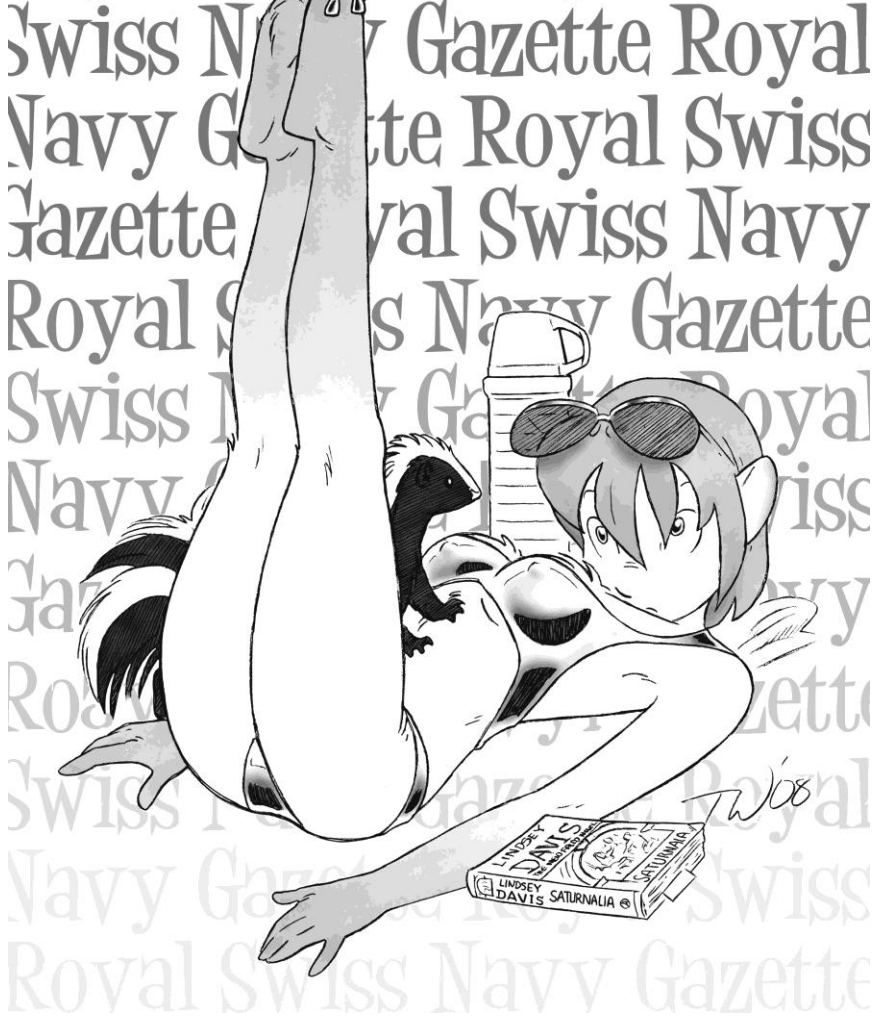


# Royal Swiss Navy Gazette



*The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* #17 (April 2009) is the work of Garth Spencer, who goes on living in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Please send comments, subscriptions, suggestions, and/or submissions to Garth Spencer (the Editor), at garthspencer@shaw.ca or via P.O. Box 74122, Hillcrest Park, Vancouver, BC, CANADA V5V 3P0. *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* solicits electronic submissions, and black and white line illustrations in JPG or GIF format, and offers contributor's copies.

*The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* is now posted regularly at efanzines.com. The hardcopy edition is printed most excellently by the good people at Copies Plus, at 1950 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, tel. 604-731-7868.

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## **2009: A YEAR IN REVIEW**

Garth Spencer, RSN

Now that the end of 2009 approaches, we can look back with some satisfaction on the Royal Swiss Navy's accomplishments this year.

Our massive advertising campaign in late January had everyone asking "Who the hell is Emperor Norton and why does this Royal Swiss Navy want us to celebrate him?" We almost nearly held a costume parade on February 8, Emperor Norton Day, but couldn't get a permit in time. Anyway it rained.

The April Fool's Day march on Granville Street also nearly came off, except some of us couldn't make it to the synchronized-silly-walk rehearsals and two of us were ill on the sacred day. That left three of us, which I still think would have been hilarious – if you ever heard of "News from Nemtin" and the Nemtin All-Army Drill Team (two privates and a sergeant with a whistle) – but the other guys weren't up for it.

We had brilliant suggestions for alternative parties to appear on the May 12<sup>th</sup> provincial election ballot: The Christian Anarchist Party, the Anarcho-Surrealist Party, and the Structural-Functionalist Party. With a little more advance preparation, we might have been able to scrape up the dollars and a few candidates to stand for election, and to liven up these proceedings.

At all conventions in the Northwest this year we planned Royal Swiss Navy promotional room parties, which required us only to get memberships and go there. And, in many cases, to get passports.

In 2010 we plan performances to satirize the various Olympic games, if we can arrange carpools up to Whistler. Who has a car?

# THE DRAKE EQUATION

NUMBER OF  
COMMUNICATING  
CIVILIZATIONS  
IN OUR GALAXY

PROBABILITY THAT  
LIFE ON A PLANET  
BECOMES INTELLIGENT

$$N = R^* f_p n_e f_l f_i f_c L B_s$$

NUMBER OF LIFE-  
SUPPORTING PLANETS  
PER SOLAR SYSTEM

AMOUNT OF BULLSHIT  
YOU'RE WILLING  
TO BUY FROM  
FRANK DRAKE

## LETTERS

Brad Foster [bmfoster@juno.com], January 1, 2009

Got RSN# #16 the other day, great to see my art there, first time I've had a contribution to the zine. (Also thanks for the notice of using stuff in *BCSFAzine* #428.) Looks like you've used up what I've sent so far, so attached are two new pieces of weird 'toonage I hope you'll find useful.

Regarding the note in here about wanting to get people to write book reviews for *BCSFAzine*, I'd love to volunteer to do reviews if it means I'd be getting free copies of books! But I figure your having to pay to ship them to me would kind of destroy any benefit on YOUR end of getting them for free. Plus, my paragraph or two of review style might not fill the bill. But, if that all sounds absolutely wonderful to you, ship a box of 'em this way!

Regarding your comments on wasting time, and the kind of writing you would like/hope to do: I think most people would feel they are wasting their time, save for those super-efficient

overachiever types who bug the heck out of the rest of us anyways! Eric Mayer gets into the idea of energy loss in his loc this issue. If I might make a suggestion totally out of left field, just from the comments you've got in this issue: maybe if you want to work more at the writing thing as an income source, concentrate on your non-fiction ideas, rather than fiction, which you seem to indicate was not really your thing. Your article ideas on inventing languages, surveying and generating crank theories, and surveying conspiracy theories could all be interesting things to read, and even marketable- though that would entail researching a totally different market than you have done so far with fiction. I've gotten a lot of odd art jobs here and there in totally weird areas because I've always tried to be open to finding places where what I do will fit in, and not just trying to fit my stuff into areas that I think will make good money. Does any of that help, or even make any sense? If there were simple answers to all this, we'd all be millionaires. Seems to mainly be a matter of our stumbling about trying what we can, and getting lucky or unlucky as the case may be.

I loved the idea of the "Anti-Vandals" from the game you mentioned in Position Paper #256. Kind of an extreme-action version of the "Practice Random Acts of Kindness" folks.

Regarding Ben Stein and the "Expelled" movie: sometimes I forget that Ben is at heart a conservative type, and for all his "smarts", has his own strange world-view to deal with, one that seems a bit "off" to me.

Oh, and loved the Horoscopes, too. Hope you'll run more of those in future issues.

Speaking of which, looking forward to seeing what you come up with in 2009.

