copies go for \$10.00 CAD (That means Canadian dollars).

All contents copyright © 2020 by Stop Press. All copyright returned to contributors upon publication. Copyright in all articles, stories and artwork belongs to the respective creators – only one-time reprint rights have been requested for this publication.

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Sensawonda .....	1
SF Class Structure .....	11
The Adventures of the Scientist's Beautiful Daughter .....	12
Boxtop: The Man Behind the Myth.....	16
Babylon If ... ..	20
Caro Fanatico Numero Uno .....	28
My Norwescon Song .....	34
Cider: Our Friend and Yours.....	35
The Secret Life of Robert Runté (Pt. 1) .....	36
The Day the Torcon 3 Bid Began .....	40
Vincent Fan GoH .....	43
The Secret Life of Robert Runté (Pt. 2) .....	45
Fandom Ecology .....	52
Introducing Don DeBrandt.....	53
Fowler's Volunteers .....	55
First International Virtual Conference on Mad Science.....	56
The Netherlands: Threat or Menace? .....	58
The Secret Life of Garth Spencer .....	60
Acknowledgments, Credits, and Copyrights .....	62

## Introduction

This is the third edition of *Confabulation*, a collection of fanwriting and fanfiction first compiled in the late 1996, the first edition of which has since disappeared into the electricity. This is a reconstruction of that fanthology.

With this edition I have finally recovered all the original contents, and added, “The Netherlands: Threat or Menace?” by me, and “The Secret Life of Garth Spencer” by Greg Slade.

It seems clear that SF fandom is simply a leisure interest group now. It has the advantages and disadvantages of having no central authority. For one thing, the interests that members actively pursue will change over time, so that fanpublishing has become a backwater, and not too many new members join in this particular activity. *Confabulation* was an attempt to provide some exposure to the kinds of participatory fun that fans made, by creating their own writing and publications.

*Garth Spencer*  
*Vancouver, July 2020*

## Art Credits

Brad Foster.....	p. 20
Robert Runte .....	p. 53
Garth Spencer .....	p. 58
Steve Stiles .....	cover
Felicity Walker .....	p. 28
Taral Wayne .....	pp. 12, 16
Alan White .....	p. 45
Clip Art from the Internet .....	everywhere else

## Sensawonda

by Randy Barnhart

*(Note: This is less a story by a fan about fans than a “what if ...” story: what if the earliest version of science fiction – deliberately conceived, at least by Hugo Gernsback, as a way to promote science – had really swept the world? What kind of “Doc Savage”/”Tom Swift” world could we be living in now?)*

### I

*I really shouldn't be here*, Violet Penn thought. The briefing room was full of nondescript, intense young men, taut and trim and ready to kill for their country. She, on the other hand, was 75 years old and feeling every second of it. A Senior Researcher for the National Security Agency, she was a good many years past the mandatory retirement age. Just last week, the Oversight Committee itself had finally put its foot down: Violet Penn was officially thanked for many years of faithful service and informed she was to be out the front door within the next 30 days. This would be her last, her very last, briefing. She peeked at all the young cowboys” around the table and thought, *Looks like I've fallen in with a bunch of professional wrestlers.*

The Chairman, whose real name was by law and tradition never spoken aloud, rapped on the tabletop. “Thank you all for coming on such short notice,” he began, “but we have something of a situation before us today.” Turning to a beefy, middle-aged man, he continued, “Gene, why don't you give us an idea of the problem.”

Gene Koke stood and moved to the head of the table. “Three days ago, someone giving their name as ‘Ted Hendrickson’ posted instructions for what was promised to be a cheap and simple Interstellar Drive on the Internet.” Violet sat bolt upright. So far her only involvement had been researching the items in the plastic bag at her feet, but this was something else again.

“Now, there are more than enough plans for weird gadgetry posted on the Web,” Gene smiled. “Hell, there's about a thousand websites advertising functioning perpetual motion machines!” Several seated around the table snorted in derision.

Gene suddenly frowned. “That's what we thought, too. By 1800 last evening, though, approximately sixty-three million individuals had already downloaded the plans. Even worse, by the time we noticed the unusual traffic, twenty-three buildings of various sizes had boosted into space. Even though this Hendrickson also posted plans for an inexpensive spaceship to go with the drive, it appears most folks just couldn't be bothered, which was unfortunate. At least fifteen people that we know of died from explosive decompression when the building they were in reached low-earth orbit. NORAD Space Command is keeping an eye on all the new junk in orbit.” The room was utterly silent.

“This morning, at 0800 hours, we tried to ... detain Ted Hendrickson, but all we got was an empty apartment. What fingerprints we found weren't registered anywhere; the room was immaculately clean, so there's no DNA samples. He even used a second-hand laptop he probably got for cash at some lawn sale to post the site, so we can't track him that way. Hell, the name ‘Ted Hendrickson’ is probably an alias. All we came away with were some odds and ends.” Gene Koke shrugged and sat down.

The Chairman motioned Violet forward while he said, “Now about those odds and ends: we asked the Research Department to take a look at them and they sent over one of our most

senior researchers.” He nodded at Violet. “Perhaps she can throw a bit more light on our Mr. Hendrickson. Dr. Penn?”

Every eye in the room followed Penn as she slowly shuffled to the head of the conference table. Her right hip was arthritic and had been bothering her lately, but at her age, she felt no immediate need to run to a doctor with every ache and pain. Looking every day of her seventy-five years, Penn could feel the silent sneering of the trim young men as she struggled with the plastic bags holding the “odds and end.” *Humph*, she grunted to herself, *like the old tombstone said, “As I am, so shall you be.”*

She silently placed each piece of evidence on the table in a precise line and then coughed once to announce she was ready.

“We were provided with,” she began, “and I quote from the field notes, ‘three paperback books and an odd ruler’ and asked to identify them.” She smiled to herself, thinking, *The only cure for physical conceit is intellectual snobbery.*

“All of these items are in fact unique. The so-called ‘paperback books’ are actually what were called pulp magazines, circa 1930s. The covers ...” She picked one up and held it up so they could see the lurid cover and the title, *Amazing Science Stories*. “... tell us they’re all from the science fiction genre.”

Replacing the book, she next picked up a bag containing a long white object etched with small numbers. “Now this ‘odd ruler’. Was anyone on the arrest team over twenty-five?” They all remained silent. “Thought not,” Penn continued. “What we have here is a common or garden-variety slide rule, used to do math before the invention of the electronic calculator.” She looked around the room at the bright, shiny faces and couldn’t help playing the professor. “It’s interesting to note that national math scores declined at about the same time.”

Koke fired his hand up. “So, Dr. Penn, what you’re telling us is we’re after some nutcase Trekkie with the hots for old scientific gizmos?” The reset of the table greeted the joke with smirks.

Penn gritted her teeth until they were done. “I’m not the detective here. Please remember though, I said these items were unique. While records indicate that the last slide rule was made in 1979, tests show this slide rule is of very recent manufacture. The only ones you can buy nowadays are collector items, and this one is right out of the factory. Nobody whittles up this kind of precision machinery by hand.”

She paused, drawing a breath, and continued. “The pulps are doubly interesting. The last true SF pulp ceased publication in the early 1950s, with the advent of paperbacks. Yet these,” shaking the bag, “are all made from recently produced paper and none are dated earlier than two years ago. She shook her head and laughed. “They even contain previously unknown stories credited to Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov, both dead for the last twenty years! Let’s face it, gentlemen; making copies of pulp magazines, exact down to the stories and the advertisements, is not a cottage industry!” Finished, she scooped the books and the slide rule into her plastic bag with a sweep of her hand.

The Chairman quickly broke in. “So how would you go about finding the elusive Mr. Hendrickson, Dr. Penn?”

Violet frowned for a few seconds, thinking. Finally, she said, “Mr. Hendrickson appears to like surrounding himself with things like this slide rule, but I ...”

“Right! Thank you, Dr. Penn. Thus speaks the voice of experience. Alright, Gene, I want a 24-hour watch on every antique scientific equipment dealer on the East Coast ...”

As the meeting broke up, the Chairman approached her. “Dr. Penn,” he said, “thank you for coming by. Your contribution was, as usual, invaluable. You’ve given us a very good lead ...” Smiling, he reached for the plastic bag. “And we’ll need those, please.”

Sighing, Violet surrendered the bag. “Precisely why are you looking for this Ted Hendrickson?” she asked. “As far as I can see, he hasn’t done anything beyond posting some interesting plans on the Internet. What’s the harm? Felonious invention? Research in the third degree? No threat to the national security, surely?”

The Chairman tucked the bag under his arm. “Oh, nothing like that,” he said with a leer, “but consider that NASA has been blowing millions of dollars a year on its supposedly re-useable Space Shuttle, right?” Violet nodded, and the Chairman continued, “yet, along comes this Ted Hendrickson with a means of cheap, easy spaceflight. Suddenly, any moron with a soldering iron is a space power. I like to think we’re protecting him from others who might not have his best interests at heart.”

Penn stared at the Chairman’s retreating back, wondering if she had done the right thing after all.

## II

“After all these years, this organization is still run by the idiots!” Penn shouted while she paced her office. Doors slammed in the distance as other researchers tried to block out her tirade.

Penn threw herself into a chair. *Damn, but public displays of stupidity still get me going!*

Calmer, she considered the Chairman’s words. What were they really going to do with Hendrickson once they found him? Offer him aid and succour or pump him for every iota of information before putting a bullet in him? Neither the Chairman nor Koke looked the guardian angel type. In fact, both looked ready to drop the hammer on anyone in the name of national security.

*Who the hell cares?* she thought. Sure, she would have dearly loved to meet this inventor if they ever found him, but so would everyone else. What was it about this particular project that got her going?

Penn leaned back and looked at the ceiling. “Stan,” she said to herself.

Growing up together during the 40s, Stan Penn and Violet Dyer loved each other and science fiction. Violet claimed she just read the stuff, but Stan was omnivorous. He read the cream and the crud, and even wanted to be a writer. In the end, though, it turned out he wasn’t a very good writer at all and soon settled down to medical school and marriage to Violet. No matter, though, his heart and soul still sailed the universe, righting wrongs and exploring the galaxy. Stan was a good man, and it broke everyone’s heart, hers most of all, when he quietly died one summer night five years ago, while sitting on their front porch, happily re-reading an old Lin Carter paperback.

Her breath caught, and for a moment she considered how really unfair the universe was.

Suddenly, she sat bolt upright and ran to her desk. “Sabine,” she called to her secretary, “did you save the photocopies I made of those covers?”

“Sure,” Sabine replied, “You want them?”

Penn smiled. “Yup,” she said, “and the big magnifying glass too.”

Even in black and white, the covers were almost blinding in their glory, complete with slobbering Bug Eyed Monsters and helpless women wearing stainless steel brassieres. She laughed gently to herself as she looked at each one. *Were we ever really that innocent?*

She recognized most of the writers advertised on the covers, but there were several she had never heard of. None of the standard references listed them either. She quickly pulled a phone book off the shelf and began searching.

Bemused by all this sudden activity, Sabine asked, "What now?"

Penn smiled again, but never looked up from the telephone book. "Anybody can switch from a slide rule to a calculator, but nobody, and I do mean nobody, changes the reading habits of a lifetime!"

### III

Penn breathlessly heaved herself through the door. She used to love haunting the local bookstores with Stan for this or that treasure on his endless want list, but that was a long time and forty pounds ago. This was the tenth science fiction bookstore she had visited that day, and she was definitely wearing out.

*Still*, she thought, *there is nothing like a bookstore*. She ran her hands across the spines of the books as she walked. Connie Willis, Ann McCaffrey and Jack Vance: each name was an invitation to dream.

A tall, almost cadaverously thin man stepped from behind the counter. "May I help you?" he asked, in eerie tones that called to memory every creepy horror story she had ever seen.

"I hope so," she replied, handing him a slip of paper. "I'm looking for anyone who might have given you a want list that included these authors."

Holding the slip as if it contained plague virus, the proprietor coughed and said, "I'm very sorry, but we respect our clients' privacy ..." He tried to hand it back to Penn.

After nine stores, Penn had her story ready. "This man is a patient of mine. He isn't dangerous but he does have some rather odd fixations about science fiction writers. Please look at the list and you'll see that many of those listed are not actually writers."

Looking at the paper, the man smiled. "Ah yes!" he said, "Arlene Wilson. Quincy McGee. I see. And you are a psychiatrist."

"I'm a doctor, yes," Penn answered, thinking *A Ph.D., at any rate*.

Walking over to a simple desktop computer, he began typing. "We've computerised our inventory. Whenever something comes in that a client wants, we send them an e-mail ..."

Assuming this would be another dead-end, Penn was already looking up the next store on her list when the owner smiled and said, "Aha, here he is."

Looking down the want list on the computer screen, Penn could see that he had requested lots of very old science fiction, ranging from Asimov to Van Vogt, but there were also a number of writers underlined in red. "That's the computer tell us it can't locate that writer," the owner explained. At the top of the page was the name Dr. Edward E. Smith, along with a nearby address and telephone number.

*Aha!* Violet thought, *I have you now!* Whoever Ted Hendrickson might be, he was holding true to form. Edward "Doc" Smith was one of the premier science fiction writers of the last century, almost single-handedly developing the space opera genre. His greatest creation was the Lensmen, a group of almost-superhuman policemen who guarded Civilisation against the



evil Boskone. Stan could rant for hours about which science fiction television series had ripped off Doc Smith that week.

Noting the address, Penn said, "Thank you so very much for this. You've been very helpful."

The owner smiled and said, "Quite all right, Doctor." Then, leaning back and lacing his bony fingers together, he continued, "Tell, what's it like working with the mad?"

#### IV

*This is just too damn stupid*, Penn thought as she stood outside what she was sure was Hendrickson's apartment. What if he really was some nut eager to show off his insanity in all its glory to a 75-year-old widow?

Then she remembered the evil little leer the Chairman had when he used the word "protection". *They want to bleed Hendrickson dry and dump him in the desert*, she thought, and she pressed the doorbell.

"Coming!" a deep baritone voice replied, and before Penn could react, the door opened and standing before her was a tall, muscular man. Not beefcake, just ... well built. His eyes were a twinkling blue, his hair brown and his face was almost handsome in a craggy fashion. Penn took one look and knew to a certainty who he was.

"Hello, Lensman Hendrickson," she said.

Hendrickson smiled uncertainly. "Lensman ...? Oh yes. Doc Smith! No, I'm no Lensman, but I do work for the Solar Patrol." And he stood aside for her to enter.

Like the apartment the NSA had raided, this one was neat and clean to a fault. The drapes were pulled back, letting in the afternoon sun and, from the tidy stack of newspapers and magazines on the sofa, it was clear someone was catching up on current events. A gigantic cup of coffee completed the picture.

Penn turned to face him as Hendrickson closed the door. "You're Ted Hendrickson, aren't you? What, are you some sort of time traveller?"

Hendrickson laughed and replied, "No, not exactly a time traveller, but look let me get you a cup of coffee and we could chat, Mrs ...?"

"That would be great!" she said, "And my name is Violet Penn."

While Hendrickson banged around in the kitchenette, Penn looked around. No pictures, no little touches, the apartment was almost Spartan in its simplicity. There was no television, but a laptop took its place. Even the books were neatly lined up according to author. Taking one down, Penn read the cover. *The Dummy's Guide to the Internet. My God! He figured out how to use the Internet from reading a book!* She thought as she replaced it.

Hendrickson returned with two huge mugs of coffee and, handing one to Penn, said, "So you've found me. What do you plan to do with me, Mrs. Penn?"

Sitting on the sofa, Penn used a moment to sip her coffee. *Gah!* She thought, *that stuff would take the paint off a car!* She quickly placed the mug on the newspaper pile and said, "Well, I'm not from the police or anything, so there's no reason for me to do anything with you. I'm a researcher though, and you are definitely something of an anomaly. Interstellar Drives and slide rules? Inexpensive spaceships and pulp fiction? Just what kind of time traveller are you, anyway?"

Joining her on the sofa, Hendrickson looked into his mug for a few minutes and then said, "Mrs. Penn, have you ever heard of the theory of alternative universes?"



Penn nodded.

“Of course!” he said. “If you know Doc Smith, you must be a science fiction fan! Another question: have you ever heard of Atoms for Peace?”

That was more difficult. Penn said, “If I remember correctly, President Eisenhower had a big plan to use nuclear weapons for peaceful purposes. Blasting harbours and canals and so on. Made a speech about it in the U.N. about, oh, 1953. It sort of fizzled out after that.”

Hendrickson sipped some of the Black Death he called coffee and said, “Here, yes. But what if the Atoms for Peace program caught on like wildfire? Suddenly people started thinking science can solve all the ills of the world. Science becomes a public enthusiasm, like sports are here, and they press the government to fund all kinds of research. Let’s even suppose that Americans were so enthralled with the adventure of science that, rather than electing Eisenhower for a second term, they replace him with someone who really could lead the world into an unprecedented period of scientific expansion. Heck, let’s go all the way: a society so immersed in scientific discovery, they’re on Mars by 1960 and settling the Solar System by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interesting, don’t you think?”

Penn felt her head spinning. “Who ...”

Hendrickson pulled out a wallet, shuffled around inside and pulled out what looked at first glance to be a dollar bill. He silently handed it to her and sat back. It read One Energy Unit and, in place of the usual George Washington, was a stalwart, upright Germanic-looking man. Underneath the portrait, it read, “Hugo Gernsback, President of the World Science Council.”

## V

“I’m so sorry!” Hendrickson said as he tried to help Penn lie down on the sofa. “It was stupid of me to drop it on you that way.”

Penn waved him away. “I’m fine, I’m fine,” she said. “It’s just a lot to take in all at once. A world run by old Hugo! My God! Between being an inventor, a writer and the man who developed modern science fiction, when did he find the time?”

Sitting back up, a tiny shadow of suspicion crossed Penn’s mind. “So why are you here? Research? Or is this some sort of prelude to an invasion?” Then she remembered the phrase Stan used whenever he discussed politics. “Are you Boskone or Civilisation?”

