

THE AVIARY

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From the venerable
Francis Baumli, for his
friends, associates,
and wayward disciples.

"... 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)

The format for this year's Aviary is considerably changed. I have at last been unable to deny it longer: too many friends of mine have not the synaesthetic capabilities I had believed they possessed. As time goes by, more and more confess to me (with copious tears and writhings of shame) that they do not even bother to read the sections on music and paintings. So I shall no longer indulge myself with the section on paintings; as for the section on music, that one is too dear to me. It is worth putting herein, even if it is never read by anyone other than myself and a few goodly friends who understand that the voice of good prose is not complete unless it keeps company with the lyre.

I have chosen to drop the section on movies simply because, with failing eyesight, I view so few. The section which deals with "on-going work" is also dropped. I do not like writing about what I am doing given that such writing seems to interfere with the doing; moreover, I have found that this section is always woefully incomplete since, being a perfect gentleman, I can not bring myself to make public all those corporeal couplings I engage in private. As for the section on "forthcoming events," it too must be dropped. I feel awkward writing it, given that not infrequently the writing of any particular issue of The Aviary is so tardy as to put me in the compromised position of writing as though something has not yet happened when actually it has. Plus there is the difficulty that philosophers with my dimension of soul seldom operate within the temporal realm anyway. Eternity is our abode, and what to others seems like our future is already but one of many atemporal ideas which reside within the vastness of our shared aviarian memory.

Be assured that any news that otherwise would have been included within the four sections which now are absent will nevertheless be mentioned here, interpolated where most pertinent or seemly. At the same time, be assured that this Aviary will be even shorter than was last year's issue. I have not the time, the energy, nor the desire to bestow upon my friends the cornucopia of wisdom and wit I have previously bequeathed. Why do I lack the desire? Well, I am becoming more and more disgruntled over the fact that most people who receive this yearly Aviary do not bother to respond. It is not intended as a literary exercise; rather, it truly is intended to give an overview of what has transpired within the Baumli cosmos during the previous year. In short (or, at length) it is a letter, and my convictions of propriety suggest to me that my friends should respond in turn if not in like. I.e., even though my friends, not so narcissistic as myself, could not be expected to produce their own massive missive similar to my Aviary, they could, at the very least, write me a short letter letting me know that they received my epistle, and responding to its aspects which they find especially pertinent to themselves, to our friendship, or to our mutual suspicions of one another (a quality which binds two people together much more tenaciously than does the love of friendship).

Thus you understand why I do not desire, any longer, to produce a lengthy Aviary. I

also said that I do not have the time. You realize, I trust, that first and foremost I am a writer. You also realize, I hope, that in my terribly busy life, there is never enough time to commit to paper the tempest of cerebration which burdens me. So I have to pick and choose what is most important, and thus set priorities, committing to paper those ideas which are most generous when it comes to instantiating what is eternal. You thus can understand why it is that the mere temporal happenstance of my life is not so deserving of my time (yes; I am aware of the irony in this statement; the question is, are you aware of the confusion which must plague such a choice?); I trust that those of you of noble bearing will be grateful if I henceforth leave this Aviary lean, and pour the divine excrescence of my soul into crucibles befitting my usurpation of eschatological veridicality.

Why is it I said I have not the energy, this year, to produce a lengthy Aviary? To put it bluntly, this last year has been the most difficult of my life. My daughter Dacia is no longer living with me, and it also is the case that she and I are scarcely sharing the same axiological terrain. (An abstract way of putting it, yes; but proceed with your reading, and you shall understand, or at least apprehend, what I remain bewildered by.) Yes; it has been a terribly difficult year. Many a force has conspired against me, and while I have not succumbed, it nevertheless is the case that at present I am physically and emotionally exhausted. There are ashes in my belly, and a boulder in my soul. Forgive me, but this time I must forego flattering you with my cavailings. I am a humbled man, and although I have not forgotten how to sing, my voice, and my message, shall be more modest--as is befitting, when we are dealing with but a portion of eternity.



... courts are places where the ending is written first and all that precedes is simply vaudeville.