---

*Eric Mayer, maywrite2@epix.net, January 11, 2009*

I'm finally writing a few short and belated locs, and at the same time advising editors of what feels like a bad case of gafiation coming on.

As always I can only sympathize with the job/job hunting woes. I'll tell you a secret – in my whole life I've only been hired for one real job, as a legal editor, back in 1980. Ever since my layoff in 1994 I've done the same work freelance. Mind you, before I went to law school I looked for over a year for a job, with no

success, which is why I went to law school. After I lost my legal editing job I tried for a year to get a new job. I was in my mid-forties. I figured there was plenty of time for me to have a career in some sort of writing/editing to which I was better suited. But I did not qualify for a single writing/editing position anywhere. I had dozens of published clips from national magazines. I had written regularly for the previous year for the local newspaper (circulation 250,000) but I could not write/edit well enough for anyone to hire me. Well, bullshit. That's what the whole hiring process is. So how did I get the legal editing job? They gave a long, difficult test, on which you could absolutely demonstrate that you could do the work they wanted done so I guess they could hardly deny my qualifications. Oh, and of course I had the law degree so I had the proper paper too.

Which is a long way of saying – it isn't necessarily you.

Fiction is fun and there are lots of outlets. But it is hard to get published and involves lots and lots of luck and pays almost nothing. However, writing a publishable work of fiction is certainly a fine achievement to aim for (he said self-servingly) rather like completing a marathon. But to succeed involves much more luck.

I suppose you can reinvent yourself at 52. I reinvented myself at 40 when I found out I loved running. I was the guy who always skipped gym class and there I was doing road races. Then I got into orienteering and competed (well, "participated in") national meets. If you had told me when I was in my twenties or thirties that I would be capable of doing such activities I would've laughed. Then, alas, I had to move away from the orienteering and my back went and put an end to my running. Luckily, my old couch potato personality was patiently waiting for me to return. But it was great while it lasted. So I wholeheartedly advise you – try something new.

Taral's article was interesting. I just coincidentally was reading that during the early part of the sixth century China and the Byzantine Empire engaged in a lot of trade, silk being an important import from China until the Romans stole some silk worms. It seems that the Persians were the go-betweens, taking goods from the Chinese and delivering them to the Romans. There was an overland route but more of the trade went from China to Persian merchants in Ceylon who transported it from there to the Romans. Amazing what those ancients got up to.

Finally, have to comment that Brad's cover is a gem.

---

Lloyd Penney, 1706-24 Eva Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 2B2,  
penneys@allstream.net, January 13, 2009

I have a copy of the *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* 16 in front of me, and some time to devote to a loc. Let's see if I have anything pertinent to say about it.

I would love nothing better than to receive free books in the mail, with the expectation that I would read them and write sparkling reviews. Good in theory, but not in reality. I'd happily accept the books, but I'd never had the time to do the reading and writing. I barely have the time to write locs. I wonder how the publishing company would react if a bad review was written. "This book truly sucked, and here are all the reasons why..." I imagine the supply of free books might dry up a little.

It shouldn't be so difficult to get and keep a job. I have been with SGS in Etobicoke for just over four months now, and while they seem to like me enough to want to keep me around, they don't seem to like me enough to want to hire me. With that in mind, I will stay at SGS and start looking around again. I'm there on a contract basis, so I can be free and clear without too many problems. CTVglobemedia has announced a 10% reduction in their workforce, but as yet, I don't know how that affects me working evenings at the *Globe and Mail*. I work there, but I am not employed by them, but am supplied by an agency. If I have any security, it comes from the fact that fellow who checked my work in the early mornings left at the end of 2008, so I may be the only person in the organization that knows how to do the work I do.

Self-reinvention may be a good thing. I've had cause to take an inventory of myself, the things I like and all the things I do. If I'm feeling stressed, I make those lists, and sometimes make a hard decision. Conrunning was one of those hard decisions; I felt that my knowledge base for conrunning was getting out of date, and I still feel that way. I'll be turning 50 in June, so I'm not far behind you. Make some of those hard decisions if you feel you have to, and don't be afraid to consider Garth 3.0.

With more personal zines coming out (RSNG, *The Original Universe*, *Space Cadet*), I hope there won't be another No Award for the Fanzine Aurora. I am still considering my own fanzine, but there's never enough time to work on it. At least we have some

candidates to go on the ballot besides *Opuntia*. But, the majority of those who voted for Fanzine voted for No Award. I'd like to hear the rationale for that.

*((Probably lack of awareness of the eligible fanzines, or lack of general participation in fanzine fandom.))*

I always thought that personal vignettes were a part of fannish writing, personal journalism and all that. There seem to be a select few who draw the arbitrary lines around what is fannish writing and what isn't, and those select few seem to have appointed themselves the arbiters of fannishness. I've been in fandom 30+ years because while a large number of people haven't accepted me, at least a small number did, and those are the people I respect and love.

*((There are two kinds of people in the world, those who make rules for other people to follow and those who don't.))*

St. Nicholas, Father Christmas, Santa Claus...he's got almost as many names as the devil. Santa? Satan? Coincidence? I figured out long ago that the only way that Santa could ever afford to deliver all those toys was that he was the majority shareholder of Duracell.

With the expansion of fandom to various interests, and the tendency to focus on a show or movie, or an activity, I don't know of any group of fans that shares a mindset or attitude. It's possible that the fannish mindset you seek may be a part of the past, or may simply be the impression you get from reading fannish histories.

*((That's what I've been saying myself for a good few years.))*

You might be of the insurgent mindset that Arnie Katz espouses. Worth searching out for further elucidation. How do we make our fandom more fannish? Another Worldcon hoax along the lines of Myles' House in '89? Hoax fans like Carl Brandon? A definitive written history of Vancouver fandom? (Graeme's doing that...) Write more of the articles you like to read?

Have a look at [www.challzine.net](http://www.challzine.net)...that is Guy Lillian's Hugo-nominated *Challenger*, in a webzine format. Given the choice between webzines and .pdfs, I'd take the latter, but Guy seems to like it. I think you'd prefer the opportunity to write the articles you like and create a website or .pdf for eFanzines.com. You seem to be frustrated with getting through to your audience with



BCSFazine. Think it's time to give up the clubzine, and create what you prefer? You'd be happier for it, IMHO.

*((That's what I've been trying to do, by preparing a new website.))*

All done, and have to get back to work. Stay warm and dry...we're about to go into a prairie-style deep freeze, so I will bundle up and endure. Take care, and see you next *BCSFazine*.

---

*Michael Bertrand, January 19, 2009*

Re: "*Can one be an introvert in the flesh but an extrovert online?*"

The short answer would be a resounding "YES", and I'd describe myself as a case in point.

Of course, it's not quite that simple. Introversiion versus extroversiion is not a binary metric, but rather a spectrum, with most people lying, bell-curve-like, somewhere in the middle. But one can still be on one side of the dividing line or the other.

I've always been more introvert than extrovert. but closer to the extrovert side than many of my fannish cohorts. I have no fear of public speaking, I've been known to enjoy some kinds of social functions, and under my surface shyness beats the heart of someone who really wants to shine, to make people smile and laugh and impress them with my personality, charm, and wit.

This all comes out online. In the world of the Internet, and especially in the world of text-based chat, I can express this extroverted side of myself in a safe, controlled, and low-stimulus environment. One where my excellent verbal skills and fertile imagination let me create my persona without the limitations of the material world. I can be who I want to be, and in a realm of imagination created out of a bookish nerd's best friend, the written word.

Kind of like fanzines, really. :)

---

*Ed Meskys, 322 Whittier Hwy, Moultonboro NH 03254-3627,  
edmeskys@localnet.com, 28 Jan 2009*

Thank you for sending RSNG as an e-letter, which I could read on my talking computer.