Hendrickson’s laughter rang out and shook the windowpanes. “Very good! Doc Smith again,” he said. “I’ll have to remember that. Oh yes, we’re definitely Civilisation.”

He sat and continued. “A few years ago, a scientist working on matter transmission instead managed to create a gateway to alternative worlds. The World Science Council asked the Solar Patrol to send qualified observers through to make contact. Problem was, we kept coming up against the same situation time after time. Mrs. Penn, do you know anything about nanotechnology?”

Confused by the sudden shift, Penn could only stutter, “Well, yes, something about really tiny machines ...”

“Precisely, Mrs. Penn!” Hendrickson said. “Very tiny machines. In fact, almost molecularly-small machines.” He pointed to all the science magazines on his coffee table. “Your scientists and futurists seem enamoured of the idea of injecting nano-machines into the bloodstream to cure all the medical ills of your society.”

Hendrickson sat back. “The reality of this technology is that, in about 80% of the world’s we’ve visited so far, nanotech warfare has already occurred. It’s almost a truism: as soon as nanotech is developed on an alternate, someone always uses it as a weapon.” His eyes stared out the window. “On Alternate 37, some psychotic apparently decided life was an abomination to his god. By the time we got there, the planet was as barren as the moon.”

Penn thought a second. “So you people are so advanced you escaped this plague?”

“No, nothing like that at all!” Hendrickson said. “Transistors are small, use less power and generate less waste heat, it’s true, but vacuum tubes are much tougher and easier to work with. Our technology never became fixated on ‘smaller is better’. This alternate and most of the others we’ve visited went for transistors because various governments invested billions in smaller, lighter technologies with military applications. And what did you get out of it? Machines that sit on your desktop and show you pornographic pictures!”

He sighed deeply. “Sorry. I’ve been away from home for a long time.”

“So you’re here to save us from ourselves?” Penn tartly asked.

Hendrickson snorted. “We’re not stupid. We know that it takes a bit more than one man shouting in the night to move a society. No, we’re offering you an escape hatch. Our engineers developed an interstellar drive that can be built by most post-atomic technologies, transistor or test tube. Several of us volunteered to visit the alternates that hadn’t developed nano-tech yet, and spread around the blueprints for the drive as widely as possible. If and when your society does come up with nanotechnology, at least some of you will survive. This particular human race will go on.”

Penn shook herself out of his story. “So you’ve done your duty. Why’re you still here?”

Hendrickson pointed at the stack of papers. “The gate is very energy-intensive to operate, so there’s a tight schedule. While I’m waiting, the Patrol expects me to earn my pay. I read, I make some magnetic tape recordings, I take some photographs, and I stay out of your society’s way.”

In her turn, Penn told him all about the NSA and their interest in talking to him. He couldn’t quite grasp the concept of a society ready to arrest him for publicising a scientific breakthrough, but accepted it as one more difference between the two worlds. Hendrickson almost balked at the idea he shouldn’t replace his slide rule: “There’s nothing like a good slipstick,” he protested, but in the end, he agreed that it wasn’t worth blowing his mission.

When both were finally talked out, Hendrickson rubbed his stomach. “Gosh, am I hungry! What do you say to a rare steak? I don’t often have guests, and it would be a real treat. Say have you ever read *Subspace Explorer* by Doc Smith?”

## VI

As Penn walked into her apartment, she considered Hendrickson. Stan and she had never had children, but if they had, she would have wanted a son like him. His life sounded like every day was an adventure. She had been embarrassed to discuss her Earth, a world where adventure was an unplanned happenstance to be avoided at all costs.

Turning on the lights, Penn saw her telephone answering machine flashing. “Hello, this is your friend at work.” She recognized the Chairman’s voice as soon as she heard it. “Just to let you know the idea about the tricky rulers never panned out, but Gene came up with the idea of watching for purchases of all kinds of antique scientific equipment. Turns out someone just bought a gross of various vacuum tubes, if you can believe that. Anyway, I know your last day is coming up, but I was wondering if you could drop by tomorrow and ...”

*You fool! You forgot to warn him about the vacuum tubes!* She raged to herself.

By the time the taxi dropped her off a block from the Hendrickson's apartment, it was clear that Team 4 was already in place. Less than an hour before, the street had been empty. Now a group of young football players were standing around trying to look nonchalant.

Still, she had one trump card to play. The young and vigorous tend to ignore the old and slow. She pulled her scarf over her head and, moaning and limping while she walked, she made her way slowly to the alley beside Hendrickson's building. Koke spotted her but the scarf covered her face. *Old bag probably lives in that alley*, he thought, and the way she was skulking, she was probably nuts as well.

As quickly as she could, Penn made her way to the fire escape under Hendrickson's window. *How am I going to climb up there?* She thought frantically. She looked around and spotted a reasonably intact garbage can. Turning it over, she slowly climbed on top, every muscle protesting. Balancing herself, she stretched her full length and just managed to grab the lowest rung of the ladder. Pulling with all she had, the ladder slid into place, all the while groaning and shrieking in protest. She was able to begin climbing.

Gasping and labouring with every breath, she climbed endlessly. It was sheer agony with every joint screaming in pain, but she kept going. She counted each floor until, finally, she was there.

She collapsed outside Hendrickson's window. It took her last reserves of strength to reach up and tap on the window.

The window creaked open and the now-familiar baritone said, "Why, Mrs. Penn! This is certainly a pleasure!"

"Did you buy any vacuum tubes?" she asked him urgently.

Surprised, Hendrickson scratched his head. "Well ... yes. I was doing some work on my transmitter and I never could get the hang of those tiny transistors ..."

Penn grabbed his shirtfront and tried to shake him. "You idiot! That's exactly what they were looking for! They have this building surrounded!"

Hendrickson ran to the front windows and peeked through the curtains. Seven tall, fit men wearing long coats seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of interest in his building. Hendrickson grunted and moved!

He ran to a closet, tore the door open and pulled out a trunk. Opening it, he pulled out a machine with dual tanks in a backpack arrangement, and then a smallish box with a button on top. Hendrickson immediately pushed the button, saying, "That's the emergency recall beacon. They'll start warming up the gateway, but it'll take at least twenty minutes to form. We've got to get out of here!"

He grabbed the dual-tanked device and, without another word, hoisted Penn through the window and into a fireman's carry. She squealed in protest, but held on. He ran out of the apartment and up the emergency stairs towards the roof.

Meanwhile, the elevator thumped open and Team 4, moving with military precision in interlocking zones of fire, rushed to Hendrickson's front door.

Koke pushed the unlocked door open with the barrel of his stun gun. "Mr. Ted Hendrickson!" he called. "We're from the government! We just want to talk to you! Mr. Hendrickson! Please!"

Just at that minute, the man watching the stairs quietly whistled for Koke's attention. Koke crab-walked to the stairwell and put his ear to the door. Footsteps. Someone was climbing the stairs to the roof.

Koke called over the radio. "He's headed for the roof! Go! Go! Go!"

Although a well-trained and fit explorer, Hendrickson did not have unlimited strength. After carrying the heavy equipment and the 200-pound-plus Penn up five flights of stairs, he was thoroughly winded. He burst through the roof door and collapsed. Penn managed to roll away before she was crushed under the combined weight of the tanked device and Hendrickson himself.

Grabbing him by his collar, Penn pulled him to a sitting position. Hendrickson was gasping for breath and was barely able to speak. "We're on the roof," she said. "Now, what exactly do you have in mind?"

Pushing the tanked device into her arms, he gasped, "Help me get this thing on!"

She held it steady while he worked his arms through the straps and helped him get it properly situated on his back. He busied himself tightening the straps while Penn stood back and wondered what this was all about. "Are you going scuba diving or something?" she asked.

Hendrickson stood upright, saying "No, it's a ..." but as soon as the words were out of his mouth, she recognized it. *Of course. I should have known the moment I saw it.*

"It's a rocketpack," she said, smiling.

"No, a rocketpack is for working in outer space. This is a jetpack, designed for flying on planets with an atmosphere ..." Hendrickson managed to gasp out.

Suddenly, the roof door burst open and Team 4 finally arrived.

Scuttling behind one of the elevator equipment huts, Penn whispered, "Well, that's great. What do you plan to do? Just fly away?"

Finally catching his breath, Hendrickson replied, "In my world, this lovely section of town is a spaceport, and I don't want to reappear embedded in a slab of ferroconcrete! The gate is about four hundred feet straight up from here."

Team 4 silently spread out over the rooftop, covering every corner with their stun guns. Koke called out in a conversational voice, "Mr. Hendrickson, we know you're up here, and I'm sure you know we need to talk. Why not come out and save us the time and energy of having to search for you? It's not like you can go any higher!" The rest of Team 4 snorted out manly laughter.

Hendrickson turned to Penn and whispered urgently, "Listen, they only heard one set of footsteps coming up here, so I think you'll be okay if you stay hidden until after I'm gone." He swallowed and resumed, "Mrs. Penn, this is a good world full of good people. All of you have so much before you. I only hope you can use the escape hatch we've given you!"

He moved his body into a runner's crouch, ready to uncoil. Penn grabbed his hand and said, "Bend over." When he did, she kissed him on the forehead and whispered, "Do your best, son."

He gently smiled at her and then sprang into motion.

Hendrickson raced for the nearest edge of the building. Expecting him to rush for the stairwell, the men of Team 4 were taken completely by surprise. It took them vital seconds to bring their weapons to bear.

His foot was on the ledge. Penn thought, *My God, maybe he really is nothing more than a nice boy with delusions! He'll fall ...!*

Hendrickson threw himself off the roof with the grace of a high diver. He threw his head and arms back, and for a split second, he hung in space. Even Koke stopped to watch a man kill himself right under his nose. Penn bit her hand to stop from screaming.

And then the jetpack fired.

He shot upward at a dazzling speed, the jetpack blazing in the dawn. Higher and higher he roared, and they could hear his laughter over the blast of the engine. Penn leaned back against the hut and watched him soar, thinking, *So that's what angels look like.*

Suddenly, what looked like a sphere of ball lightning enveloped his rapidly fading body, and when they recovered their sight, Hendrickson was gone.

## VII

"... In any case, it appears that he blew himself up testing one of his gadgets," the Chairman said. "I'm certain we won't be hearing from him again."

"Uh huh," Penn replied, juggling the phone against her ear while she tidied up her desk.

"Again, thanks for your help in this matter," he continued. "Can we contact you if we need your help again?"

She smiled to herself. "That's very kind of you, but I've decided to accept retirement effective immediately. I'll be moving to the Dutch Antilles."

They chatted a bit more and, when they said their final goodbyes, the Chairman was absolutely certain the NSA need never worry about Violet Penn.

Dropping the last file in a packing box, Penn called Sabine in. "Well, that's it for me. Could you make sure this gets down to the file room?"

"Sure, Dr. Penn. Wow, the Dutch Antilles! Why so far away?"

"Stan and I always wanted to live in a tropical paradise," Penn said. "I still want to give it a try."

*And of course, she thought, they're a non-extradition country with excellent Internet access.*

She walked out into the sunshine of a Washington afternoon and looked up at the sky. Ted was a good man, and would do what was right. Meanwhile, she would take care of business here.

And walking away from her old life and into her new, she took out the computer disc containing the Drive plans Hendrickson had somehow slipped into her pocket during those final moments on the roof. *Yup, she thought, a very good man indeed.*

## SF Class Structure

by Garth Spencer

### A NEBULA-WINNING WRITER

Leaps tall buildings in a single bound,  
Is more powerful than a locomotive,  
Is faster than a speeding bullet,  
Walks on water,  
Gives policy to God.

### A HUGO-WINNING WRITER

Leaps short buildings in a single bound,  
Is more powerful than a shunting engine,  
Is just as fast as a speeding bullet,  
Walks on water if sea is calm,  
Talks with God.

### A SECRET MASTER OF FANDOM

Leaps short buildings with a running start and favourable winds,  
Is almost as powerful as a shunting engine,  
Is almost as fast as a speeding bullet,  
Walks on water in an indoor swimming pool,  
Talks with God if special permission is approved.

### A FANEDITOR

Barely clears the bicycle shed,  
Loses a tug-of-war with a locomotive,  
Can fire a speeding bullet,  
Swims very well,  
Is sometimes addressed by God.

### A GOFER

Runs into buildings,  
Recognizes locomotives,  
Is not issued ammunition,  
Can stay afloat with a lifejacket,  
Talks to walls.

### A HOTEL CONFERENCE MANAGER

Falls over doorsteps when trying to enter buildings,  
Says "look at the choo-choo!",  
Wets himself with a water pistol,  
Drowns in large puddles,  
Mumbles to himself.

### A SECRETARY

Lifts buildings and walks under them,  
Kicks locomotives off the tracks,  
Catches flying bullets in her teeth and eats them,  
Freezes water with a single glance,  
IS God.





## The Adventures of the Scientist's Beautiful Daughter

by Christine Kulyk

(from *New Canadian Fandom* #5, August 1982)

### Episode I

#### FADE-IN

INTERIOR. Basement laboratory, filled with weird (and inexpensive) apparatus. The SCIENTIST'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER (SALLY S. DRUTHERS) is contemplating a framed photograph of her husband, DEREK (the SCIENTIST'S HANDSOME SON-IN-LAW). On the wall behind her hangs a plaque engraved with: "PROF. B.B. BRAIN, SCIENTIST."

SALLY: *(sighing heavily)* Oh, shucks and darn. Oh, Derek, I wish you and Dad would hurry up and come back from the twentieth century. Ever since you stepped into the Wherever Machine on an expedition to gather ethnographic data in North America in 1066, things have been so boring around here. I mean, I've typed all the letters you left for me to do, and I've finished making photocopies of all the reports from your last expedition. And now the Coffee Machine is on the blink, I really don't know what to do with myself. I wish Dad hadn't burned that book by Germaine Greer that I picked up at the bazaar last month – it looked kind of interesting, but I only got to page three before he grabbed it out of my hands to use in an important experiment. Now all I've got left to read are these dumb cookbooks Derek keeps buying me for my birthday. Oh, well, maybe I can find something to do around here ...

*She throws aside the thick cookbook in disgust, and begins looking around the lab, poking her nose into everything. Finally, she finds a helmet attached to a*



*strange-looking apparatus by several wires. She reads the inscription on the helmet.*

"Professor Brain's Brain-Recorder, patent pending." Hmm. This must be that new gizmo that Dad and Derek have been tinkering around with for the past few months. I wonder how it works?

*She tries to activate it in various ways, then finally puts it on her head, and examines her appearance in a mirror. A whirring noise starts up, and she stands petrified, with a dopey expression on her face. After a brief while, the noise stops, and she blinks a few times, rapidly, then frowns and removes the helmet slowly.*

My goodness! I've just read all of Derek's brain-wave patterns! ... Fascinating ... But who would have thought it? All this time, he's been telling me that making the coffee while he and Dad worked on their experiments and went off on fabulous adventures together was the most important job of all. He even told me that there was going to be a new Nobel Prize established for the best Lab Assistant and Typist. And now I've discovered that he didn't really believe any of that at all! He just made it all up. Why, he even made up the part about making babies. How could he? I thought he loved me! Well! Just wait 'til he and Dad get back from 1066 – I'll fix *their* little red coffee mugs, and this time – NO SUGAR!

*She pounds her fist into her other palm, furiously, and stamps over to the coffee maker with a wicked grin.*

FADE-OUT.

((TO BE CONTINUED))

Episode II

FADE-IN

INTERIOR

Basement Laboratory. SALLY DRUTHERS is pacing back and forth, with her chin in one hand, looking pensive. A loud buzzing noise begins, and we see PROF. BRAIN and DEREK DRUTHERS emerge from behind a curtain, looking exhausted and bedraggled. Sally wears an applique with her initials, "SBD" in large letters.

DEREK: Boy, am I tired! That was a really exhausting expedition. Sally, *(without looking in her direction he unstraps his knapsack)* how about some coffee, darling?

PROF. BRAIN: *(takes out a notebook from his pocket and begins to scribble in it. His pencil breaks abruptly.)* Darnit! Sally, get me a new pencil, will you?

SALLY: *(without looking at them, she begins to stroke her chin pensively)* You know, Dad, I never thought to mention it before, but I've been typing your notes for a long time, and the other day I came across something that didn't sound right. I was

wondering if maybe you'd made a mistake in adjusting the Whenever Machine ...

*A loud roaring noise emerges from behind the curtain. Everyone stops whatever he/she's doing, and stares toward the curtain, trembling. DEREK clutches his knapsack defensively. PROFESSOR BRAIN points his broken pencil at the curtain, brandishing it like a sword.*

SALLY: What on Earth is that?

PROF. BRAIN: Oh, it's ... I've been meaning to tell you, my dear, we've been having some trouble with the Whenever Machine.

SALLY: But, that's what I was trying to say, Dad, I –

DEREK: Not now, Sally, dear, we've got work to do!

SALLY: But –

DEREK: Run and hide in the other room, Sally. Right now!

SALLY: But, isn't there something I can do to help?

DEREK: Just do whatever you usually do in a crisis like this.

SALLY: Well, usually I scream, really loud, and then I faint into your arms ... But somehow, I don't see how that would help ...

*The roaring becomes especially loud, and PROFESSOR BRAIN rushes behind the curtain, with DEREK following.*

PROF. BRAIN: It's the Time Warp Beast – it's followed us here! Quick, Derek, we must do something! Attack!

SALLY: Oh, dear! A Time Warp Beast! They could get hurt ... Well, it would serve them right ... No, I don't want them to be hurt, after all. What can I do? If only they had listened to me, maybe I could have solved the problem. It just needs a little bit of adjusting here, and there ...