Notes of a Dirty Old Man
by Charles Bukowski, p. 76



SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF 1991

Dec. 28, 1990: This date is significant per 1991 given that it was intended to be the last date I would shave my face; henceforth, I would sport a full beard for all of 1991, perhaps for the rest of my life. Plans did not work out as intended, however. I kept the full beard for about two months, as I recall, and then shaved it off, except for this mustache and goatee I have now worn for many a year. The full beard was not to be simply because it was so uncomfortable. After one month, the itching had stopped, but there was the problem of the weight. My beard was so heavy that it actually seemed to make me feel off balance, as though there were a pendulum suspended from my face. The considerable mass of this pendulum would be evidenced by something as simple as walking down the hallway of a building. As I would approach a corner, even though walking at a normal rate of speed, I would have to start leaning into my turn well before actually negotiating it; otherwise, the weight of my beard, because of its insistent momentum, would cause me to fail in this otherwise quite simple task and go crashing into the wall. (Yes; I do exaggerate. But the fact is, the beard actually seemed so heavy that the thought of such peril would actually cross my mind when approaching a corner.) You can understand why I at last took up razor and proceeded to depilate a goodly portion of my scarcely comely face.

Jan. 12: Since there is no movie section this year, I shall, in this part, give an accounting of the few movies I did see. On this date I viewed Godfather III. Al Pacino gave the kind of performance which once again proves that he is one of the finest actors on the scene today. The movie itself, although upsetting in its violence, caused even greater tension in the ways it successfully built up so much suspense and maintained that suspense as violent scenes approached. Unfortunately, the story line of this installment of Godfather was not well done; parts of the plot were very difficult to follow, and I never could figure out what some of the criminal machinations were. Certain of the actors were bad; others good. Seeing Pacino act was what made this movie worthwhile.

Feb. 9: I this date attended a concert by The Manhattan String Quartet. (In past issues of The Aviary, I have noted the dates of concerts attended in this section, but have reserved a discussion of the performance for the music section. To save time, and space, I shall henceforth give a full summation of the concerts in this section.)

The playing was rather uneven in quality. Their first number, Mozart's Quartet in C, K. 465 "The Dissonant," was not good at all. The following work however was tremendous: their rendering of the Quartet #2 in A Major, Op. 68 by Shostakovich was the best I have ever heard. It gave me new insight into the music of Shostakovich (a composer for whom I have never had a natural or easy affinity), and caused me to want to obtain the complete recordings of his string quartets which has recently been done by The Manhattan String Quartet.

The final piece on the program was Beethoven's Quartet in C, Op. 59, No. 3. The playing on this quartet was acceptable, but not at all impressive. The first violin was weak, dragging at the beginning of the first and third movements, i.e., failing to enunciate the notes clearly.

As an encore, they played the string quartet version of Jerome Kern's "When Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." It was a humorous digression, given the thematic subject matter, but not musically engaging.

The Manhattan String Quartet is not a strong ensemble. When enthusiastic, as with Shostakovich, they are wonderful. But the first violin is weak, and the viola lacks power. The best musician in the group is Judith Glyde, the cellist (and wife of the first violinist). If you have a chance to hear them, I recommend you first discover what the intended program is. My experience suggests that they are likely to play well only those pieces which are relatively recent in musical history. They are not a first-rate quartet, but are certainly worth hearing, especially if Shostakovich is on the program.

Feb. 10: A concert by the duo pianists, Delphin and Romain. These two fellows are faculty members at SIUC, and I can not for the life of me understand why two such talented pianists would choose to stay in such forbidding territory.

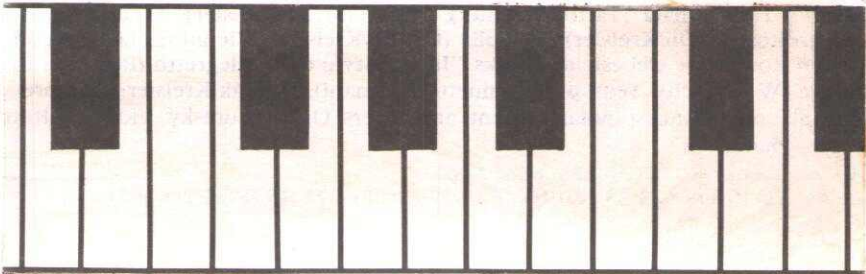
I shall not mention every work on the program. However, it is worth noting that they did a sterling job with Mozart's Sonata in D Major, K. 448. Also, I

loved their interpretation of Chopin's Rondo, Op. 73, which, as far as I know, is the only piece Chopin wrote for two pianos. Also, their rendering of Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances, Op. 45 was truly superb. This is a very intriguing piece, given that not only is it Rachmaninoff's last work, it also has the distinction of having been arranged by the composer for solo piano, orchestra, and also for two pianos.