I am a bit late answering because I have had no end of problems with computers. A sighted friend installed "express

software" from my ISP, which completely boggled Outlook Express, which is still dead even after uninstalling it. We installed my speech software on my wife's computer, but that is not working well. At least it is working. So I am doing Access, Word, and Excel on my machine, and Outlook Express on hers. I am writing this in Word on my machine, saving it to a floppy, and will mail it from hers.

Anyhow I especially appreciated your piece on the many fandoms, and Taral's on Cheng Ho. I came onto the fringes of fandom in 1955, slowly got more involved, and got deeply into it when I moved to California in 1962. That year I started going to Worldcons regularly, was very active in the two Bay Area clubs, and started *Niekas*. Before that I gone to a few local cons and two Worldcons, and occasionally went to local club meetings in the New York City area, had done some APAzines, and *Niekas* started out as one, but in a very few issues it became a genzine which also happened to go thru an APA.

*((The first I heard of Niekas was in an illustration by Stephen Fox. He was a great fanartist; are you still in contact with him? I lost track of his current address some years ago.))*

I resonate most strongly with fanzine fandom, especially enjoying stories based on the mythology of fandom. Willis' *Enchanted Duplicator*, Carr's Brandonizations, like *BNF of Iz*, etc. But somehow I do not mix well with fanzine fans at Corflu or Ditto. I will go when I can do so at reasonable cost, but will not go at great cost as I will for Worldcon, or the annual National Federation of the Blind convention. As I get older I lose energy. I have not published my genzine *Niekas* in over 5 years, though I hope to Real Soon Now, and have not done my small, email-only personalzine in two years. (A year ago I had an issue of *Entropy* almost ready to send out, and accidentally deleted it from my computer. I got so discouraged that I have not worked on it since. But, Real Soon Now...) Anyhow, I really resonated with Eric Mayer's LoC, and I agree with you in asking what we can do to make fandom more fannish?

*((You can only expose people to the fannish idea; you can't make them get into it. Maybe it's too late to reach people when they've already "imprinted" on something else. Maybe you have to recreate a fannish group de novo, with neofans.))*

When I was sighted I bought and read many old fanzines. I remember Ted White's *Steller* with its fiction ABOUT fen. As you said, now “fanfiction” means amateur fiction set in the world of some movie or TV show, much of it slash, or fiction involving gay relationships between characters depicted as straight in the original shows.

Because of my love of Tolkien, I have become aware of a very active network of Tolkien fanfic authors, and they even have their own awards. Bonnie L. Sherrell, sighted but active in blind SF fandom, has posted a few of her stories on blind lists, and referred us to many others by herself and others.

I had heard of Cheng Ho, the 14th century explorer. Mostly I remember Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, saying that Europe's balkanization led to greater progress than China's monolithic empire. In China, one despotic emperor could put a halt to an age of exploration. In Europe, if one king ordered a halt to exploration, other countries would have continued unhampered. I had read somewhere (in Diamond? De Camp? John Boardman in a fanzine?) that the emperor was unhappy that Chinese gold was leaving his empire to be spent overseas. Taral's description of the situation seems very reasonable.

About 25 years ago I read a book, author not remembered, *Columbus Was Chinese*, which gave some possible evidence that Chinese explorers had reached the west coast of the Americas.

*((I think that was the basis for Poul Anderson's Time Patrol story, about a team sent to forestall a medieval Mongol-Chinese exploratory team returning from the Pacific Northwest.))*

I really like Taral's comparison with the US abandoning the moon to concentrate on domestic and imperial issues (Cold War and local poverty). I remember reading somewhere that the UK abandoned advanced aircraft technology, its equivalent to the US X-plane experiments. The government destroyed all hardware and engineering drawings and calculations, so that a later government could not easily revive the projects. Back then the UK had been in the forefront of airplane development, as shown in the movie *Breaking The Sound Barrier*. I do not remember when or why this was done.

*((That sounds a great deal like one of the most shameful but typical incidents in Canadian history, the Avro Arrow story.))*

I first became aware of runes when I read *The Hobbit* in 1960, largely as the result of Los Angeles fandom promoting LoTR, but did not get to LoTR until Christmas vacation from graduate school, December 1961. I was vaguely aware of their use in Scandinavian lands, and even in early Anglo Saxon. Actually, before that I had learned that Anglo Saxon had had three letters derived from runes: ð, Edh, which looks like a crossed partial derivative sign (or backwards six); þ, Thorn, which looks like a capital Y with the top bridged; and a letter which represented a guttural GH sound, which looks like the number 3 where the top half is angular rather than curved, with an extra loop on the bottom. I was told in high school or college English – I don't remember which – that these letters were dropped from English with the coming of the printing press, where imported type fonts did not include them. The Y in "ye olde gifte shoppe" was originally an attempt to fake the thorn.

I thought little more about it until I met Jane Sibley in the early 80s. Former *Niekas* co-editor Mike Bastraw had recruited her as artist, and we shared a huckster table at the 1982 Chicon. She had learned runes from a Norwegian grandmother, and noted that there were two different sets of runes used by Tolkien. She had written him asking how long-lived dwarves would make such a drastic change in their writing, and got some sort of answer.

She told me about the magical and fortune-telling uses of the runes, and she had seen Norwegian books less than 200 years old printed in runes. A few years ago she had completed a Ph.D. with a thesis on runes and their uses, though I have not understood just what the theme of the thesis was. I believe she had published a book based on her researches.

Thank you, again, for sending this very interesting fanzine.

---

*Jane Sibley, jrsibley@snet.net, January 29, 2009*

Hi, Garth! Ed Meskys forwarded your Swiss Navy online fanzine (cool stuff! I did really enjoy the commentary, and may actually have some support for the Chinese arriving in the New

World before ol' C. Columbus, but not Song dynasty. Shang (fall of; survivors fleeing the incomers).

OK, now to the meat of my email. "Runes" always gets my attention, me having been in the runology game for easily 40 years plus. Heck, I learned runes as a kid. The first ones I learned were what's called the "Swedish-Danish Common Runes", which most folks know as the Younger Futhark. In grad school (University of Oslo), I was the only student in the runology class and the professor and I could really "go places" since I knew easily 25 variations of the futharks coming into class.

OK, now for a running commentary ...

*A few months ago, a conversation at a BCSFA meeting about writing systems led to a breakdown of communication. I was maintaining that medieval runes not only served as a sort of alphabet, but the individual symbols could be used as ideographs on their own.*

OK, in medieval times the Norse used the "*kortkvistruner*", "short-twig runes", which was an expanded version of the Swedish-Danish and dotted futharks, so as to accommodate Latin (there were originally no runes for "c" (either it was pronounced as K and written as such, or as S and ditto), j (which the Norse pronounce like "y" but was written as I; q (best guess would be the runes KI or KIU), w (written as U), X (written KS) and Z (probably either S or TS). Plus, there were runes for sounds which don't exist in Latin or English, such as the *ømyld*, þ (as in "thorn" and "those") *æ* (pronounced in English vaguely like AAAHH rather than AAAY), etc.

*The hostess brought me a volume to correct my impressions - which had nothing to do with the Norse runes I was talking about. I should have been more specific.*

So, what book did she trot out?

*The short version of this story is that, even long after Europe was Christianized, some Northern Europeans used a sort of alphabet that was vaguely associated with paganism, with the Norse and Danes and Goths, and with folk magic.*

We can document rune use in northern Sweden (into late 1800s if not later) in Dalarna and Älvedal provinces, and (up to the beginning of WWI if not WWII) in Opedal, Norway. Those regions were all north of where the Black Death wiped out so many people.