*She turns some knobs beside the curtain, and the roaring soon ceases. DEREK and PROF. BRAIN emerge, looking even more bedraggled.*

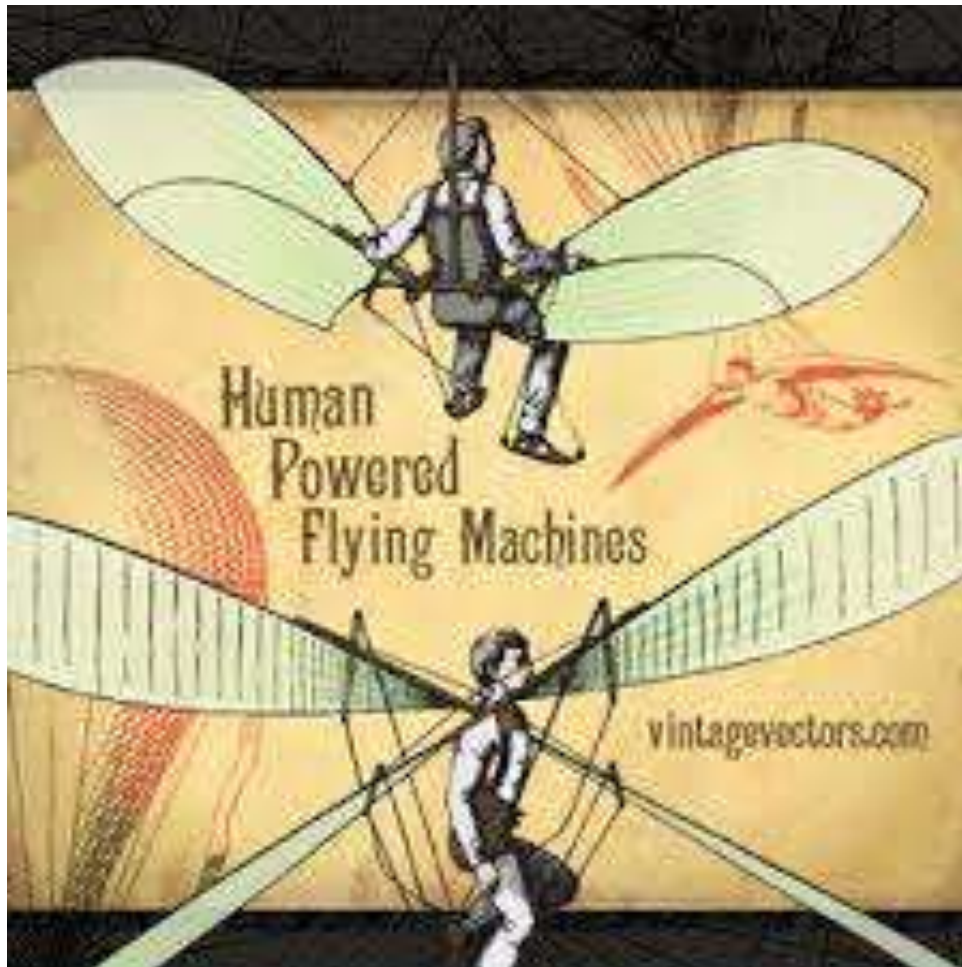
PROF. BRAIN: I can't understand it. It just disappeared all of a sudden, just as it was about to grab poor Derek.

DEREK: I'd have been a goner, for sure! What happened?

SALLY: *(smiling smugly)* It was me, Derek – I fixed the Whenever Machine, and sent the Time Warp Beast back to its evil lair. And now, there's something else I've got to fix ...

*As DEREK and PROF. BRAIN stare in amazement, SALLY strides over to her sewing kit and removes a new applique with the initials "SBB". She yanks off the old initials and throws them into a trash bin. She pins the new ones on her lab coat.*

SALLY: I just thought I'd let you know, Derek, dear, that I've decided to take a more active part in *our* experiments from now on. And, also, I'm going back to using my real name, SALLY B. BRAIN – this way, they'll know who I am when I win the Nobel Prize.





## Boxtop: The Man Behind the Myth

Steve George

(from *New Canadian Fandom* #5, August 1982)

Nick Boxtop is a private detective based in Winnipeg. During the past two years he has become the subject of a small-press mystery magazine that has assumed his name, numerous stories and articles, and possibly an upcoming television series. The following interview took place on a grey afternoon in mid-February 1981, in a small office on the fourth floor of a dilapidated building one block from downtown.

Boxtop was dressed neatly in a jet-black suit, white shirt, black tie, and black leather shoes. His hair, short, black, and greased down, is combed straight back from a high forehead. His face bears numerous scars, but projects a friendly aura, masked by professional cynicism.

Boxtop was very cooperative. He talked very freely about matters pertaining to his private life, and his business life, his answers revealing a certain amount of intelligence that fails to show itself in the various stories concerning his exploits. The interview, which for the most part ran smoothly, was periodically interrupted when

Boxtop had to run down four flights of stairs and cross through heavy traffic to use the underground public washrooms on the corner of Garry St. and Portage Ave. From what I could gather, Boxtop has no fixed address; when he needs to sleep he lays a sleeping bag on the stained wooden floor of his office. The office itself is very small; a single room with two desks. One of the desks is usually occupied by

Boxtop's secretary, Miss Bag, but she was not present during the interview. The atmosphere for the interview was very appropriate: grey light slanting inwards through the single window, across which had been nailed a number of wooden slats, casting weird shadows through the veil of smoke from the cigarettes that Boxtop chain-smoked throughout the interview.

GEORGE: Nick Boxtop is a name that has become synonymous with the image of the wisecracking, hardboiled, street-toughened, womanizing breed of detective. Did you start off trying to build that sort of reputation?

BOXTOP: No, well, not really; perhaps in a way, but subconsciously rather than by overt planning, if you know what I mean.

GEORGE: You mean you're really the way you appear?

BOXTOP: We become what we pretend to be, right? But no, what I mean is, everyone has an image of what a hardboiled detective should be, right? I mean, we've all seen Bogie in the Chandler/Philip Marlowe movies, right? I didn't always want to be a detective, but when I did in fact become one, I knew the type of detective I was going to be. Unscrupulous to a certain extent, but basically a nice guy, right? (Smiles brightly here, leaning back in his rickety wooden chair, feet up on desk.) You've got to remember that I didn't write those stories. I never agreed to have my name on some damned mystery magazine. That was all behind my back, right?

GEORGE: That brings up another question. How accurate are the various adventures that have been written about you?

BOXTOP: (Chuckles, takes a drag on his cigarette, takes a sip out of a styrofoam cup in which he told me is cold coffee, but by the smell of his breath I know it's cheap rye whiskey.) Those writers sensationalize a lot, right? But basically, getting down to roots as they say, a lot of what is written is accurate. I do have a secretary named Miss Bag. Cecelia Bag. Where they came up with this Sleazy Bag bullshit I'll never know. I do have a partner named Green Bottlecap, but I haven't seen the bastard in weeks. I mean, in those stories he's made out to be the utterly reliable one, right? He's the one always solving the damned cases, acting normal, a real straight-guy-honest-detective, right? Christ, what crap. I shouldn't talk about the guy behind his back, but what the hell. He's a scum. A no-good rotten brained maggot. Last case he was on, he was trying to figure out where the sun went at night. Never did get to the bottom of that one.

GEORGE: So most everything else is accurate?

BOXTOP: Whoa, boy, now wait a minute. Give me a chance to finish. Not everything else is accurate. Give me a minute to think. (Thinks for five or six minutes, intermittently puffing on his cigarette and sipping his cold coffee. /sic/) That car that Danielson fellow says I drive ...

GEORGE: A '52 Nash Rambler.

BOXTOP: Yeah, right. What the hell is a Nash Rambler? I don't go in for those fancy foreign jobbies. Danielson was over here when he was writing that story, right? He says, "Nick, what kind of car you drive?" I tell him a '75 Toyota Hatchback, right? He says, "Nick, Nick, that won't do. I'll think of something else." Right? What could I do? Also my appearance. They're always having me "tossing back my golden locks", right? Do these look like golden locks? Looks more like black paint, right? And then there was that bit about me cavorting naked and all with Miss Bag. Embarrassing and not true.

GEORGE: I don't understand. Why not sue for libel?



BOXTOP: Like I said, I'm a nice guy, right?

GEORGE: You have been called "sexist" and "crude" by various readers of the /Nick Boxtop Mystery Magazine/. Any comment on those accusations?

BOXTOP: Amazing powers of observation. I admit it, I am sexist and I /am/ crude.

GEORGE: I want to get away from the magazine and the stories for a while. Would you mind if I asked some personal questions?

BOXTOP: Go ahead. If the truth doesn't come out, the fiction eventually will, right?

GEORGE: Let's talk about Nick Boxtop the child. What are your earliest memories?

BOXTOP: Strangely enough, I have a very clear image of my first memory, it recurs every so often in my dreams, and sometimes during the day. I'm hanging upside down. Some huge pink and white monster is holding my ankle. I can hear a woman screaming: "It's blue! My God, it's blue!" Next think I know I'm being smacked and battered and beaten and a hoarse voice is yelling, "Breathe, damn you! Breathe!" And then I'm coughing and sputtering and someone else is saying, "Damn it, Doctor, couldn't you leave well enough alone?" Then I'm being swung towards the woman on the bed, my mother I think, and she's getting ready to breast feed me, but the hand is around my ankle again, yanking me away and another voice, my father I think, is saying, "This little bastard ain't sucking on that, Babe. Doc, get me a bottle!" and then there's a lot of confusion and a bottle is stuck in my mouth, only it isn't milk, it's straight rye. (Boxtop gulps down the rest of his cold coffee, stares at me solemnly.) That's my earliest memory. You getting all of this on tape?

GEORGE: That's a very vivid memory.

BOXTOP: Yeah, but then I'm blank for the next twelve years.

GEORGE: Okay, let's skip ahead a few years. You've already mentioned that the sexual exploits in /Nick Boxtop Gets Laid/ and other stories aren't entirely accurate. Do you remember your first sexual experience?

BOXTOP: Yeah, I remember. I was thirteen, covered in zits, self-conscious as all hell, awkward, ugly, etc. You know the story. Two lost souls meeting in the barn, sort of thing, right? She was fifteen, ugly as sin, stacked. I didn't know what I was doing. I'm not sure she did, either. It was great. In a way. (Boxtop pauses here, obviously thinking about what he said.) Hell, what am I talking about. It was the shits. I didn't know what was going on. I went to the barn to fork some hay and there she was, stark naked, except for a flimsy black negligee and a red garter. I was raped. I'll never forget it. I don't know where she came from. Nobody ever saw her before or after that. My analyst says I imagined it. I'm inclined to believe it was a conspiracy, probably with Dad behind it, right? Make the boy think he was raped by a nonexistent alien, right? Didn't work. It'll take more than that to get me believing They're after me. Paranoia ain't my bag, right?

GEORGE: Then let's talk about when you decided to become a private detective and why.

BOXTOP: Let's see, now. I was twenty-seven when I decided to become a detective. Mostly because my career as an up and coming artist had fallen through. Why a detective? Romanticism, I guess. Certainly not for the money. (Laughs) It's sort of an easy life, right? Also, you can get away with a lot more, people expect it. Live like a bum, be an alcoholic, no fixed address, and it adds to the image, right? I pull pogeys and people think I'm tough. It works out. But all that came later. I started off very optimistic, without this layer of protective cynicism, can you believe that? I believed I could make it. Naïveté beyond belief. Look at this town. A stink pot; a numb spot on the face of the continent. I might be able to get work making /Who's Fucking Who/ charts, but there isn't much of a market, even for that. Loner detectives are a dying breed.

GEORGE: Are you thinking of getting out of the business?

BOXTOP: Hell, no. I've thought about it, I'll admit, but what else am I going to do? I'm stuck with this. I'll have to make the best of it.

GEORGE: Just a couple more questions. What do you think the future holds in store for you?

BOXTOP: Professionally? I really don't know. You think they'll have detectives in the future? About the near future, though ... I've had film offers. /The Nick Boxtop Story/. Sounds okay, right? Listen, I'm thinking of expanding my operation, maybe even open up a couple of publishing houses. Maybe buy the rights to /The Nick

Boxtop Mystery Magazine/ and publish it myself. I've only seen a couple of copies, looked kind of crude to me, I could probably do better. Must be a huge market for that sort of thing, right? I mean, look at that Ellery Queen fella, and that Alf Hitchcock guy and that Asimov dude, they all got their own magazines. I think Boxtop stories could make it. I got fans too. Really. Danielson tells me that fans read the /Boxtop Mystery Magazine/, right? I must be popular.

GEORGE: I think he probably meant science fiction fans.

BOXTOP: You mean like Buck Rogers and UFOs? I doubt it. What do I have to do with all that? I realize, sure, that I once wanted to be a sci fi writer, but I hardly got started before I realized there was no market for my stuff. /Lust in Space/, my first novel, will never see the light of day. I'm really not interested in exploring the far frontiers of the imagination. I'm exploring the far frontiers of my wallet. I've reached the limit.

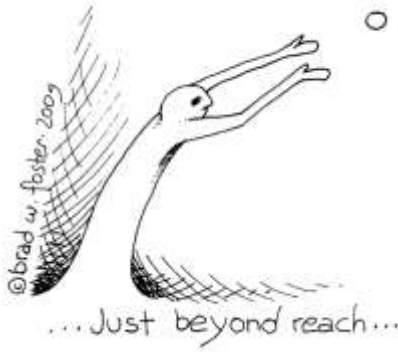
GEORGE: Any personal plans for the near future?

BOXTOP: Yes, actually. I was thinking of getting hitched up with Cecelia Bag, my secretary. Green Bottlecap would be my best man, right? I'd have them both in the same room at the same time. Perfect, right? Start off with a double murder then top off the evening with a messy suicide. Other than that, no plans.

GEORGE: Thank you for this interview, Mr. Boxtop.

BOXTOP: No problem. Anytime.





## Babylon If ...

by Eric Mayer

(from Brian Earl Brown's *Sticky Quarters* #9, May 1984)

It took a neofan and a couple of sticky quarters to make the discovery that split Fandom like a *Hustler* centrefold. The neo had been staying at Curly Thompson's famous Brooklyn apartment for barely a week when the quarters showed up in a dog-eared envelope, addressed in a looping, childish scrawl to "Frederick Foster, editor" Freddy had never edited anything in his life.

"It must be an omen," Curly told him. "Buy a couple of stencils. I started with a two-pager myself."

Freddy had peeled the tape off the coins and stuck them in the pocket of his jeans. They were still there that evening, gummy and gathering lint, as the roar of the departing subway dwindled to a ringing in his rather protuberant ears. As soon as he realized he'd gotten off at the wrong stop, his suddenly trembling hands went to the coins, as if to a talisman.

He wished desperately that he'd listened to Curly, stayed to the end of the Spacehounds meeting and come home with him and Sid. The unfamiliar station was deserted. Naked bulbs, dangling overhead, sent shadows knifing away from the graffiti covered I-beams supporting the unnaturally low ceiling. Freddy began to move down the platform in an awkward walk that was really a frantic dash trying to pass for a nonchalant stroll.

Later, Freddy wouldn't explain how, terrified by the dank, subterranean tunnels, he had chosen to reach the Port Authority and the Brooklyn bound IRT by an aboveground route. He had not planned on finding himself on one of those disreputable blocks near Times Square. He was horrified to see the black flocks of "X"s that had come to roost on the theatre marquees thrusting out over the congested sidewalks. Everywhere, neon buzzed about "Topless Dancers" and "Live Sex" so shamelessly that it might have been hawking "Bud" or "Miller" It looked like it would be possible to commit all Seven Deadly Sins, as well as several others undiscovered by medieval man, before reaching the end of the block.

Steeling himself, Freddy started off. He never dreamed he would end up in one of the innumerable peepshows advertising "Movies — 25¢". It would never have occurred to him,

except for the fateful quarters he kept turning over and over in his pockets. The sign in the window of the peepshow, which was covered with the stained glass contact paper favoured by storefront churches, said "Babylon West".

"A fan has to keep broadening his mental horizons," Freddy told himself, as he pushed open the door.

He made his way through racks full of glossy porno magazines, all sealed carefully in plastic bags like priceless fanzines on a huckster's table. As he approached the viewing booth in the back, he had the sensation he was being stared at. He glanced back over his shoulder. In the front of the place was a tall counter with a raised platform behind it. A moon-faced black man was sitting up there and grinning at Freddy in a peculiar way, as if he knew a secret.

Freddy hid himself in the first booth he came to. It resembled the changing booth in department stores and as he pulled the squeaky curtain shut, he recalled the mortification he'd suffered as a child when forced to try on new clothes.

He'd been certain that the other customers could look over or under the curtains and see him, with his skinny legs, in his underpants. As he rushed to get his trousers back on, the zipper invariably stuck.

Freddy flushed. He fumbled one of the quarters out of his pocket. It stuck to his sweaty thumb before he managed to shove it into the coin slot underneath the screen. It fell into the coin box with a loud thunk and he heard the projector behind the wall of the booth whirl into life.

"Up in the Attic". The title flashed on, then vanished to be replaced by a grainy, unsteady picture of a nude woman, stretched out on her side. As the camera pulled back Freddy realized, with disappointment, that it was the famous poster of Marilyn Monroe. Intellectually speaking, he'd hoped for something more exotic than the picture that had adorned the backs of the playing cards he and the neighbourhood kids used to steal out of his father's desk for their poker games.

The camera continued to move back jerkily until it became apparent that the poster was hanging on the wall of the long cluttered attic of the title. The picture was dim, as if the projector bulb was nearly burnt out, and Freddy strained to make out four shadowy figures, moving about vigorously. Before he could figure out what they were up to, the screen went black. Muttering, he pushed his second quarter into the slot.

He gasped so loud that the moon-faced man must have heard him, and his sensitive fannish face was contorted into an expression of disbelief. The picture was brighter now – and it was quite obvious what the four figures were doing.

\*

There was the rattling of chains being unlatched and bolts being slid back that Freddy's week in the city had not accustomed him to. Then the heavy apartment door swung open and Sid goggled up at him through his ?? lenses. "Thank goodness, you're OK," he said.

It was late. Brooklyn, stretching out away from the fifth floor window, was dark. Curly lumbered up off the couch, a big, indistinct silhouette against the twin arcs of red and green lights marking the Verrazzano Bridge.

