



THE AVIARY



Vol. II, No. 1 (From Francis Baumli: for friends & associates.) JAN.-FEB., 1985



"... let us now suppose that in the mind of each man there is an aviary of all sorts of birds--some flocking together apart from the rest, others in small groups, others solitary, flying anywhere and everywhere."

Plato (Theaetetus)

Again, a "form" letter. If last year's Aviary is any indication of what I can accomplish in these elaborate epistles, then it appears that I somehow have succeeded in being as personal in these lengthy diatribes as I am in my more private letters. Last year, people seemed to be most excited by the "lists": favorite books, favorite movies, worst books, etc. There are fewer lists this year. But more in the way of content--it is longer, and more in the way of articles. I was surprised by the response to the articles I included last year. There were people who would normally eschew any interest in things scientific or philosophical, who said that they found the earlier part of The Aviary interesting enough that they proceeded to read the articles too. And found them interesting in the bargain. It's good to know that people, if their interest is initially aroused, can find the written word still wonderful. Even edifying. There is one new thing in this year's Aviary. My twin sister, Frances (note the different spelling) has been living in this area, sometimes with me. We are collaborating on many things. Hence, she has some space too. Greetings!

The future has arrived and it is not unbearable.

Joseph Brodsky

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1984

March 19: I did it--I finally bought a new turntable. A wonderful Sony PS LX-500, direct-drive, linear-tracking model that delivers sound that I haven't heard in years.

My old turntable had bit the dust, and I hadn't been able to afford a new one that would have had any quality. So I had been waiting for nearly a year, with my musical aesthesia atrophying accordingly. But, totally unexpected, a former client who owed me money, and whose debt I had written off, came through.

Hence, I have had the wonderful pleasure of listening to my old albums, and have been faced with the constant dilemma of whether or not to buy more albums that I usually can't afford.

Now, again immersed in music, I can say a bit about what I have been listening to. There's a special section for this a few pages later.

May 17-18: My friends Perry Treadwell and Ted Davis, travelling from Georgia, paid me a visit. I can't very easily describe why it was so valuable for me, but with them I felt a contact that I have not felt with other men in a good while. An ability to be open and emotional, but also, an ability to talk about things from a somewhat educated perspective, without thereby fearing that we were lapsing into empty intellectualization. Most of all, though, something simple. An acceptance: here we are, three men, sometimes struggling, sometimes enjoying ourselves, but most of all, committed to knowing ourselves better while upon this earth, and not discouraged in this commitment when we realize that we are not going to attain even a passable degree of sainthood before it's through.

May 31: I turned 36 years old. One year closer to the mid-life crisis. This year the celebration was quiet. I wasn't by the phone, I shunned parties, and was content.

July 28: I had for some time been considering taking on a room-mate. And on this day, the decision, already made, became concrete: Abbe Sudvarg moved in with me.

Rumors abound that she is more than just a room-mate, but rather than clarifying this matter myself, I will leave it to the purveyors of gossip to sort it out.

Actually, Abbe moving in was a bit more complicated than how I put it. She also brought her dog--an ageing, skinny dachshund whose habits are less than endearing. Its penchant for occasionally eating its own feces is one of its lesser faults.

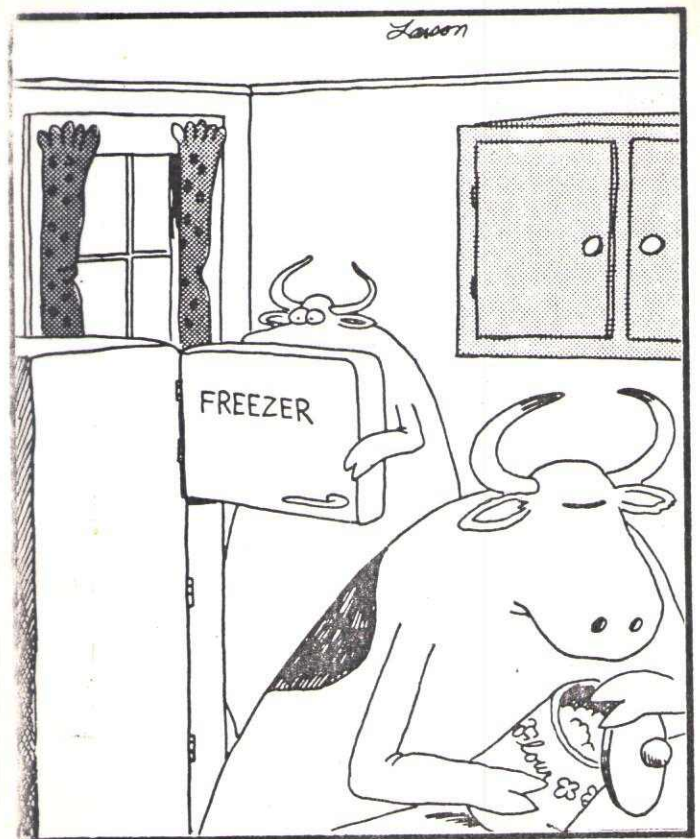
To protect my olfactory sensibilities, this dog (I will now give its name), Pacino, is confined to one room of the house. And for its eliminations and evacuations, it is taken to the downwind side of the yard.

Pacino has to be "walked" four times a day, a responsibility which devolves upon me when Abbe is not here. There have been some scarcely amusing contests of will between Pacino and myself. She (yes; the dog is female, although gender seems scarcely applicable to this creature) does not want to wait for her "walk" when snow is on the ground. Rather than doing it in the far, southeast corner of the yard, she wants to do it the moment she gets outside.

People with more patience than myself indulge her whims at such moments. As for myself, the only remaining option is that Pacino do her urination while she is being forcibly dragged across the yard by her leash. Scarcely pretty, those large furrows in the snow that her body leaves as she is dragged, and the narrow trails of yellow piss that punctuate the center of those furrows.

But let me desist this scarcely warranted description; with some embarrassment I realize that I have spent more time describing Pacino than describing Abbe.

Let's see. Abbe is a vegetarian. And she is not a short blond with big tits.



While Farmer Brown was away, the cows got into the kitchen and were having the time of their lives — until Betsy's unwitting discovery.

Sept. 17: Dacia turned nine years old. The celebration was mild, but it was one hell of a fun time.

Oct. 13: The festivities of Baumli's 8th Annual Chili Party commenced. There are some who claim that the revelry is still not over.

The chili reached a new record in terms of rank. On my exacting scale of 1 to 10, the carnivore chili ranked 9.483, and the vegetarian 9.404. Not bad. But still, not perfect.

Nov. 1: I attended a concert by the men's lib singers, Geof Morgan and Fred Small. I mention this date as being significant because of Geof's warm, wonderful music. As for the latter person, I resolved after the concert to never again hear him. This was my second exposure to his frigid conceit and hostility toward the audience. As for Geof, it was my second exposure to his music too, and I continue to believe that he is the best singer on the men's lib scene, and one of the most original songwriters in this country today.

Dec. 21: My former wife dropped a small bomb. I this date received word that she filed for child support. This despite the fact that I have been Dacia's primary supporter, and have legal custody of her.

Dec. 29: I this date discover that my former wife has begun the process of trying to get custody of Dacia.

It hasn't turned out to be a fun Christmas or New Year's.

Dec. 31: Things with my former wife have escalated into open war. And on this date, I have grown very tired of trying to fight it out with small weapons. I climb into my armored tank, and crank the turret around. It's going to be a tough year. Stay in touch via next year's Aviary to see what happened.

Generally:

1. With regard to parenting Dacia, it's been a rough year. In last year's Aviary, I discussed the difficult decision I made to let Dacia go and live with her mother. She attended school from there, and spent her time making new friends, watching a lot of television, and trying desperately to establish a relationship with her mother. In this latter endeavor, I don't think she has succeeded. I have been taking Dacia to see a counselor, who says that Dacia's situation is dire: it's not that she has a bad relationship with her mother; rather, the matter is worse than that: Dacia has no relationship with her mother, and after more than a year, seems no closer to having one. Hence, she is constantly insecure about her mother when away from her. Which means she doesn't want to be away from her. As a result, I spent only 58 days with her in 1984, counting summer. Not pleasant for one such as myself, who really does enjoy being a parent; i.e., I don't merely want to tell people that I have legal custody, I want to parent Dacia. That means fix her meals, help her with her homework, talk with her about her friends, help her through rough times, and check on her at night as she sleeps to make sure she's okay. Having custody of Dacia is not enough. There is too much pain when I can not be the person raising Dacia.

2. Also, when it comes to difficult things, there is the issue--or question--of my health. MS is not a pleasant disease. Even though its consequences are not always so hard to live with, the lack of

predictability does make it very difficult to live with. The year has been relatively mild as far as concrete damage from the disease. There are subtle things that have happened; I tire somewhat more easily than I did a year ago. I don't bounce back from weariness quite as soon as I did a year ago. There were, however, a couple of times when things



got difficult. In early September, my right eye--my only remaining one--gave me a lot of difficulty. But now it is better. In early November, my eye and my hearing were both undergoing an assault. Also the muscles in my back were affected--I never before realized how much you use your back in even the most simple things. But all this is better now. I get scared sometimes. I am afraid of losing my eyesight. I am afraid of experiencing sexual dysfunction because of the disease. Maybe none of this will happen; there is a good chance that it will. It's difficult, walking that thin line between self-deceptive optimism and self-defeating pessimism.

It helps when I am very assertive about my needs. I finally got a handicapped license plate for my pickup so that I can sometimes avoid walking so far. It also has helped a great deal when I ask people not to smoke around me. Cigarette smoke causes my cranial nerves to go awry, i.e., the nerves which govern my eyes and hearing. And when people can manage to put away the cigs, or at least smoke them as far away from me as possible, I feel a lot better. And I'm grateful to those who have been considerate about this. (I'm sure their lungs are grateful too.)

3. Another new thing I've discovered is playing the role of uncle. I have three nieces and a nephew, all wonderful, very unique, playful little persons. This summer I traveled to northwest Missouri, where they all live, and spent an entire day playing with Dacia and them. It was tiring, revealing--as to the many ways such different personalities have their own requirements, and rewarding. As I was growing up, my own uncles and aunts were very important role-models, and a lot of fun. I want to provide for my nieces and nephew the same opportunity. And I'm looking forward to having them come visit Dacia and I next summer, and going to visit them all again.

4. A tough decision it was, but I decided to give up counseling entirely. To continue my work as a writer, and do the research I have committed myself to, I simply could not continue doing the amount of counseling I had formerly done. So I had been cutting back considerably for the last two years. But this wasn't enough. Given the sort of clients I have tended to see in the past--personality disorders--I found that having even three or four clients meant that I had too many emotional irons in that fire. Plus, there is the problem of insurance. To be a counselor, I have to maintain an extremely large amount of liability coverage. Supervising other counselors, and working in psychometry, meant that I needed even more liability insurance. Which in the end, however, meant that unless I did a considerable amount of counseling, the financial return simply did not cover the basic expenditures--insurance, organization memberships, etc. So, I have ceased counseling--personal counseling, psychometry, forensic counseling. I miss it; I miss seeing people in that capacity, and I also miss the sense of self-esteem I get in doing that work. And yes, I do get a great deal of self-esteem out of it, because--no modesty required here, I hope--I am very good at it.

But there are other involvements that are just as rewarding, and it feels good to be working in those areas.

5. One area it does not feel good to be working in is (still) trying to field that anthology which I spent a full four years working on.

Yes; I know that last year I told people that I thought it would soon be published, and that people would not have to hear me say the word "anthology" anymore.

Well; things didn't work out as planned.

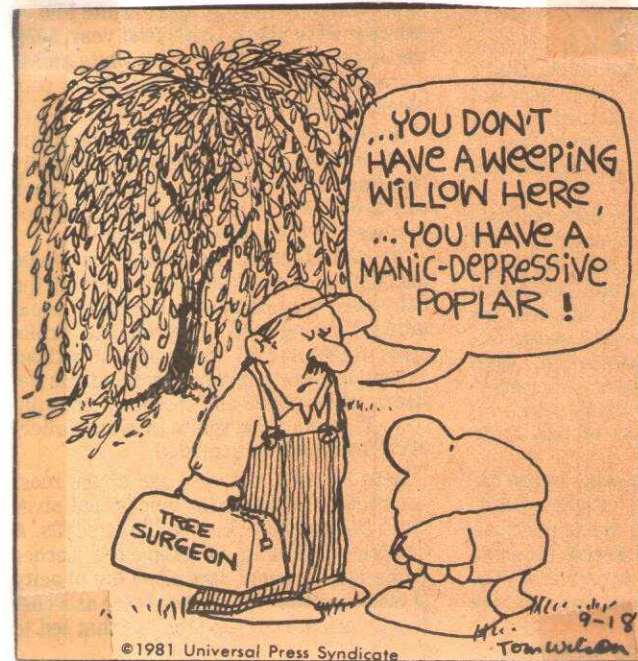
The two-volume work that Herb Goldberg and I had put together didn't sell. There were various reasons. I do not think our agent was working very hard at pushing it. But more, over and over, editors found the book "offensive to women." It seems that a book which even criticizes the otherwise pristine and sainted image of women in this culture is very much a heresy. And we were rejected accordingly.

