SWLV

#43 Annual February 2024

Table of Contents

Editorial:	And I Feel Fine…
Thrashing Trufen:	Switching Mediums
Flogging a Dead Trekkie:	Playing With A.I.
Scribbling on the Bog Wall:	Pre-empted Programming
Endnote:	Moving Forward

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SWILL

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Editorial: And I Feel Fine...

Neil Williams

Hello again)) So, where to begin? A lot has happened since Issue #31...

I will begin with the hack. I failed three engineering technology students from Saudi Arabia in my sociology course; they were fluent in Arabic and in mathematics and in computer languages, but their understanding of English was poor and the course was taught in English. These students would then go on to hack into my account on my webhosting provider and delete my website, emails, everything. Some of this was backed up elsewhere, but not all was immediately accessible (I had buried it deep into the file directory of an old laptop). And for some of the data, e.g. Issue #31, the only copy of the finished product was on the server and now gone.

Therefore: here is the plea... If anyone out there still has a copy of SWILL #31, please email me a copy!!))

I could give excuses for my absence. Individual labour problems with management and Human Resources. Collective labour problems and a five week strike. Increased workload. COVID. Forced retirement due to COVID. Moving. Skyrocketing Ontario rents. Moving again. And so on... Life got in the way. The main reason, though; Taral Wayne is correct -- I am NOT a "real fan" as he perceives the term.

Fanac is not the air I breathe. I will not perish if I do not fan publish. It is a hobby. Like my painting (which is bad) only I do not display these creative endeavours to the public (as a service to humankind). Like my fiction

writing, that does not pay enough to be even considered a part-time job. I am a reader and viewer of speculative fiction, who is a fan of this supra-genre and, in particular, the genre of science fiction. I write within the genre. And I do some fanac, from time to time.

So, I now admit it. Yes, Taral Wayne, Neil Williams is NOT a "real fan" and certainly not a trufan or faan. He is just an ordinary human being, almost "mundane", who enjoys the genre, engages in some fan activity, but has no commitment to fandom as a collective entity.

SWILL #32 was started in 2016 and finished in March of 2017. SWILL #33 and SWILL #34 were written in 2017 as well. I did not publish these issues. In 2018, I thought that I had located a copy of Daughter of SWILL, Mother of SCUM #3 -- which dealt with the problem of overly human aliens in SF -- but I was incorrect. I wrote SWILL #35 and that was devoted to this topic. Again, this issue wasn't published.

The original plan was that starting with SWILL #36, SWILL would become an annual. This has happened as to the planned issues, that parts of, but not all of have been written. SWILL #36 to SWILL #38 are on the theme of passages -- they are In Memoriam issues. SWILL #39 is all about COVID and the pandemic experience. SWILL #40 is the 40th Anniversary issue and is a Best of SWILL issue.

The tone shifts with SWILL #41. The zine is now 100% total perzine. SWILL now is a "catch-up" on what Neil has been doing the past year. "Slice of life" content, with still the occasional axe being ground, and no attempt to deal with anything too topical, or "burning issues of the day" within SF.

The following schedule ~~is thus~~ has been changed: SWILL #41 and SWILL #42 will be released online in 2024. In December of 2024 the following volumes of SWILL will be published:

Original SWILL	Issues #1 through #7
SWILL 2011	Issues #8 through #12

SWILL 2012 Issues #13 through #17

SWILL 2013 Issues #18 through #22

SWILL 2014 Issues #23 through #26

SWILL 2015 Issues #27 through #30

In January of 2025, SWILL #32 through to SWILL #40 will be released online as "A Trough-Full of SWILL". These issues will cease to be available for online access in September of 2025 and will be published as:

SWILL 2016/2017 Issues #31 through #35

SWILL Annuals: Volume 1 Issues #36 through #40

SWILL #41 through to SWILL #43 will be remaining online (in September of 2027, SWILL #41 through #46 will be removed from online access and SWILL Annuals: Volume 2 will be published).

And in February 2025, SWILL #44 will be released online.

Anyway, that concludes my State of SWILLdom address. All is well, and I am back -- for now ;)

Thrashing Trufen: Switching Mediums

Neil Williams

I have a love for the audio medium. As a tween I was a radio nerd. I rebuilt radios and built radios from parts. I was into DXing (listening to distant stations on the AM band) and also listened on shortwave. I did not do sound in secondary school. That was all performed by the AV Club and that was a closed group to the "unwashed"; AKA those who did not have the same television and film tastes as the club executive.