*As symbols, alone or in combination, runes were used for calendars, for divination and in talismans.*

True. There were runic "Easter Tables", palmistry charts, and runic talismans (some possibly modelled on the Greco-Roman *defixiones*) go way back into Pagan times. But the most sophisticated use of runes in magic was in Christian magic.

*That said, we can now go into details. Strictly speaking, an "alphabet" is not only a set of signs for the sounds that make up words; "alphabet" is specifically applied to the Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic scripts, to the symbols used for Russian, or Coptic, or Armenian or Amharic - in fact, for a host of scripts descending from ancient Punic - all of which start with similar sequences.*

Yep, and named for "alpha, beta", the first 2 letters of that sequence. Nobody knows why or how the runic futhark sequence got its order.

*The Latin A, B, C, D, etc. are mirrored by the Greek Alpha, Beta, Gamma, the Hebrew Aleph, Beth, Gimel ... and so it goes. (Incidentally the Hebrew names for the letters are recognized as words for "ox", "house", and so on.)*

*Runes follow a different sequence, usually called a "futhark" ...*

F Feoh

Ah, you're using the Anglo-Saxon names for the runes. Thank heavens you're not using the New Age "fehu" etc.!

P Perth

No, this rune is not in the rune-row in this position.  
Perth/Pert/Peorth is usually found in Tyr's aett, the third family of the runes. Not in Frey/Freya's aett (first family).

U Ur

I Eoh

Oh my you do have these scrambled up!  
*((You seem to be reading the runes left, right, then down to the second row, then left, right ... which is not the way I ordered them. I was writing them down the left column and then down the right column.))*

... The sequence is F U TH A' R K G W H N I J S and sometimes D (dag) and OE (oethal) wind up here. T B E M AA (the rune "ac"), AE (the rune aesc), P (peorth) L Y

T Thorn

The original name for this was "thur" or "thurs", but that was too Pagan for the monks resident in England when the pagan Angles/Saxons etc. arrived, "Thurs" essentially means "pagan or supernatural beings in the world of humans" and the monks changed that to "thorn" after Jesus' crown of thorns. One usually had the first sound in a rune name as the sound of the rune. The Norse runes (YF) kept the "thurs" name for this rune.

*... There have been different versions of Norse runes at different times and in different places, not only with variant forms but also with a different number of symbols, and with different names. The version shown above is the Elder Futhark, perhaps the earliest known form of the runes. The names of the runes - like the original names of letters in Hebrew - were taken from everyday objects or concepts, not all of them natural: "Feoh" was a word for cattle, "Urs" a word for the aurochs (now extinct), "Hagal" for hail. Also like the earliest alphabets, the runes are very angular, adapted to carving into wood or stone.*

Note that the rune names for the Elder Futhark are nowhere documented as to period; what we use (except for the New Ager) are the Anglo-Saxon rune names. You might want to read *Runica Manuscripta* by René Derolez (major university libraries have it...maybe) (and yes, it is in English).

*A longer futhark developed in Anglo-Saxon Britain; a shorter sequence, the "Younger Futhark", developed in medieval Scandinavia.*

Actually, the YF was developed and disseminated in Viking period (pre-medieval) Scandinavia, as well as a number of rune-based codes (some of which go back into Vandel and Migration periods).

*As late as the 17th century, runes were used for writing, for ciphers, for calendar reckoning and for folk magic.*

Yep, right you are. Even later, too. There was one Danish skipper who wrote his log in runes so the casual spy would be clueless. When I was a kid, I also used runes as a secret code.

*In the early 20th century yet another runic system was dreamed up by a German mystic, and co-opted by the German fascist movement in the 1930s.*

Guido "von" List (he awarded himself the honorific "von"); he took some material from Friedrich Marby (known for his *Runengymnastik*, poses in which the body assumes a rune form, and the person chants rune-ish stuff; it's really crazy!). Marby and then List's material was eagerly sucked up by the *Germanenorden*, and by Heinrich Himmler's merry men in black. I have Xeroxes of some of the correspondence etc. from their HQ.

*Come to think of it, a lot of fringe culture from the 1930s was co-opted by the German fascist movement. Neo-fascism keeps popping up again in our generation. What I call "fringe culture", including crop-circle theories and pyramid power and astrology and, well, rune lore keeps making a comeback, too. Without looking terribly hard I keep finding books on runes, on the same shelves where you find astrology guides and numerology texts, palmistry,*



*witchcraft courses, and a thesis arguing that Atlantis was a Neanderthal stronghold.*

That's because a lot of the modern New Age rune books are "trash for cash" and totally not reflective of Medieval and earlier Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon usage. Look at the bibliographies of those books; if they cite other New Age authors, or a lot of books from Germany from ca. 1850 into ca. 1944, that is "creative imagination" more than actual scholarship. If you want to read good books on runes, first get a copy of R.I. Page: *Runes: Reading the Past*. I also sell a runic bibliography (focusing on scholarly as opposed to Nazi or New Age material, for the English-only speaker) on my Web page, [www.auntiearwenspices.com](http://www.auntiearwenspices.com) (I have a smallish spice blend business).

*(This is not to say that someone sporting runic tattoos or writing runic graffiti is likely to be a skinhead, anymore than a member of the Bush administration is likely to suffer from Alzheimer's, just because they work in the same building as the late President Reagan.)*

Yep.

*Runes, like Tarot cards, are prone to evoke a sense of cryptic, potent symbolism. (At least, crude geometric designs and symbols of basic, common experiences have that effect on me. Must be something in the limbic system.) I want to call this "iconic" even though it's a misnomer. The fact of life, however, is that any arbitrary set of symbols can develop "iconic" significance for people, in my sense; just give it enough time and reinforcement. It has been traditional to claim that Tarot cards are some cosmic, timeless, Platonic powers in themselves, not just as symbols; the same thing has been claimed of runes, Hebrew letters, and Sanskrit writing, even of their very sounds. It may not matter.*

Right you are.

*The folk-magic aspect of runes combines the notion of runes as signs for Cosmic Values, and the notion that you can somehow divine character, foretell the future, or cast spells by rearranging the signs.*

Woooo-woooo and squirrel food, anyone? Actually, we're in about the 5th runic New Age; you oughta see some of the 1600s "second runic new age" material...

*From the days of Viking raids to the present, people have been casting runes for divination, writing runes in rings, and combining runes in talismans for health and good fortune.*

True. I learned a form of runic divination from my father's mother (that's the Norwegian side) which is quite unlike the New Age rune tile technique.

*The conclusion of this is obvious: we have here an Unregulated Industry, and it is past time to call for professional standards of runecraft, and government regulation. It only remains to consider whether this is a Federal or a Provincial jurisdiction.*

ROFL! And yes, there are decent Canadian runologists (if they're still active); I'm one of the few in the US; there are plenty in Scandinavia, Holland, Germany, UK, and scattered ones in France and Italy.

*We could also strike a Royal Commission to ask whether the archetypes of First Nations monumental art bear "iconic" significance. This calls for further study.*

I'll drink to that! (Now, where did I put that half-bottle of blueberry mead?)

Actually, you got a lot of stuff right, which is a lot more than I can say for the modern New Age "wannabee". Congrats!

-- JT Sibley, who actually has a Ph.D. in this kinda stufh, and a fellow SF/fantasy fan

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*William Wright [bilw@iprimus.com.au], February 8, 2009*

I discovered the *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* trolling for Taral Wayne articles on eFanzines. A lot by and about him had appeared in Chris Garcia's *The Drink Tank* and, when he became Fan GoH at Anticipation, I determined to acknowledge him in the Feb 09

edition of *Interstellar Ramjet Scoop* (posted on eFanzines on Feb 8th, 2009).

In RSNG #16 Taral reminds us that, when Europe was asleep in its Dark Ages, Central Asia was the cockpit of the world and China was up to all the animadversions the West is living through now including, in all probability, our immediate future. We need perspectives like Taral's to learn from history – which makes the recent inauguration of the best educated and culturally savvy US President ever a serendipitous event.