New strategy was in order. For a number of reasons, Goldberg and I decided to part company as co-editors. He signed all rights as editor over to me, and I revamped the book somewhat. It is now reduced to one volume, and has been submitted by a new agent. The book has been rejected many times, but my new agent has not given up hope, and I myself do believe that the book will yet sell. It is of good quality, without a doubt; and in my opinion is unquestionably the best anthology on the male experience that has thus far been put together. But still, there are the same old barriers: anthologies do not sell well, and ... yes, you guessed it, women editors find it offensive. So, the tilting continues--and the windmills won't hold still.

My agent, Ted Stevenson, has admirable perseverance in this endeavor. I think that in the end we will place the book. Meanwhile, there is the frustration, not to mention the debts.

6. In pursuing my other work, there yet remains an issue with all my friends--the telephone. No small number of people get angry at me because I am so hard to reach by phone.

Well; what can I say? I tried having an answering machine. But there were two problems. That often proved to be only another frustration for people trying to call me.



Calling and getting no answer was one thing; calling and getting that infernal machine with its obnoxious beep was even more frustrating. There was another difficulty too. I would come home, to find half a dozen messages on my machine, all of them long-distance, and I would feel obligated to return those six long-distance calls. Which caused my phone bills to be very expensive.

So yes; much of this year I couldn't be reached by phone. This is because I'm not by the phone much. I'm usually in my study, and--by choice--there is no phone in my study. This is because when I'm in my study I'm working.

And, this is what really pisses some people off: I leave my phone unplugged a good deal of the time when I am home. Why? Well; phone calls take up one hell of a lot of time. There have been no small number of evenings when I

decided to leave the phone plugged in, and spent four hours on the phone. This is not easy, when I am wanting to relax, listen to music, spend time being quiet, do housework, etc. Plus, it's not the time only--phone calls are by their nature intrusive. It amazes me to think how when people call, they just say, "Hi; how you doin? Listen, about that ...," and without one word to inquire as to whether or not I have the time to talk, they go into a long monologue which, if I do happen to be busy, I have to rudely interrupt. You see, I do place value on the mundane things in life. If I am sitting down to eat supper, or listen to Brahms, or help Dacia with her homework, or have just stopped what I'm doing to think about something (yes; even this is an important act), or have just decided that for the first time in two months I have a moment to scratch my ass, then a phone call can be an interruption.

So I would like to ask you for one thing. Namely, when you call, I would appreciate your asking me something that I have found most people ask me if they come by my house.

Namely, I appreciate it if someone simply asks me if I have time to talk right now. It's not that I'm so unassertive a person that I can't say to people that I do not have the time to talk. I can say it even if people don't ask. But there have been too many times when it has been difficult to say it because the person began talking at such a clip that I literally had to interrupt them, sometimes rudely, and sometimes more than once, in order to let them know what my own needs are.

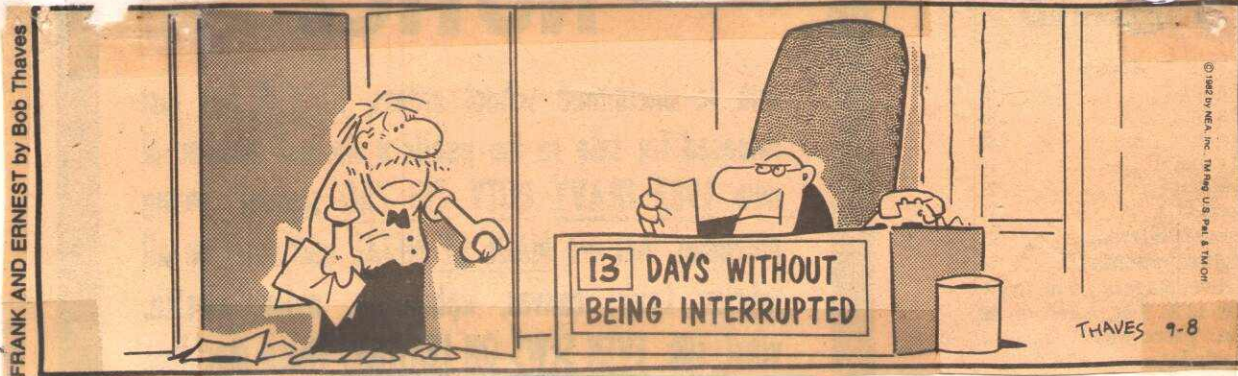
Many of you have heard me talk about this topic over the last year. In my loquacious spiels, I have lamented at length the literary inanition of the average American. What, Baumli has been heard to ask, over and over, has happened

to the art of writing letters? I know that letters take a bit more time. I know that they require a certain motivation that is not always easily tapped. But I also believe that they are more personally generous, often more intimate, and certainly less expensive.

Especially frustrating is the fact that my male friends do not very often write letters. Being an avid men's libber (sometimes accused of being a rabid men's libber) I'm not often one to take pot-shots at failings of the male sex. Not because I think we don't have our failings, but it seems that other people are pouring in the artillery so efficiently that I don't have to add my bit. But I do want to register one criticism. Why is it my female friends are much better at writing than my male friends? There are some wonderful exceptions, here, but generally the people from whom I get letters are women. It seems that men always call, if they get in touch at all except for the times we actually visit. What accounts for this? I've seen studies that show the number of books people read, the number of magazine articles that get read, what sex reads what part of the newspaper and how much. But I would like to see a study done of how many letters get written by members of each sex. I think that men would come up on the illiterate end of the spectrum. Does anyone have any ideas why?

7. There is something else that has been happening this year; something that is very important. Namely, I have begun painting. No; not painting my house. Painting pictures. Art. And it hasn't been too bad. One enthusiastic appreciator, who didn't even know that I had done the painting he was admiring, said, "I just returned from New York where I saw an exhibition of paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec. This reminds me of his style, and it's just as good."

Well; I do not agree with this man's judgement. But it is nice to know that if someone must be wrong about something, then they can be wrong in such a lofty way.



"Well, all right, but hurry, would you? I haven't got much time."

When painting I sometimes find it relaxing; sometimes I find myself getting frantic. But it has taken me into a new, very pleasant dimension of art. As pleasant as it is challenging. So far I have worked with water colors and colors made from plant dyes. But I have recently bought some oils, and am planning to work in that medium. This is when it's going to get really exciting.

8. Amazingly, considering how busy I was with very noncreative things in 1984, it nevertheless turned out to be a fairly good year for writing.

For one thing, I finished Volume Seven of my massive, A Phenomenology of Psuedo-Sentient Aeschatology. This volume, which I believe reaches farther than any of the earlier volumes, was 790 manuscript pages long. I sometimes quail at the commitment I have made to doing a phenomenological study of psychology, but I believe I can take comfort in the fact that, as far as I can foresee, I am more than half finished.

More importantly, I wrote a short novel this year. The urge came rather unexpectedly, and I wrote it from Oct. 22 to Nov 28; i.e., in less than six weeks. It is about 60,000 words, and is entitled, The Year Bukowski Didn't Get Laid. I had to overcome a tremendous block in going to work on it. I had for years thought that I must never write another novel unless it can be better than my last: The Plucked Chicken. Why had I imposed such an expectation on myself? Not pride, I think. Rather, it comes from having seen so many other writers turn out one novel after another, without ever really challenging themselves to go to higher echelons of accomplishment. And, without such challenge, I have seen such writers diminish their powers and eventually foresake aesthetic status.

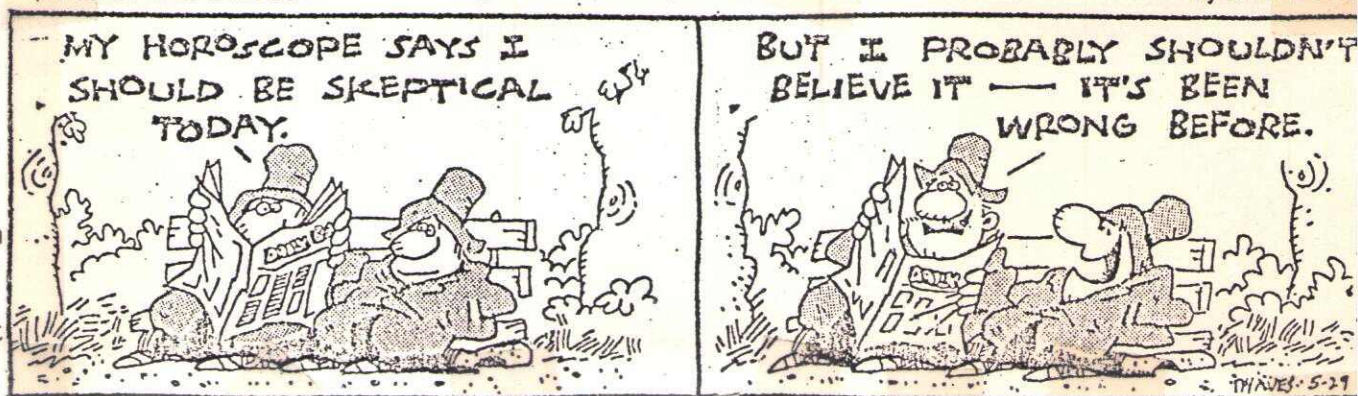
This novel did not come easily. It was hell, getting it going. The end result: I'm not sure. It isn't great. It isn't mediocre. But it is good; and with some polishing over the next couple of years, I think it will be very good.

But already I am ahead of myself. What, you may ask, motivated me to go ahead and write

a novel when I had vowed so strongly that I would not. Well; I'm not sure. I don't, in fact, think I am being in bad faith when I say that I didn't intend to. As a matter

FRANK AND ERNEST

by Bob Thave



of fact, I began writing this work, thinking that it would be no more than a 20 page short story. As I began, I had a very strange feeling that something was "happening to" me. I proceeded. The story became 40 pages. Then 80. By the time it was 100 pages long, I was truly curious about what the hell I was doing--trying to make a short story become something this lengthy. Before long I realized that I had played a good trick on myself. And that's when I truly gave rein to what I was doing, and the book took on real quality. Hence, the first part will need some re-working. The latter part, I think, stands pretty much as it is.

It feels good, to know that again I can write a piece of fiction this long. I had feared, for a time, that I didn't have the capacity for it any longer. After that lengthy, noncreative bout with the anthology, during which I did little else than edit other writers' creations, something in me grew flaccid. Something about my creativity felt timid. And it required an "accident" like this, I think, to assure myself that--well, if I can write a novel without really intending to, then perhaps I can write one hell of a good novel when I sit down with that purpose in mind.

Besides books, I wrote a few short articles--nothing great, and some very good poetry. In poetry I've taken on a command of language, and achieved a recklessness with image, that stands me in good stead.

9. And then there is the battle I have been fighting over "relationships." Yes; if you are a creative, inspired person, my language has already bewildered you. So let me explain.

Schopenhauer, that great 19th century German philosopher, in his, The World as Will and Idea, gives a lengthy description of character. He then goes on to describe two types of character: qualities and relationships. His description of qualities is thorough and intricate; his description of relationships is complex enough to strain the intellectual capabilities of even a seasoned metaphysician such as myself.

So perhaps you can understand why it is that, after immersing myself in such demanding issues for so many years, I have been discovering that in the minds of most people, the word "relationship" refers to one thing only; or rather, I should say, the generic term has come to mean one instantiation of the genus only; namely, a relationship between two people who consider themselves potential or actual sexual partners.

It has taken no small amount of adjusting on my part to go through a quick mental scan to try and decipher what people mean when they say something like, "You know; I think I would feel much better if I had a relationship," and realize that they do not mean a relationship with their car, their house, their own soul, or their pet dog. No; they mean a relationship with someone they're fucking.

What is perhaps just as curious, not to mention repugnant to my philological sensibilities, is the unique diction people employ when saying the term.

Mind you, I do not consider myself any kind of authority when it is a question of grammar, enunciation, or definition. But I do have a few dictionaries on my desk, including the OED (not to be confusedly thought of as a method of birth control), and I think my opinions on how this word should be pronounced are not to be entirely trivialized.

But again, I must explain; and in this case, I fear my task is not an easy one.

I have found that those people who use the word "relationship" to mean but one kind of relationship--namely, the coital kind, tend to pronounce the word differently than they would when it is used properly in its generic sense. Generically used, the word is grammatically structured as, "ri-lā-shən-ship." There are four syllables; the second syllable receives the primary accent, the last syllable the secondary accent.

Those who have pre-empted the word for their coital fixation, however, pronounce the word in a rather different way. It still has four syllables, but each syllable is pronounced somewhat differently, and there is but one accent. The first syllable begins with a hard rolling "r," and an airy exhalation that would do service to the French language, could one assume that any of these peasants know a language so melodic and pure. Perhaps the best way of grammatically indicating this first syllable is, "rrrrēhhh." The second syllable is the accented one, although here too there is a slight mutation. The latter part of the syllable bends into a double-vowel, such that it can best be indicated as, "lāēē." The third syllable is unceremoniously cut short, perhaps because of the strain caused by that double-vowel in the last syllable, and is grammatically described as, "shn." And the last syllable is less unique in terms of its sound than in terms of the strange oral contortions that seem necessitated in delivering it. "The syllable, properly described as, "shp," also deletes the vowel, thus showing continuing servitude to that greedy second syllable. But in order to deliver it properly, the speaker must let his lower lip protrude into a pucker, pooking out into a properly sour pout, as if upon pronouncing this term he very well may promptly burst into tears and unconstrained wailing.