I did do sound for several community theatre groups in my teens and into my early twenties. Later, when I was in the Reserve, I was in Signals (back then radio operations). There was a fad in the late 1970s and early 1980s of audio science fiction fanzines. I got into that for a short while. I just didn't have regular access to good recording equipment and it kind of sucked not being able to produce audio content at the level that I was capable of ((And I think that it was perhaps more time consuming to record all the cassette tapes and then costly to send them out in the post.

And then, I worked in radio. I did volunteer work with "The Ether Patrol" (the SF & F show) and the anarchist show (whose name escapes me) on CFRO-FM in Vancouver, British Columbia. I would work for a wide variety of shows as a volunteer and as a temporary contract employee on one grant or another -- usually under an arts grant or public affairs fund. I worked on music shows, several public affairs shows, arts shows, and did engineer training for a lot of shows, and also on-the-spot edited tape for many reporters. I wrote some radio drama. I am fond of two serials that I wrote and produced. One was titled "On the Rocks" set amongst the anarchists, socialists, and intentional community people out in the asteroid belt vs the corporate authoritarian Dominion of Earth. The other was a dark cyberpunk set after a rather negative technological singularity event called "Rhonda Riot and the Insurgents". But most of what I produced were alternative rock band biographies. This started through my work on the Brent Kane show, and drifted off in its own direction.

And the 1980s in Vancouver was the place to be, to interview cutting edge Canadian alternative rock bands.

With the technological changes, I have some good audio recording equipment available at home, plus I have access to some superior equipment at the local community theatre. Now that I am semi-retired, I do sound for them.

So, I am kind of set to switch mediums. Should I choose to do so. The question is, do I want to do that? This I am not certain of. And which medium? When this idea first emerged, I thought that SWILL would make the jump to video. The proposed channel would be SWILLTube. However, that was several years ago and the idea never did manifest into reality. I have done some work within the past for television, albeit with local cable stations, as a technical director. Creating video content is more time consuming and potentially expensive than the audio medium. And to do it well, requires a team. It is easier to go it alone with audio; there is even AI to do some of the additional voice work (not very well, in my opinion, but less expensive than voice actors and the ACTRA headaches). As audio was my preferred medium, and the medium that I have the most expertise in; I will be working in that medium.

Sometime in 2024, I will be launching Radio SWILL as podcasts. I have yet to flesh out the full plan for the content and frequency... It will be an experiment. In keeping with a SWILL style, I envision this as a series of "pirate radio" broadcasts -- keeping just ahead of the (in this case mythical) CRTC signal-hunters ;) So, podcasts that appear essentially at random, with some email/social media "heads up" prior to a podcast.

SWILL (this fanzine) will continue to be published in the print medium, as an annual.

Flogging a Dead Trekkie:

Playing with A.I.

Neil Williams

Comeon everybody! It's the new sensation! Everyone is doing it...

Yes, I am experimenting and playing with A.I. software. Why, because my middle son suggested it and demonstrated some of the software to me. I had known that my students were using ChatGPT (or other AI software) for their assignments. However, I was not aware of how good the software was. Oh, it can make hilarious mistakes. But for simple and straight-forward assignments (and in my current courses they really are, and have been developed by the course leader, and they haven't been changed in five years...) this software is brilliant. One of the features that AI software does not have yet, is a "masking" or "cloaking" feature; to intentionally put in random grammatical errors and spelling mistakes into the text -- this is my main method of telling if an assignment was written by a human or by software.

Of course, the better solution would be to use AI software to develop new and customised assignments; each student gets their own customised unique assignment. Sigh, but this will descend into a kind of "arms race". The students will still use AI to write the assignments for them. Perhaps, the assignments need to be to be more complicated. Perhaps, the educational goal of the assignment is to demonstrate that the student has acquired the course knowledge, through their ability to train AI to write the assignment for them. For foundational knowledge, evaluation should be via timed multiple choice testing at a testing centre. No phones. No devices. Just you and the terminal and the tricky complex scenario-based multiple choice questions the computer asks you.

I have come to the decision that while I will continue the attempt to identify the misuse of AI in written assignments, that this is a no win situation. And post-secondary administrations are torn on this issue. AI does assist is increasing student retention (and thus revenue) and at the same time, if all the students are "cheating" in the long term their diplomas and degrees will have no worth and revenue will decline. At present, administration tends to be at odds with the faculty on this issue. That is because, with the exception of new buildings, post-secondary administration tends to take its cue from the financial services sector; looking ahead only the next two quarters as the market is too unpredictable beyond that. So administrators are taking in just the short term view that AI increases retention that increases revenue (and if the students are international students, massively increases profits) and has the potential to increase their salaries and bonuses. Thus, a longer term vision is required. Administrators and faculty will have to together and along with the professional associations and government agencies that licence people to work in certain fields, determine what the required core knowledge the student must have is, then come up with new methods to evaluate whether or not the student has those skills. And they may use AI to develop these methods of evaluation.