Some of the other works played were not so good. One was terrible. I refer to Ever Since that Day written by SIUC's composer-in-residence, Frank Stemper. Was this piece played badly? I do not know. It was such a shoddy composition one can not possibly judge. There was a description which came with the program, outlining all the supposedly ingenious things this composer was doing in this piece of music. I listened. Yes; the things were all there. But these things did not succeed in comprising music. I could have done better on a weekend drunk, and I certainly do not consider myself to have any talent as a composer.

It was interesting to note how members of the audience, some of whom conversed with me after the performance, were so impressed that the composer-in-residence in question had composed this piece especially for this duo.

Well; such supposed generosity counts for but one thing. Namely, just as a writer can never be known unless he is published, so also a composer can never be known unless musicians play what he composes. And the most effective way, if you are a composer of mediocre or absent talent, to get your works played is to compose them for, or dedicate them to, talented and performing musicians who thereupon, out of politeness, feel obligated to play the piece. A very sordid way of pushing one's career along, don't you think? And rather



boorish, too, given the rude imposition upon one's colleagues.

Lest anyone think I carry in my heart the faintest trace of malice for this would-be composer of contemporary music, let me here note that I have met this fellow, and he is an enjoyable, likable person. My only complaint is that he composes with no more talent than would be required for masturbating while picking one's nose.

Feb. 9 & 14: It was on February 14th when I discovered that the pianist, Walter Klien, had died on February 9th. He had been losing weight, had been in the hospital for a diagnosis which came up with nothing, and then, despite illness, prepared to give three concerts. He gave two, on Jan. 26 and 28, but canceled the third because of exhaustion, went in hospital, and died a few days later, never knowing that it was cancer.

The news of this man's death was devastating to me. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say his death was harder for me than anyone's has ever been, with the exception of my sister Ann's death when she was killed in a car wreck.

Why was it so hard for me? I had made it a point, about two years ago, to make the

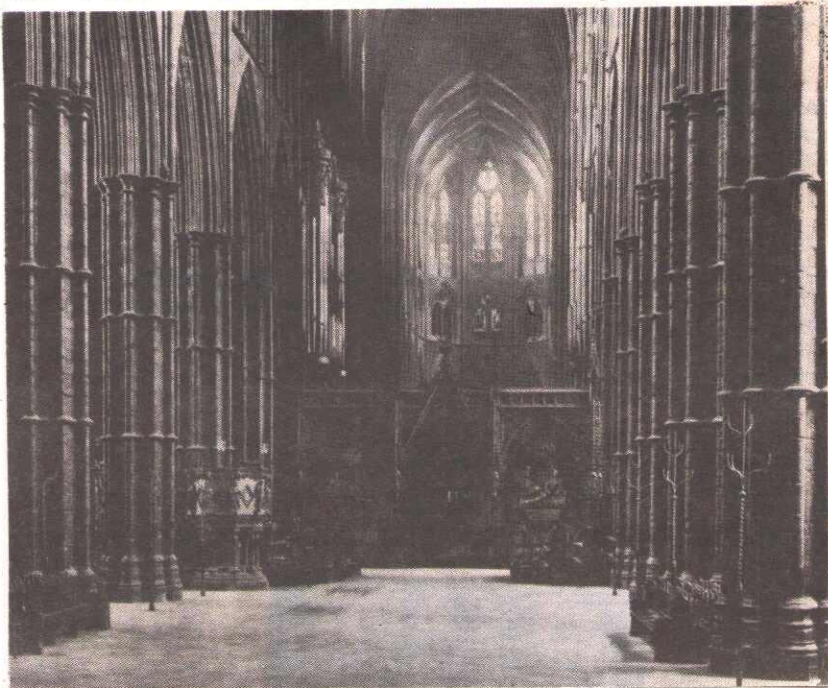
acquaintance of this man. I considered him to be the greatest pianist in the world. Certainly the greatest since Schnabel, and perhaps greater even than Schnabel. I had been listening to his recordings since in my early twenties. His recording of the complete works by Mozart for solo piano is one of the greatest recording achievements ever; and his recording of the Beethoven sonatas (the triad) has no equal. I had come to know him, and had resolved that I would help him realize a dream he had held for a long time. Namely, to again record some of Mozart's solo piano music.