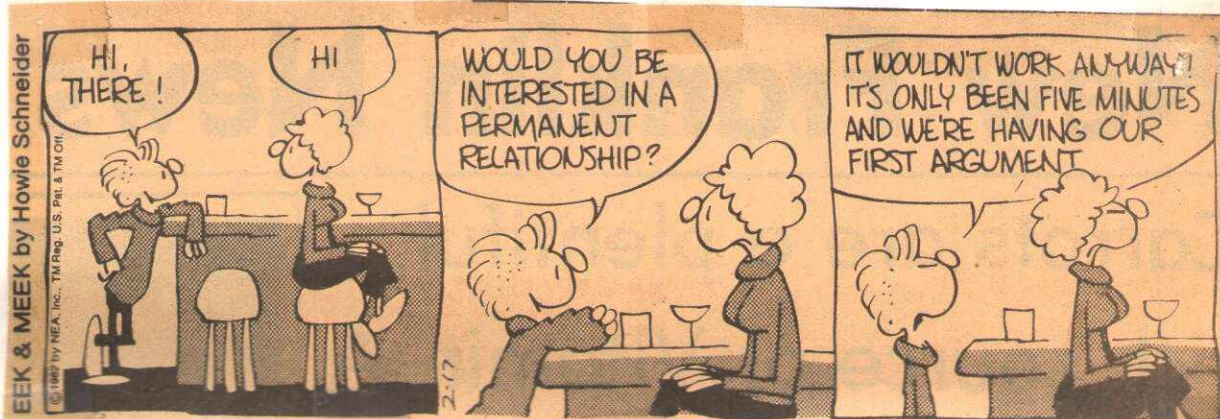
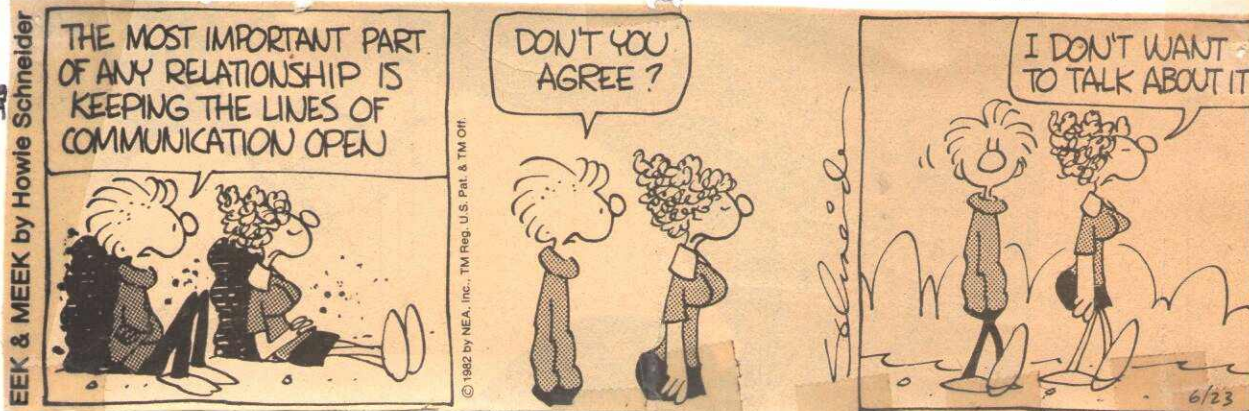
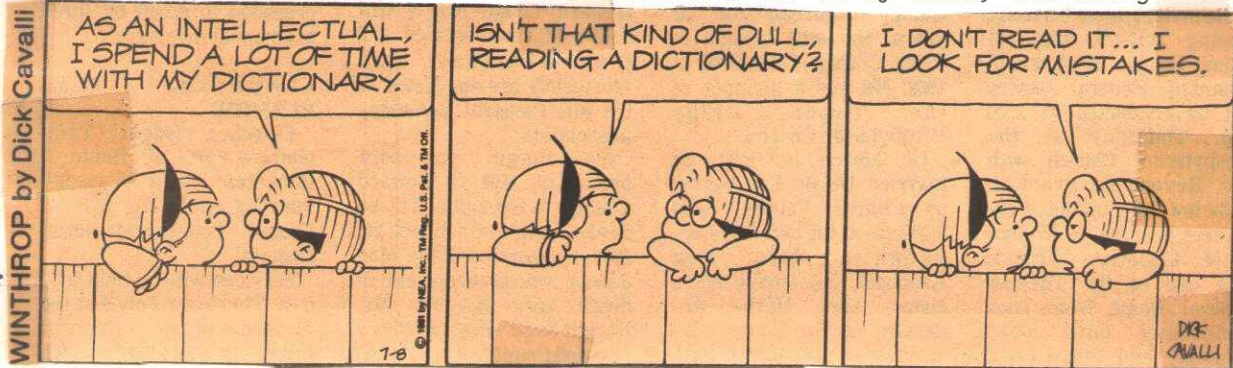
As many of you know, during 1983 I declared a period of vocal celibacy for 3

weeks, 3 days, and 3 hours, during which I refused to talk about these kinds of, to sum it up: "rrrrēhhh-lāēē-shn-shps" (don't forget the pucker!). Having faith in my assertive abilities, and confidence in my fortitude, I this year avoided such structured respite. While I survived many verbal assaults in which usage of this barbaric word constituted the only violence, I nevertheless was on more than one occasion seen to recoil visibly from its usage, thereupon staggering along the streets of Columbia, Missouri, hurrying away from the harangue that had initially pained my sensibilities, halting only long enough to disinter the contents of my stomach before proceeding along my sorry way.

Because I thus did not very well endure the hardships caused by my hearing this strange word, I very well may declare another such period of vocal celibacy for 1985. Vocal celibacy may be the only viable choice, for I fear that if I do not choose such, celibacy of a more stringent kind will be my unwitting and unwilling fate.

So, once again, so you may say it properly, I give you my last rehearsal: "rrrrēhhh-lāēē-shn-shp" (Remember! No accent on the last syllable; the pucker eclipses it!). Okay; now you're on your own.

Just please, please, leave me alone about it. I want to this year work on having a good relationship with Mozart's music and Bukowski's poetry. Moreover, I want to work on establishing a more fun relationship with myself.



10. A further "event" of 1984, although the actions have been so diffuse as to scarcely warrant its being called an event, has been the bevy of reporters in the Columbia, Missouri area observing my lifestyle. It seems that people are compiling information for another book on the "real man" image, and for reasons unknown to myself, they believe that I am the best exemplar for their research. Information they have discovered generally seems rather uneventful to myself, but of course, this is likely because I habitually practice the activities these people find fit to record, and hence do not find them out of the ordinary.

As a result, I can scarcely recall the claims about "real man" qualities that these people have communicated to me, except to here mention a few of the most recent I have heard:

1. Real men who drive Chryslers are wimps compared to real men who drive Cadillac hearses.
2. Real men, although they will eat Chinese food, show absolutely no interest in the fortunes in fortune-cookies. They either leave them alone, or tolerate them being opened by the lesser creatures who accompany them.
(I enclose--at right--one such artifact, which was pressed into my pocket by a young lady as she was whispering to me her appreciation for other real man qualities which, like the above, I of course am so unaware of that I for now have forgotten what she referred to.)
3. Real men never read pornography. They are too interested in the real thing.
4. Real men always own a .44 magnum pistol. The reason they own a pistol this large is not because they think they need this much fire-power, but because they like a pistol that kicks.

Well; I report these observations, not because I find them interesting, but because I find it curious that anyone could possibly believe that any man doesn't share these qualities.

I will, however, report on one incident that is related to this theme. Namely, at some time this year (I have forgotten the date) one of my friends claimed that I had attended many a dinner where quiche had been served. I declared that this could not be so, because I am sure I would never eat the stuff, and I am just as certain that I have not ever seen the stuff. So she took me to a place where quiche is served, and showed it to me--I mean, showed me to it; no; I guess what I mean is, it was there, it existed, and I observed it with my own eyes. I do remember going to the place where the quiche was reputed to exist, and I even remember a refrigerator door being opened. And, let's see ... yes, a pan was produced. Rather like a pie tin. Round, I think. And yes; I recall now that I did see it. But I can't recall what it looked like. If I remember, the color was ... but no, the memory actually eludes me. I suppose I may presume that it was not a particularly brilliant or unique color. As for smell, it seems ... but again, I apologize, for memory again fails. Likely it was not an offensive odor; that I would remember. Surely it did not arouse my appetite, because I have a keen memory for any passion, however small. Its consistency is something I can have no opinion about, for I do not remember whether I touched it. I can not, for that matter, recall whether it is the sort of thing that would allow being touched.

But I must desist in this digression. I fear I have taxed your patience, and wasted space in this letter. I will try, this next year, to again introduce myself to this rare and strange phenomenon, and next year give a more edifying report.

11. And for those who hunger for news about my intimate life, yes, I have been spending a good deal of time with my room-mate, Abbe Sudvarg. As for the nature of this relationship (note I do not presume to speak in any generic sense), it is difficult to describe. As for the intimacy of this relationship, it would embarrass most of my readers, were I to deign a description. Besides, real men do not feel a need to talk about their intimate lives; there is nothing they feel insecure enough to talk about. Moreover, real men do not talk about their women. They respect ladies.

However, I will comment on an experience that is rather peripheral--although by default, rather proximal--to the topic at hand.

One date in early winter, 1984, I sat in a small restaurant in Columbia, Missouri. I was seated next to a table where there were two young women, who appeared to be in their early twenties.

For about fifteen minutes I listened to their conversation while reading the then current issue of Soldiers of Fortune. One of them, recently divorced, went through a lengthy, dispassionate analysis of why she had left her husband, wielding her righteous, analytic

A woman's guess is much more accurate than a man's certainty.

↑ fortune from fortune-cookies



"HOW THEY'VE MANAGED TO STAY TOGETHER THIS LONG I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND."

cleaver with the finesse of a butcher dismembering a carcasse. The other young woman, soon to be married, responded by describing exactly what she would do with her fiance as soon as she married him. She carefully outlined exactly what she would make him do for her, how she was going to change him, how much money he would be making five years from now, ten years from now, twenty years from now, and how she would convince him that they should have three children even though he didn't want any. She made all these predictions with the confidence of a seasoned prophet, and with an air of supreme smugness. I began looking toward the back of the magazine, among the ads for potency potions.

As they left, I noticed that their faces had a certain craggy resemblance to the more common specimens one finds in the geology labs at the local University. You know--rocks.

And that day I realized that there indeed are times when it is not wrong to consider my good fortune in terms of how it compares with the lot of other men. I subsequently walked out of that restaurant with a deeper appreciation for my friendship with Abbe.

**** NOTICES ABOUT FORTHCOMING EVENTS ****

1. For starters, let me proclaim that I fully intend, this next year, to remain a closet recluse. My exhibitionism, rampant and unequalled as it can sometimes be, is nevertheless something I am very selective about parading.

Of course this is confusing, because you all know that there is nothing in the world Baumli enjoys more than having another chance to show himself off. Problem is, I don't get enough good opportunities. There seems to be a dearth of good parties and a paucity of Dionysian revelries. Most parties I go to seem to be attended by people who believe they are seated upon defecatory receptacles. The sounds they accordingly emit are scarcely amenable to brilliant wit. Their boredom seems matched only by my frustration.

So ... how in the world can you expect Baumli to be a wonderful exhibitionist when he lacks a good audience? I don't want to proscribe casting pearls before ... what was the animal? I seem to forget ... but I do believe that everyone who claims to have a brain in his cranium owes it to me (not to mention himself) to put boredom aside when in my presence.

Do that, and you will find that I am more entertaining, as is my want.

Still; be aware that I am, in many ways, a very private person. Many people just can't understand why I do not socialize more. One person even put it to me bluntly, "I worry about you, all alone out there in the woods. I'm afraid you're going to go crazy, and nobody will know about it."

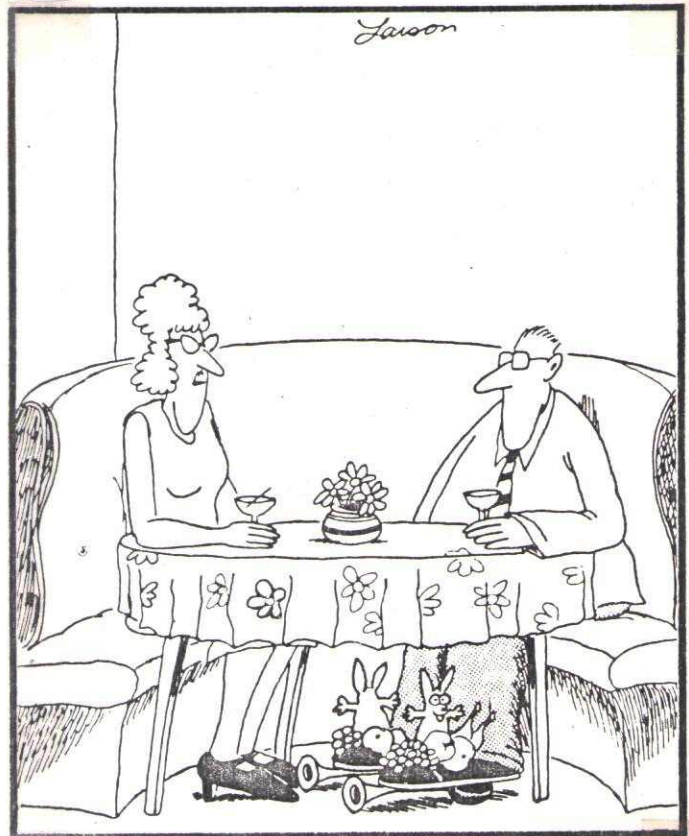
Well; the time span this person was referring to was seven weeks. I had not been entirely alone during this time. More than one person had visited. And I had done a bit of traveling too. What this person seemed more worried about was: what is wrong with this cosmos when Baumli does not spend more time with me?