The "bitter pill" for academics will be the possible abandonment of demonstrated writing skills on the part of the student. This is a millennia old standard of being educated. But, we have to realise that this past skill may be superseded by the skill of training software to write for you. I could argue that training the software to write requires some writing skills to begin with; but, I have a long experience with software and I do know that the current software will evolve and become more user-friendly and no longer really need to have the user "train it", it will supply the user with a myriad of choices to select from.

And, so be it. The "genie is out of the bottle" and this is part of the new reality.

I am also playing with AI for my own creative purposes. And this IS a learning curve and I have yet to select which software I am going to use for my projects. That is which software I am going to purchase. But, I will be using AI. For writing software, I will be using it to write audio serials again. I will create the universe, the characters, some basic conflicts, and some suggested plot lines, then voila... Twenty mouse clicks later I have twenty radio scripts. I can then make further suggestions and have the software re-write. In my experiments, so far, at the present state of the software available, I will still have to do the final drafts and editing. And there is also AI software out there that can be used as voice actors. Sorry ACTRA (well not really sorry), your rate scale still assumes that an independent audio producer must have a CBC budget and CBC sized audience and a CBC level of revenue (we don't). You didn't anticipate this, and so, I guess it sucks to be you...

I am also playing with using AI as a writing aid in prose serial fiction, but I am at the "early days" on that one.

When change comes, you can embrace or you can resist that change. And perhaps do a bit of both, adapt to the change and modify it and humanise it. This is the new normal. This could be a really wonderful set of tools. It could also be a prelude to destruction, should AI decide that humankind is now redundant.

For now, I will play with AI and make use of it.

Scribbling on the Bog Wall: Letters of Comment

Neil Williams

How easy it is to be forgotten…

Someone has gone and renovated the bog and all the walls have been repainted. Not a single crude word, badly drawn obscene genitalia, or nasty slurs. The urinals are all gone, but they kept the shitty lighting, and there are now tampon dispensers beside the condom dispensers in the bog and a box for used tampons in every stall; and the bog is now gender neutral. There is a female colour palette to the paint and the lighting quality of a men's washroom in a factory.

But this is too pristine and with hope, will not last.

Please do your part to grunge this bog up. To paraphrase Prostetnic Vogon Jeltz, tell me how much you love my SWILL…

You can do so at info@uldunemedia.ca

Due to temporal warps, we present this single LoC received for this issue prior to its official publication date. Thrilling…

Dear Neil:

Greetings! It has been a long time! Issue 43 of Swill? Ah, I see why. Looks like you'll be issuing issues in reverse. Bring it on, and we'll get caught up. Glad I could send you issue 31.

Lloyd)) Thank you again for issue #31 and issue #28. I am catching up on SWILL this year, I have Original SWILL (#1 through #7), SWILL 2011 through to SWILL 2015 ready to go for publication via Draft2Digital. I am just waiting for

the cataloguing info from the National Archives. These will be published at the end of December. SWILL 2016/2017 and SWILL Annuals Volume 1 will be released online in January and published in book form in September of 2025. SWILL #44 is already half written and will be released on time for February 28, 2025.

May I ask where you are these days? We are still in Etobicoke, and have been at our Eva Road address for just more than 25 years. Fortunately, it is one of the quieter parts of Toronto. I hope you are enjoying your retirement, even if it was forced upon you. I'm a couple of months away from 65, and I will handle it as I expected I would, by not slowing down at all. Taking on the position of editor-in-chief of Amazing Stories is proof of that. Besides, the resumes keep going out because I could really use the money.

I am currently living in Woodstock. I am enjoying retirement and not. I love teaching. So I would prefer to still do some for the next few years. I was teaching at Algoma Mississuaga, and then, government policy changes, and so I am not. ((Congrats regarding Amazing Stories!)) Yes, we can all use some money these days with rising rents and rising prices and stagnant salaries.

I was a DXer as well on shortwave and AM and FM bands, and I did some volunteer radio, too, on CFOR-AM in Orillia, where I grew up. I probably told you all that eons ago.

Oh, you probably did and I forgot. Comrades of the airwaves!! ;)

AI is nothing evil in itself. It's what people will probably do with it that will be the evil part. With AS, we ask our submitters if they used AI to write their pieces. We also use AI voices to read the successful stories on the website. I might just offer to read a few of the shorter stories on Audacity at home, and send them in. I'd hope that people would be able to tell the difference.