Thanks for reprinting the article 'Different Values of Fandom' (originally published as 'The Trouble with Belgium' in *BCSFAzine* Oct 2008) where the writer wonders where to find a number of friends with 'fannish' minds. Given that 'fanac' covers a spectrum of activity so wide that it encompasses perspectives from the mutually inclusive (e.g. drinkers) to the mutually exclusive (e.g. thinkers), just how does one go about making our fandom more fannish?

My way, honoured more in the breach than in performance, is to engage with a wide variety of fanac then do my own thing in the hope that like minded fans might notice or, if I'm lucky, join in. An example is 'Creation revisited', an article in IRS Feb 09 dealing with Ditmar's \* thoughts on First Things – a contrasting theme to Last Things, which was explored in an article titled 'Imagination vs Logic in the accommodation of Inconsistency' in IRS Dec 08.

\* Ditmar Jenssen (who, in 1969, gave his name to the Australian science fiction achievement awards, popularly known as the Ditmars and whose fannish bio is accessible via the 'Consultants to the committee' link on the 'Who's Who' page of [www.meteor.org.au](http://www.meteor.org.au)) is a long retired head of meteorology at Melbourne University. He has the distinction, in 1958, of having produced the first computer-generated weather forecast in the Southern Hemisphere. A portfolio of his stunning computer graphics may be found in Earl Kemp's eI on eFanzines. Ditmar is almost a recluse these days but continues to tantalise SF fans with snippets of scientific and philosophic speculation at the cutting edge of human thought. Fandom's response might lack his intellectual rigor and academic scholarship but, for gentle irony, it has no peer.

This LoC is in response to my first encounter with RSNG. It won't be my last.

Well, Garth, here's a quick loc on your 16th endeavour chronicling the history of the Royal Swiss Navy. And an eventful history it is. Or was. Or whenever. Whatever.

I am sorry to hear of your job loss. This seems to be *de rigueur* nowadays. It sounds like you are not as depressed as you have been before when dealing with this situation. That may be because you've learned how to handle it and have a strategy in place as a back-up plan Just In Case. Too bad the "just in case" plan has to be used so often. Buck up, laddie. Things will turn around for you, I hope. I have been there, too; most of us fen have, come to think of it. In the words of that great philosopher, Red Green, "I'm pulling for ya; we're all in this together."

Say, a couple of those ideas you listed in Garth 2.0 would make crackerjack fanzine articles. If you ever finish one of them, send it my way: I would love to have it in *Askance*. The ones I would love to read are "how fans run conventions" and that Canadian fanhistory of the 1980s. Ages ago I ran one of your Canadian fanhistories in *This House*; I forget which issue, but I think it was circa 1979-80. I shall have to look that up.

Eric Mayer touched on the main reason why I enjoy fanzine fandom, and even fandom in general. The people that I have made contact with through fanzines have been largely welcoming and fun to correspond with. Sure, there are some real fuggheads floating about, but that's going to happen with any large group of people. One always has to sort through the crap to find that diamond in the rough. (Gee, I'm not sure about that particular analogy...) Then again, I discovered fandom in a hotbed: Minneapolis. A very welcoming group of folks. That made all the difference.

Still, like Eric and you - and many others - I enjoy writing and really got into the notion of running my own show, so to speak, by pubbing a fanzine, so I did. Eventually it became self-sufficient, generating enough response to keep it going until I got tired of it. Which is also going to happen. Right now I have no idea how long I will keep at *Askance*, but it looks like it's going to be around for awhile. Pubbing it is a lot of fun, and that's the bottom line in my book. When it ceases to be fun and assumes a drudgery role, then it's time to stop. That's my fan publishing philosophy.

Your V-Con 33 report is remarkable considering that you were ill and still attended on a limited basis. You illustrate very well the principle that if one parks himself in the consuite, the con will come to you. I'm sorry you weren't feeling better. Hopefully next time you'll have better health and fundage. They seem to help the enjoyment level of pretty much everything, especially con attending.

Taral's article was interesting and fun, but I have unfortunately no real comment to make on it. Even so, I did enjoy reading it. The same goes for your "Runes" article. Your writing skills are still very good, so I look forward to receiving an arkle from you some day. Or some year. No rush.

With that, end of loc. Good luck to you, Garth, and I hope things turn around for you RSN. Thanks for the zine.

All the best,  
John Purcell

"There was never a good war or a bad peace."  
- Benjamin Franklin

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*Sue Thomason, 190 Coach Road, Sleights, Whitby, North Yorks. YO22 5DN, UK; March 27, 2009*

Dear Garth – THANK YOU for *Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* #16. “*Can you reinvent yourself at 52?*” you ask. I think so. I think people continually reinvent themselves all the time. Life is change. I’m not quite the same person as I was yesterday. Some of the cells are different, the memories edit themselves, the thoughts sometimes don’t repeat exactly, the experience base is slightly different ... I think very few people have a radical-change road-to-Damascus type dramatic life conversion, but it is always possible to *nudge*. The trick is to have established a direction to nudge in before you start nudging, otherwise the nudging will just give you a drunkard’s-walk peregrination around the immediate area of your current life. And the other trick is to *keep* nudging.

In your locs, Eric Mayer says “*58 is hardly elderly, is it?*” Face it, folks, for most of human history, most people were dead by the time they were our age. When Mozart was my age, he’d been dead for more than 15 years. And I have yet to write a \*single\* symphony (Mozart wrote over 40). Yet this does not distress me.

Have to say I resonate with “*listlessly browse the Internet then kick myself for not doing something creative instead*”, although I don’t browse the Internet (much) as my connectivity is lousy. Hence liking to communicate with people by paper, dinosaur that I am ... (And if I’m in “thinks real slow” mode, YOU can’t see how long I spend staring at the wall between each sentence ...”

Comments on RSN Position Papers: (#127) No, it’s all done by Santa Claus. I’ve watched NASA track him around the world, so it MUST be true.

(#256) Never having met “Super-Heroes of Hoboken” I hadn’t come across the Anti-Vandals, but they are clearly part of the burgeoning guerrilla movement – here in the UK we have guerrilla gardeners, who sneak around at night beautifying neglected areas of public space, and guerrilla knitters, who decorate public objects with pieces of knit art. For me this has a kind of resonance with the new-ish Dangerous Sport of extreme ironing.

Enjoyed the articles on Cheng Ho and the runes.

So, how to find (or found) a community of exactly the sort of fandom you’re looking for? I don’t know, but I suggest that you delegate at least part of the task to an extrovert. Extroverts are good at community, so they tell me.

*WAHF: Tara! Wayne, KRin Pender-Gunn, Paul Spencer, Stephen Samuel*



## **POSITION PAPERS**

Garth Spencer, RSN

(#157) I may or may not have mentioned this proposal before, but a recent Facebook mention of Near East violence prompts me to write this again: Perhaps the real problem in the Near East has much less to do with Jews versus Muslims, is much less about

Israel versus the Muslim world than you think, but mostly has to do with the minority of hotheads and extremists and generally violent types, in either population.

Considering the distinction between *fedayeen* and the general Palestinian populace, or Jewish fundamentalists and the rest of Israeli society, I think you may get an idea of what I'm driving at.

I suggest that we separate out the most devoted, most obstinate hotheads from the general population, designate a separate time and a place (like a fortified arena) where they can meet up ... and let them have at each other. Weapons should be limited to swords and pikes, spears and lances; firearms should be disallowed; bows and arrows have to be negotiated. Talk about honour or something to make it stick.

After the long weekend devoted to the purpose, the authorities can unseal the exits and escort the survivors to psychological rehabilitation centres.