Well; what was wrong with the cosmos in this instance, while Baumli was all alone out there in the woods, is that he was doing things like listening to Beethoven, writing poetry, walking in the woods, putting notes together for a novel, and generally so busy enjoying himself and preening himself that he almost went crazy.

2. Definitely, unless the gods intervene, I am going to do a few more paintings this year.

3. I have my lustful eyes upon three '55 Cadillacs, and two '56 Cadillacs. I plan to buy at least one to have around for parts, should my wonderful '55 need such.

4. And yes, there will be lots of reading, eyesight permitting. And I plan to listen to a good dose of music, especially Mozart's piano sonatas and some of Herbert von Karajen's conducting.



"I judge a man by the shoes he wears, Jerry!"

5. Okay; here goes. I'm going to break my rule, and let out one bit of news that applies to 1985. Remember what I said earlier about Baumli putting away the small weapons and climbing into his tank? Well; on Jan. 25, 1985, Dacia came back to live with me.

This means that a request about my time is in order. Namely, since Dacia will be here weekdays, this means that I'll be spending a good deal of time with her during the evening. There will be homework to do, lots of tickling (Dacia is getting better at this than me), and a need to relax and be the thousand things that are a part of living together. This means that I will not take business calls from 5:30-9:30 (my time). If you do want to reach me by phone for business, good times are evenings: 4-5:30, or 9:30-10. Realize that I am not excluding pleasure or family calls during this time, only business calls.

Please understand. This has been a big move for me. I have, for now, ended Dacia's emotional incarceration with her mother. And I am going to be parenting her. You see, it makes little sense when I am called at 8 P.M. about my doing a workshop called, "Dads, Career, and Kids: Finding Time for It All," and the person, without evening inquiring, expects me to talk for an hour. This, when I need to help Dacia with her long-division, which will take about half an hour, and have her in bed before 9.

6. And here comes the big one. There will be no more chili parties.

Yes; I can hear the groans. I can hear the shocked minds crumbling into dust, and the horrified bodies falling like bowling pins.

And no; I am not going to change my mind. Some of you, no doubt, believe this is but another of Baumli's ruses to get attention--i.e., wouldn't he love it if dozens of people called him up, trying to talk him out of his latest resolve.

But seriously, the party of 1984 was the last one. I will give reasons.

Primarily, it is too much work. The preparing, in advance, takes about 1½ days. The cooking takes 2½ days. The party is a full day, and sometimes more. Cleaning up afterwards takes about 1½ days. Recovering from the weariness takes another two days. In other words, we're talking about an event that consumes more than a week of my time--no exaggeration! And I simply no longer have the time for such a lengthy, huge celebration.

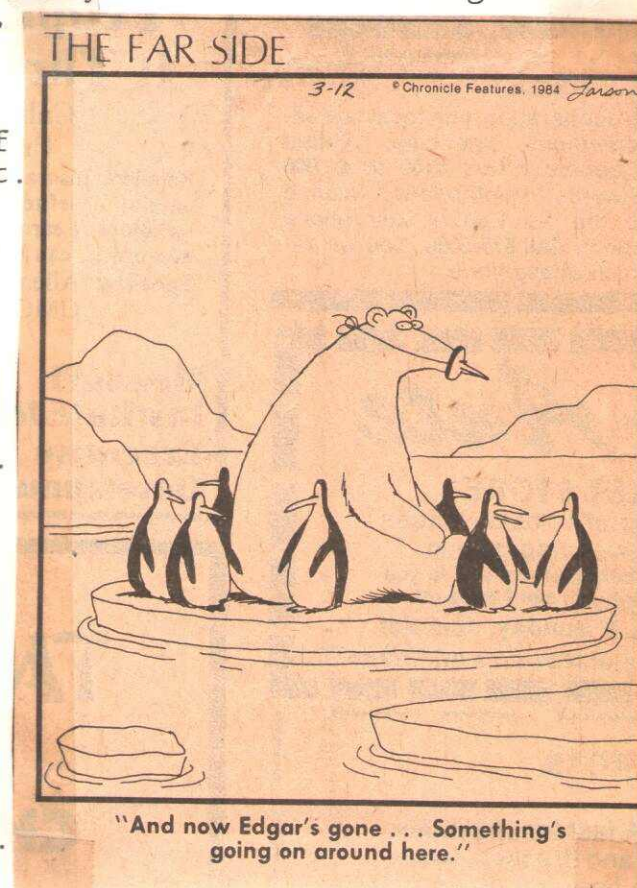
I anticipate your reply. "But we will help!" Yes; I know this, and I appreciate it. People have helped in the past. Still, even with help, most of the work is mine. That's just the way it works out. So, people helping actually only helps a little. And if the truth be known, when people get together to help in advance, that usually means but one thing. The party starts that much earlier. And hence, when the day of the actual party arrives, I am that much more tired.

The last three parties have been very difficult for me. People have said, at each of them, that I looked exhausted. They were right. I am simply not willing, or able, to become that exhausted over something that is intended for me to have fun. It's been a sad irony, the last three years, that I have put in a week's worth of work for a party that in the end I was too tired to enjoy.

There are other reasons too. The party is expensive. It costs me no small amount; the carnivore chili costs about \$1. per cup to make. Yes; I know. You will offer to help pay. But this isn't what I want. I don't want to be coordinating a chili dinner for which people are paying. It began as my party--my once-a-year dinner for all my friends. I either want to keep it that way, or not do it. And I have decided to not do it.

To be frank, the atmosphere of the parties is not what it used to be. This is no one's fault. But as the years go by, the people who come to these parties seem more and more fragmented in terms of knowing one another. Hence, there are a couple dozen groups of four or five people who don't really know one another. And the cohesiveness, the group warmth, seems to flag accordingly.

Moreover, there are fewer and fewer people at the party whom I myself know. In the past I have encouraged and welcomed people whom I don't know to come. I have met many wonderful people this way, some who are still close friends. But as time goes by, and fewer people know one another, it seems that



"And now Edgar's gone . . . Something's going on around here."

guests don't get introduced to one another, or to me. And I end up feeling that I'm providing something of a free meal for a group of strangers. This reached the point of absurdity this last year when a group of people--15 to 20 in number--arrived, and I knew only two of the people among them. This group came at about six, and left by 7:30, so they could get back to town to watch a television program. Well; my generosity just doesn't go that far.

And one last reason. This tradition of chili parties began in a small way. Many people would invite me over for dinner, and I wanted to return the invitation. Making chili is a big undertaking, even if it's only a small batch. It isn't a great deal more work to make a huge batch. So, I decided to do it up big, and invite all the people over for a chili dinner one year who had had me over to dinner. From there, the initial motive became convention, and convention became tradition. Meanwhile, it has happened that a lot of people are coming to the party--even people I know, who haven't invited me over for dinner in several years. In fact, we now never see one another except at the chili party. Which isn't how I intended it. I want the people who come to be people I know--with whom I have more than infrequent contact. I want them to be people who have me over for dinner too. This may seem a bit selfish. Maybe it is. But like I said above; I've begun to feel like I'm running one hell of an expensive soup-kitchen for strangers, rather than having one hell of a good time at my party with my intimate friends.

I am not going to stop making chili. And I am not going to stop having people over for dinner--at which there will be chili sometimes. But the parties, the huge amount of work--those have to stop. And truly, the primary reason is the work--and weariness--involved.

7. One thing I'm really looking forward to. For The Midwest Literary Guild, I am going to edit the 1985 edition of Socrates' Revenge.

8. One thing I'm not looking forward to--a likely stay in the hospital. This disease I have, multiple sclerosis, has been progressing too much over the last three years, and I may go into the hospital for a lengthy trial of plasmaphoresis or lymphocytophoresis. It's scary, and not very fun. Plus there are the side-effects, and a lot of uncertainty as to whether these procedures actually help very much. Not an easy decision. And not something I can talk about very much for now, simply because I have not come to grips with it myself.

9. I have been told that the main difference between the Bible's Old and New Testaments is that the Old tells us what we should not do, and the New tells us what we should do.

Well;

this time you got the New Testament first, in that I told you what I want to do next year, and what I hope for from you. Now to what I don't want.

Primarily, I have appreciated people not smoking when around me, and I will appreciate their continuing to do so. I am not exaggerating or playing hypochondriac when I say that cigarette smoking makes me sick. One good dose of smoke for one evening can cause problems with my cranial nerves for the next week. And each time there is a problem, this means that more damage has been done, and there is that much less margin between my level of functioning for now, and that dreaded, final scar on that particular nerve, which may someday happen.

10. Another proscription: leave your dogs at home. As some of you know, I can't stand them. It's not that I dislike the little beasts; very simply, the smell of dog makes me almost sick. Curiously, if I am feeling horny, and get a good whiff of a dog, I get an immediate, very painful headache which lasts about two hours.

Please; if you're coming to visit, leave your dog at home. Or if you bring it, plan to leave it in your vehicle, or tie it up in the southeast (downwind) end of my yard. No exceptions.

11. (This one will probably please most of my friends.) I have had it with near-accidents and stupidities when people come out here with guns. Hence, no more guns are to be brought on this place, either for hunting, target-practice, or any other purpose.

When I target-practice, it is serious business. I am careful,



methodical, and I enjoy myself. And I'm a much better shot when I am practicing alone. Other people's foibles on the range distract me, and often frighten me.

Henceforth, when I target-practice, it will be alone. It seems to me that most people who have come out here to shoot are doing it because they enjoy shooting guns, not to become good shots. That is their business, but I am tired of people wanting to shoot my .44 magnum, just to see how much it kicks, and going away with bleeding knuckles and bruised hands.

More, I am tired of the near-accidents, and the flagrant carelessness. Examples? Well; there was the salesman who came in my house, was casually talking to me about gun-safety when he spied my rifle on its rack, and then, while talking, took it down without asking permission, sighted it, and pulled the trigger. Still talking about gun-safety. That particular gun was loaded, although fortunately not cocked. (I don't keep it loaded anymore.)

Then there was the time I was talking with a friend who was sitting in his car. I was leaning against the back door, looking out at the peaceful countryside, while he conversed with me, his head out the front window on the driver's side. Suddenly a tremendous blast, almost right in my ear-- I am not exaggerating--nearly knocked me to the ground. I thought I was going to go into convulsions from the sound. This friend had, without a word of warning, picked up his .45 automatic, stuck it out the window, and with the muzzle directly horizontal to me and not two feet away, fired it at a tree. The same friend has since bragged about how, while watching tv at his home, he shoots at birds through his open back-door with his .357 magnum. I've often wondered what the chances are of a human being appearing in that doorway just as he draws a bead on a sparrow.

A final example. I found an old WWI army helmet in the dump, and it had been in my garage for some years. One day, a couple of friends were here, target-shooting, and were wondering about the bullet-stopping capabilities of that helmet. One friend was sure that it would stop a .44 magnum bullet, and even bet a six-pack of beer that it would, offering even to wear the helmet when the bullet was fired.

I put the helmet away, and went to the house, taking my pistol with me.

Later, two friends were here, and we decided to test the hypothesis, but this time safely. We fired a .22 pistol at the helmet. It left a small shiney spot. We fired a .45 pistol at it. The bullet left a large, shiney spot. Yes; a good helmet. I then fired the .44 magnum at it from a distance of 15 yards. It didn't leave a shiney spot. Instead, it went through both sides of the helmet.

It makes my blood run a bit cold to think about how that friend would have lost his six-pack of beer.

Have I made my point? I don't trust other people enough. In fact, there are only two people I know whom I would trust around me with guns. And I don't care to make an exception to these two people, and then have to explain to many other people why I am not making



Wirephoto
A Lebanese girl points her toy gun at a French soldier in Beirut.



an exception for them. So, let me state it clearly--no guns on this place, whether it be pistols, rifles, or shotguns. Whether it be for target-shooting or hunting.

Yes; I know. Some of you are thinking--why does Baumli have a right to put himself above everybody else? He thinks he's so much more careful than anyone else when it comes to guns! Well, yes; that's it exactly.

Others of you are thinking the accusation I have heard many a time--namely, why in the world does a closet peacenik like Baumli have guns in the first place? Frankly I don't know the answer

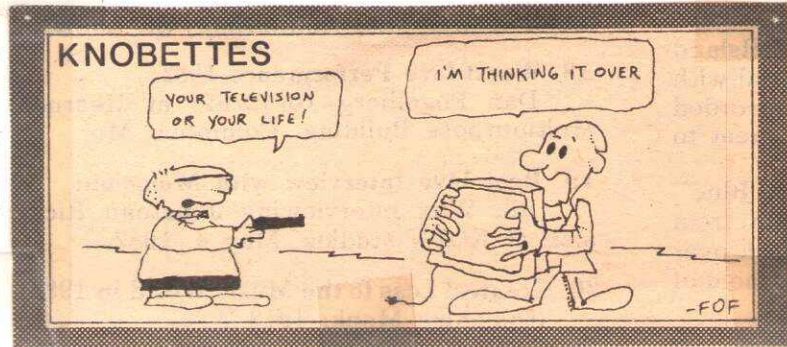


to that question. Believe me, I have pondered it mightily myself. There have been times when I've been on the verge of selling my pistols. Then I go out to the range, and I enjoy myself, and say, "No; not yet." I qualified at expert in 1979 with the .44 magnum; I don't care to get better. But I enjoy myself.