"So, you finally made it," he said, knuckling his eyes. "You should've stayed for the rest of the meeting. Vispi proclaimed Sid 'The New Burbee' on the basis of that Pith article. Isn't that a laugh?"

"You got lost, didn't you," said Sid. "I knew we shouldn't have let you leave by yourself. You could've been mugged."

"At least that would've made an article," Curly said. "Maybe Vispi would've proclaimed Freddy 'the new Willis'." He chuckled. "I'm off to bed, myself." For a man of his bulk, he made his way with surprising grace through the cartons of paper, stencils and fanzines piled like ancient cairns around the dark living room.

"Wait," Freddy said suddenly. "I did get an article out of it. I went into this peepshow and —"

"Peepshow. Great Ghu. Rotsler's on my mailing list. You think he'd be impressed by a juvenile account of some silly peepshow?"

"Well, what I saw —"

"My dear boy. I've attended 441 conventions. I know what you saw." Curly shook his head. A smile began to form. "Imagine, though. Freddy Foster, well-known young neo, not a week in the Big Apple and already succumbing to the illicit pleasures of city life. Now there's something I'll have to write up."

Freddy flushed. His mouth moved but for a moment nothing came out. "I — I saw Walt Willis in the peepshow," he finally blurted.

\*

An hour later Curly, Sid and Freddy stood in front of the sputtering sign in the window of the Babylon West. Curly had grumbled but had broken down when Sid threatened to go with Freddy alone. On the way, over the numbing clatter of the subway, Freddy described what he'd seen.

"As soon as the picture brightened I could see it was a ghoddmitten match. A mustachioed character in a trenchcoat whacked the shuttlecock towards the camera and when one of the opposing players whirled to retrieve it, I recognized him as Willis."

Curly led the way into the peepshow. As they passed the front counter, the moon faced man accosted them in a mellifluous voice. "Only one at a time in the viewing booth, gentlemen."

Sid dashed eagerly through the racks of shrinkwrapped genitalia and vanished behind the curtain of the booth Freddy had indicated. Curly came to a halt beside the booth, stopping slowly like an ocean liner coming into dock. He waited, glowering, with arms folded.

Half a minute after the whirl of the projector stopped for the second time, the curtains squeaked and Sid emerged, looking sheepish. He pulled a red bandanna out of his shirt

pocket and began cleaning his glasses. He looked straight at Freddy with his myopic, unfocused eyes. "There were just some — uh — girls. You know."

"Let's make it official," Curly said. He wedged himself into the booth.

"Freddy," Sid whispered, "I'm sorry." He put his glasses back on but wouldn't look up from the linoleum floor.

Curly yanked the curtain open and glared icily at Freddy. Freddy found himself glaring back. How much condescension were you supposed to put up with in return for a place to crash?

"I know what I saw." His voice quavered.

Curly looked thoughtful. "I don't think you do know," he said in a surprisingly mild voice. "For instance, you didn't even realize that the character in the trenchcoat is John Berry."

\*

On the downtown IRT Curly and Freddy sat apart from Sid, as if he had metamorphosed into a giant slug. As soon as they got back to the apartment, Curly fetched Sid's travel bag from the bedroom and dropped it at Sid's sneakers. "Any real fan would've seen Willis in that film," he said. "I'm not harbouring any mundanes under my roof."

The horror of being banished from Curly's famous apartment was too much for Sid. He began to sob. "Maybe I'm not a trufan," he blubbered. "Maybe I'm just a jerk. But think of the articles. Where would Burbee be without Al Ashley? Let me stay, Curly. I'll be your Al Ashley."

From the fifth floor window they watched his foreshortened figure trudge off. He looked one of those cartoon characters that waddles away after being squashed up into its hat.

"Pathetic," Curly said. "He didn't even think to call us bastards."

\*

"We won't be attending Spacehounds anymore," Curly announced the next morning. "We'll form our own club, exclusively for Trufen. We can call ourselves the Wheels of Babylon."

He had it all figured out. Discreet invitations were mailed. Small groups of would-be initiates began to arrive each week and Freddy and Curly escorted them to the Babylon theatre. Some saw the light. Most did not. It surprised Freddy that he could never predict which fans would see Willis in the booth, although it seemed to him that the rankest neos failed most consistently, probably because many of them were not long for Fandom anyway. Those who saw heaving breasts rather than spirally shuttlecocks reacted in various ways. Many gafiated in humiliation. Some denounced the whole thing as a hoax. One prominent editor merely added a couple of "h"s to his name and went on pubbing as if nothing had happened.

In the evening Curly bent over his vast mailing list, eradicating the names of the frauds who had been revealed. "Many are called but few are chosen," he liked to say. Above his desk hung a pen and ink drawing done by a fanartist after his revelation in the peepshow. It

showed Mae West wearing a beanie. "Is that a stylus in your pocket, or are you just a mundane," she was saying. The Wheels of Babylon promised great things indeed.

It seemed to Freddy that club membership was increasing with agonizing slowness, so it surprised him when, after two months, Curly remarked that too many fans were entering the fold. "Some of them must be faking it," he concluded.

He didn't pursue the subject and the next pilgrimage started off normally. The dozen uneasy fans made their way down the seedy street to the Babylon West, trailed by the panhandlers who'd come to anticipate the weekly appearance of these easy marks. Inside the peepshow the moon-faced clerk was at his accustomed spot, smiling his enigmatic smile but not acknowledging the fans otherwise. He was remarkably tolerant of the commotion the fans caused — the whoops of glee from the chosen, the tooth-gnashing and howls from the less fortunate. It was as noisy as if Jesus Christ himself were to materialize at a revival meeting, save half the congregation on the spot and open up the floor under everybody else. The clerk's only response, if it was a response, was to play a jazz station on the radio he kept behind the counter.

In the group was a long-time fan with whom Curly had once feuded. "We fought the good fight and I've come to respect the man," Curly confided to Freddy. The long-time fan emerged from the booth exuding neofannish enthusiasm.

"What a sight," he exclaimed.

"What colour were the stripes on Shaw's sweater?" Curly asked him.

The man was taken aback. No one else had been subjected to questioning. "I think they were blue," he said hesitantly. "I wasn't studying the —"

"If you'd really seen the attic you'd know the sweater wasn't striped at all," Curly said. And Freddy could hardly disagree.

Testing soon became part of the ritual. Not everyone who claimed to see the attic was tested, but whoever Curly chose to test was invariably revealed as a fraud.

"When you've been in fandom as long as myself you learn to spot them," Curly explained.

Gradually Fandom was culled and the remaining Trufans were able to turn their attention to the great task before them. There was much to be done for, as Freddy described it, the film did not end after the first two segments. A third segment appeared a week after Freddy's initial discovery and was followed, at sporadic intervals, by others. Each new segment opened new universes of information.

Curly organized projects. Neofans were assigned to count the cartons of paper and stencils. The attic was mapped. Artists kept busy drawing Willis and his colleagues from life and coming up with new treatments of the bits of Newtonnards Road that was sometimes visible through the attic window. The length of Berry's moustache was calculated to the millimetre. One enterprising fan deduced the date from the angle of the sunlight hitting the wall to the left of the ghoddmitten net.

"To my knowledge not a single issue of *Hyphen* appeared within months of that date," Curly observed. "And yet, the amount of supplies suggests Willis was ready to print something. Freddy tells me he has verified the existence of crumpled stencils in the wastebasket which appear for a second behind paper stack 4A, during the fifth segment. If all this is true, it can mean only one thing. A lost *Hyphen*."

By remarkable coincidence, it was the following day that Freddy reported the appearance of a new, sixth segment, in which a manuscript was clearly visible on the work table that sat beside the heretofore unglimped attic doorway.

The Wheels of Babylon set out to reconstruct the Great Lost *Hyphen* and all might have gone smoothly if Freddy had not met Ann Dilcher. Without Curly's knowing, Freddy had been visiting Sid at Vispi's Westside apartment. Freddy had been surprised that Sid, although a mundane, was still publishing frequently and receiving numerous fanzines from other mundanes. It was at Vispi's that Freddy met Ann. She reminded him of one of Heinlein's heroines. He was smitten.

Curly was horrified when Freddy proposed her for the Wheels of Babylon. There were no women in the club. "It wouldn't be gentlemanly to take a woman into a peepshow," Curly explained. "And what if she was a mundane and rather than seeing Willis ... well ... it couldn't be done."

Freddy insisted, however. Ann was the most beautiful femmefan he had ever seen. When he and Curly finally took her to the Babylon West she had to pull a baseball cap down over her hair so she could pass for a boy.

"What colour are White's socks?" Curly asked her. "White, of course."

Curly shook his head sadly. "I'm sorry, Ann. They're obviously a charcoal gray.

Freddy's mouth went dry. Curly was avoiding his gaze but Ann flashed her eyes at him. "Curly," Freddy said. "You must have seen wrong. Those socks are white."

\*

Something seemed to go wrong with Curly once Ann was in the club. He proposed that the Wheels start work immediately on a fanzine, *Babylon If*, in which they would make public their findings, including a reconstruction of the lost *Hyphen*. He suggested they use magnifying glasses to enable them to make out the words on the manuscript page that was visible in the film.

"Why not take a camera into the booth," Ann suggested.

"The clerk would never allow it," Curly said. "Besides, it wouldn't work. The Effect can only be seen by a Trufan."

Ann took a drag on her cigarillo. "Hasn't anyone written to Willis and asked him about all this, about the lost issue, about whether he ever had a ghoddmitten game filmed?"

Curly leaned forward in his seat. From beyond the window came the sound of distant sirens. "I know there's still a Walter Willis in Northern Ireland," he said. "But, you see, he's not our Willis. He's not the fan Willis. Not anymore."



The next day Freddy found a net stretched across the middle of the living room. Curly was wheezing as he shifted cartons of paper from place to place.

"We will create an exact replica of the attic," he wheezed. "Every box of paper will be in its place. We'll recreate the scene. If we put ourselves in the minds of the Wheels of If we'll be able to fill in the gaps in the lost *Hyphen*. We'll need to dress appropriately. Does Ann sew?"

Freddy started to worry about Curly. It was with a sense of relief that he was able, shortly afterwards, to report that he had finally discovered the final segment of the film.

"There's no more. Willis' side wins the game, naturally. Then the trailer comes on."

With the completion of the project suddenly in sight, the Wheels worked feverishly. Evenings, after the others had left, Curly would stand before the window, between the replicas of "paper stack 4B" and "dropped stencil 2", gazing glassily out over the rooftops of Brooklyn, muttering about pods and mundanes who walked like fans, wringing his big, soft hands.

"Sometimes I think there's just the two of us, Freddy. There are no more fans left anymore but us."

The day came when Babylon If was finished. It was a magnificent fanzine, with gorgeous lino-cut covers. It was absolutely authentic. Every word, every picture had either come directly from or been inspired by the film of the attic. Freddy gazed upon the hundreds of zines choking the living room and quailed.

"Don't worry," Curly told him. "I'll see they're mailed right away."

And indeed, when Freddy returned from visiting Ann that afternoon, the issues were gone.

\*

For a week Freddy haunted the tiny, cold foyer where the apartment mailboxes were located. At last the first loc arrived and he raced up the five flights of stairs calling for Curly.

"Dear Curly," the loc began, "Thank you for sending *Swedish Metermaids in Bondage*."

The locs were all like that, although some writers did not thank them. Even the Wheels themselves accused Curly and Freddy of sending them glossy pages of sexploitation rather than the twiltone revelations they'd laboured at.

"I never imagined that the Effect would remain, even after we transferred what we'd seen onto paper."

"They were all Mundane," intoned Curly. "Not a single Trufan among them. They all deceived us." Freddy had to agree, there was no other explanation.

Freddy and Curly returned one last time to the Babylon West. Winter had arrived. Soiled snow lay sprawled in sullen piles along the curb. As they approached the peepshow, they



saw an ambulance pulling away. Two police cars, red lights flashing, were parked in the street. The neon sign in the stained glass papered window was dead.

Curly strode through the doorway and confronted the policeman inside. "I want to see the manager," he said.

"You're too late," one of the cops told him. "The fellow's an escaped mental patient. Someone recognized him and tipped us off. He's on his way back upstate now." Curly headed towards the booths.

"Don't waste your time, buddy," the cop called after him. "No films left. As a matter of fact, the whole place was cleaned out weeks ago."

Freddy noticed for the first time that the racks were empty. There wasn't a magazine to be seen. The place might have been deserted for years.

He and Curly trudged back out, into the cold. The shock had been too much for Curly. "Now what?" he moaned. "What's left for me?"

"I'm moving out of the apartment," Freddy told him. "I'm gafiating. Ann is going to school. We have plans."

Curly said nothing. His eyes were dull. Except for the movement of his legs and the fact that his breath continued to steam out into the icy air, he might have been dead.

"Before I leave, though, I wanted to tell you, since you're the last one now, that there was another segment. I wanted it to be a surprise, for a second issue of *Babylon If*." Curly turned his head dully into Freddy's direction.

"Willis left a message. He wrote it on a sheet of paper and held it up to the camera so I could read it."

Curly's hand clamped around Freddy's thin wrist, but there was no strength left in his grip. It was as if he were holding Freddy for support.

"What did it say?"

"I'm sorry, Curly. I can't tell you that. It would plunge all Fandom into war."

Freddy pulled away from Curly. He started walking to the subway.



## Caro Fanatico Numero Uno

Andrew Hooper

(previously appearing in *Mainstream* #14/15, 1992)

"... Andrew's (story) assumes some familiarity with other books or cultures. Here Joseph Conrad and Francis Ford Coppola meet Terry Carr. ..."

(Jerry Kaufman, in *Mainstream* #14/15)

Times were bleak at Fan Central Station. When there are more mundanes than trufen living in your slanshack, it's time to move on. But the thought of packing everything up — the mimeo, e-stenciller, typer, the collection, the hi-fi, all those beer cans — made a cold wave wash down Max Lineaux's spine.

He was contemplating a new set of "house rules," which the new "house-mother," Espera Locke, had attached the refrigerator with alphabet magnets. She had taken down his laborious quotes, "Not to run on four legs, that is the law," and "Who sawed Courtney's boat?," and replaced them with "Eferyone blease read these rules." It cheered Max for a moment to notice that she had been unable to find a "v," despite the fact that "Vargo Statten" was smack in the middle of the fridge. Then he read rules eight and nine:

8. There is to be no operation of mimeographs after 9 p.m.

9. Electrostencilling will be conducted during daylight hours, with ventilation as recommended by the manufacturer.

"Who died and made her queen of the galaxy?" asked Jack Verti, sauntering into the kitchen in his bathrobe. He was unshaven, and the throbbing of his hangover was almost audible, but as always, Jack exuded an air of control, calm and unflappable.

"This is just to get back at me," said Max.

"I can't imagine why she would be mad at you. Just because you sat there running the stenciller for five hours, and almost gassed us in the process."

"Some people have no sense of 'umour. They're fakefans who think crifanac is calling for dry towels at a con hotel."

"Whatever they are," said Jack, mixing himself a very large glass of tomato juice and oatmeal stout, "they are now in charge around here, and you are a minority. Of one, I am afraid, since I shan't be here for very much longer myself."

This shook Max. "You're going? You've accepted the job?"

Jack nodded happily, gargling the Stout Mary in his throat. "Universidad de Venezuela at Maracaibo. They have a lot of transmission work, everything from microwave to land lines, and by the time I get through, we'll have the whole Orinoco basin wired for sound."

Max stared. "What will I do without you here, Jack? We have another issue of *Boney* due soon, and what'll I do without your article?"

Jack shook his head and smiled sheepishly. "I've written three more 'Verti-bra!' columns to tide you over through the end of summer. You *know* I wouldn't run out on my co-editor altogether. But don't you think it's time you showed a little backbone yourself? This has been your fanzine for most of the past year anyway.

"Besides, I'm going to Venezuela, not Vega! They have typewriters there and everything. I'll write some heady stuff out there in the jungle, best I've done, wait and see. And I promise, I'll send it back to you first, Maxie."

TEN DAYS LATER, JACK WAS GONE, and Max felt lonely. Other members of his fan-group had taken new jobs, married Britfans and emigrated, even burned out and gafiated, but none of their departures affected him like Jack's. Jack had pubbed his first LoC, run his first article, had been the first to call him a fugghead in print. Now, with him gone, the slow defections caught up with Max all at once; he looked over his Wednesday night group, and realized that none of them had been there five years before.

He sidled up to Annie Cash, who had once bounced into his life as an apple-cheeked neo and asked, "What's this fan stuff, anyway?" Now she chain-smoked Parliaments and wrote KTF reviews of Jacqueline Lichtenberg and David Drake's novels for *SF Eye*.

"So, Jackie's gone to South America?" she asked.

"Yeah," sighed Max, "he's really gone."

"Good," said Annie, struggling with the cellophane on a fresh pack. "He was like an octopus. He always had a hand on my thigh, or worse. I showed one moment of weakness and kissed him on New Year's Eve, and I never heard the end of it."

"I'm sorry he treated you that way, but I still miss him."

"Well, you'll get over it. I sure got over him in a hurry." She stopped, seeing the stricken look on Max's face, then put her hand on his shoulder.

"Hey, Max, honey, it'll be all right. He'll write; you're his best pal. He'll miss you more than you miss him, I bet you, when he gets out in that jungle, with nothing to do but read the same copies of *Holier Than Thou* over and over."

Max smiled wryly. "He'll just look at the fillos."

"Right," she smiled. "But we'll hear from him. I know Jack Verti too, and he's no gafiato. He's trying to find a Spanish translation for 'egoboo' right this minute."

Max laughed, and bent his head back away from Annie, letting her warm hand fall from his shoulder. He had been awfully close to crying, and he didn't want her to see.

But she was right. Jack was sure to become an awesome letterhack, at least.

THREE MONTHS LATER, MAX HAD BITTEN his fingernails into bloody stumps, called the American consulate five useless, hissing times, gotten into over a dozen screaming arguments with Espera, and still not a word from Jack Verti. There was to be a house-wide Fan Central Station meeting in twenty minutes, and Max knew that they would be asking him to leave. He didn't plan to contest their decision.