Unfortunately, Mr. Klien had never been overly successful when it came to selling recordings. He was not a flashy performer; he simply played, and played both impeccably and inspiringly. But a performer who merely plays well does not necessarily sell records; it is those performers who are good at showmanship who quickly seduce an audience. Hence, Mr. Klien's recording career had fallen off dramatically over the last several years. When I met Mr. Klien, I discussed with him his desires for again recording some of the Mozart solo piano music, and explored ways I could help him.

I was very amazed over the next 1½ years at what I accomplished. While I did not succeed in getting him any new recording contracts, I did succeed in persuading companies which held his old recordings to release them on compact disc. I was pressing ahead, arranging for the release of more of his old recordings, and also trying to set up a fund to finance his again recording not only all the Mozart solo piano music, but also all the piano music of Beethoven, Schubert, and all of Mozart's piano concertos. Would I have succeeded? I believe so. It was amazing how well I could sell this person, as a musician. But then ... his death.

Why did I grieve so deeply? Walter Klien's death deprived me of a very powerful goal, or purpose, which defined a good deal of my life. Also, in a way that is hard to explain, it deprived me of a certain faith in the cosmos. It was stupid, I realize, and perhaps even superstitious; but I somehow had held the conviction that here was a musician so supreme that the cosmos simply would not let him die before he had again recorded all this music. Maybe my grief was made even more painful because, in certain private ways, I have harbored the belief that this universe is kind enough that I--this awkward Baumli soul--will be allowed the privilege of completing certain works of art, of writing, to which I am very attached, before my death or before my eyesight leaves me. Klien's death shattered this delusional faith. More, his death deprived the world of immeasurable joys. One of the greatest musicians of our century died in 1991. At the piano, there is no one at present who can replace him. I suppose that now it is Richter who reigns supreme as the world's greatest pianist, and indeed he is a god at the keyboard, but compared to Walter Klien, Richter must know humility.

March 16: I attended a concert by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra which was uncommonly good. Ives' Three Places in New England began the program; I can say that they were played well, but since I am not overly fond of these pieces, I can say little about the quality. The final work was Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in D Major. It was performed very well, but not nearly



on a par with the performance of the same symphony I heard Slatkin conduct in London, about three years before, when he was in front of the London Symphony Orchestra.

The highlight of this concert was Midori doing Sibelius' Concerto in d for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 47. The only recordings of this I am quite familiar with are done by Perlman, and Heifetz. The latter plays it in a very refined and restrained way; the former is lush, but given to mistakes, and lacking any grasp of the work's overall unity. Midori's playing, however, was perfect. It was powerful, perfectly timed, and with a rare grasp of the work's emotion, moving the piece along with just the right increase of emotional power and nuance, thus moving it to a crescendo, and catharsis, and final understatement which gave this concerto an entirely new dimension for me. After this hearing, I would place it in the company of the other great violin concertos--those written by Beethoven, Brahms, Britten, Tchaikovsky, and such.

Truly, Midori is one of our great violinists, and I would advise any of my friends to never pass up an opportunity for hearing her play.

March 23: I attended what was probably the best jazz concert I have ever in my life imbibed. It was the Dave Brubeck Quartet. I have heard him before, with various musicians, but this particular ensemble worked perfectly. Brubeck is getting old; his health is obviously failing. But he was relaxed, in control, masterful. And supported by some great musicians. Jack Six on bass proved himself to be one of the best jazz bassists in the world. Randy Jones on drums gave the best drum solo I have ever heard, even though he was not even on his own trap set. Bill Smith, one of the original members of the old Brubeck Quartet was there on clarinet, and he proved to be the only weak link in the concert. For the most part his playing was very good, but he was running through an amplifier, and kept using its echo, reverb, and concert reverb capacities, and these sound effects simply did not work well. He seemed to enjoy them, but I found them very distracting.

Randy Jones is a great drummer; but there are many great drummers out there. There are not so many great bass players. Jack Six is one of the best, and I am very grateful that this time Dave Brubeck's son, Chris, did not come along to sully the music. Jack Six presented the finest bass playing I have ever heard in concert, and I would travel many hundred miles to hear him again.