Does this enjoyment mean that I have horrible reservoirs of hidden hostility? Does it mean that I somehow endorse the "violent" mentality by simply owning a handgun? Does it mean that I am refusing to give up another vestige of machismo? I'm not sure. Truly, I'm not. But one day, if I am sure, and feel bad about what I am sure of, then you can be sure that I then will get rid of my guns. Until then, I don't want to make a choice that is based on other people's admonitions. To be honest, I don't like the fact that I enjoy guns. I'm not easy with it. But until I have come to a decision that reflects my own careful thinking on the matter, I will continue to enjoy shooting my guns. But henceforth, alone--and hopefully, in safety.

12. My plans for killing a live television in 1984 did not work out. It seems that many a person of philanthropic bent, who otherwise would have given me a television this year, upon discovering my motives, did not. So, I have been denied that pleasure.

However, I fully hope to kill one in 1985. If you have a television, please give it to me, and allow me the pleasure of granting it mortality. As I stated last year, I prefer a b/w television set, since I hate them more than color sets. I want to turn it on, tune in a popular show, and prove to myself that I can drill it dead center with my .44 magnum from a distance of 80 yards.



Meanwhile, having been denied my plan for this last year, my wrath against tv's has mounted to such a fever of fury that, upon entering a room where such an infernal machine resides, my face emits such anger, my body exudes such murderous hatred, that mothers have, on many an occasion, huddled with their small, innocent children around their machines, forming a human shield to protect it from my lethal intentions.

Many of you are aware of my hatred of televisions. One day I may, in fact, write a major epistle giving the rationale of my hatred--a rationale, I assure you, which will be as convincing as my hatred is profound.



I swear, I hate televisions more than the most avid peacenik hates guns. I would rather live in a society of violent criminals, all of them

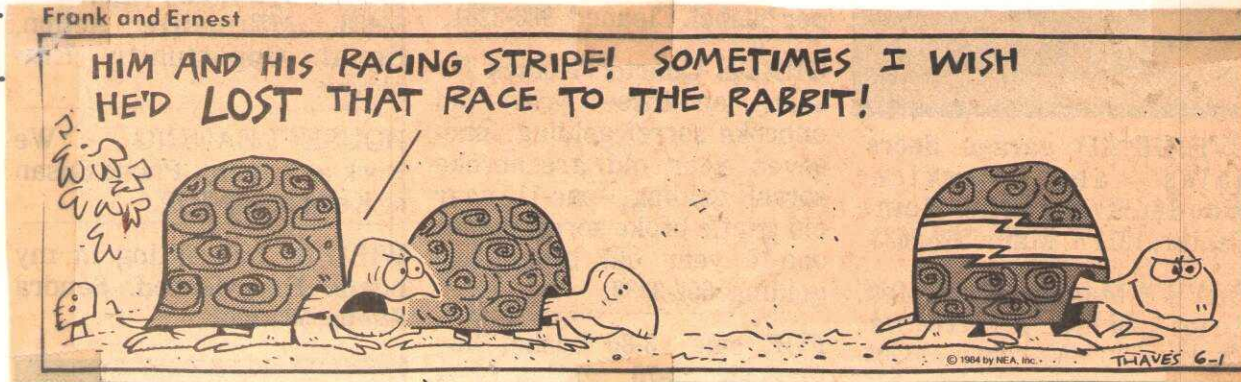
armed, than live in this society of mine--which seems to be filled with wretches who are hopelessly addicted to the boredom of television.

ON-GOING WORK

1. Still, I am buried in translating Bergson and Virgil. I figure, at the present rate, I have about five years to go on Bergson. As for Virgil, I'm making no predictions.

And to think that some years ago, about the age of 20, I for some time thought that I would translate the Opera Omnia of John Duns Scotus. I began, and realized that to do so I would have to devote my entire life to the work of another thinker. So I decided to let it be. I just could not be that generous. I wanted time to be a creator too.

So, my current translating is on a much more modest scale. Still, it takes a great deal of time. The real question--why do I do it? It



certainly is not for the prestige. There is some satisfaction in it, yes, especially with French. But there is something else. A sense of duty. So many other translators have given me works that have helped me enjoy great or important literature which otherwise I could never have read. And I think I have a duty to do my own small part. It saddens me, in fact, to think of the number of Ph.D.s who are required to pass language requirements to get their degree, and upon passing the requirements, never use the language again. Simply put, translating is the dirty work. It takes a long time, and the translator doesn't get much credit. Think of some of the more important works you have recently read by foreign authors. Do you know who translated the works? Probably not. Well; some very dedicated people have done those difficult, thankless tasks. If you know a foreign language, I think you might repay those people their kindness by doing a bit of translating yourself.

Bergson's writings, right now, are what I am most enthusiastic about. His doctrine of mind intrigues me. Over and over, I encounter his statement, something to the effect, "It is the nature of mind to bring forth from itself more than it contains." A doctrine which some would deny; but if we look at our ordinary language, e.g.s: "I surpassed myself," "I outdid myself," "I surprised myself," and such, we might not be so quick to dismiss a statement like this, and go deeper--searching to understand the doctrine that supports it.

2. I will be doing more work in philosophy this next year. I had thought of doing more work on Marx, but frankly, profound as he is, I no longer find Marx that interesting. It is as though one can no longer study Marx without becoming bogged in the academic quibbling and pedantry that are now attached to his doctrine. So I have decided to let it be and go on to other things.

I hope this year to do an article on Kant, and one on Plato. Also some work on St. John of the Cross and his doctrine of the Dark Night of the Soul.



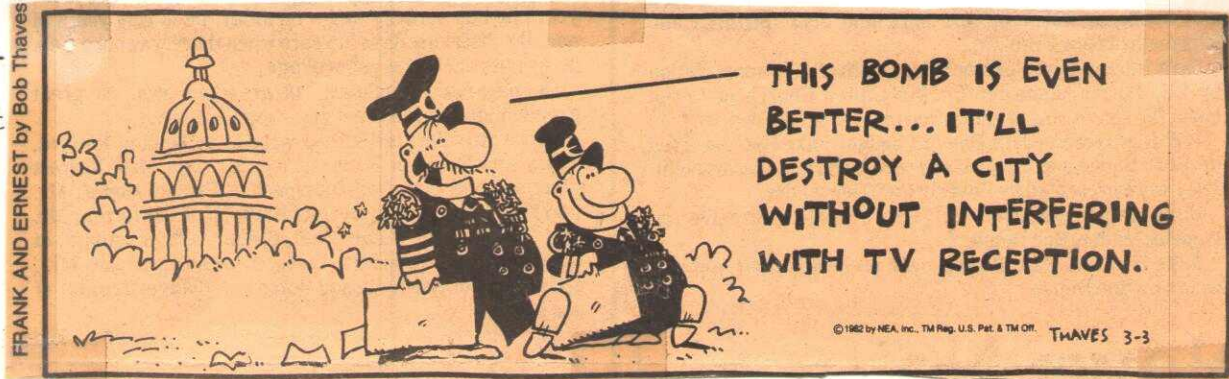
And of course, there will be the usual work with The Institute for Advanced Philosophic Research. Being a member of their National Board of Advisors is not, like with some institutes, simply an honorary position. They ask for a lot of advice, about difficult topics in philosophy. It's fun to send my thoughts along, but sometimes they hit me with a request that keeps me busy for two or three weeks. Not always easy, but worth it nonetheless.

3. And then there is my work as a closet peacenik. Work which, to be frank, I am not very conscious of. In fact, I have only become aware, by degrees over the last few years, that I even qualify for this term. Perhaps it comes from keeping company with no small number of these people, but I have found that I am at least as committed as most of them to the ideals they espouse. And if anything, I often believe I have a very balanced perspective on the matter. Perhaps because I grew up in rather violent surroundings during my youth, I understand these tendencies in myself better than do some people. And hence, when I think of being opposed to violence, it is not so much an ideal as it is a very established way of life.

I am thinking of getting more involved in PSR (Physicians for Social Responsibility) and also directing some of my writing on men's issues towards the military mentality. This work is perhaps the only thing that keeps me from succumbing utterly to nuclear despair. Because yes, I can scarcely believe that we, as a species, can escape the trap we have set for ourselves. Perhaps we can last another two decades, but I place little hope for us beyond that. To think this is one thing; to despair in the face of it is to commit a premature suicide. I work against nuclear arms, not necessarily because I think I can do anything definite that will change the situation, but primarily because it cancels the despair. The spectre is still before me, but as long as I am working, it is not inside me.

4. Yes; many of you ask, "When will Baumli ever get off his men's lib soap-box? Well; frankly I'm not sure. Maybe when I quit being affected by the ways we all have taken our gender and turned it into something which we believe must limit ourselves and one another. Until that happens, I will be working. If not on a soap-box, then in my study and out there stumping it to give a few talks and workshops. Topics I plan to work on this year include divorced men's custody options, the rapist's psychology, and pornography--both men's and women's. And, as I stated above, I want to do some work on how masculinity enters into the military mentality that afflicts not only the more "advanced" nations, but also nearly every "third world" nation too. Note the photo above, and the caption. Can you imagine our illustrious president holding hands with these two men? I suspect that if he ever dared to, it would severely disturb the tranquility of his afternoon naps.

Furthermore--and this will not be so easy--I intend to do some study in how women perpetuate norms of violence which often are associated with masculinity only. This involves no small amount of historical research, plus looking around myself at contemporary society with some of my old blinders removed. What I see is not always very pleasant. And talking about



A BATTLE REMEMBERED: Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany, left, and President François Mitterrand listen to national anthems at ceremony in Verdun,

United Press International
France, honoring French and German soldiers who died there in 1916. Mr. Kohl's visit was intended to symbolize the close ties between Bonn and Paris. Page 8.

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it with other people--especially feminists who believe that femininity is the archetype of virtue--is not always productive. But I am not going to give up on this line of inquiry until I have formulated a certain thesis. So be on the lookout for the results--I don't yet know if it will involve a series of articles, or if I will yet decide to put it all down into a book.

Meanwhile, the organizational aspects of the men's movement seem to falter more and more. I am discouraged by the inability of men to cohere their efforts. But even if political cooperation is lacking, I am not going to give up my local involvement, and my writing. So those of you who want to keep working with me, don't get the idea that Baumli is burned out. I plan to be involved in this realm of endeavor for a good while yet.

AN ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN was sitting alone at a bar.

"Excuse me, may I buy you a drink?" asked a young man.

"To a motel?" she yelled.

"No, no. You misunderstood. I just asked you if I could buy you a drink."

"You're asking me to go to a motel?" she screamed, even more excited.

Completely bewildered, the young man withdrew to a corner. Everybody stared at him indignantly. A little later, the young woman came to his table. "I'm sorry to have created such a scene," she said. "But I'm a psychology student studying human behavior in unexpected situations."

The young man looked at her and shouted, "What? A hundred dollars?"

—Milo Dor and Reinhard Federmann, *Der galante Witz* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, Munich)



"Well, good heavens! . . . I can't believe you men . . . I'VE got some rope!"

*** READING FOR 1984 ***

This year I read 89 books. A healthy dose, but I must say that most of them were not very good. However, to continue tradition, I here list the best books I read:

1. Creative Aggression by George Bach and Herb Goldberg. (A book with a thesis about aggression that is as profound as Freud's thesis about sex was. I have reviewed this book; look for the review in a forthcoming issue of a men's lib journal, or a future issue of The Aviary.)
2. The Plucked Chicken by Francis Baumli. (Yes; I must list it here. After all, I last year listed it among the ten best prose fiction works I have ever read. So, go ahead and scoff, ye peasants ye, but leave me to my opinions.)
3. The Year Bukowski Didn't Get Laid by Francis Baumli. (I've always said that the main reason I write is so I can find something good to read.)
4. Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame by Charles Bukowski. (A book of wonderful, profound poetry.)
5. Notes of a Dirty Old Man by Charles Bukowski. (Another book of his short stories. Truly, if I were asked who the greatest living writer is, I would be hard put to not say Bukowski.)
6. The Myth of the Monstrous Male and Other Feminist Fables by John Gordon. (A book for the men's libber. But it is a powerful social commentary in its own right, with a powerful message and an iridescent style. I think no woman should dare call herself a feminist before reading this work.)
7. Remember to Remember by Henry Miller. (A book of his essays. Miller, in my opinion, is probably the best writer of this century. What else can I say?)
8. Zen Flesh, Zen Bones ed. by Paul Repts. (Another book that is on my "Ten Favorite" list. Worth reading over and over.)
9. The Second American Revolution and Other Essays (1976-1982) by Gore Vidal. (A book of book reviews and political essays. Skip the book reviews; the rest of the book will likely convince you that Vidal is the most astute political thinker and theorist of our day.)

I have selected a new category for the reading I did in 1984: the most offensive book. Two came in for a tie on this one: About Men by Phyllis Chesler and Women's Reality by Anne Wilson Schaef. The Chesler book was a long, poetic diatribe which attempted to

prove that every man's mentality is wormy with atavistic preoccupations with fratricide, cannibalism, and rape. Women, of course, evolved as a somewhat different species, and have none of these traits, consenting--in the great evolutionary scheme of things--to merely be the victims of male bestiality. The Schaefer book, I thought, would be eventful

in a more positive way, given that three feminists I know recommended it to me, all of them saying that it is the one book that has said the most to them in terms of their status as women. Well; the Schaefer book was perhaps



the most simplistic, rhetoric-laden book I have ever read by a feminist. It went through some dizzying peregrinations and permutations of logic to show that there are two ways of understanding the world: The White Male System, and The Female System. Neither is better than the other insofar as they are "systems," but compared to each other from the perspective of feminism--which somehow has a metameter which stands aloof from the latter system--we are forced to conclude that women are morally superior to men.