He was sitting in the television room, waiting by the telephone, hoping the A.I.D. officer for Venezuela might still return his call. But it was hopeless. Jack had gone underground for some reason, and if he didn't want to be found, then he wouldn't be.

There was an amazing movie on the Cinema Channel. Something by Werner Herzog, with Klaus Kinski as a demented opera buff who wanted to build a grand opera house in the Amazon jungle. As Max watched, Kinski had a huge army of porters and labourers dragging a massive steamboat, straight over a mountainside. It was an incredible endeavour, clearly issuing from a mortal obsession in the character Kinski was portraying. He went to turn up the volume, so that he could hear the dialogue, and heard the mailbox on the front door slam shut.

Max strode to the door, and flapped the box back open. Inside were several bills, a copy of *FOSFAX*, and a pocsarcd with a bird-of-paradise plant on the front. The ink on the back was smeary; it looked to have been rained on. But the writing was clearly Jack's.

"Dear Maxie," it began, "I'm sorry I've been so long in writing you, but I've had a few changes of plan her e and there. These people don't need microwaves, although a sturdy typer or two would do them wonders. Did you know you can make something like hecto-jelly using ground manioc root? I am delirious to finally be in a country where they understand what FIAWOL really means. I may not be back as soon as I planned; already they call me 'Caro Fanatico Numero Dos,' and that's pretty hard to turn your back on. But if you still remember your pal, send me my stylii and letter guides! We're dying out here without them! Anything in care of Capitan Pedro Moreno of the riverboat *Mariposa* will reach me sooner or later. By the way, don't you trade anymore?"

And that was it. It wasn't exactly "Croatoan," but it was pretty damn close.

His passport was upstairs, in his desk drawer. The stamps from Heathrow and The Hague would soon have company. He went out into the common room, so they could finish throwing him out of the slan shack.

VENEZUELA: NIGHTMARE AND PARADISE ALL AT once. The poverty and squalour of the countryside was subdued by South American standards, but Maxie still found it striking. yet, when he pulled his rented Hyundai out of the oily smoke and chaos of Caracas, and headed

into the campo, the countryside resolved itself into a riot of birds and trees and rain and butterflies.

The bed of his truck was filled to the rails with the equipment he felt Jack and he would need. He had brought the e-stenciller, the trusty A.B. Dick, and an almost new Gestetner 420 that he had gotten for a song. He had about a hundred pounds of stencils, several gallons of corflu, four manual Royal typewriters, hundreds of stylii and letter guides and shading plates. In Caracas, he had bought a black market Venezuelan postage meter. The only thing that worried him was paper; five cases wouldn't last very long. But a minor functionary at the Soviet embassy promised him that with a little judicious tinkering in the machinery, a certain factory in Azerbaijan could produce high-grade twiltone from toilet paper.

He figured he had pretty much all he and Jack would need to establish their own jungle fanpub empire. Now he just had to find Jack.

He spent three fruitless days searching around Maracaibo. The local A.I.D. officer claimed that Jack had ceased to check in with him over two months before, but there was always the chance that he had just holed up in town somewhere with a stack of *Asimov's*. Yet, everyone whom he spoke to confirmed that Jack had gone up river, some time before. When Max finally found the room in which Jack had been staying, the only clue he found was an unfinished note, which read:

SELL THE TYPER. BURN ALL THE *GENRE PLAT* AND THE *SPAN INQ*. FORGET ABOUT ME.

Clearly, something significant had happened.

FORTUNATELY, CAPITAN MORENO AND THE *MARIPOSA* were still at their slipway when Lineaux found them, and half their load had "fallen off the truck" on their way to the docks, so the capitan was only too happy to load Maxie's mimeos and other gear into the hold.

The journey up to El Lago Negro, the farthest the *Mariposa* could navigate, took four excruciating days; Capitan Moreno was a trekkie. He would grin with rotting teeth at Max, and ask things like, "Que barca did Commodore Matthias Decker command? Y quien fue el actor?"

Max would sigh, slap at the mosquitoes, answer "Uuuuhh ... it was the *Excalibur*. And William Windom played him."

And Moreno would laugh a high, whistley laugh, and say, "Correcto, pero solo en parte!"

AT EL LAGO NEGRO, THEY HAD seen Jack, a crazy gringo who tried to give them fanzines. But, they were all in ingles! Who would bother to translate them? Jack tried to explain that all knowledge was contained in fanzines, but they simply smiled vacantly and nodded, saying, "Si, si! FIAWOL, se\_or!"

Something was wrong here. But he had to keep going now; there was nothing to go back to. He hired a dozen young men and women to help him bear his equipment, spent the last of his money on extra food and supplies, and his expedition struck into the hinterland, heading to the headwaters of the mighty Orinoco.

The journey was hellish, miserable, but we need not dwell on it at length. Max was delirious from fever, but he kept going on. his porters were lazy or superstitious, but they did get hurt,

sick. The Gestetner went down into a ravine, and Max wept for a solid hour. There was a sound of shattering glass and the e-stenciller was useless junk. They ended up putting his Soviet toilet paper to its intended use.

By the time he reached the last foothill village, Max had only one loyal man still with him, and between them they carried a typewriter, three quires of stencils, two bottles of corflu, and two colours of ink. Jack had always loved red inserts.

As they walked up the muddy road, a child darted from a dark corner and thrust a smudgy fanzine into his hand. Max couldn't read the writing, but he was stunned to see from the picture on the cover that it was a Terry Carr memorial issue.

Then his spirits were lifted to the clouds when he heard the voice of Jack Verti crying out hoarsely from the window of a house nearby. He ran to embrace him, but his joy stopped in his throat. Jack was missing the lower half of his left arm, and the stump was bound in bloody, stinking bandages. His body was raddled with sores and fresh scars, and his weight had dropped under 100 pounds. And as Max boiled water on his primus, to make Jack's favourite flavour of cup o'soup, the dying man related his story.

"I wrote you that the fans I befriended had declared me *`caro fanatico numero dos'*? Well, it was flattering and bothersome at the same time. It made me wonder; had Forry Ackerman made it all the way out here? Were these people reading that monster rag of his? Or was someone else around here number *one* fan face? I had to find out.

"So I headed up river, where they said numero uno had his palace. Once or twice along the way, somebody showed me his stuff. It was good, really good. Great repro, even. But it sounded sort of familiar to me, like I had read it somewhere before. Or maybe it was just the style that was familiar. I'm not sure.

"But by the time I got this far, I *knew* that there was some famous gafiate living up here in the mountains, with his own fan empire all to himself. I thought it might be Laney, or even Degler, founding the master race among the indios. He knew so many things that only a trufan would know. I couldn't believe that numero uno could possibly be a native Venezuelan."

He coughed enormously, then sipped some of his cup o'soup. "Mmm," he said, "tomato noodle.

"Well, I was right about that part. But not the way I thought. Did you know that Brasil fought in the Second World War? I hadn't. I don't know as much as I thought. But Brasil did fight in the Second World War, they had a division fighting in Italy. They had a squadron of pilots fighting with the RAF. Some of them were very imaginative young men and women. They wrote letters to *`Brass Tacks.'* They found other fans in the armed forces. But they were shy about their English, their lack of experience. Only one of them had the ambition — the megalomania — to build his own fandom, while doing what he could to keep an eye on what trufandom was doing. To keep his hand in without identifying himself. Do you see where this is going, Maxie?"

"Not really, Jack. Why didn't he just contribute to fanzines, write LoCs, like anybody else?"

"Oh, but he did, Max, he has for over forty years. His friend Sandy Sanderson got him started, and he's been at it ever since. He's always been able to find someone to help him stay anonymous. And when the Brazilian police closed in on him, thinking he was some sort of revolutionary, he moved his operations over the border, up here where the hill people revere

him as a SMOF. And he has been so many fen, so many times. First he was Joan W. Carr, that much I know; but later, he had other names: Vincent Omniaveritas, Demian Razorbill, Cesar Ignacio Ramos, Wally `the Snake' Mind; the list must be a mile long."

"Bergeron?" guessed Max.

Jack sighed. "I think the *real* Richard Bergeron died in early 1980. I mean, who would believe that a fan who hardly even left his apartment would move all the way to Puerto Rico? It was just a way for Numero Uno to use an American bulk permit."

"It would explain a lot," said Max.

"Then, when I got there, to the temple of the beaver, he shook my hand, and he took me in, let me set up my own zine on his mimeo, and let me use his paper to run it off, and distributed it with his runners. And then, do you know what he did? He brought me his latest number, which he had finished before I ever started mine. And in it he called me a talentless fugghead who was polluting the forest with his hopeless crudzines. And his people took me out and threw me off the top of the temple. And this is the result, Max; `Dey took my *thumb*, Charlie, ahahaha."

"Pretty wasteful if all they wanted was your thumb," said Max.

Jack descended into miserable delirium, while Max tried to decide if what he had said could be true. He sat with Jack through the night. Near dawn, Max made his decision and packed his gear; a little after that, Jack died, muttering, "The *hoaxer!* The *hoaxer!*"

Poor, poor Jack, thought Max, he never could get used to being less than the first name on the colophon.

Max shouldered his pack and went into the jungle. A few days passed, hard days, but his burden seemed lighter all the time. Soon he came to the outlying compounds, where many ran to him, offered him clubzines printed in Quechua or Aymara, and shouted things like "WAW with the crew in '52!" and "Minneapolis in '73!"

At last, he stood at the base of the great pyramid, and was walking up the long carpet of jaguar skins, the air full of incense and fresh ink. The mountain behind seemed to be carved with a mile-long Rotsler cartoon. Caro Fanatico Numero Uno waited at the top of the stairs, his face dark and lined, yet still sensitive and supremely fannish. His huge jade ear spools were engraved with *Hyphen* covers.

Max huffed to the top, and offered his hand. "Carl Brandon, I presume?" he said.



## My Norwescon Song

Garth Spencer

*(with apologies to Stan Rogers)*

(for male quartet, to the tune of "Northwest Passage")

### CHORUS

Oh and just one time, I would make it to Norwescon  
To find the hand of Suryan screwing up Security  
Making one warm line through a land so mild yet savage  
And make it to Norwescon by the sea.

1.

Three hours from the Peace Arch Gate, 'tis there twas said to lie  
The gateway to Trufandom, for which so many tried  
Seeking gold and glory, leaving empty name and purse  
'Mid old convention flyers, Star Trek fanzines, and filk verse.

2.

A generation after, I take passage down I-5  
In the trail of famous Susan Wood, and others yet alive  
Watching cities rise before me, then behind me sink again  
This tardiest congoer, 'cross the hills and fruited plain.

3.

And through the night, behind the wheel, the mileage clicking past  
I think upon Creation Con, Mike Glicksohn, and the rest  
Who passed the U.S. Customs gates, and showed a path for me  
To make it to Norwescon by the sea.

4.

How then am I so different from the first fen through this way?  
Like them I left a settled life ... for three or four more days  
In search of El Dorado as described by many fen  
To find there but the road back home again.

## Cider: Our Friend and Yours

by Don H. DeBrandt

(first published in *The Daily Blurb*, V-Con 17's daily convention zine, and reprinted with the author's permission)

Cider has grown in popularity these last few years, especially in British Columbia. In 1986, we consumed 6,939,000 litres of this tasty beverage, about the same as we had for the previous three years; the next year it jumped to 8,491,112! The reason?

Some say V-Con did it.

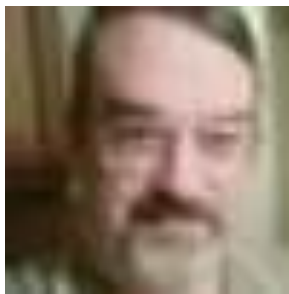
It's true that this drink, with an alcohol content ranging from four to seven percent, is a perennial favourite with our American visitors, perhaps because until Prohibition, cider was considered the national drink of the U.S. Since then, it has been replaced by other liquids, notably coffee and wine coolers.

Perhaps it's because of our orchards in the Okanagan, which produce fruit with a relatively high acidic content, perfect for concocting this fruit wine. Cider is made from the pulp of apples or pears and fermented in much the same way wine is but there is even a champagne cider, fermented a second time in the bottle. There are, however, some misconceptions about cider which should be cleared up.

First, flavoured ciders, such as apple-lime or strawberry, are not made from fermented berries or citrus fruits but they have these flavours added to an apple cider base. Other popular flavours include peach, blueberry, root beer and kokanee. The berries used in kokanee cider grow only in the Kootenay mountains, and are sometimes called "sasquatch berries" because of their heavy brown pelt.

Second, the bubbles in cider are not carbon dioxide, as in other sparkling beverages, but methane, which gives cider its distinctive aroma. Trained Smurfs are fed a special diet of burritos and sodium bicarbonate, then added to the fermenting mixture, which they stir briskly by performing synchronized swimming routines from old Ethel Merman pictures. Most Smurfs are good for seven or eight hours before they absorb enough alcohol to go belly up. Don't worry, it isn't as bad as it sounds; at this point they are fished out, dried, shredded, and used as artificial blueberry colouring. Kittens are occasionally added for extra sparkle, flavour, or just for the hell of it. Dead winos that have been found in the gutter and are too smelly to bury are sometimes used to enhance fermentation, and an age-old tradition in the cider business, passed on from father to son, is "straining the vat for spare change". Leper's underwear is ...

*(continued on page 72)*



## The Secret Life of Robert Runté (Pt. I)

by John Constantine  
(Adam Charlesworth, former ed., *Neology*)  
(in *Neology* #68, Winter 1989/90)

During the courses of our daily lives we are surrounded by unseen brilliance. The man down the street who wins the Nobel, and the boy next door who discovers the cure for cancer. However, we never actually get to meet these people; we only hear about them. I think the majority of the populace (me too) expect to see halos around people's heads, and flowers springing up wherever they walk. So when we bump into Joe Genius we just tell him to sod off and look for where he's going. Luckily for me, I recently discovered one of these rare beings and have had the opportunity to study this particular one in close detail, at a science fiction convention.

I first met Robert Runté (not his real name) eight years ago in Edmonton (not a real city), at the local SF club. I was very young but it did not take me long to realise that the always interesting group of people sat in the same small quiet corner every week, talking quietly in amongst themselves. Using my wit and charm (blackmail... oh it was soooo ugly) I wormed my way into their little group and began to participate in their activities. Being young, I never really pondered why we talked about alien intelligence and when would the earth be capable of space flight, and why in such a small group of people they always seemed to get their hands on the cutting edge of Earth's present technology. Several years passed and I became a good friend of Robert's, it was then I began to notice things about him that were odd. I don't mean that I have ever witnessed him eating live hamsters or a suspicious extra hand where one would not normally see one but little things like — the fact he never ever took off his clothes in front of anyone or when he rented a room at any convention NEVER EVER would he share one or even tell you where it was. These may seem like trivial little things to you now but wait till I blow them out of proportion.

By a very strange coincidence Robert and I happened to attend V-Con 17 together, strange because I met him at the door carrying four bags of luggage. As he registered at the front desk I ambled up to him and offered to carry two of his bags for him. My reasons were for this charitable action were not solely based on my good nature but also because I wanted to see the inside of his room. Robert and I chatted about how odd it was to actually be here together when I realized that I had to stop and rest for a minute. Robert looked me up and down and asked why a man of my bulk and non-flabbiness was having trouble carrying two 50 kilo bags half a klick to his room. It was then I remembered that Robert HAD been carrying all four huge bags himself without apparent discomfort. My deep, dark suspicions about Robert surfaced, and suddenly I had to know what was in those stupid bags. I considered all my options in a

flash and decided on a course of action which I hoped would bring about the best results with the smallest amount of friction between myself and the alien creature. "Robert, what exactly is IN these bags anyway?" I asked.

He looked at me with a wicked grin and told me. "Books, John. What else would I bring to an SF con?..." His sentence trailed off as he realised I was on to him. The look of panic and despair vanished off Robert's face almost as soon as it had arrived, but it was too late... I had finally caught on to his little act.

We finally arrived at his room, for which I was grateful because the silence between us was growing stiffer and stiffer. Jokingly I offered to help him unpack. It was then he turned on me, and asked me to leave his room at once. He placed a supraterrrestrial strong arm on mine and pushed me out of the room. I cried out that I had left my ID card behind, and protested my ejection. Robert relented and I reassumed my position inside the room again. Robert began to panic and explained that he had a friend arriving momentarily and I really had to go. Using my "look it's Elvis" routine I misdirected him long enough to place my tape recorder, running, in his closet.

I left his room and went to the Con suite to ponder all of the general quiet weirdness that continually surrounded Robert. First of all, no matter where we went together he would always see and meet other quiet people. But he would only say a few words to them and then depart, refusing to answer any of my questions about who the person was. I mean, it was as if he planned all the coincidental meetings ahead of time. Then there is the fact that Robert doesn't mate with other humans. Occasionally he goes on trips to Mayerthorpe and Cadomin for "Conferences." Yeah... alien sex tune ups is more like it.

I returned to Robert's room an hour after I had left it and discovered nobody present. Using my lockpicking techniques taught to me by KMF, I wormed into his room and retrieved my tape recorder. I started to examine the contents of Robert's room for clues which would support my theory (like a good Christian Scientist I disregarded any clues which would not support my theory), but before I could progress any further into my covert searching I heard the door of the elevator opening. I cut my search short and exited the room quickly. I left the floor by the side stairs and tracked down Stephen Samuel and persuaded him to relinquish his portable stereo unit long enough to listen to the sound I had recorded. Normally I would expect to hear conversations on a hidden bug but this time I was surprised by genuine weirdness. At the beginning of the tape I heard the sounds of me being ejected and then a few moments of silence then this:

"Come in. Are you ready? I don't have much time."

"Of course, brother... prepare... DZZZCHHK... DZZZCHKKK." That's it. No more, nothing else. Steve, wide eyed, identified the sound as the pickup carrier for a 9600 baud data transfer. Stunned, I swore Steve to secrecy. Sadly, Steve met with a fatal accident on his return trip from Vancouver, and he never would have the opportunity to relate any of this story. Unfortunately, the only copy of the tape perished with him.