April 12: Abbe and I traveled a few miles to hear, at a community college, a concert by The Duo Cellissimo. This husband and wife team did pieces for two cellos, and it was an enjoyable concert, given the unusual presentation of instruments. The music was rather unique, given that most pieces they played were transcriptions, which is understandable since so little music is written for two cellos. During the program, the music was very enjoyable, but upon leaving, memories of the concert faded quickly. Their playing of David Popper's Suite for Two Cellos, Op. 16 was the best work on the program. None of the other selection were impressive enough to here warrant comment.

April 27: It seems I attended a goodly number of concerts during 1991; on this date I heard the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, with Alicia de Larrocha. We were a bit late for the concert, and did not get in to hear the first piece on the program: Steven Stucky's Impromptus for Orchestra. Alicia de Larrocha came next, and it was a terrible disappointment. She did the Ravel Concerto in G Major for Piano and Orchestra, but because we were sitting in a "dead spot" in the hall, where one could scarcely hear the performers at all, I did not get to actually hear Alicia de Larrocha. I have always considered her to be one of the finest pianists alive, and for years I had hoped to hear her. I was there, with several friends, but we did not hear. And the way we were seated, we could scarcely even see her. I came away from that concert aware that I had thus missed out on what would probably be the only chance, during my entire life, to ever hear this great pianist.

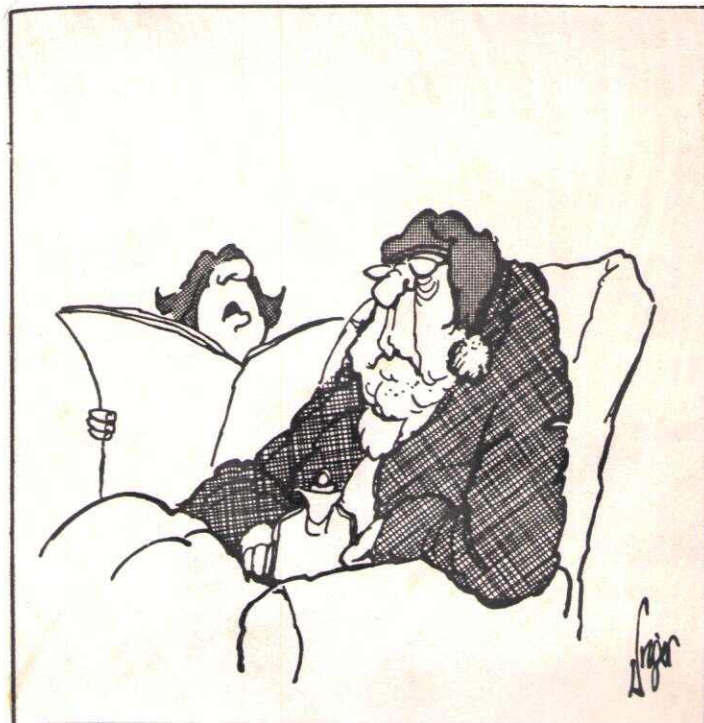
There was some solace in the fact that the first piece the orchestra played after the intermission was Beethoven's Overture to King Stephen, Op.117. This work was played perfectly, and because of its natural volume, we could hear it very well. The subsequent performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93, was only adequate. A major disappointment, this concert.

May 31: On this, my 43rd birthday, Abbe and I rented a movie, took it to where she works, and there used their VCR and TV to watch a movie we had long wanted



Regrettably, the Labinski brothers had selected an apartment in the heart of the Bermuda Triangle of jam sessions.

to see: Children of a Lesser God. It was a major disappointment. The acting was excellent, and the story most intriguing. But there was too much false romance as the story unfolded. The emotional barriers that stood between the two people becoming close to one another, much less, falling in love, came down too quickly, too simply. Most irritating was the movie's reliance upon stock cliches of passive aggression, especially by the woman. Most movies do this, I realize, but about half-way through the movie one began sensing that this story could not proceed even another three minutes without a scene during which the woman would become angry and rush out of the room or building, slamming the door behind her. Also, there was the usual, and repugnant, cliché of the man who, initially failing to win the woman's love, spends the next many months groveling, searching for her, until finally she lets him into her heart. At which, instantaneously, all the hurt and bewilderment he might have experienced, i.e., should have experienced, during that long period of rejection, simply evaporated, and love bloomed between them. That final scene, where the two of them, having just made a reconciliation after that long period of painful separation, went walking out on that white dock, the two of them wearing white, and made passionate declarations of (does one call it love?) to one another ... well, I know that there are many romantics out there who probably wept copiously at this scene, but as for Baumli, he was heard to make retching sounds as he tried to purge his soul of all that fluff.