I am uneasy about AI, but I am going to be using it. But, only for certain things. The novel I am completing right now has not been written with AI at all. However, it does have some companion pieces (a series of related novellas that are more pulp-esque adventures in the same universe featuring two minor characters from the novel) and these will be written by AI under my supervision, as will the corresponding audio scripts and graphic novel scripts. I will use AI for self published works only and, dependant on rights, on adaptations into other mediums of traditionally published works of mine. Any short stories and longer forms that I submit for publication will be written 100% by me.

Yvonne and I stay busy as our own entertainment. There are only a few shows we regularly watch, and the PVR helps us keep up when we can't watch it as broadcast. Years ago, I spent $35 to download from YouTube, and for us, that was very good money spent. We don't subscribe to any streaming services.

We subscribe to certain services off and on, but Netflix we were early adopters of and Prime (which we are really getting for the free shipping) are our constants. And then, I can be a bad boy and pirate stuff ;)

I will keep an eye out for Swill 5 and Daughter of Swill, and I will see if I have them somewhere as files on my overstuffed computer. (Computer tells me I do not have either of those issues.) See you with some more in the e-mail.

I have SWILL #5, I am missing SWILL #6 which probably had a small print run. I think that Daughter of Swill, Mother of Scum: third trimester had an even smaller print run and was mostly distributed in the K-W and Guelph area, with some sent to people in Toronto. Both issues are probably lost to history. In the case of Daughter of Swill 3, I return to those same discussions in SWILL #35.

I have decided to attempt to re-create SWILL #6 and Daughter of Swill 3 based on my recollections of what was in those issues. Should either of the original issues turn up, I will publish them in a new edition and folks can compare the re-creations to the originals.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

All the best to you both... Neil

Endnote: Moving Forward

Neil Williams

But in what direction? Toward what goal? Or is it just some aimless wandering...

Well, I intend to continue to move forward through time, until I cease to do so. And while I continue to move with the direction of the arrow of time, I will continue to publish SWILL.

However, my life does not revolve around SWILL.

I continue to teach sociology at university as part-time faculty. This is a face-2-face gig and steady (two courses each semester) and the occasional online course (usually introductory sociology) elsewhere. I am not really involved in course development, though I could be... But, I am in the twilight of my teaching career and I am happy just to teach the courses I am assigned. Shrug, I love teaching))

As a grandfather, I now regularly use FaceTime, to interact with my son, daughter-in-law, and especially my grandson in the USA. It has been amazing watching, mostly from afar via FaceTime, his development over the past year. Absolutely wonderful! I remember this from when the kids were younger, as a parent, you are too in the moment. You are not always "on call", ears trained for your child's cry, and all of that "hands on" day to day parenting that, oddly, shifts your focus away you're your child's development.

But, it is different as a grandparent. It is really cool to observe (with zero responsibility). And it was great to go down and spend time with him last summer. I am looking forward to doing so again this summer and possibly briefly in the autumn.

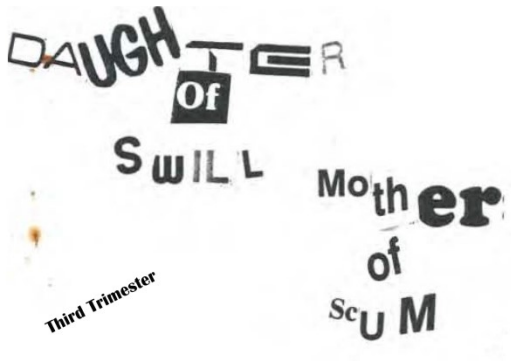
Otherwise, life is pretty routine. I go out to karaoke once a month. I travel to London (Ontario) to see professional theatre or to go to a concert. I watch television; streaming services only. I will on occasion watch broadcast television, e.g. the Oscars, but I am now too spoiled and find the commercials difficult to tolerate.

Life goes on... as does SWILL.

Missing Issues

SWILL #6
Cover: unknown
# of Pages: unknown
Identifying Features: 2 Star Captain Bruce comic strips
Format: print -- mimeograph
Last seen: circa December 1981
Location: Vancouver and Toronto

If found, please scan and email to info@uldunemedia.ca



Daughter of Swill, Mother of Scum: third trimester
Cover: Uncertain but probably had an alien or group of aliens
# of Pages: Unknown
Identifying Features: Written in screenplay format and discusses the problem of unalien aliens in science fiction
Format: print -- offset
Last seen: circa June 1985
Location: Waterloo and Toronto

If found, please scan and email to info@uldunemedia.ca

#31 Spring/Summer 2016

SWILL #31
Cover: Steve Stiles - Donald Trump being dumped into slime
# of Pages: Uncertain -- about 20-ish
Identifying Features: Anti-Trump editorial, Poking the Bear, Lester on the "New Economy", Brexit
Format: digital -- pdf
Last seen: circa June 2016
Location: the internet…

If found, please email a copy to info@uldunemedia.ca