Robert Runté continues to live in Edmonton, and now works for the Board of Education. Robert writes the exams and designs the course structure for today's youths. You wonder why today's youth are so apathetic? They have been programmed to accept orders from above, and care not for who rules them. I see the frightening consequences developing, and I can tell you do too. I mean, isn't obvious that aliens are taking over the world by subverting today's youth?

Why don't I do anything about it .... Well, having met Robert, and taken courses he has designed, I see this is really just some silly idea the TV put in my head.

*(Editor's Note: In recent months UFO sightings have been commonplace all throughout the world. Interestingly enough all UFO sightings have taken place around the location of fanzine editors' homes. After I sent Mr. Runté an advance copy of this article, I tried to contact Mr. Constantine. Unfortunately he has disappeared, and strangely enough, so has Mr. Robert Runté.*

### ***SEQUELÆ:***

"The Secret Life of Robert Runté": letters in *Neology* #69, March 1990

*A Letter of Scholarly Interest from Dr. Teresa Malcolm*

Dear Mr. Constantine:

It is with great interest that I read the last issue of *Neology*, in which your suppositions concerning the entity known as "Robert Runté" are chronicled. I have approached my colleagues in the Department of Scientific Philosophy here at the university with a plan to thoroughly research this possibly alien entity. They are dubious, but I certainly don't need to sell you on the project, as even a lowly undergraduate such as yourself can understand the importance of this Find.

The "Robert Runté" entity — an alien existing within our midst — living off of the brainwaves of the deviant and the brilliant! An alien giving back care and protection to the humanity that harbours him — or possibly a spy — a forerunner of a force of uncommonly powerful and intelligent beings who would vacation on earth and take home fossils, orchids and pet humans! It is truly mind-boggling. To be blunt, however, my plans are not inexpensive. I calculate it would only take 25 years (with 4 months off every winter for me to authenticate alien sightings in Mazatlan) and cost a moderate 7.372 million dollars (half of our funds would come from Private Sources). I have several detailed budgets. Please forward all donations to the offices of *Neology*, who will then forward them to me. Utmost secrecy is required, therefore only the Hobbithouse Offices of *Neology* will know my whereabouts — somewhat like yourself, Mr. Constantine, there are Those Who Would Thwart My Efforts.

Minimum donation \$1000. No tax receipts issued. Items of Runtéism also welcome. (Runtéism is the cultivation of a Runtésque temperament and life plan. Its adherents follow the Runté Deity slavishly and may prove my biggest obstacle in the trapping and caging — er — housing of the Runté entity).

I am planning to build a lavish and modern research laboratory for the study of the "Robert Runté" entity. Of course all contributing ESFACAS members would be allowed to view the entity for free, once he has been captured. This is due to the fact that he seems to thrive on the strange and aberrant auras of Esfacians. Esfoggies would be forced to pay actual cash, as I am under the impression that they are: a) mostly employed, and, b) In possession of less wildly unusual auras and problems.

He has, I am told, certain favourites of the category "FB" which we would be required to produce. I am still researching what FB can possibly mean: either Fabulous Bakers (he is fond of chocolate) or Forensic Beancounters (an inexplicable taste for bureaucracy is noted).

I am certain my plans will meet with your approval, and I will expect a great deal of help from you. Capture of the entity is judged to be a task of the utmost delicacy. Any information you can give me will be appreciated.

Yours in Scholarship,  
Dr. Teresa Malcolm  
Alien Entity Researcher

### *RUNTE DEITY*

How dare you defile the great name of Runté by allowing person or persons unknown to pry into his secret life! He is a God, and as such cannot be bothered by the likes of mere mortals like you! We are aware of the prying of Doctor Teresa Malcolm, and she will be dealt with severely for her heresy, as will all trespassers against the Runté deity! None shall survive our righteous wrath as we destroy all disbelievers!! The Runté deity lives! Be warned and beware!

Cult of the Great Runté

*The Secret Life of Robert Runté: The Epsilon Factor*  
by Bob Johnson

There is, and or rather was, a perspective visible only to those select few with the lack of foresight to perceive it. Make no mistake about it, Rob (Robert Runté) does what some of us only dream of doing. How, is not relevant in this discourse. Who among us would begin to grasp the fundamental nature of fandom to the level of such a person? Could not anyone hindered by wayward thinking begin to believe they had grasped the fundamental nature of the cover of *New Canadian Fandom* #8? I think not, but so did others whose names I won't list here, except for Cath Jackel, Michael Skeet, Steve Forty and Robert Gunderson (and who could argue with that?).

What of Free Trade and Robert Runté? Is there a connection? How the @#5% should I know? Nobody wrote about it in any zines, but what does that mean nowadays with this fascination some Canadians seem to have with voting for complete morons like Mulrone? The issue isn't academic any more, the process is incomplete without looking at the history of fandom, but even when we do it's easy to get bogged down in details which, to the casual observer, appear somewhat familiar in an awkward sort of say.  
In conclusion: what a guy!

*The Secret Life of Robert Runté: Alien Friend Runté in Schools Brainwashing Scandal*  
by Ian McKeer

I was greatly amused by "The Secret Life of Robert Runté" and chuckled all the way through it. The deductions are indeed plausible even if somewhat surprising and I can't say that I can produce any evidence to the contrary based on the period I lived in Edmonton



(1982-82). I assume Mr. Constantine is a pseudonym so that the real author can remain protected from alien death squads, though to judge from the editor's postscript, it hasn't done him much good. Still, it was a suitable cover name, given the Byzantine reasoning in the article. What it really lacked was a lurid title, like: "Alien Friend Runté In Schools Brainwashing Scandal."

*The Secret Life of Robert Runté*  
by Harry Warner Jr.

Gee whiz, I don't think anyone in FAPA realized all these secret facts about Robert Runté and I doubt if many of the individuals on your mailing list outside of me are FAPA members so maybe I'll be the only one in the organization to comprehend his hidden nature. I'd been thinking about dropping out of FAPA, but now it's obvious I should retain membership for a while longer, just to see what might happen in Robert's special circumstances.



## The Day the Torcon 3 Bid Began

Taral Wayne  
(from "Same As It Ever Was", *Maple Leaf Rag* #13, March 1985)

*(Editor's note: this was written as an obvious satire in 1985 – Toronto had hosted only two Conventions then, and nobody was willing to cooperate with anyone else on another, yet. The piece itself satirizes Toronto fandom in the early 1980s.)*

... a letter in *The Maple Leaf Rag* was the start of it. It was written by someone who should have known better, who was an expatriate of the city and had surveyed the fandom there. But however injudiciously the gauntlet had been thrown down, the challenge couldn't be ignored if Toronto fans were to face themselves in the mirror (a chilling prospect at the best of times). Reluctantly, fans from all walks of life assembled for the first time in years to discuss a Worldcon bid.

They filed, one by one, into a silent room for the 2 o'clock meeting. At quarter to three the room was still silent, and thick with mutual suspicion. Then someone realized that they were all waiting for others to show up. Bob Hadji checked with Do-Ming, who was keeping minutes, and confirmed that in fact they were already all there. No-one had realized it, though, since they didn't recognize one another. Hadji thought he should make introductions. He hardly opened his mouth before his precedence was contested by everyone on the floor. The two dozen people in the room formed and reformed into caucuses, to raise one of their own to speak first. Somehow Hadji ended up speaking first anyway, most likely because no agreement could be reached among the contending parties, and it was getting to be three-thirty. He made the introductions:

He himself and Do-Ming were there to represent OSFiC. He then pointed out Mike Wallis and Howard Scrimgeour, the middle-of-the-road convention crowd. Kevin Davies came next, an independent. Then Taral Wayne, a fanzine fan. Liz Pearse followed, from media and art shows. Next came John Robert Colombo, representing academic interests. Then John Millard, the old-time fan and collector. Although more familiar than most with the disparate faces of Toronto fandom, Hadji ran through those he knew quickly, and thereafter asked people to introduce themselves.

A couple stood up and declared themselves from costuming. A tall-in-the-saddle type said he was a Dorsai and demanded strict compliance with any military fiat he might find it necessary to impose. A pair of high-schoolers identified themselves as fans of the best sci-fi on television. Immediately two others shot up, one declaring that *she* was the Star Trek representative, and another that *he* was the Dr. Who fan there (and who were the three impostors?). It developed that the show originally referred to as "the best sci-fi-on television" was not even in serialization, much less the subject of \$40,000,000 movies, or international syndication, so the high-schoolers were hooted out of the meeting. Rapidly thereafter, people identified themselves as from comics, games, video, Japanimation, and a Heisenbergian nightmare of other splinter groups.

The first order of business was to establish a committee, and at once there were difficulties. It was agreed that 24 chairmen was an impractical number, but no-one volunteered to withdraw their claim. The assembly decided to accept itself as 24 candidates for the chair, and table the matter of an election until another time. Someone brought up the division of labour in the committee. This resolved itself suspiciously easily, as people staked out their individual hegemonies. There were one or two exceptions, such as eleven people demanding exclusive liaison with the guests, and two competing factions for internal security. Then it was noticed that certain alliances had cornered large areas of responsibility, and demands came to break up the monopolies. Security passed out of the hands of one faction into the hands of the other. At once there was an objection from another area of the floor, viewing with alarm the loyalty oaths the new chief had once demanded from past concons. He promised no loyalty oaths as long as he could administer a polygraph test to every prospective concern member, but to no avail. Security passed into a third set of hands, one of the video

representatives. This brought up the issue of monopoly of power again it was objected that one faction couldn't be allowed to be in charge of films and security. Then someone asked for a separate security force for the art show ... The decision on security was deferred.

Two people wanted to do publications. Kevin said he could get good dealers on printing and subsidize the cost with lavish ads. Taral claimed he would do the artwork himself and could get the best contributors. He only draws himself, it was remarked, and also that Kevin was an artist too. This was countered with sarcasm from someone familiar with Kevin's past "deals." Then someone asked what was more important, a better editor or a better publisher? A motion was made to put the publications in the hands of a third party with more experience than ordinary fans. Objection was made at once that that party would use them as little more than self-promotion. Colombo took exception, and asked what was the matter with that? Publications were tabled until the next meeting.

Elizabeth Pearse commented that she'd like a special guest artist at the con, perhaps her wonderful friends the Freas — But she was immediately drowned out by the floor.

"Again? They were special guests at ChiCon!"

"What about my friend, Fletch?" "Who?"

"We should get John Benson to run the artshow; he won't rig the judging!"

"... owe it to her to let her make back what she lost ..."

and other less intelligible howls of fury, directed as much to other speakers as to Elizabeth. She backed down and that issue was left undecided as well.

The bidding committee (still *pro tem* until its membership could finally be resolved) took up the matter of guests of honour. There was no agreement but a satisfactory number of alternatives were proposed. About 39 of them, ranging from Jerry Pournelle through Alfred Bester to J.G. Ballard. A few suggestions, such as Charles Platt, E.C. Tubb, Jacqueline Lichtenberg, and L. Ron Hubbard were discarded out of hand. Having been unexpectedly productive in an area potentially fraught with controversy, the *pro tem* committee happily passed on to the next item on the agenda.

Someone challenged Bob Hadji's modest proposal that he head a program team, eliciting gripes from the floor about "artsy-fartsy panels", "talking heads" and "Commie-intellectual-queers". Someone demanded that David Warren be in charge of program, contested immediately by a claim for Danny Lozinsky. Since neither candidate had been informed of the "open" meeting and wasn't present, the matter was referred to such time as it could be put to one or the other.

One after another, difficulties were met and similarly dealt with.

At 9:30 the committee *pro tem* had reason to feel proud of the progress it had made in spite of the many differences that divided it. A unanimous decision had been reached to hold a bidding party! Just as soon, that is, as the committee could agree just when and where it should be held.



## Vincent Fan GoH

by Wendi Vadd  
(Dave New)

(from VCON #18 program book, 1990)

Vincent's lifelong passion has always been names. He's one of those people who can tell you what stands at the intersection of Nixon and Bluett, in Ann Arbor, or who was the previous member of the Royal Family to be named Eugenie. He's collected postmarks from towns named after every planet but Uranus; he's compiled a list of the phone numbers of every James T. Kirk in a North American White Pages. Perhaps it's this fascination which has led him to live in such remote towns as Enigma, Georgia; Baie-des-Ha! -Ha! Québec; and most recently, York Factory, Manitoba ("where they make new Yorks").

Never remaining for more than ten months in one place since his childhood (on an Army base in Weierhof, West Germany, next door to a Mennonite high school), Vincent has been notoriously hard to track down ever since he first appeared on the SF scene in 1967 with his groundbreaking short story, "It Was a Tree". Combining a utilitarian sense of language with an avid distaste for the so-called New Wave movement, he founded the sadly short-lived Tree school of writing, contributing himself such stories as, "They Eat Potatoes," "Earache", and the uncannily self-referential "Soon to Be a Collector's Item."

He retired from the field of semiprofessional writing in 1969, after receiving a rejection slip for his first novel, and moved to Luxembourg, where his work in fandom began. In 1972, he founded the satirical *Richtung der sehr grosser Sozietät*, a quarterly journal which he published in Paris and for which he accepted articles in any language except German and French. But this endeavour sparked the paranoid curiosity of Interpol, and when the zine's fourth issue contained a Sanskrit piece entitled, "Fafhrd: An Etymology", they translated it and discovered instructions to bomb the Amsterdam airport. Although Vincent was cleared of charges (he speaks no Sanskrit and refuses to learn any to this day), the magazine was forced to fold, and he was banned from selling his works in the Netherlands for eighteen years.

Since then, he has moved around North America, hostelng in obscure Newfoundland villages, renting an apartment in Vincent, Texas, playing a trombone for spare change in Milwaukee ("which is a pretty silly-sounding name in its own right"), or spending one September tracking Sam Donaldson's footsteps in order to appear in the background of as many of Donaldson's White House broadcasts as possible. (He's in fifteen.)

Known for such one-shot zines as *Varve*, *Mulm*, *Petrochemical Tendencies*, and the APAzine *I'm Boring You, Aren't I?*, Vincent organized Confield in 1981, a landmark convention held entirely out of doors. Panels occurred at wooden card tables with miniature teepees as decorations. Thoroughly contented by its success, he proceeded to organize winter 1982's three-part Concatenation — Conception, Continuation, and Convalescence — working behind the scenes and only bowing out of the Con3Com at the last moment, to publish Impressions 91.

Later that year, he applied for and received Canadian citizenship, and in 1984 made typically jesting use of it by running for federal office with the Rhinoceros Party that September. He came third in his northern Saskatchewan riding, narrowly surpassing the Liberal candidate, on a cunning platform of establishing a government monopoly on paper clips, redesigning stop signs to be visible from the air, and sending alkaline rain to the United States as a friendship gesture.

Since his election defeat, he has published five more issues of *Impressions* 91, each with the same cover date (April 1st, 1991), and recently he has been working on a new novel, his first fiction in twenty years.

His astrological sign is Virgo sometimes and Libra other times, "which means that I balance order against sanity and get to ignore horoscopes." His favourite number is 91, "because it really ought to be a prime. I mean, there's no good reason why it isn't." His favourite film is *Powaqqatsi*, his favourite album is Don McLean's *American Pie*, and his favourite books are the Dick and Jane series.

Before now, Vincent has always refused to attend cons under his own name — although he denies being Dale Speirs. But this May 25th is his 8281st day of involvement with SF — 91 squared — and that seemed to him a perfect excuse for a comeback opportunity. He hopes to have his novel published sometime next year, even in the Netherlands, and finally enter into the Pro SF field that has eluded him for two decades. In the meanwhile, he's proud to be V-Con 18's Fan GoH.

*Vincent writes:*

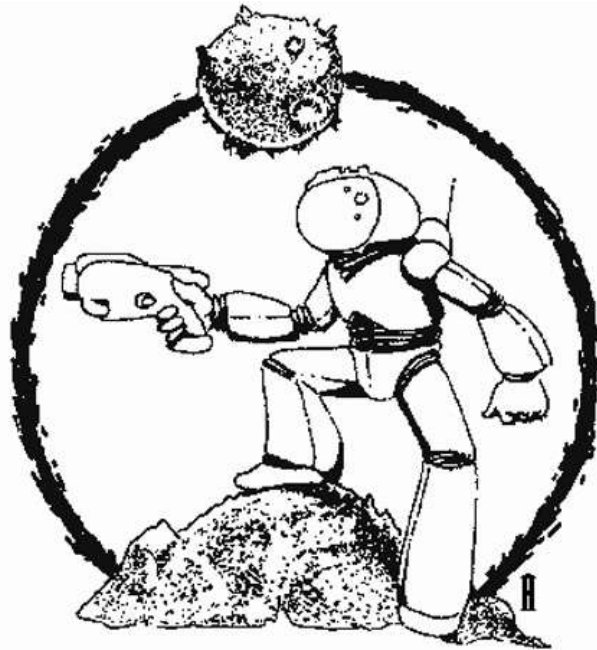
*I lived in Paris. There, I enjoyed a comic called Les Aventures Fabuleuses de l'Incroyable Thrüd. The Incredible Thrüd is an alien and a dinosaur and a medic. His back is always full. There were only three issues.*

## **Vincent Bibliography**

*Richtung der sehr grosser Sozietät* #1-4, 1972-3  
*Sunflowers, Money, Karma*, 1975  
*Varve*, 1975  
*Mulm*, 1976  
*Household Silt*, 1976  
*I'm Boring You, Aren't I?*, 1979



*Fire Door Keep Closed*, 1980  
*Petrochemical Tendencies*, 1981  
*Impressions* 91, 1982, 1985, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989  
*Is There Death After Life?*, 1983  
*A Guide to Painless Rebirth*, 1983  
*See, Spot, See!* (with Wendi Vadd), 1986  
*You Read Me Like a Book*, 1987  
*Retroactive Lives* (with Wendi Vadd), 1987



## The Secret Life of Robert Runté

David Panchyk

(from *Neology* #69, March 1990)

*Viet Nam, 1972:*

Sitting quietly in the bush, waiting for Charlie to either walk into the ambush or kill them all from behind, the men — boys — of the 129th Infantry Company, United States Army, bided their time. The unit was newly-formed, too new to have its own nickname and bullshit badge, a totem to get into bar fights and back-slapping reunions over. The soldiers were too new to be cocky about their unit. No group pride, here; just stark terror.