• It is better to know nothing than to know what ain't so.
-Josh Billings (1818-85)

Many of you are aware of my private campaign against illiteracy in this country. As I have said before, the average American reads less than one book per year. The average college graduate reads two. Actually, the average American who does read books reads about two per year, because half of adult Americans never read a book. And in this country, the functional illiteracy rate is 20 percent!

Sometimes my private campaigns take strange, and perhaps fruitless, direction. For example: early in 1984, I was discussing literature with a friend who, I must vouche, is one of the most intelligent people I know. This woman, I discovered, did not know who wrote The Aeneid. Well; it may in the end be a sad



comment on my character, but I must confess that I was outraged, offended, and very indignant. My friend defended herself admirably, but I was not one to give up. In my righteous certainty that anyone who has had even a high school education would know who wrote The Aeneid, I proceeded over the next several weeks to query nearly every person I talked with. I purposely avoided asking people with degrees in literature, because I knew they would know, but focused on others. Now, for the denouement--absolutely no one I asked knew who wrote this tremendous classic! Was I humbled? Eventually, I suppose. Was I ever less than aghast? No! Tell me; am I being a pompous prig to think that everyone who has a passing acquaintance with literature should know who wrote this book? Your answers may, I warn you, have severe ramifications on the state of my sanity over the next several months.

Regardless, my war on illiteracy sometimes extends to authors who write bad books. This year I encountered many such books. I began the year with a dip into literature. I didn't get far with several books I had just bought. I read about 85 pages of Still Life with Woodpecker by Tom Robbins. I gave up. I read about 40 pages of his Even Cowgirls Get the Blues. I was appalled. I read nearly one-third of Blue Highways by William Least Heat Moon. This one wasn't fiction; it was a travel book that reminded me of a photo album filled with out-of-focus Polaroid snapshots. I gave up on it, aware that the author's surname should have cautioned me from the beginning. A name like that--indicating, it would seem, a moon that never quite makes it into estrus before going into menopause, should have kept me away. I suspect it would have given D.H. Lawrence an acute migraine.

I soon gave up on contemporary literature, and went on to books in pop-psychology, many of them in the field of men's liberation. Yes, I must admit it--most of them were very bad. Most of these writers had a penchant for redundant conjunctions. Over and over I encountered monologues on the meaning of life which went like:

And then we all sat down together and held hands with one another and each other and were just together physically. We talked for a while about our lives and growing up, and we discussed and shared and processed and wondered aloud about our hopes for the future. Each of us felt that our feelings were enhanced by the experience which we all had, and that we had all impacted each other's lives. My own growth increased from our sharing, and I knew that without a doubt my emotions and feelings and inner urges would now be less constrained and more free.

Dealing with such inanities caused me to this year put forth another new category: the worst book I have read. There were many close runners for this one, but I finally decided that the worst was, Good Morning, Merry Sunshine by Bob Greene. Mr. Greene, a seasoned journalist, keeps a journal of his daughter's first year of life. He never skips a day when it comes to making entries. He convinces us he is a sensitive father because he worries about his little girl when he is at work. He convinces himself he is a caring husband because he worries about his little wife, who stays home with his little girl and watches entirely too much television. He convinces us he is a liberated man because, when he judges a beauty contest, he has pangs of conscience about what he is doing before he goes ahead, makes the selection, and awards the prize.

Because I did a lot of reading this year, there was another category of books which perhaps bears mention: disappointments. These books were not necessarily bad, just not as good as I had thought they would be. So I here list them:

1. The Floating Opera by John Barth. (Actually this was a good book, but there is something difficult about it that is hard to designate. Barth is brilliant. He is agile with language, facile with a wry wit, and full of a laughter that makes quite tolerable the sadness and despair he sometimes alludes to. But somehow he does not engage me. His books grip me during the reading--yes. The plot is hard to leave. But the character(s)--one can follow them rather as a voyeur might. They do not take the reader by the heart, they never grip his viscera, they never open his soul. Perhaps this is because Barth's characters, when he begins a novel, are already fully developed. The reader, to be sure, does not know this. He comes to know the characters gradually. But it is as though the characters are being disrobed for the reader, not as though the characters are unfolding or growing.

The result is rather like peeling an onion, going deeper, layer by layer. The tears are real, but after they go, there is little emotion to associate with the experience. And there was no boisterous laughter, only brief chuckles. No tears of grief; only a fleeting, dry sadness.)

2. A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess. (The movie is definitely better; if you've seen it, you will gain nothing by reading the book.)

3. Money Madness by Herb Goldberg and Robert Lewis. (I had thought this would be a wonderful book, primarily because I am enamored with the three books Goldberg wrote by himself, and I above registered my admiration for the other book he has co-authored: Creative Aggression. This book gave a rather loquacious analysis of our fears and desires regarding money, sometimes examined such emotions in terms of Freud's categories of oral and anal fixation, and for the most part was so redundant that the book was hard to stick with.)

4. Fathers and Sons by Ivan Turgenev. (I had never read this classic before. In the end, I thought it was rather a good book, but certainly not the work of genius it is often touted as.)

5. The Color Purple by Alice Walker. (Stylistically, this book began with a power like few I have read for several years. But the book was very flawed. It was humanly flawed, in that it preached a misogyny that never abated. All men were oppressive, wife-beating, daughter-raping beasts, who could only in the end be redeemed when they endorsed the "feminine principle," vaguely defined when we see men who finally behave themselves when they sit down with other women and sew. The book was artistically flawed too, when Ms. Walker, mid-way, decided that she would preach a doctrine of the natural superiority of the African race--when left alone in their African environment. This book had potential for being great. It could have contained its artistic flaws, perhaps, and still have been great; but its human flaw--a misogyny that was never atoned for by the book's otherwise powerful compassion--made it very mediocre.)

For this **PEANUTS**

coming year, I intend to do a good deal more reading in the area of men's liberation. Also a good deal of poetry--likely some things by all my favorite



poets. My favorites are, I confess, a rather strange assortment: Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot, Charles Bukowski, Ntozake Shange, Pablo Neruda, Emily Dickinson. News on this adventure will be reported next year in The Aviary.

MOVIES AND SUCH

As usual, in 1984 I did not see as many movies as I would have wanted to. And generally the ones I did get to see were not all that good. Still, most were enjoyable. Listed below are the ones I saw. As you can tell, no small number of them were seen in Dacia's company. (I list them in the order I saw them):

1. Terms of Endearment. (Very gripping while in the theatre, but soon after I left, the movie faded from memory, and I realized that I had seen little more than a grand soap-opera.)

2. Star 80 by Bob Fosse, who is one of my favorite movie producers (Cabaret, All That Jazz). (A major disappointment; Fosse's genius has faded in this one. He seems bent on scouting the pretty women, and showing blood on the screen instead of inspiration. The movie wasn't even worth my time; I would have walked out, had I not believed that somehow, before the end, Fosse would come through with something. He didn't.)

3. Fanny and Alexander by Ingmar Bergman. (A wonderful movie by one of my favorite producers. Celebration and joy throughout, even amidst the sometimes sordid scenes.)

4. Satyricon by Fellini. (This one was already on my "Ten Favorites" list. It never loses its appeal.)

5. Splash. (Seeing this one was Dacia's idea, but it was enjoyable--fun through Dacia's eyes. Come to think of it, there was another enjoyable part: the mermaid had a nice ass, when she wasn't being a mermaid.)

6. Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan: Lord of the Apes. (Many of my friends scoffed at my opinion, but I thought it was profound. A message that went a step deeper than "the veneer of civilization" theme. Deeper--into something of a primeval, atavistic subconscious.)

7. Purple Rain. (Seen on a whim. Terrible acting, but seeing Prince on stage was fun. I begin to understand why staunch conservatives a couple of decades ago were so opposed to rock-'n-roll. It breaks down barriers between people. The little kids love Prince. Almost as much as they love Michael Jackson. Look at it this way--Michael Jackson has perhaps done more for civil rights than Martin Luther King ever did. Jerry Falwell and Phyllis Schlafley, look out!)

8. Ghost Busters. (I went to this one with much trepidation, because I usually do not like comedy at the movies. But it turned out to be one of the funniest, most enjoyable experiences of the year. And wasn't that a beautiful '59 Caddy hearse?)

9. La Cage aux Folles. (Another comedy, and a real screamer. If you're in the midst of an identity crisis, stay away. It will convince you that being gay is fun.)

10. 2010. (I liked the ending, which most people thought was trite. I believed it made an excellent anti-nuclear statement. I also enjoyed the infusion of Pythagorean mathematics, which was apparently lost on everyone. You know, the creative number sequences: 1,2,3; squared in the object, 1,4,9: the creative gnomon, oblongata, and tetrakty. I'm not exaggerating; it was all there.)

11. Pinochio. (Well; it was good for Dacia, or at least she enjoyed it. I sat there and felt guilty about all the lies I had told when I was little. Problem is, though, nothing ever grew long on me, no matter how many lies I told.)

*****MUSICAL MUSINGS*****

In last year's Aviary, people liked the lists--favorite books, favorite movies, etc. My friend Robert Keith Smith suggested that this year I list my ten favorite albums. Well; this is a tall order, and for now, I'm going to pass on it. I'm not even sure I could list my ten favorites here.

But maybe next year; we'll see.

I decided to, this year, instead report on some of the music I have been listening to. Of course, there has been a good deal, but it does seem that I tend to concentrate in one area, or focus on one composer.

This year it has been Beethoven; more specifically, his piano sonatas. The sonata form for piano is probably my favorite medium in classical music; and Beethoven's piano sonatas, when it comes to sheer expressive power, are never matched by any other composer, and, for that matter, are never even approached by other composers except perhaps in some of Prokofiev's piano sonatas.

I listened to some of his later piano sonatas. They are so complex, so rich, that actually I would not know how to talk about them. I will say a



word or two about the Hammer-Klavier, Sonata # 29, Op. 106 in B flat major. Beethoven, upon its completion in 1818, pronounced it his greatest achievement in the sonata form. I listen to this piece, and yes, I can understand, via its complexity and development, that it is likely his greatest. And yet I look upon this complexity without understanding it; I follow the development, but my emotions do not unfold. In short, I do not understand it. I can not fathom what emotion it contains. And I request: if anyone does have insight into this sonata, I would very much appreciate being edified.

I recognize that perhaps my difficulty is occasioned by the B flat major key; this key has never appealed to me overly much. Yet, I wish to understand. In Beethoven's opinion, his three subsequent piano sonatas did not surpass this one. I would rather understand its emotion, than feel forlorn in my lack of intuition.

So, in listening to Beethoven's sonatas, I this year concentrated on his three most popular: the Moonlight, Sonata # 14, Op. 27, #2 in C sharp minor, composed in 1801; the Pathetique, Sonata # 8, Op. 13 in C minor, composed in 1798-9; and the Appassionata, Sonata # 23, Op. 57 in F minor, composed in 1809.

Why these? Well; I like them. I know that sometimes it isn't exactly sophisticated to like what is so popular, but I am willing to eschew the emotional sophistry of sophistication for the honesty of simple attachment to the beautiful.

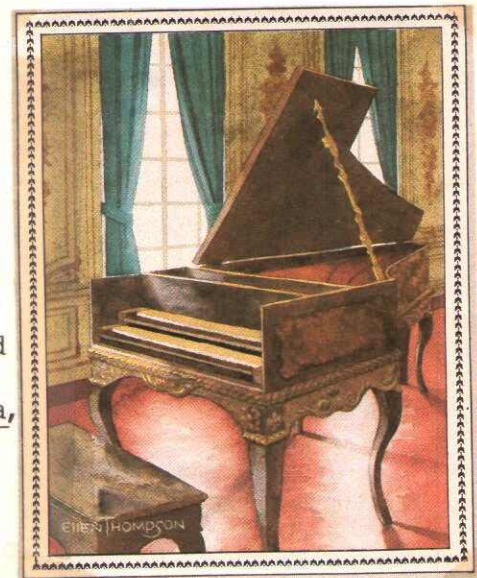
Yes; I know that the Moonlight is not even in true sonata form. But that first movement sets the stage for an outburst of passion, which Beethoven had never actually unleashed in his earlier sonatas. An invocation of beauty, framed by tumult, is to be forgiven a lapse of form. The middle, Allegretto movement--which Liszt called, "a flower between abysses," I finally comprehend after this year's listening. And I better understand the fate motif--the three short notes followed by the longer one--which was used in the Fifth Symphony and the later Appassionata; a motif that spells the impact of a seemingly deterministic universe, which demands, rather than cancels, the will to rebel.

So much has been written about the Pathetique that I should avoid much comment here. It is not an easy piece, contrary to what many a commentator has said. It's second movement is idyllic, romantic, yes--rather like a tempestuous tryst between two lovers. Or, perhaps more accurately, like a fantasy upon two loves, prior to the choice--which comes in the third movement. A choice, not for one beloved, but for freedom from love for the sake of an affirmed spirit of creative impasse--not an impasse before what is created, but the impasse that separates the artistic creator from other human beings.