"Grannie, your horoscope says be prepared for a whirlwind romance!"

July 12: My new niece, Sarah Ann Hendry, was born. Exactly nine months before her birth, certain matters of prudence had been eclipsed by some moments of inspired turbulence (immediately transubstantiated by Baumli into a concrete emanation of those metaphysically idealistic realities which inhabit, and even provide, a retrograde entelechy, for those many uninstantiated morphic possibilities which have not previously received that fulguration which converts natura naturans to natura naturata) and this little person began the task of shaping herself into a personality worthy of an uncle comely and proud as Baumli.

July 20: After many phone calls and much in the way of arrangements, I sat in with a jazz group--the first jazz I have played since moving to this area. Even though they had agreed to let me play an entire set when the arrangements were made by phone, when I arrived at the performance, they informed me I could play but two songs. Except for the bass player, who was obviously appreciating the time off, the other three musicians were openly hostile. I played the two songs and got the hell out of there. I know when it is time to get off the stage. And I am getting sick of the morbid lack of hospitality--the open hostility--around here.

July 27: Do I want to write about this? I have told the story so many times, and I am weary of the telling. Weary of the circumstances. Despairing of any way of resolving it.

Dacia had gone to visit her biological mother in Florida but four weeks before. On this date, her mother, with a very scared Dacia on the phone, called to say that she was not returning. I began asking indignant questions, and they hung up. Frantic days followed, during which those at the Florida household would not answer the phone, and we procured attorneys in Illinois, Florida, and Missouri. Although working with one primary attorney in Illinois, and for a while with one primary attorney in Florida, we had the aid of six attorneys amidst the fray. Spending thousands of dollars, and exhausting ourselves utterly, we managed to get Dacia in Florida at 3 P.M. on August 8, and we then returned to our home, hallucinating with weariness, at 3:30 A.M. on August 9.

This was one of the most frantic times of my life. I lost ten pounds in ten days. During the 36 hours of that trip to and back from Florida, we scarcely slept, ate, and all the time flying to and back from Florida, a little nine-month old Marion was with us. He had to come with us because he was still breast feeding, and of course he was miserable--crying, inconsolable at times, himself completely exhausted.

Dacia was sad the day after we returned, but also, she seemed to be very relieved to be back. Within two days, things seemed to be back to normal, and Patty said she was giving up the fight, that she had not really wanted Dacia to

come live with her anyway. She said she had only detained Dacia because Dacia had wanted it, and now she--Patty (my former wife)--was content to leave things be.

Little did we know, at this point, that the battle was far from over. Meanwhile, Abbe's milk dwindled and Marion soon quit nursing. This was a very sad thing for Abbe. One of the most precious bonds in her life was thus intruded upon, and she would never again be able to nurse a baby, which she had valued so much.

Aug. 10: After several years of planning, the Japanese translation of my book, Men Freeing Men, was finished, and the book's first printing was released on this date.

Sept. 10: We went to see the musical, Barnum. It was not performed by the original Broadway cast. This cast was maybe one notch above amateur status. Abbe sat there yawning. I left at the intermission, wishing mightily that I had stayed home and listened to Mozart.

The director of the concert series swore to me that all the songs were actually sung by the performers on stage, although he conceded that they used wireless microphones for some of the songs. I contended, and still do, that at least some of the songs performed were lip-synched (Is this how it is spelled?) . . . that the songs we heard were being played from a recording--the very same orchestral recording which accompanied those songs which were not lip-synched. We never resolved the disagreement.

Why do I even bother here noting that I attended this musical? After all, this section is supposed to include "significant events." Well; I suppose it was significant in that it failed so completely at being significant. But yes; this explanation for my having listed it here is rather lame. Next time I will save the space for better things.

Sept. 28: We attended a concert by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gilbert Kaplan. The piece performed is the only one Kaplan conducts: Mahler's Symphony # 2 in c (the "Resurrection").