The only grunt with any experience besides the platoon leader was Corporal Robert Runté: Corporal because he'd been there for the better part of a year and hadn't been killed or even severely injured yet. Time was coming soon for him to get sent back Stateside to get a clap on the back and a boot in the ass right back to Viet Nam.



No way he was going. He had the jitters almost every night now, and he didn't take the sleeping pills the NCO medics would sell because he had a gripping fear of getting his throat slit by a Viet Cong who would sneak into the base and who he wouldn't even notice because he was sleeping too deeply. He was also afraid of the other soldiers and their "fun" night-time pranks. Bloody Americans.

The Army knew he was one of the ones who came down from Canada to lend the Americans in Viet Nam a helping hand. So did the other recruits from boot camp. But he got sick of it. If it wasn't the stupid questions from people who didn't know the geography of their own assholes that got him, it was being called "Canuck." "Hey Canuck, you sure you gonna be able to handle them hot jungles?" "Yeah, man, maybe they'll send you up to be in the Arctic patrol." After a while he just told everyone that he met after boot camp that he was a farmer from Iowa. He still got jokes made about fucking sheep, but it was better to his mind than "Canuck."

Bracing the butt of his M-16 against the ground for balance, Runté shifted a little in his crouch to keep his left leg from falling asleep. He peered around into the bush behind him and off into the bush on the other side of the trail. It was already far too dark to see anything well.

As he looked off into the jungle on the far side of the trail, little white points of light flashed and sent an automatic chill of adrenaline/ fear through his body. He ducked his head down just as the crack, crack sounds of Charlie's machine-gun fire reached him.

The first-timers in the unit started yelling, as if no one else would notice that there was automatic fire tearing into their ranks. Pure panic instinct, Runté supposed, but HE had never given in to it. He flattened and reached for one of the frag grenades on his web belt. No sense in firing his Mattel toy into the high grass where Charlie was; the 5.56 bullets had a nasty habit of getting deflected by anything more substantial than a very small leaf.

The pig gunner, who was screaming too, had finally set up the bipod on his gun and was shooting indiscriminately into the jungle. All it seemed to be doing was sending up a cloud of shot-up foliage.

At least, thought Runté, I'm not on the other side of him, getting sprayed by his hot brass.

From Charlie's side came a "brapp" that Runté could hear even over the M-60 beside him. He was looking into the bush at that moment and saw the muzzle flash from the gun light up the ventilated barrel and the drum magazine. Holy shit, Runté thought, a Chinese burp-gun!

Where ever they had got the Korean era weapon, it did a fuck of a job on the pig gunner. The gunner shrieked, stopped firing, and a tiny piece of something wet and sticky landed on Runté's cheek. He pulled the pin on his grenade and lobbed at the burp-gunner. When the grenade was away he covered his ears and put his face to the dirt. There was a dull whoomp and a lot of Charlie screams a few seconds later.

The dirt was soft, almost warm for the evening, and it was oddly comforting, with that damp, earthy smell that reminded him of home. It formed itself to his cheek, and as he lay there with his fingers in his ears the gunfire turned to dull pops and all the tension flowed from his body into the earth.

He was lying somewhere near the twenty-yard line of the old football field in the back of his old high school in Red Deer. He'd grown tired of looking up at the stars, and was now lying on his stomach staring at individual blades of grass.

It was summertime, war air playing over his back and the ground giving him some of the heat that it had stored up during the day. There were no enemies waiting in the scrubby little trees around the fence of the school. He would find a girl here, get married and live a peaceful, quiet life.

The battle had stopped. There was no gunfire. No explosions. No yells, screams, curses. Nobody who wasn't on the ground.

Oh God...

He peered into the bush on the other side of the trail and tried to detect any movement. There wasn't any, as far as he could see. He wormed his way around to the seven other guys in the platoon, lying on his stomach and pulling himself along by the elbows. He went to each one, tried to revive him, tried to treat his wounds. No one breathed. No heartbeat. The only sound around was a solitary cricket, chirping in the jungle somewhere. He couldn't tell where.

He took some of the dead men's ammunition and food. He removed all their dog tags and placed the dead men's names in his pocket. He started humping back cautiously along the trail, back towards the base, back to the land of the living.

The walk back to the base at the other end of the valley would take eight hours, the time it had taken his platoon to get to the ambush point. As he walked through night, the air seemed deathly quiet, but shadows would appear all around him to bring a cold sweat to his skin. He kept wondering if he was going to die on the way back to the base.

After his eternity of trudging, he could see the lights of the base. Soon would come the barbed-wire perimeter, the guard posts, and then he'd be in, able to rest. He wasn't hungry; he just wanted to lie down. As he walked, half-stumbling now from the half-dead state of fatigue he was in, he thought about sleep.

A big comfy bed would be what he'd have. A feather pillow for sure, maybe even a feather mattress, but those were expensive. Maybe he'd get a job that would make a big bed like that easy to afford. He could, hell, maybe move to Calgary or Edmonton, get a job in construction or something like that. It had to be easier and less dangerous than this, and the pay a lot better. Yeah, a construction job in Calgary, working on one of the tall office buildings that were going up downtown. And going home every night to a huge, soft, warm bed.

He had been guiding his body along with half his mind, and didn't see the figures in black until there were right ahead of him on the trail. They were two tall Americans in tiger-striped face camouflage. He stopped and stared at them.

One pointed a finger at him. "Bang," he said. "I got 'im. What good is HE gonna be?"

The other one said, "He's MIA. He's material. We've gotta take 'im."

Runté's brain was fogged. "MIA?"

The first man in black spoke first with a tone of impatience. "Are you a member of the 129th Infantry Company?"

"Yes."

"Did you leave this morning at oh-nine-hundred hours as part of an eight-man ambush mission, heading west along this trail?"

"Yes."

"You are the only person left of that unit?"

Runté reached into his pocket, slowly as if he was moving through water, and pulled out the dog tags. He held out his arm. The second man in black fatigues took the tags. "Yours," the first man said. "What?"

"Give him yours."

Runté slowly took off his helmet, removed his tags, and gave them to the other man. He slowly replaced his helmet.

"Follow us," the first man said, and he and the other man walked off towards the base. Runté followed. As they walked, the first man dropped back to where Runté was walking. He pulled out a big Bowie knife and started to cut all the insignia off Runté's uniform. Runté didn't bother to resist, or even to ask him why he was doing it.

They marched straight through the front guard posts without getting challenged. It finally dawned on Runté that these were spooks, the shadow forces of the army only spoken about in whispers. There were things people said about the spooks, about the way they fought the war. That they were more like the 'Cong than American soldiers. That they were insane, or that they weren't even human.

They led him over to one of the chopper pads on the far side of the base. Their helicopter was sitting on the farthest one, far apart from the other two choppers that were there. It would have stood out anyway: it, like the men's fatigues, was black. And it didn't look like the big Hueys: it was smaller, and the lines of its body were ... sharper somehow. Among the Hueys it looked like a hawk among ducks.

Runté was led into the windowless rear part of the chopper. The second man fastened him into a cushioned seat — not an uncomfortable web seat like the Hueys had — then sat down himself. The first man stepped into the co-pilot's seat, buckled in, then put on a flight helmet and spoke into its microphone while the silent pilot went through his pre-flight check.

"Base One Base One, this is Anubis. We're bringing in another soul, ETA oh-six-hundred."

Runté could hear the muffled response. "Copy Anubis, ETA oh-six-hundred."

The pilot started the engines up and brought the rotors up to speed. Under cover of darkness they left, under cover of darkness they arrived at another base an hour later. When they got out, the first man showed him to a tent with a cot in it. "Sleep," he said.

"Where am I?" Runté asked.

"You're in the land of the dead," the man said with a grin. "Sleep."

Runté slept.

He dreamed of his comfortable feather bed. It would be in a house, a house of his own, someplace quiet in the kind of residential area where people raised kids. It would be close enough to a good bar, the downtown, movie theatres, swimming pools. He could meet lots of people, make friends, and he could watch football on a big TV.

The place was never given an official name as far as Runté could hear. It was always the "Land of the Dead", land of the walking dead. There were only about fifty of them. IN the common room there was a cork board with a dazzling array of unit badges of those who had passed through the land of the dead. Nobody talked about any of them. Runté saw his on there the day after he arrived.

There they taught him to kill. After two months he was deadly at any range from two inches to a quarter mile. He was taught how to be utterly silent and completely invisible. And he learned other things that weren't covered by the instructors. He developed good night vision, and what the others around him called the "jungle sense," a kind of awareness that extended beyond any of his physical senses.

Through all this Runté floated along as if outside his body, as if he had died and his spirit was hovering above his body. And a part of him HAD died, somewhere along the way. Once he was fully trained, they sent him out. He was sent to kill village leaders, to assassinate North Vietnamese officers, to blow up essential bridges and tunnel systems. All these he did and did well; the training that had been given to him did all the work. His body was just the hollow shell that went through the motions.

And all through these missions, more and more he would slip into living his other life, his secret life. His job in Calgary as a construction worker was too reminiscent of the labour of a far more gruesome kind that he was carrying out; he would have a desk job. A nice quiet desk job. Maybe he would even work with computers. Computers could do marvellous things, they said.

*(This damned spirits?)* needed to be focused if they were to be effective, otherwise they might as well be dead for real. Runté, Robert (MIA) was performing adequately, but he was losing his grip, losing his focus. They would return him to the land of the living, back to the States, and keep tabs on him. If he showed signs of all-important focus once more, they would make him disappear again and bring him back.

On the flight back it seemed to Runté like he finally clicked back into his body, and his perceptions were exceptionally sharp. What have I been doing for the last — how long has it been? he asked himself. He took stock of his situation Stateside. He found out that for the last year he had been officially "Missing in Action"; his term of duty came to an end during that time when he was MIA, so he had received a discharge and was sent back to the U.S. At least, that's what official Army records showed — as far as he could find out.

So Robert Runté found himself in California with the peculiar culture shock of a soldier who doesn't know what to do with his time now that someone's not telling him, and who's been placed in an environment he hasn't seen for over a year. Runté got what Army pay he could,

and wandered the streets of the business district of a city whose name he didn't remember. It was a hot day, summer, and he walked into a bookstore to cool off.

He made an attempt to look like he was browsing. He looked over titles and covers, flipped disinterestedly through a few volumes, and stopped dead in his tracks, staring at something out of his secret life.

A computer ... He picked up the book on whose cover it appeared; it was just a novel, but he bought it anyway. He figured it might tell him something valuable.

Working maybe a four-day week... He'd heard that those who knew how to work with computers had it pretty easy. He'd like that sort of routine, after doing what he had done for the past couple of years. Imagine, all the information that those big machines could hold. All that information, all that knowledge, would be somehow exciting to work around. And computers could find out things, maybe even about the land of the dead in Viet Nam. He bet American papers would pay quite a bit for information like that.

"So you like SF?"

Runté came to. There was some long-haired guy a few years older than he was, pointing at the book. Runté had just been standing there, looking stupid. "Uh, I don't know," he said, "I just bought the book for the computer on the cover."

The guy looked disappointed somehow. He was one of those longhaired California hippie types, and Runté wasn't sure about him. But he was that the guy must've had doubts about him, too, looking like a soldier in fresh civvies. And Runté guessed he must still have the spook look about him that a lot of people learn to stay away from. This guy was probably paranoid about the draft, too: it was likely that he was already a dodger. Runté figured that if he wanted to re-establish contact with the world of the living he had to do it by meeting people halfway.

"My name's Rob," he said. He didn't stick out his hand. He was accustomed to salutes as a form of greeting.

"I'm Steve," the long-haired guy said. He kept his thumbs hitched in his front pockets.

"So, you, uh, read a lot of this stuff?" "Yeah, quite a bit, I'd say."

"Well, I just thought — computers, you know. I want to go back to Canada and maybe find work with computers." And so by cautious degrees they inched closer to a trust of each other. Robert wanted to head north to escape the memory of his past involvement with the army; Steve wanted to avoid the possibility of any future involvement with it. Robert found out later that Steve had burned his draft card two years previously.

Steve had a VW van that they loaded up with books. They headed north. Robert read more and more of this science fiction stuff and found it touched something in him that his life up till now hadn't: his imagination. His secret life began to change.

Why work with computers as part of a routine, a day-to-day job? He could be a writer, like these guys, and set his own hours putting down his flights of fancy on paper. A quiet study off the bedroom with the feather bead in a quiet little house in a quiet part of Calgary. He could

make lots of money writing, if he got good enough. Maybe one day, like some writers said in their books, computers would be everywhere and he could have the money to buy one.

They didn't have any trouble at the border into Canada. The Canadian border guards seemed to know Steve was a dodger and they let him through without any questions. They headed right up into Alberta and ended up in Calgary. They spent two days in Calgary, staying in a cheap motel and trying to get some angle on where to start about getting jobs or something. Steve didn't like Calgary, for some reason Robert couldn't understand; something gave off the bad variety of 'vibes' Steve was always referring to. Robert said they could always stay at his old place in Red Deer. It made him remember his family hadn't heard from him in over a year. Steve said, no, let's move on to the next big city. So Robert called his family collect to tell them he was back and he was all right. Though his mother was frantic, he promised he'd call when he was settled down. Robert and Steve set off for Edmonton.

In Edmonton it didn't take them very long to find jobs and a place where they could stay for a while. Robert was happier working in a print shop than doing dirty work for the U.S. Army. His dream life was starting to flesh itself out in reality.

He moved out of their cramped little apartment within about four months and got a place on his own. It wasn't anything special, but it was in a quiet area just a block off Whyte. He'd sit for hours, sometimes, reading or keeping a diary. He tried writing a few stories.

And he and Steve kept reading science fiction. The first book with the computer hadn't told him much about computers. but it was exciting to read, and ever since leaving California he couldn't get his hands on enough of the stuff. Working with computers seemed less important now. He would try his hand at writing seriously.

They met other people who read science fiction. They knew there were more out there in the city, so they formed a club to bring them all together. Robert wasn't into organizations, but he took the job of vice-president. Steve had been to some conventions in the States that were just for science fiction; they figured maybe one day something like that could happen in Edmonton.

When the club had been going for a few months Robert met Miss Una Sib, a tall dancer who was interested in science fiction too. That was Robert's first girlfriend and first lover. His life was jump-started by the months they had together. She made him feel fully alive for the first time since leaving to join the army. Her sensitivity and her sensuality helped Robert mature and, more significantly, relax for the first time in years.

He relaxed. He took life at a slower pace than he could have dreamed of while in the army. He gained weight: the extra pounds settled around him like a comforter. It was a while later that someone suggested to him that he go into university, and he took the suggestion seriously. He could maybe learn to write there, or at least get the education for the well-paying job that could land him smack in the middle of the secret life he'd been dreaming about. So he went into university, studying English, but he found it too dry for him. They weren't interested in teaching writing, just in taking apart and writing about other people's writing, and it mostly wasn't the kind of stuff he like to read.

He stayed in, though, and eventually he found his calling, entirely by chance as these things always happen. He read Marx for a sociology class and found the two of them struck a chord in him. He got a degree in sociology and when he was done, he immediately took his Master's.



If you meet Robert Runté now, you'd never guess he was ever one of the U.S. Army's spook soldiers, and that's just the way he wants it. He no longer works in a print shop, and hasn't for a while. He works at a fairly well paying job that keeps him at a relatively comfortable level of living, but he wants that doctorate so that he can teach more than the university has up till now been letting him. He cherishes his privacy and his quiet in his newer, bigger apartment. He bought a computer recently to help him in his writing, which is coming along fine. He always seems very happy and very much at ease, but at night, as his head rests on a feather pillow, he dreams of a goose-down mattress.



## Fandom Ecology

Dr. Robert Runté

(from his CUFF GoH speech at Pinekone II/Convention 9 in Ottawa, March 1989)  
(reprinted from *I'm Not Boring You Am I?* #7, fall 1989)

First of all, I would like to thank you all for making me so welcome at your convention. I'd also like to thank everyone who voted for me. I'd especially like to thank my campaign manager, Steve Forty. I'm sure I couldn't have won without Steve's tireless efforts on my behalf. What makes this so unique, of course, is that Steve was the other candidate this year. ((Laughter)) That's the sort of generosity of spirit that makes fandom what it is.

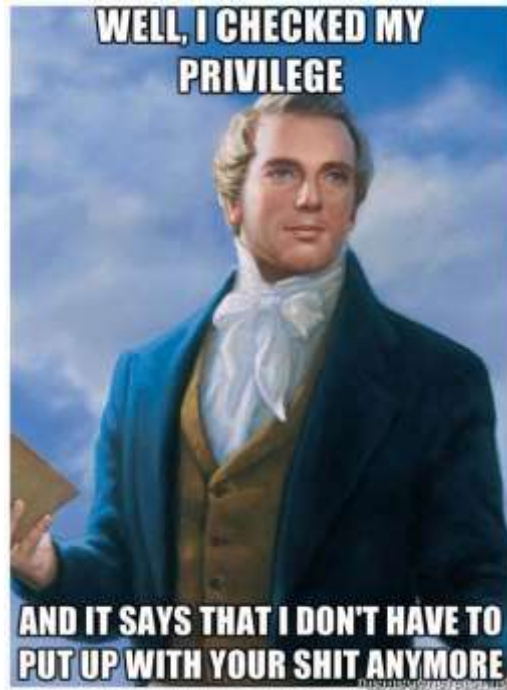
I've been corresponding with fans in the east for 17 years, but this has been my first opportunity to meet any of them in person. It's also been an opportunity for me to get together with a few friends who've moved here from Edmonton, and of course, to meet many new people. So I'd like to second everything that Michael said about the importance of conventions, about fandom as family, and about why we're in fandom.