The Appassionata is my favorite of the Beethoven sonatas. I still remember my first hearing of it. Unique and scarcely comprehensible! Here was an energy--creative anger--which I had never even imagined! The Appassionata remains my favorite of the Beethoven piano sonatas, and for that matter, was Beethoven's favorite until he composed the Hammer-Klavier. The fate motif resounds again, this time with a development that is never approached in his other works. The human spirit is enmeshed in the trials of fate as though decended into hell, but even here, the human spirit emerges, both triumphant and victorious. Its vehicle is that dissonant, unremitting, angry yet cunning diminished 7th chord of the 3rd movement. There are some performers, and writers, who do not approve of this vehicle, or find it something of an anomaly. Alfred Brendel says of it, "... we realize what expressive power was concentrated in the diminished seventh chord. For Beethoven, Weber, and Schubert that chord still conjured up demons and terror. The nineteenth century gradually wore it out; the most enervating of dissonances ended up as the most enervated of harmonies. Today it is up to the performer, whether we forget 150 years of harmony and tremble dissonantly instead of being bored by a triviality." This is an excellent way of putting it; performers who are excited by the piece bring forth the resolved dissonance; performers who are not excited state it tritely.

Recognizing the possibilities of the Appassionata, and the fact that performers often fail to realize those possibilities, caused me to turn to several performers in studying the above-mentioned three sonatas. I listened to performances by Walter Klien, Alfred Brendel, Van Cliburn, Vladimir Horowitz, Rudolf Serkin, and Artur Rubenstein.

Walter Klein's performance is the best, and is unquestionably the standard by which all others should be measured. It is difficult to here comment on his approach at length; perfection defies description. His approach to any piece of music differs from other performers in one primary way: he gives unremittingly. His energy never flags. He is never bored. Not for one moment does he halt the sheer thrust toward further and greater



interpretation and power.

Despite his words about attempting to avoid the trivial in Beethoven's Appassionata, I am not sure that Brendel succeeds. I get the impression, from his playing, that he is bored with it. I also sense this in his playing of the Moonlight, although his skill and subtlety surpass his intention and he does therefore come off with a good performance. It is in the Pathetique, however, that Brendel shows genius. There he has a reflective, careful command of time that no other player has. Brendel does with the keyboard what Toscanini did with the baton. He kneads time, his fingers clutching at temporal nuance which no other performer, in my opinion, grasps. Klien has a brilliance and power that eclipses Brendel; but Brendel's immersion in subtle blending, pausing, and flexing of the score causes one to listen in a way that Klien can never demand.

About Van Cliburn I can say very little. His performance is simple, accurate without being precise, and emotionally correct without achieving emotional power. He did, I must say, help me better understand the second movement of the Moonlight. I had before seen the first movement as the sad foraging of pensive memory. I now see the second movement as a reprieve from memory's exercise. It involves a momentary sensory saturation, which then unites with the first movement in the third, as the sonata moves toward a world where dream merges with consciousness. Of Van Cliburn's performance, I can say that if you are wanting to approach these sonatas for the first time, and get a basic sense of them, he is perhaps the first person to hear. His performance will not elude you. After gaining a basic understanding of the pieces through him, you can then go on to other performers for the subtlety and power.

Horowitz's performance was disappointing. It was not bad, but not good enough for a pianist of his stature. His left hand attack tends to overpower the right hand when he plays Beethoven, sometimes rendering the melodic exploration of the theme unintelligible. This was especially true in the Appassionata. But in the gentler parts of these sonatas, where he lacked grace, he did have finesse. And he helped me a great deal when it came to understanding the intricacies of the thematic development in the second movement of the Appassionata.

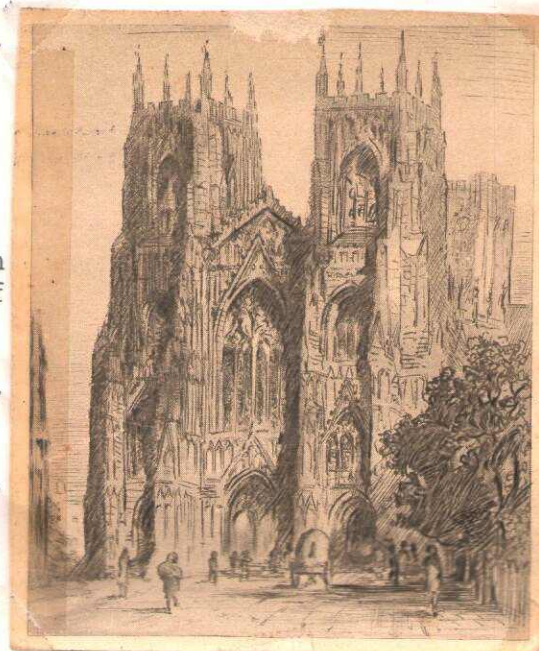
Rudolf Serkin is, in my opinion, over-rated as a pianist. He always sounds good, but he never sounds great. In these pieces, he always seems afraid. In the Moonlight, he is afraid of subtlety, though wonderful when it comes to passion. In the Pathetique, he seems afraid of the sonata's unity. He gives inconsistently--very present for five seconds, then absent for ten; powerful for one minute, then lax for the next minute. I think his problem is with technical balance between the two hands. It is as though he can never separate one hand from the other--something Horowitz is excellent at. Rather, both hands must always be playing with the same power, attack, or volume. Hence, if melody is important in one place, it tends to be overpowered by the left hand's chording; if overall development of theme is important, he usually strikes a good balance; if chordal attack in the lower register is called for, the trills are lost. He is a good player, but in the end, too frustrating.

I had predicted that Artur Rubenstein's performance would be wanting, and it was. He is a subtle player, sensitive to fine emotional nuance, but lacking the flair and bombast that Beethoven requires. For Chopin or Debussy, he has no better, but Beethoven he should leave alone except for his private enjoyment. In his recording of the Moonlight, there were actual mistakes as pertains to the score--and many of them. His rendering of the Pathetique was scarcely tolerable, and I could not even bear to listen all the way through to his performance of the Appassionata. Over and over, in this latter sonata, he would hit a chord instead of playing individual notes--sometimes even playing the four note theme as one four note chord. He seems to have absolutely no power, no resoluteness, in his left hand. As though he once broke it during a very guilty masturbation, and ever since can not but think of that member as timid and lame.

But let me depart from my topic, and on to other things about music.

First, a note about Horowitz. I am becoming weary of receiving letters from my friends who refer to Horowitz, and then abruptly dismiss the issue by saying, "But of course, you don't like Horowitz."

This is not true. It is only that I do not, as so many, think that Horowitz is the greatest living pianist. What strange malady of the ego



afflicts so many musicologists and appreciators of music, such that they think it an abomination if any person dares believe Horowitz is less than perfect?

I do think he is a great pianist. No one, absolutely no one, can touch him when it comes to playing Rachmaninoff. And he is perhaps unequaled when it comes to Paganini. And his repertoire is perhaps more broad-ranging than any other great pianist, with the possible exception of Brendel.

But allow me--I do have problems--sometimes, with Horowitz; and I do not think I commit a mortal sin by confessing to such.

To put it simply: Horowitz seldom plays as well as he can. He does not love his audience. He does not like people--by his frequent admission, and he sometimes positively dislikes people. Basically a recluse, it then is not surprising that when he appears in recital, this dislike toward people comes out. The problem is, it then comes out in the one way he communicates with people--in his piano playing. He is careless sometimes. He purposely distorts the score to anger his critics. He rushes through works, welding chords together instead of exploring the quality of each. For example, I once heard a recording of a Mozart sonata that was being played on the radio. At first I thought it was the work of an amateur, and could not understand why they would play such a bad recording. Then, during the third movement, came the familiar hurrying through the chords. And I knew it was Horowitz. The radio announcer's voice verified my judgement.

Horowitz is a great pianist, but he has limitations. He is precise but not subtle. He is tender but not sensual. Powerful but not sublime. Of course, precision, tenderness, and power are all rare qualities in themselves; combined in one player, they make for a wonderful pianist. And this Horowitz is.

But I do not think these traits make him the best pianist in the world. And I also think that Horowitz' playing is not so constrained by his artistic limitations as it is constrained by the limits he chooses to place between himself and his audience.

But let me be on to other things.

This next year, I hope to listen to quite a variety of music. I love the pipe organ, and will likely listen to a goodly number of performers. E. Power Biggs is the consummate performer, in my opinion. Walter Kraft is good--as temperate as Virgil Fox is tempestuous. Fox I will likely avoid--an instrument as powerful as the pipe organ does not require garish drivel to make its voice commanding. Perhaps I will also listen to some Albert Schweitzer, who was quite an authority on Bach. I now have the complete recordings of Bach's organ music (except for the recently discovered chorales) by Walter Kraft. He plays Bach with the ^{same} finesse that Segovia plays the guitar, and I'm looking forward to listening to it all.

I want to listen to some of the representationalists also. Mussorgsky and Stravinsky especially. I do not understand their music very well when I listen to the representational content, i.e., the program progression. I seem to imbibe best when I try to accept the emotion only. For example, I best understand Stravinsky's Rite of Spring when I give it the same sort of attention that the "Winter" movement of Vivaldi's Four Seasons requires.

I want to return to the flute again also. My friend Abbe has caused me to better appreciate Rampal. Galway excites me; Debost inspires me. I want to understand these three players better. Rampal, in my opinion, has little depth, but great vision. Galway has little depth or vision, but he has tremendous skill, brightness, and versatility. Debost has great depth, has some vision, and is fully steeped in the classical style of playing. He is not as mellow as Rampal, not as bright as Galway. Yet he has something of both. He does not make mistakes like Rampal does, yet he does not have the predictable precision of Galway. Rather, he combines interpretation with a careful, almost solicitous love for the score. And I appreciate him mightily for it. In fact, by way of parenthesis, I can say that the best classical concert I ever heard in my life was when he appeared with The Toulouse Chamber Orchestra.

I may even look deeper into Gershwin--a composer whom I scarcely appreciate, except for his Rhapsody in Blue. Incidentally, for those of you who are interested, I would suggest that if you want to hear a wonderful recording of this piece, you might want to pick up the recording by The Vienna Symphony Orchestra, with Dean Dixon conducting and Vivian Rivkin on piano. (Olympic Records: 8121, distributed by Everest records.)

To digress: mentioning Dean Dixon's name raises an issue here. For those of you who do not know him--he is a great conductor. But a conductor who has not been able to get a permanent post in America, because--if what people won't admit but talk about has credibility--he is black. Yes; like many types of prejudice in this country, it is worst at the upper-class levels. It is just that it also works so effectively at that level that we often do not see its ramifications.

In jazz, of course, there is prejudice too. Black musicians and white musicians are constantly hurling insults at one another. It hurts, but at

least it is out in the open. And open, verbal warfare does get resolved--somewhat.

But not in the sterile, white-gloved, bow-tied atmosphere of classical music. Yes; they let the orientals play; orientals are a fad now. And there is a plethora of jewish musicians. But blacks, no. I follow classical music closely. I have been to many a symphony. And I still have never seen more than two or three black members of any leading American orchestra.

Well; 1985 will likely be an interesting year, musically speaking. More than anything, I want to listen to more of Soler. I discovered, in his 6th Concerto for Two Organs in D major a new nuance of expression this last year, something which, for want of a better term, I would call "the anger of mystic aspiration." More on this another time.

NOTES FROM TWIN FRANCES

Hello!

I come to these pages informed of something new. My brother generously promised me two to three pages. He now tells me he prefers I keep it at one. So ... my voice must be small, my message brief? So be it. After his loquacious exercise in prosaic narcissism, I here say a few words.