I need not go into a lengthy account about Kaplan--the fact that when he first heard Mahler's 2nd he knew little or nothing about classical music, but upon hearing it, resolved that he would one day conduct it. What Kaplan has done is admirable. With tremendous monetary resources (he is a multi-millionaire) he has traveled the world over, listening to more than a hundred performances of the piece, has obtained the original score, has taken lessons in conducting, and even hired major orchestras so he could conduct the piece before them. After all this expensive practicing, he has learned the score, and how to conduct it.

The performance was truly spectacular. What came across most impressively was Kaplan's own knowledge of the score, and how he had imparted this knowledge to the musicians during rehearsals. His actual conducting technique was poor. His baton was unsure, and although he seemed to know all the cues, he scarcely bothered giving them, instead, concentrating on directing the forward strings only.

Some of the musicians I know, who play with the SLO, had stated that they did not like his conducting during rehearsals. I knew that the result would either be that the orchestra would play badly--their way of protesting Kaplan's presence, or they would play splendidly to prove to themselves that they could play well despite being handicapped by an amateurish conductor. We were fortunate that the musicians opted for the latter option. The result was sublime, and most admirable.

Oct. 10: In Japan, Men Freeing Men, is selling faster than it is in the U.S. On this date, the book went into a second printing.

Oct. 11: We found our cat, Sam I Am, dead beside the highway. He had died but recently, probably within the last 24 hours. Yet, he had been missing for about three weeks. He disappeared the early morning of September 16. I heard a dog growling out in the yard, but did not worry about it. However, the next morning, Sam was gone. I now suspect that the dog frightened Sam and chased him away. Sam then likely wandered about for the duration of his absence, or he found a temporary home at someone else's place, only to die later when trying to cross the highway. Poor kitty. He was Abbe's favorite, and she took his death very hard. And we all felt guilty that we had assumed him dead those 3½ weeks instead of looking harder for him.

Oct. 17: I once again whored out my eyeballs to take in a movie. This time it was Barton Fink, a winner of the Cannes Film Festival Prize. I left the theatre feeling that I had wasted my time. The main character's bugging eyes had become rather tiresome. The scene where the psychopath was walking through that fire at the end--was it supposed to be allegorical, and if so, regarding what? I was believing, by the end of this movie, that modern-day audiences have become so numbed to good art, i.e., so constantly exposed to violence and such, that good art can not appeal to an audience unless there is a good deal of violence thrown in. Hence, we now have the genre of the "subtle splatter" movie, in which the film tries to be artsy, but dares not

hope to stand on artistic merits alone, so ... the blood, gore, and sudden shock are injected too. The movie had been a waste of time.

But then, over the next few days, something about the movie kept growing on me. Despite the movie's limitations, there was something powerful about it, and within a few days I wanted to go back and see it twice. But by this time it had left Carbondale.

What seemed to take on value in this movie? I think it was the character Charlie. This movie gave the audience a clear look into the terrors and hell of his soul, and it seemed so perfectly accurate, understandable, even pitiable. I liked that psychopath. That scene where he was running down the hall, wielding a shotgun, screaming ... there was a man modeled after a small part of my own soul. For me it was like looking into a mirror and yawning.

Oct. 15: (I apologize for the mix-up; this entry should have come before the previous one, but now, having typed the above, surely you will forgive me for not going back to retype that entire previous page. And, surely my friends who use word-processors will show kind reticence about thinking, much less, saying to me, "See there Baumli, if only you had a word-processor, you could have")

I attended a special concert at SIUC devoted to music by Mozart. The program was lengthy, and I do not care to comment on all of it. Generally it was quite good, although not impressive. The pianos were very out of tune, and although I quickly became accustomed to this difficulty, it continued to encumber the music.

Delphin & Romain played, and told too many of the same stories--intended to be humorous--which they had told at previous concerts. However, they did play well, and managed to do Mozart justice. The most impressive performer was the soprano, Jeanine Wagner, who, although she did poorly on the gorgeous Exsultate Jubilate, did subsequent pieces in a most impressive manner.

Nov. 12: We went to see a performance by The Glasnost Ballet. The selections were generally rather brief, but the performance, although somewhat uneven, was very powerful. Unfortunately, the peasants in the audience could not refrain from applauding right in the midst of the most powerful, and meaningful, dances. This distracted the performers, irritated my own refined sensibilities, and caused me at one point to turn to a peasant behind me, whose paws were clapping with painful volume, and shrivel him with my glare.