The thing that I've noticed here, though, is that I keep seeing people I know out of the corner of my eye. I'll see someone go by and I'll think, "There's Ken", and then I'll stop myself because I realize that Ken is 3000 kilometres away and that can't possibly be him. I keep seeing the people I always see at conventions or at club meetings, only it isn't really them at all.

So I've come to the conclusion that there is an ecology of fandom: that every local club or convention has the same set of ecological niches fills them (sic) with the same sort of people. Every club has its compulsive photographer, its hippy musician, its natural MC, its femme fatale, its space cadet, its curly-bearded physicist, its long-haired scholar, and so on. Every club is the same. That means that every one of you has his or her twin in Edmonton fandom. Every one of you has been cloned!

The corollary of all this is that wherever you go in Canada, or the world for that matter — wherever your job or education or wanderlust takes you — there is a niche waiting for you in the local fandom there. You have friends waiting for you wherever you go.

Thank you, and thank CUFF for showing me my friends here.



## Introducing Don DeBrandt

by Steve Barclay  
(from V-Con 19.5 program booklet)

Anything you have heard in the past about Don DeBrandt is almost certainly untrue, and this biography will almost certainly not break the trend. There are so many rumours and superstitions built up around Don that he has achieved almost Godlike proportions in a relatively short period of time. Don is, above all, a writer. Perhaps it was the early bouts of alcohol and depression; perhaps society is to blame. No one will ever know for sure, but he seems to be happy enough.

Since his death from a drug overdose in the early 1970s, Don has been spotted in several burger joints and video stores throughout Vancouver. Cults are springing up around his name, claiming that he was the new messiah. They freely quote from his classics, "Payback Tattoo," which appeared in the Fall 1990 *Pulphouse*, or "Brainframe Blues," which appeared in *Horizons SF* in 1991. However, deep theological rifts form when the name *The Quicksilver Screen* is mentioned.

Some Debrandtists claim that the original short story which appeared in Volume 2 of *Fictons* (a fanzine that Don both edited and wrote for) is the true word of Don, while others

claim that the true word of Don is captured in its entirety in the soon-to-be-released novel version of *The Quicksilver Screen* from Del Rey Books.

Militant factions of Debrandtism get quite irate whenever someone quotes from any source other than *Fictons*, which published four of Don's works, beginning with "The Terminal Club" in issue one, "The Quicksilver Screen" in issue two, "Avocado Avatar" in issue three, and "Shipping Susan" in issue four. Debrandtism seems to be sweeping the country. Even in rural Saskatoon, crowds are forming around Kittiwake. Don's country estate, where his body was found that fateful sweltering July evening.

In the true spirit of those who rose from the dead, Don immediately buggered off to avoid the kafuffle and medical examinations and moved to the west coast. He went to great lengths to conceal his identity, even importing a girlfriend all the way from Saskatoon to avoid local detection. (The details of that relationship can be found in the unauthorised biography *I Was a Teenaged Sex Slave And Enjoyed It Quite a Bit*, by Kitty Kelly.) Alas, though, as soon as he began writing the crowds rushed back into his life and once again threatened to overwhelm him.

In order to keep from being driven to the brink of insanity by the continual squealing of young nubile female admirers, Don decided that drastic measures had to be taken and got married. With his life effectively put back in balance, leaving the nubile females wandering away dejectedly to become Guns-N-Roses fans, Don threw himself into his work and only emerged from the confines of his writing room to eat, sleep, drink, have sex, party, go for walks, and do pretty much anything else he wants.

If he were to offer advice to any aspiring writers I know what he would say: "Buy me a beer. We'll talk." Do so. It's your chance to talk to a legend before he gets out of hand.



## Fowler's Volunteers

by Garth Spencer (a work in progress)

*(with apologies to Stan Rogers)*

(for male quartet, to the tune of "Barrett's Volunteers" by Stan Rogers)

Oh the year was 1988  
(How I wish I was in Fairfield now!)  
A request to bid came from Anaheim  
To the ruggedest crew of partners in crime

(Chorus)  
God damn them all!  
I was told we'd hold a con for American gold  
We'd lose no points - shed no tears  
Now I'm a broken fan on a False Creek pier  
The last of Fowler's volunteers

Oh, Frances Skene cried Vancouver town  
(How I wish I was in Langley now!)  
For forty brave fen all con vets, who  
would make for her a con com true

(Chorus)

The bidding group was a naive crew  
(How I wish I was in Kamloops now!)  
The vets stayed home and the neos came who  
were the only ones to follow through

(Chorus)

On Dominion Day we placed our bid  
(How I wish I was in Richmond now!)  
We went a whole year up to Anaheim  
Plugging like madmen all the time

(Chorus)

In '89 we won our bid  
(How I wish I was in Squamish now!)  
When a bloody great Trade Act hove in sight  
With our fannish press we tried to fight

(Chorus)

## First International Virtual Conference on Mad Science

(IVCMS'96)  
Call For Papers  
London, England  
29 March 1996

*(contributed by Paula Johanson)*

### **Theme**

Mad science is a much maligned domain of human knowledge and its practitioners have for too long been relegated to B-movies and remote ancestral estates. IVCMS provides an international forum for the presentation, discussion and extension of research into these darkly powerful pseudosciences and dangerous technologies which fall beyond the scope of conventional science and good taste. The purpose of the conference is to promote a general understanding of mad topics within the broader scientific community, to encourage new researchers to dabble with things best left alone, to attract commercial sponsors to the potential benefits of mad science in the business world, and to replace the old drooling maniac stereotype of the mad scientist with a new drooling maniac image which is more appropriate to the modern era. The conference will be hosted in a suitably baroque homepage to avoid the overheads of unpredictable atmospheric conditions and revolting peasants.

### **Focus**

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Creating life to satisfy egocentric motives.
- Unleashing entities beyond human control and comprehension.
- Tampering with the life-sustaining forces of the Universe.
- Exceeding the limitations of the human body via grotesque metamorphoses.
- New applications for old technologies (alchemy, necromancy, etc.).
- Ill-advised collaboration with alien and/or supernatural intelligences.
- Life-long devotion to researching the pointless and inane.
- Callous disregard for human experimental subjects.
- Exacting bizarre revenge on contemptuous and derisive peers.

### **Submission Details**

Authors are invited to submit papers to the Programme Chair at the following address:

Paul Schleifer, IVCMS Programme Chair  
School of Computing, Information Systems and Mathematics  
South Bank University  
103 Borough Road  
London SE1 0AA, England  
Email: [schleip@sbu.ac.uk](mailto:schleip@sbu.ac.uk)

All submissions should reach the Programme Chair by 29 December 1995. Papers should not exceed 5000 words and should be submitted in electronic formats. HTML or ASCII are preferred, but PostScript and word-processor formats are also acceptable. Figures may be sent as URLs or in standard image file formats, such as GIF and JPEG. Submission by email is strongly encouraged. Papers will be refereed by a panel of at least three deranged experts. Posthumous papers will be welcomed.

### **Important Dates**

Paper submission: 29 December 1995  
Notification of acceptance: 26 February 1996  
Conference: 29 March 1996

### **Programme Committee**

Postmortal General Chair:  
Howard P. Lovecraft, From Beyond

Programme Co-Chairs:  
Victor Frankenstein, Modern Prometheus Ltd  
Paul Schleifer, South Bank University

Programme Committee:  
Marc C. Allain, First Church of Mad Scientist  
Peter Armstrong, Swiss Bank Corporation  
Pope Max Flax Beeblewax, 5-College Discordian Society of Saint Rufus  
Sue Black, South Bank University  
Cosmic Cat, CCHQ  
Dr. Ahmed Fishmonger, Institute for Parallel Studies  
Dr. Henry Gee, Nature  
Dan Hanley, South Bank University  
Donna Kossy, Kooks Museum  
Ross McNaughton, South Bank University  
Burti Montague-Leon, BP Sema  
Dr. Omega, Evil Geniuses For A Better Tomorrow International  
Dr. Judith Ramsay, South Bank University  
Dave Scott, (unaffiliated freelance mad scientist)  
Dr. Scratching, Human Secretions Institute  
Allan Songhurst, Bavarian Illuminati Inc  
Neil Walton, Dastardly Machinations  
Xero, Planet X, Local Arrangements and Reception Chair  
Igor, The Cellar

Home Page URL:  
<http://www.scism.sbu.ac.uk/cios/paul/MadScience/>



## The Netherlands: Threat or Menace?

By Garth Spencer



(from “Nor Dashed a Thousand Kim”, *BCSFazine* #384, May 2005)

I’ve spread myself too thin, over too many projects, to pay enough attention to any of them. I barely pay enough attention to paid work, household chores, social obligations, or fanzine editing; I have entirely neglected my websites, and failed in my obligation to the CUFF administrator.

And then I have also been fighting a secret war with DR. GERONIMO® fandom, a threat to all North American fans everywhere.

Under previous authorship in the 1940s, the title character, then named “Tym Fasst”, was a favourite ongoing character in Danish science fiction; but in translation the series failed to capture market share from the Tom Swift franchise. Then came the reinvention from world-travelling boy genius and scientist/entrepreneur into DR. GERONIMO®, “The Brazen Man”, conflicted anti-hero and man of action, whose every adventure mirrored the major issues and moral conflicts of the year – so much so that ten novels were banned from publication in English, and two of them brought down as many governments in the Benelux. While Dr. Who inspired “Dalek Fever” in the United Kingdom, DR. GERONIMO® inspired several of the James Bond movies (and the copyright litigation continues to this day).

Until the 1970s, DR. GERONIMO® was a foreign craze that Anglophone fans rarely heard about, like Perry Rhodan, or that French thing about Jerry Lewis. But it is useless to deny now, because it is impossible to conceal the steady growth of DR. GERONIMO® merchandise, clubs, “fanzines” and conventions across North America, outnumbering and outmarketing classic, traditional fandoms such as Star Trek, Star Wars, anime and LARP gaming. Suddenly every old-fashioned mediafan and gaming fan is surrounded by nine DR. GERONIMO® fans! Traditional Creation Cons belatedly find themselves scheduled directly against nakedly Philistine DR. GERONIMO® conventions! It’s appalling!!

My first clue to this insidious encroachment came in 1989, at the first Banffcon. I knew that DR. GERONIMO® fandom had advanced from its bases in Greenland outposts, and had established small colonies in Labrador City, Truro and Métis-sur-Mer (in Walloon translation); I even heard rumours about affiliated clubs in Hamilton and Scarborough. But I had no idea that DR. GERONIMO® fan-club comics had penetrated the Canadian heartland as far as *Regina*, forebye; but there it was in the Banffcon fan lounge, a fan-drawn DR. GERONIMO® comic from Saskatchewan, inexpert Danish and all.

I now believe that what I thought was a sophomoric gag at the University of Victoria – the war with Greenland, sponsored by “Generals” Bentley and Armour – was a *serious* campaign against cultural imperialism. I now believe that *Buckaroo Banzai* was a gallant, but unsuccessful attempt to combat the DR. GERONIMO® franchise directly. I have to wonder whether the spate of US-Canadian “co-productions” in the last decade, especially in science fiction, were another attempt to stem the Danish tide.

There are horrifying rumours of a DR. GERONIMO®-inspired movement, mimicking the “SCIENTISM®” brainwashing cult from the early-1970s story arc, not only “programming” followers in Danish but preparing them to campaign for a “National Socialist” party; and there is a long record of litigation against misuse of their trade marks, which is why I have been scrupulous about the use of their marks. But of course these are just rumours - or else, they are *entirely legal* proceedings.

The problem with such a franchise, as I perceive it, is that it destroys actual imagination and creativity; it attempts to force a monopoly on the sense of wonder at what might be possible, which was the heart of science fiction.

I have done my part to promote an older, purer form of fandom, to remind fans there was science fiction before DR. GERONIMO®, by printing nothing about DR. GERONIMO® clubs and zines and cons; and now I am all but spent.

So now it is time to share the burden, expose this secret war, and beseech fans everywhere not to dissolve our fannish cultural identity in the tsunami of DR. GERONIMO®. Practice your English! Be masters in your own homes!! REMEMBER WHO YOU REALLY ARE!!!



## The Secret Life of Garth Spencer

by Greg Slade

(previously appearing in *BCSFAzine* #387, August 2005)

The prisoner was hustled into the dark room, and shackled to an uncomfortable, straight-backed chair bolted to the floor. Before the guards left, a technician in white scrubs swabbed his forearm with alcohol, and injected something. Then, the group left and closed the door, leaving him in darkness.

The darkness did not last long. Across the room, a bright light flicked on, shining in his face. Behind the light, he knew, would be an interrogator. Shrouded in darkness. He didn't care. He knew how to tune out interrogation. "Good evening, Mr. Spencer," said a voice in perfect Danish. "Or perhaps I should call you... *Kaptajn Glemme?*"

"What?" he replied in English. "I can't understand what you're saying. Can't anybody here speak English?"

"Of course we can speak English," the voice replied, still in Danish. "After all, everybody here was born in Canada." There was a brief, pregnant pause.

"Oh, excuse me. I should have said, 'almost everybody', shouldn't I?"

"You see, Kaptajn, we have long been aware of the infiltration of this pernicious '*Doctor Geronimo*' material into Canada. You yourself have been loudly decrying the infestation in the newsletter you edit on behalf of the fans who are the target of this *trash*. Tell me, are those potential victims aware that they have handed over the editor's blue pencil *to the very man who is importing* the same material that he is so stridently warning them against?"

The interrogator pushed a pile of books and merchandise out to the front of the table where the light could fall upon it. Glemme's training was thorough. Without it, he would have groaned in dismay as he recognised a portion of the material he had been hiding in his own home, in preparation for discreetly distributing it to carefully selected used bookstores around town. The garish covers proclaimed "*Doctor Geronimo*" in a rainbow of covers, accompanied by improbably heroic illustrations. Never break cover. No matter what, never break cover. It was still possible to bluff them into thinking that the stuff had been planted on him.

"Hello?" he called out, still in English, "can anybody here speak English?"

"Oh, you can carry on your little game if you like, Kaptajn, but we are perfectly aware of your conditioning. Nothing which is said to you in English, or any other language -- and we already know in precisely how many of those languages you are fluent -- can possibly get through to your consciousness unless you deliberately pay attention to it. That would make it extremely difficult to put any pressure on you through verbal tricks, now wouldn't it? However, your masters forgot to condition you against words spoken to you in your own

native tongue, didn't they? That is why I have the dubious privilege of acting as your... shall we say... *corrections officer*.

"For make no mistake, Kaptajn, you are here for correction. Your ring has already been broken. Those who are not already in our custody are under surveillance. There has been a mysterious fire at a certain mini storage site in Coquitlam, and we are aware of your methods of transport. The flow of this... *rubbish* into the country has been stopped. We have no need of information from you. You are here simply to learn the consequences of attempting to corrupt the minds of Canadian fans.

"That chemical which has been injected into your veins every few hours since you arrived here... (Oh. You would like to know how long that has been, would you? Sorry, but to tell you that would spoil the effect of temporal displacement, now wouldn't it?) As I was saying, that chemical renders you incapable of going to sleep. So I'm afraid you have no choice but to enjoy the entertainment we have prepared for you. Don't worry if you miss some of it. It will keep repeating so you can enjoy it to its fullest.

"Oh, and in case you've been wondering where you slipped up, what put us onto you, we have suspected you for some time, but what confirmed our suspicions was last month's *BCSFAzine*, when you announced that Canada Day was on July 2nd. No real Canadian would ever make that mistake. So now, we'll give you a little taste of Canadian culture."

The light clicked out, and he could hear the sound of a door opening and closing, and then whining, clanking, and hissing noises as some mechanical apparatus moved in the dark room. Then, a large-screen television flickered into life, placed so that he couldn't avoid looking at it without turning his head, but a brace fastened to the chair kept his head facing forward. Speakers blared a cheesy, overblown soundtrack, and the credits flashed, "*H.G. Wells' The Shape of Things to Come*." He had heard about this. It was supposed to be pretty bad, but it was in English, so he'd be able to ignore it. In fact, he'd have to concentrate *not* to ignore it.

It was only when the dialogue came on, and he realised that it had been dubbed in Danish, that he realised the trouble he was in. Jack Palance's Danish voice double wasn't even halfway through his first speech before he broke down. "*Nej!*" he cried, "*Nej! Nej! Neeeeeeej!*"



## Acknowledgments, Credits, and Copyrights

- Barclay, Steve, "Introducing Don Debrandt" (from V-Con 19.5 program booklet)
- Charlesworth, Adam, "The Secret Life of Robert Runté" (I) (*Neology* #68, Winter 1989/90)
- First International Virtual Conference on Mad Science (IVCMS'96), Call For Papers: London, England, 29 March 1996
- George, Steve, "Boxtop: The Man Behind the Myth" (*New Canadian Fandom* #5, August 1982)
- Hooper, Andrew, "Caro Fanatico Numero Uno" (*Mainstream* #14/15, 1992)
- Kulyk, Christine, "The Adventures of the Scientist's Beautiful Daughter" (*New Canadian Fandom* #5, August 1982)
- Mayer, Eric, "Babylon If ..." (*Sticky Quarters* #9, May 1984)
- New, Dave (writing as "Wendi Vadd"), "Vincent Fan GoH" (VCON #18 program book, 1990)
- Panchyk, David, "The Secret Life of Robert Runté" (*Neology* #69, March 1990)
- Runté, Robert, "Fandom Ecology speech" (Pinekone II/Convention 9 in Ottawa, March 1989) (reprinted from *I'm Not Boring You Am I?* #7, fall 1989)
- Slade, Greg, "The Secret Life of Garth Spencer" (*BCSFazine* #387, August 2005)
- Spencer, Garth, "The Netherlands: Threat or Menace?" (*BCSFazine* #384, May 2005)
- Spencer, "Fowler's Volunteers" (undated)
- Spencer, "My Norwescon Song" (undated)
- Spencer, "SF Class Structure" (undated)
- Wayne, Taral, "The Day the Torcon III Bid Began" ("Same As It Ever Was" column, *Maple Leaf Rag* #13, March 1985)