Are there compelling reasons why we can't institute such a policy?



## CONJECTURES

Garth Spencer, RSN

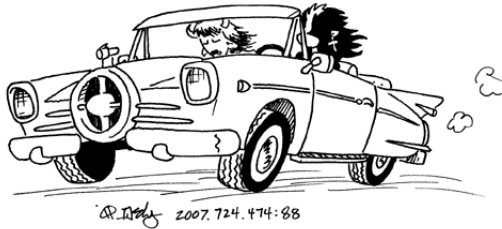
Under what conditions will we establish regular commercial freight traffic to and from orbital space?

Under what conditions will we establish manufacturing centres in orbit? Or shift our manufacturing there from Earth's surface?

Under what conditions will we find it necessary and preferable to clean up floating garbage from the oceans?

What are the costs and benefits of mining garbage dumps and junkyards?

How many commercial and industrial uses are there for non-recyclable, non-biodegradable industrial and municipal waste products?



## GET FURRIES!

Taral Wayne

(This was composed on-stencil during WebBob's panel n "The Politics of Reproduction". It has been changed only slightly – a few hyphens and commas; perhaps a total of twenty new words – from the version printed in *The Same to You*, a Ditto one-shot published by Web Bob. The first few lines, it should be noted are in imitation of the first few lines of Bob's one-shot introduction.)

Ending a one-shot in the middle of a convention panel is something I don't have an opportunity to do too often, so I suppose I ought to see what mischief I can do. Inspiration comes floating in through the grating. Unfortunately, there isn't time or space to do inspiration justice. "The Ten Thousand Lives of Poona Singh" will have to wait until another day, along with "Gold at the End of the Laserbow", and "You Can't Go Home Again, Claude Degler". Instead, I must find some subject short enough, and trivial enough, to suit the mood of Ditto, the first alternate fanzine fan's convention.

That ain't so easy.

Well, what about the Great Furry Controversy?



“Furries,” for those not in the know, are people who grew up on Saturday morning cartoons. (As I did.) More important, Furries passed through puberty while watching Saturday morning cartoons. Image a typical TV tot with his eyes glued to the screen. Costumed heroes are bashing ludicrous villains with names like Vomitar, or Skuldic. One member of the team of heroes is a typical Japanimation female character – big eyes, child-like proportions, pointed chin, and hair that floats in permanent anti-grav. Then, suddenly, \*spung\*, puberty!

But suppose the young addict isn’t watching that sort of cartoon. Suppose he (almost always a he) is watching a cartoon about cute little animal characters? Just when a soft, furry, curvaceous, sex-kitten is flicking her tail suggestively, \*spung\*, puberty!

There are whole cults of funny-animal perverts, devoted to their favourite comic or cartoon animal-character. I wouldn’t want to name names, but I must admit a certain admiration for a Walt Kelly skunk that is shared by many. Natural outgrowths of furry-fandom have been independent comics, with original funny-animal characters. In general these are known as “anthropomorphics”. Prime examples are Joshua Quagmire’s *Cutey Bunny*, Steve Gallacci’s *Albedo* (Erma Felna), and Reed Waller’s *Omaha, the Cat Dancer*. The adult nature of these comics exploits the traditionally non-adult medium with controversial results.

Furries, self-professed furverts, admittedly have strange tastes. What else can you say for a person who sits unmoved through a costume parade of conventional beauties, but falls in love with Bambi? The old fashioned funny animal cartoonist is uneasy confronted with this passion for painted cells. Reactionaries, people who believe funny-animals are for humour, (and if God meant them to be sexy he’d have given them herpes), have lately accused furverted-fandom of giving everyone a bad name.

I suppose there is truth to this, but the reasoning is circular. Because there is broad support for repressive censorship, sexual content in funny-animal comics will make the field a target for repressive censorship. This is so, but it’s blaming the Jew for anti-Semitism. “If only he’d quit being Jewish, he wouldn’t be a victim of racism.” The guilt belongs to those who practice censorship, and

smart cartoonists will resist censors, not criticize furverts. All the same, the pressure is on in funny-animaldom.

Friends are sniping at each other behind their backs. Professional relationships are endangered. Organizations are disrupted. Where will it all end, one wonders, with a White House Commission on Pornography in Children's Media? (God forbid, but that sounds plausible!) It's time to stand up, and demand an end to prejudice against animisogny. Let Roger Rabbit do it like a rabbit. Come out of the closet with your lust for fur. Stand up for artists (and readers!) with fetishes for ducks, dogs, deer, cats, rabbits, raccoons, bears and mice, and fight for their right to Get Furry!

Just don't ask me to share a dinner table with any of those weirdoes.

## **THE BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY**

*Received in Email*

Dear Fellow Constituent:

The George W. Bush Presidential Library is now in the planning stages and accepting donations.

The Library will include:

1. The Hurricane Katrina Room, which is still under construction.
2. The Alberto Gonzales Room, where you won't be able to remember anything.
3. The Texas Air National Guard Room, where you don't even have to show up.
4. The Walter Reed Hospital Room, where they don't let you in.
5. The Guantanamo Bay Room, where they don't let you out.
6. The Weapons of Mass Destruction Room, which no one has been able to find.
7. The National Debt Room, which is huge and has no ceiling.
8. The Tax Cut Room, with entry only to the wealthy.
9. The Economy Room, which is in the toilet.
10. The Iraq War Room. (After you complete your first visit, they make you go back for a second, third, fourth, and sometimes fifth visit.)
11. The Dick Cheney Room, in the famous undisclosed location.
12. The Environmental Conservation Room, still empty.

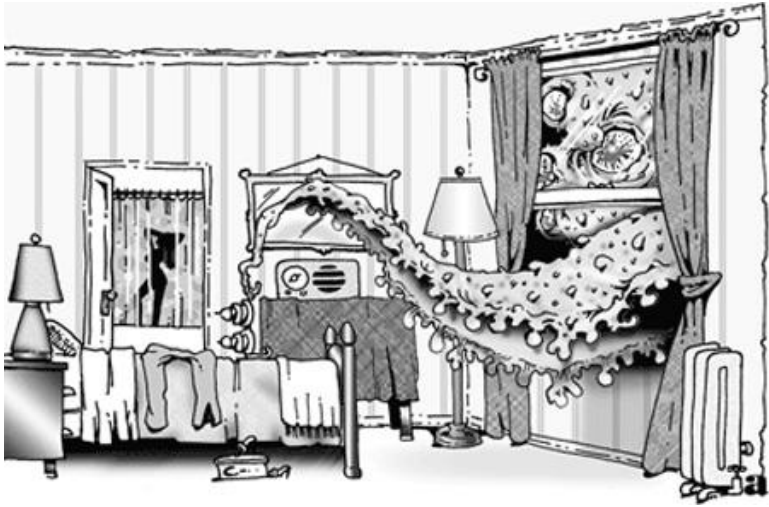
13. The Supreme Gift Shop, where you can buy an election.
14. The Airport Men's Room, where you can meet some of your favorite Republican Senators.
15. The Decider Room, complete with dartboard, magic 8-ball, Ouija board, dice, coins, and straws.

*Note: The library will feature an electron microscope to help you locate and view the President's accomplishments.*

The library will also include many famous quotes by George W. Bush:

1. 'The vast majority of our imports come from outside the country.'
2. 'If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure.'
3. 'Republicans understand the importance of bondage between a mother and child.'
4. 'No senior citizen should ever have to choose between prescription drugs and medicine.'
5. 'I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy -- but that could change.'
6. 'One word sums up probably the responsibility of any Governor, and that one word is 'to be prepared!''
7. 'Verbosity leads to unclear, inarticulate things''
8. 'I have made good judgments in the past. I have made good judgments in the future.'
9. 'The future will be better tomorrow.'
10. 'We're going to have the best educated American people in the world.'
11. 'One of the great things about books is sometimes there are some fantastic pictures.' (during an education photo-op)
12. 'Illegitimacy is something we should talk about in terms of not having it.'
13. 'We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur.'
14. 'It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it.'
15. 'I stand by all the misstatements that I've made.'... George W. Bush to Sam Donaldson

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY!