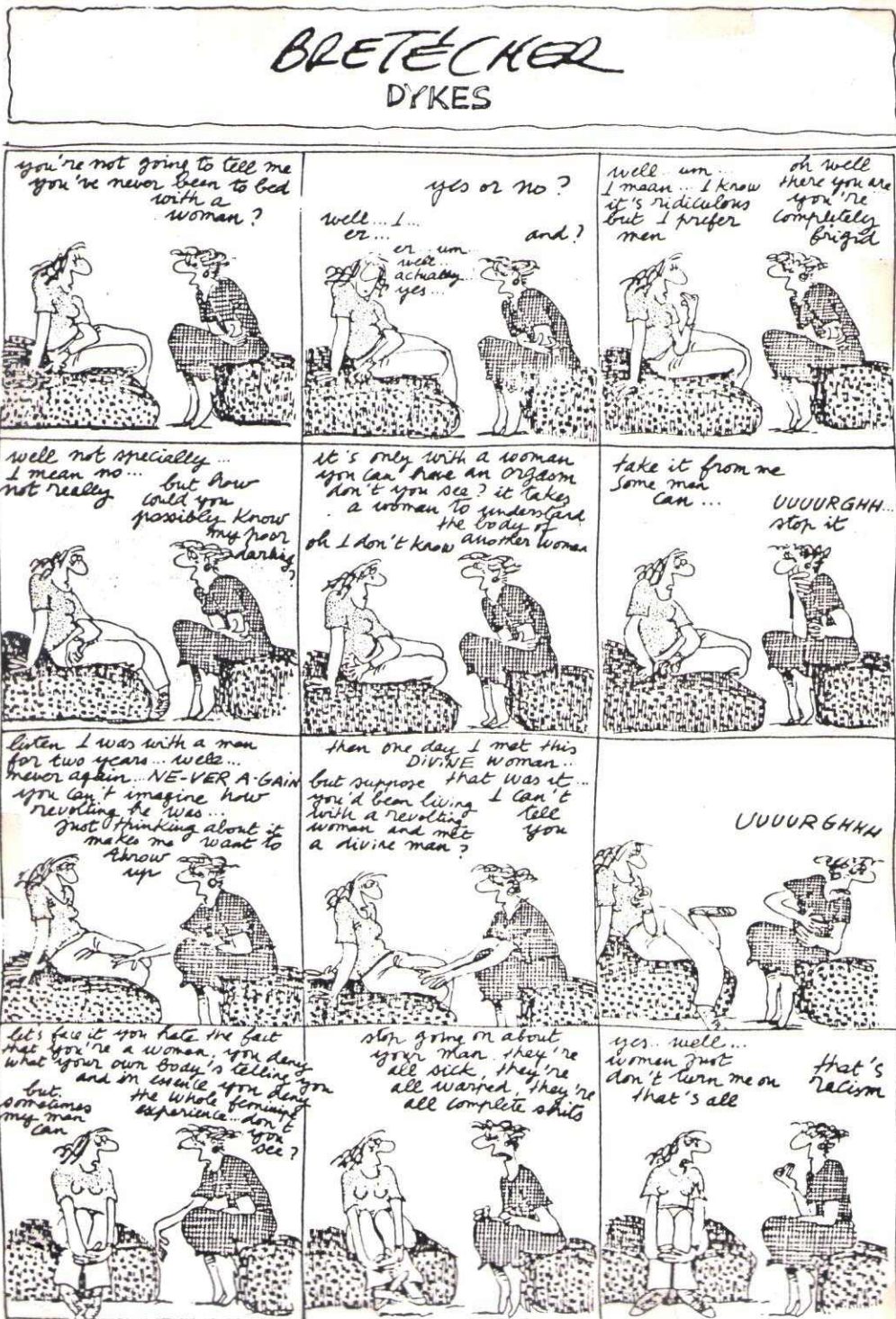
Yes; after some time abroad, I am now living in mid-Missouri. Quite often with Francis. With whom I share more affection than my initial sentence suggests.

Actually, Francis and I share a lot. Our names, to mention but one thing. For those of you who don't already know it, we are named, Mary Frances--and--Marion Francis. The original plan, we are told, was to be called Mary and Marion. But by a series of circumstances too complicated to go into here, we have ended up being called Frances and Francis (both of us successfully resisting the many attempts to put the respective nicknames--Fran and Frank--on us).

As Francis and I work together more and more, I find that our friends are more in common. Hence, I join him in these pages. I extend my wishes to all of you who are his friends, and look forward to meeting many of you.

I want to make it clear that as closely as Francis and I work, I am still my own person. True, I do not have his aptitude for writing--I have done but one short story and a few poems this year. Still, my own work is unique, and my work in studies that approach Francis' interests in men's liberation is picking up steam. I am becoming more and more allied with those who call themselves "Classical Feminists," given my disagreements with current feminist doctrine. This work has taken the form of some writing, but is mostly something I have to work with personally.

I can no longer honestly call myself a lesbian. If anything, I am very "straight" these days. And it is quite an eye-opening experience. I had, as a lesbian, experienced a great deal of prejudice from heterosexual society. As I find myself relating sexually with men only, I had thought I would no longer be stigmatized. If anything, however, the stigma is greater than ever. I find that there is probably more prejudice in my lesbian sisters against me as a "straight" person than there ever was against me when things were the opposite. I follow my brother's liking for cartoons, and here illustrate



my point with an excerpt from a London publication.

But already I find I am running out of space. My brother is a miser when it comes to sharing words.

I am, however, glad to be making this first appearance. And may say something in future issues of The Aviary.

As a matter of fact, I find it easy to join my brother in these pages, given our emotional symbiosis. Plus the constant intellectual dialogue we engage.

His approach to matters is rather too cerebral for me, but that is a difference of temperament only, and I do not judge him wrong for it. I find, in fact, that I agree with virtually every observation he makes in these pages.

I take exception only to the trace (minimal at best) of rancorous sarcasm that sometimes is apparent. But even this mild fault I forgive, since I perceive it to be the necessary compensatory expression--through writing--which relieves him of a heavy burden: the constancy of his compassion when dealing with people directly.

So I take my leave, for now. And return to our work.

Best to all,

Francis

*****ARTICLES*****

1984 WAS A GOOD YEAR FOR PUBLISHING; I MANAGED TO GET 16 ARTICLES INTO PRINT; BETTER THAN USUAL, THE ARTICLE I WAS MOST PROUD OF WAS, "DURATIONAL VALUES IN MUSICAL NOTATION," PUBLISHED IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY (APRIL 1984). BUT THE ARTICLE WHICH REACHED THE MOST READERS, OR AT LEAST HAD THE WIDEST CIRCULATION, WAS, "CASTRATION BY DECREE?" PUBLISHED IN THE NOVEMBER ISSUE OF HUSTLER.

(Nevertheless, as in last year's Aviary, I will here give you a sampling of some of the things I have written over the last year.)

Letter to the Editors of Ms. Magazine
 Re: "Special Issue on Men" Ms. (Aug. 1984)

August 29, 1984

by Francis Baumli, Ph.D., Missouri representative for
 The Coalition of Free Men

MISANDRY OR MS.ANDRY?"

Except for the essays, "Anger" by Hellerstein and "Rejection" by Rothenburg, the entire issue was a litany of apologetics and contrition; men begging forgiveness in the feminist confessional, piously murmuring, "how I was chauvinistic here," "how I didn't support a woman there," or, "how at last I am devoutly trying to remedy my crass behavior." These writers could not grovel enough to tell you how sorry they are for how horribly they have oppressed women. The fabled Knights in Shining Armor were this time playing the game of MELLOW MACHO, practicing the NEW CHIVALRY; i.e., "Just explain how we men have hurt you, my dears, and I will repent by protecting you from all those other dreadful males." This penitential ardor culminated in Richard Cohen's ridiculous martyrdom: "Ultimately, maybe the finest thing we men of my generation can do for feminism is die out." (p. 75.)

It so happens that many of us men, while supporting women's rights, are also loyal to issues of our own: our sexuality, our own burdensome roles, the sexist draft, etc. Another of our issues is the fact that we are tired of being oppressed by the same old female conspiracy that makes women the permission-givers when it comes to men expressing feelings.

Your Special Issue portrayed nothing new. As usual, we men were told that of course we can talk about our feelings, just as long as we only tell you what you want to hear.



Letter to the Editors of National Geographic Magazine November 16, 1984

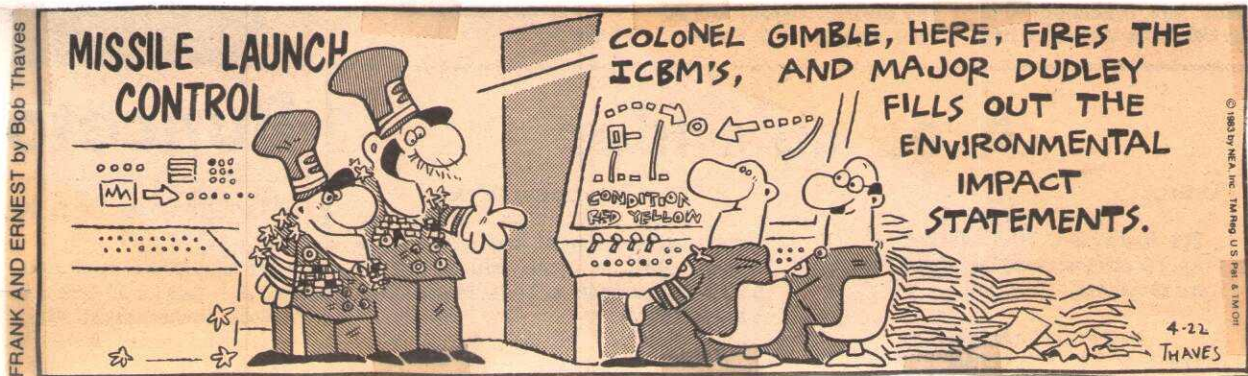
by Francis Baumli, Ph.D., Member, National Board of Advisors to
The Institute for Advanced Philosophic
Research

ON POLITICS AND SCIENCE

The October issue of the National Geographic prints two pictures of President Reagan giving the dedication speech for your new building. And your November issue focuses on what was a great political victory for President Reagan; namely, the U.S. intervention in Grenada. Photos show handsome, stalwart Marines; and a young woman wears a shirt that says, "America: Thank You for Liberating Grenada."

Since both these issues of your magazine arrived just before the Nov. 6 presidential election, I can not help but believe that the officers of the National Geographic were campaigning for President Reagan.

I find this lack of political neutrality deeply disturbing.



NOTES TOWARD AN ETHICS OF ACTION

by Francis Baumli, Ph.D.

My purpose in life, stated intellectually, is to seek a synthetic and creative holism for the sake of human liberation and the expression of human compassion. All this I hope to accomplish in a language of seriousness and levity, which unites being with doing, places love at the heart of everything, and presumes that happiness can be found on earth.

For my starting point, I rely on the Roman poet, Publilius Syrus, who said, "Taciturnitas stulto homini pro sapientia est." ("Silence for the foolish man is wise.")

And, in order to not state it so intellectually, I often consult Silly Billy, the local idiot-svant, who prefaces everything he says with, "I don't exactly know myself very well, but then I ain't got nothin to hide either."

The following is something Silly Billy wrote up for my visitors. I present it in his own words:

NOTUS TO ALL VIZITERS
HEED THEEZ RULES SEERIUSLEE AND
WE'LL ENJOEE YOU NOW AND NEXST TIME TOO!

SILLY BILLY'S AWNEST RULES:

1. Don't cum here expektin to be saved from yersef. And dont expek to bee innertaned. Ifn yer bored, go home. We onlee allow truu diskourse.
2. Leeve yer teevee an yer undo kemeekalle indused esotereka elsewhere. Ifn you kant funkshun rite, go back to yer sell.
3. Dont manipulate innyone into indulgin yer narsisism. If you need an awedunce, the cows awr owt back.
4. If another persun is doin his art er his werk, let thet persun bee and dont pester. Eether git to werk or jist be supreamlee idle.
5. Let the sik rest and the forneekators have phun.

6. Avoyd all horreebl perdikuments in genrall and sum things in pertikuler. For eggsmpl, dont ever tell a lie. Bee awnest wif yer friends. But remember, at leest haf the lies we tell arr true.

7. Dont be hipperkritikal, dupliceetus, akrimonius, er a stabber in the bak. Ware a genuwine smile.

8. Dont think vilently. No fites, brawls, scufflin, er exsessiv rowdeenuss er drunkenuss. Also no kunnipshuns.

9. Bee kind and compashunut. Dont bee of a generallee bad dishperzishun. When yer feelin down take notise that the sky is green, the grass is shinin, and the sun is bluu. It'll cheer yer hart.

10. Make shur you beleev in feelin an then theres reezun too. That way you git yer needed trooth and sekuritee too.

11. Dont diskriminat accordin to inny contingenzeez er such eggsgenzeez. Bee nise to hoomun beens.

12. Jus rekollekt this thing always: we have lots of will power, but we refooze to be a slave to it. And dont tempt us wif tempeschoous dezires. We can rezist all things egzept temptashun.

13. Dont worree abowt innytheeng. Just wunder abowt it.

14. All smiles and laffin welcome an allowed.

15. No krazee promiskuity allowed. If your so inseekure you have to flaunt yer sex, git owt. But if you jest want to do it nachrally, then go off wif someone or maybee by yersef and hurry up an git started.

16. Loving love aint a towtawlogy.

17. No undoo role playin. We maybe hicks, butt we beleev in mins and wimmins and ivery other types ov liberashun. No aggrashun er passiveness allowed. Jist bee nise, and thin bee ussertiv and reseptive whin yoo need too.

18. Kleen up yer own messes eether inside er owtside.

19. Dont be distruktiv. Ifn you er yer kids tare somethin up, kindlee fix it yersef.

20. Watch yer kids and dont let em fall in the pond er hert themselvs. And watch yersef, but leev the mirrers alone.

21. Ifn yoo cum in grate and unexpekted kwantitee, kindlee hep wif condeemunts.

22. No fishin er huntin. Thiss iz a cuntree place, nawt a sports areena. Go find a plant and say how-dee-doo.

23. No motersikls er snowmobeels eether tarrin up the kuntreeside. Keep the pees and kwiet.

24. If you hav to belch er indulge in flachulation er a vigrus skrach then doo it. Dont suffer theez inconveeniensees needluslee.

25. No dawgs on the premusus. And no goats eether. And that incloods sheep. (Also no porkeepines.)

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Well people, my missive this year is longer than intended. But then, sometimes my life is more complex and variegated--if not complicated--than I intend. And even so, it seems that I have only talked about the lesser things. Perhaps, as Rajneesh said in I Am the Gate, "You remember only things that are lost. That which is always with you, you need not remember." (p. 122.)

If my prose style herein seems a bit less polished than my usual literary forays, please realize that I have written this directly from the typewriter. There has been no preening and pruning. I trust, nevertheless, that this year's Aviary has been almost as enjoyable as it was weighty.

My best to all. I think 1985 will be a difficult year, with many trials and such. But then--there are no problems, only solutions!

My best to all!

Verily I am,

• A highbrow is a person educated beyond his intelligence.
—James Brander Matthews
(1852-1929)