*If Yog-Sothoth had a girlfriend ...*

## **ELDER GHODS V. MICROSOFT**

To: Microsoft Lawyers, Inc.

From: Azathoth, Nyarlathotep and Hastur, Elder Attorneys.

Sirs:

Our agents among the mortal herd have brought to Our attention your recent product entitled Windows Vista. Therefore We now give you statutory notice of intent of proceedings to be taken against Microsoft by the Many-Angled Ones.

With this suit We will show that Windows Vista, and to a lesser extent all of the Microsoft range of products, infringe upon the recognised "look-and-feel" of the Elder Gods, for the following reasons:

- o Windows Vista is a crawling abomination from the darkest pits of Hell;
- o No man can be in its presence for too long without being driven into gibbering insanity;
- o A cult who worship it exist in secret amongst the mortal herd;
- o Those who associate with it for too long develop common physical characteristics, to wit: pale, clammy skin, bulging eyes, generally unkempt physical appearance, tendency towards nocturnal living, change in diet to that which normal men do

- o not eat (in your case tacos, burgers and Jolt Coke; in Ours, human flesh, Fungi of Yuggoth and the blood of Alien Gods);
- o Mysterious tomes that purport to explain this phenomenon are reputed to exist; they are bound in an unnatural substance and only available at a terrible cost to the user.
- o The Microsoft range of products seek to utterly dominate the world, and force all who dwell there to live in eternal damnation.

As you can see, Our case is very strong, especially when you consider that most judges prefer not to have chittering things with tentacles for faces scoop out their brains and eat them.

We hope that you will consider these points carefully and settle out of court, since it is not Our intention to have your senior partners spend the rest of their mercifully short lives under heavy sedation in a maximum security psychiatric hospital. After all, it was the Lords of the Outer Planes who gave humanity lawyers in the first place.

Respectfully yours,

pp. J. Arthur Hastur, LL.B., B.C.L, B.D



## WHAT I LEARNED FROM FORENSIC TV SHOWS

- Most people don't know this, but you have to treat a crime scene almost like a biological contamination zone.  
Recommendation: try not to move anything, try not to *touch*

anything with your bare hands, or *you* become part of the evidence (and a possible suspect).

- Most people don't know this, but most crimes of violence are committed by those known to, indeed close to the victim. This is why investigators have to ask nosy questions that sound insinuating, or get your fingerprints and DNA even if you aren't on the suspect list, just to eliminate your traces from the evidence.
- Allegedly everyone who passes through a place not only takes something (some trace evidence from the scene) but also leaves something (some trace evidence of themselves). No one has Teflon untouchability.
- Unfortunately the first responder at a crime scene must logically be included, not only among the witnesses, but in the suspect pool, and has to be eliminated by an alibi.
- If you resist invasions of your privacy, your personal information, your home, you are suspected of hiding something. Then again, if you're *too* willing to assist the investigation, you may be suspected of injecting yourself into the process, like some perpetrators. You can't escape suspicion, at least temporarily. The best you can do is to comply with all requests but not be too enthusiastic about offering information. Recommendation: err on the side of complete openness and cooperation.
- One problem with media coverage of crimes is that they serve to inform criminals about the progress of investigations. The problem with forensic TV shows is that they educate criminals in how to eliminate evidence remaining to investigators.
- One problem with forensic TV shows is that they don't *time-stamp* the successive scenes, to give a realistic sense of their time lapse. Real-life investigations do not start and conclude within an hour. Real-life trial processes can take *months*, if not longer.

## WHAT I LEARNED FROM RECENT POLICE NEWS

- Police are human. If most of them are doing a scrupulous job most of the time, but a few occasionally mistake an innocent party for a suspect, or a distressed and neglected immigrant with no English for someone with a violent mental disturbance, that is the only explanation I can think of.
- Police are as inclined to cover their ass and deny culpability as anyone. That is the only way I can explain the pathetic defences some Mounties pleaded in the recent Dziekanski affair; or in earlier years, the habit of Chief Jamie Graham to jump to the Vancouver Police Department's defence, when he should have waited for some facts to emerge.
- Some police are, to say the least, not as professional as others. That is the only way I can explain the treatment given to innocents designated as terrorists, or Native Canadians deliberately exposed to hypothermia.
- Sooner or later, some policemen in any force will act like thugs, and company goons. That is the only way I can explain the degraded reputation of the Vancouver Police Department and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in recent decades.
- We live in an anarchy, and always have done. Sometimes our police forces fail to maintain the illusion that they protect us from much.



## ESSENTIAL REFURANCE

Tara Wayne (December 1992)

Strictly speaking, furry fandom is a social circle – a group of people come together through their interest in funny animal comics and animation.

Oh yes, the furry phenomenon has antecedents, and feeds from some branch-stream of the universal subconscious. One can cite classical mythology, traditional folk-tales, fable, lycanthropy, children's lit, hunting magic, totemism, and animal stories. We have always lived with animals, and thought about them. It would be surprising if there were no other anthropomorphism than ours.

But funny animals are specialized critters. Furrries draw their imagery from a common background of Saturday morning cartoons and comic books, and have imbued these images with meanings that could only arise from growing up in the boomer Years. We don't communicate with animal spirits, wonder how we will be reincarnated next on the wheel of life, believe other



creatures exist only for our moral instruction, or beseech animal patrons to feed our tribe. Most of us, anyway. In California, not everyone has all four corners of their rent pegged down...

The point is, we are NOT ancient Greeks, Amerinds, feudal peasants, Hindus, or druids. We do NOT think of animals as these people did, even those of us who think we do. We don't. We didn't live their lives. We lived OUR lives, and therefore add a spin of our own to the eternal study of those other beings who inhabit our planet.

All the same, before furry fandom there were furies – artists and fans such as myself who drifted into either science fiction or comics fandom. Most of us knew the others for what we were, furies at heart, but there lacked a center of gravity and sense of group identity.

Two of the most important founding members of furry fandom are Reed Waller and Ken Fletcher. Together they laid the groundwork for later events. Their innovation was Vootie, a kind of small press co-op called an apa. Vootie was initially a “funny animal” apa because there existed no shorthand for “not an apa for superhero comics”. It was principally a collecting point for artists whose interests were not only funny animals, but also undergrounds, classics, animation and foreign comics. One way or the other, the greater number of contributions was anthropomorphic. But the content was counter-culture. The apa lasted only 37 mailings, the first mailing in 1976 and the last in 1984. In the end, conflicting demands for Reed Waller's time led to longer and longer delays between mailings, until it was acknowledged dead by default.

At almost the moment Vootie passed away, Marc Schirmeister brought into being a new apa, called Rowrbrazzle. Brazzle swept up a lot of orphaned members of Vootie, and added to them various odd people that Schirm knew. They included animators, members of groups such as the Cartoon Fantasy Organization, would-be publishers and self-published artists, anime fans... and probably a Flat Earther or two. His connections replaced the Minneapolis complexion of Vootie for a Southern California one. The big change, though, was to sever once and for all the connection with the counter-culture. When Schirm said Brazzle was a funny animal apa he didn't mean “not superheroes”, he meant anthropomorphics.

Furry fandom was born with that first quarterly mailing. The people had been brought together, a common meeting ground created, and a purpose defined. Before Vootie, there had been people only. Before Brazzle only people and a place. But after February 1984 there was finally a sense of group identity, and soon a word for who we were – furries.

Other leaps were made, one by one, in the following years. The first to be made was to imitate Rowrbrazzle. These other apas appeared, and disappeared, though Brazzle survives to the present day. At almost the same time the pioneering fanzines appeared. Comics and pin-up collections at first, a few experimented with prose articles, reviews, and news. Many died after a small number of issues, but the survivors developed successful formulas. For Yarf! It was illustrated prose fiction and shared-worlds. For Bestiary and others it was eroticism. Yet another kind of fan après arose, one that was neither a fanzine nor an apa. Like an apa, it was up to the members what went in pubs such as Gallery and the new Huzzah!. But like a zine, the editor controlled all aspects of production. Like an apa, members met “minac” and were sent all issues. Like a zine, the issues were sold and there was a profit-sharing arrangement. Increasingly, fanzines are taking advantage of desktop publishing to improve their production values. The downside is a growing number of eight and ten dollar fanzines. Where will it lead? Nobody knows.

A parallel development with print-fandom has been the furry bulletin board. There seem to be two independent streams of furry bbs activity – those boards feeding from Furr/Purnet and those from alt.fan.furry on the Internet. Surprisingly, the overlap with fans in the print-medium world is not as great as you would expect. Among several dozen well-known furry artists, I can attest to seeing the names of only three active on Furr/Purnet. I expect similar lack of representation in the alt.fan.furry stream. Encouragingly, I believe there are signs of growing awareness on the boards of the print medium.

A step beyond the furry board is Furry MUCK. The word “MUCK” derives from “MUD” or “Multi-User Domain”, an interactive form of computer chat-line. Users log onto the MUCK in their personal, and interact simultaneously with other member personae. Most MUCKs have a structured backdrop, such as a convention setting, dungeon, starship, or even... a donut shop.

MUCKers claim to be “virtually real”, and can usually be spotted by the vacant look in their eyes and undirected locomotion.

Perhaps the most important invention in furry fandom, other than its own self-discovery, was ConFurence. Begun in 1989 as ConFurence “zero”, it’s grown in size and scope to be recognized as the annual gathering place for funny animal fans. Modeled after SF conventions, ConFurence nevertheless has evolved some features peculiar to itself, such as the artists’ ghetto, the artist-friendly art show, and “Sketch-booking”. The later is the unique habit furry fans have of carrying bound books of blank pages to collect artist’s sketches in. An entire etiquette arose to cover every situation – when an artist can be approached, whether he expects to be paid, and what sort of drawing may be asked for.

In the wake of ConFurence, other conventions have become unofficial furry cons. Places where significant numbers of furies will collect and party include the annual Worldcon, the San Diego Comics Con, and lately Philcon. Other completely furry cons like ConFurence have been talked about, but not yet held. It’s probably only a matter of time before somewhere in Canada or the U.S. someone announces a ConFurmentation or Furmentation or something of similar name.

The one area of the funny animal field that once led and perhaps lags now, is the black and white comic. Outside of the mainstream comics industry, there has been a thriving b/w field; a direct descendent of the undergrounds but no longer counter-culture. Various politically correct, nihilistic, erotic, barbarian, artsy-fartsy, samurai, japanimation, and superhero comics contend with each other for sales in a limited market... among them furry comics.

1984 was a good year for furies. The best-known and earliest furry comic was *Omaha the Cat Dancer*, created and drawn by the same Reed Waller who once co-edited Vootie. *Omaha* began in Vootie, in fact. The earliest stories to be published outside the apa appeared in *Bizarre Sex* comics in 1982, then under their own title in ’84. In the same year, the first of Joshua Quagmire’s five issues of *Cutey Bunny* entered the scene. Also, the first proper issue of Steve Gallacci’s *Albedo*, and possibly Jim Groat’s *Equine the Uncivilized*.

The next landmarks of b/w furry comics that appeared in years later included William Van Horn’s *Nervous Rex* (1985), Stan Sakai’s

*Usagi Yojimbo* (1986), *Captain Jack* by Mike Kazaleh (1986), and the focal point comic published by Fantagraphics, *Critters* (1986). *Critters* published almost everyone at one time or another, and did the unheard-of for a long time – it appeared on a bimonthly schedule. Unfortunately, the better contributors drifted slowly out, and were replaced by less popular artists. By the fiftieth issue in 1990, *Critters* had lost its commanding place and was cancelled.

For a brief while there was some hope that Eclipse's gem-like *Dreamery* might take up where the declining quality of the Fantagraphics book left off. But its 14-issue life only lasted from '86 to '89, dying a year younger than *Critters*. The one great service done by *Dreamery*, fortunately, was introducing Donna Barr to the public. Soon after the last issue of *Dreamery* the first issue of *Stinzz* was on the shelves of comic stores.

The next big event in the evolution of the furry comic was the five-part mini series by Vicky Wyman, *Xanadu*, followed by a single colour special. After wrapping up the series, the story moved ominously downscale – to a fanzine. Lex Nakashima's *Ever-Changing Palace* was a lavish production, but a fanzine nevertheless. What did it mean when superior material reverted to the level of fanac?

Possibly it meant nothing at all. But, if it meant the field was not viable, certain people were unwilling to admit it – luckily. Martin Wagner launched his popular *Hepcats* series in 1989. That same year Edd Vick established MU Press.

MU's fledgling production was a small paperback collection of Steve Willis' *Morty the Dog* stories. In rapid order Edd added new titles to his line. Over the years MU has published several fine, and several puzzling titles – *Rhudiprrt Prince of Fur*, *Mad Raccoons*, *Champion of Katara*, *Furkindred*, *.357*, *Zu*, *Wild Kingdom*, *Beauty of the Beasts*, *Shanda the Panda*, and many more. In spite of disappointing sales and irregular releases, MU is perhaps still the best hope of legitimizing furry comics.

Much more recently, Antarctic Press has entered the contest, with a new series of *Albedo*, and the pro-military *Furrilough*. In this case, two over-heads are definitely better than one. Two companies hopefully have better than twice the opportunity to wedge an entry into a tight market.

But by and large the furry comic field hasn't grown since its beginnings in 1984. Many titles have come and gone. About as

many are published now as were published eight or nine years ago – some five, arguably six, titles apart from the sporadic MU stable. Sales are insignificant for all but two, *Omaha* and *Usagi Yojimbo*. The rest, (limping along with sales of three thousand, two thousand, or far fewer), might almost be called glorified fanzines.

In my view, this is the greatest obstacle to the creative growth of furry fandom. It grows in numbers, but not in dimension. Fan artists increase, as does the fan press. But the professional side of the field is perpetually on the verge of breakthrough, without quite breaking through.

Where are we going as a social phenomenon? The question has been asked again and again, and the answer each time likely says more about the individual than it does about the future of furry fandom. There does seem to be a groundswell of interest in the furry motif. It shows itself in growing numbers and increasing cross-links in the electronic media. ConFurence itself grows, if slowly. But is this growth from a static body of potential furrries? Or is the furry sensibility spreading? Can it grow far without more development of its public face, the comic book? Or is a professional side in fact irrelevant?

These questions will only be answered in time. My guesses are no better than yours.

### ***Footnotes:***

- i. An apa (Amateur Publishing Association) is run on a contributory basis. Each member is required to produce and send in to the Official Editor his quota of pages. The OE bundles these together as identical mailings that are sent back to the members.
- ii. Also “furverts”, and on occasion “skunk fuckers”.
- iii. Not formally dated; the artwork seems to have been drawn in ’84.





### ***Why You Got This:***

- The gods hate you.
- You are mentioned.
- I owe you a reply.
- You sent me your zine.
- Your work is in here.
- Thought something here might tickle your funny bone.
- Your part of the world desperately needs a Royal Swiss Navy detachment.
- My master Groucho told me to.