As for the dances: I care not to comment on all of them, but I shall make mention of a few things: La Peri was brief but featured Jana Kurova, a gorgeous female lead; the story: a man choosing carnal beauty over immortality, was very passionate. Evening Dance, a story of unrequited love, was terrible in its power, and fully convincing; an epic reduced to the proportions of a poem, it is a dance I would love to see again. Equally convincing was La Sylphide. The anorexic Maria Ivanova played the role of a spirit who, in the context of a lovers' tryst, is accidentally poisoned and dies; her strong but emaciated body was perfect for this sad, and somewhat horrible, tale. The selection from Swan Lake was the one badly flawed piece on the program. The female lead did well, but Alexei Malykin, a very large man, had all the grace of an old moose standing on his balls. Perhaps the thing I found most impressive about the entire presentation was the music for the dance entitled Ur. The program guide merely described it as Contemporary Collage. I could not identify any of the several musical pieces in that dance, but at present I am trying to find out.

I came away with the impression that it had been a very good program. The unseemly and ill-timed applause had flawed it. Even more difficult, however, was the fact that for some reason the minions of peasants who attended that evening had, for reasons I could never decipher, conspired to all douse themselves with unusually huge quantities of perfume, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, and such. The result was that Abbe had a mild asthma attack during the concert, and I was constantly worried that somewhere in that auditorium someone might strike a match and cause a conflagration.

Nov. 16: We attended an all-Bernstein concert put on by The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Typical of Bernstein, much of it was light, enjoyable, but not memorable. The Songfest was well done, and very fun, but flawed in an unusual way--the singers' voices were amplified, causing a very uneven balance in the presentation. Moreover, the speakers used were cheap--Yamaha; they further compromised the sound. The Prelude, Fugue and Riffs was very fun, and I was rather impressed by the ability of these classical musicians to loosen up with a jazz piece such as this. Unfortunately, the fun of these two pieces did not suffice to retrieve the concert from what was a major blunder. Namely, the way the orchestra played, and Slatkin conducted, Bernstein's The Age of Anxiety, Symphony No. 2. This is my favorite work by Bernstein. As an orchestral unity, it shows the skill of a Berlioz or Ravel. And truly the score is awesome; just sitting and reading it, one can hear the entire symphony, and feel the anxiety. The problem was: Slatkin and the SLO did not play it like it should be played. They were all smiles, the pianist rocking about like she was doing ragtime, the violinists all but dancing a jig there in their

chairs, Slatkin prancing and laughing, and ... hells bells, I went to this concert for this one piece, which is Bernstein's best, and they blew it. I was royally pissed. It's not as though the piece came to them virgin and untested. Bernstein himself had recorded it twice, and both of his interpretations are much the same, although the second one is both recorded and played much better. Slatkin could have listened to these versions. And the least he could have done was to simply keep in mind that this symphony is titled, The Age of Anxiety. It says "anxiety" for chrissakes! I do not exaggerate. I could have mounted that podium myself, and after introducing the orchestra to a corpse or some equally sobering event so as to wipe the vapid grins off their faces, I then could have gone on to interpret, and conduct, this piece better than Slatkin did. Slatkin and the SLO are a wonderful combination, but this is one night when the magic did not happen and the earth failed to move.

Nov. 17: Dacia, showing little proficiency with a standard transmission in the course of our teaching her to drive, finally convinced us that we would have to get a car with an automatic transmission if she were ever to learn the art. So this date we bought a 1979 Volvo with an automatic transmission. It is a good car, Dacia is able to drive it, and ... well, we bought a Volvo because they are supposed to be sturdy and there is always the possibility that Dacia could wreck the thing.

This purchase brings us into a state of true decadence. We now have four vehicles: my 1955 Cadillac hearse, my 1962 Chevy pickup, Abbe's 1970 Volvo, and now another Volvo. But whenever we are inclined to feel guilty about owning all these vehicles, we remind ourselves of how frequently one or more of them is not running, and also of the fact that all but the most recent purchase have serious problems with rust. In fact, the time is coming when my '62 pickup is going to go the way of all things. I overhauled the engine a few years back, and it has many miles left on the engine, but the body is just about gone. Mind you, I am not talking about cosmetics only. I refer to the huge gaping holes not only in the front fenders, but also in the floor of the cab, along the side of the seat, and ... we may have to send it to the junkyard before the seat falls through the floor.

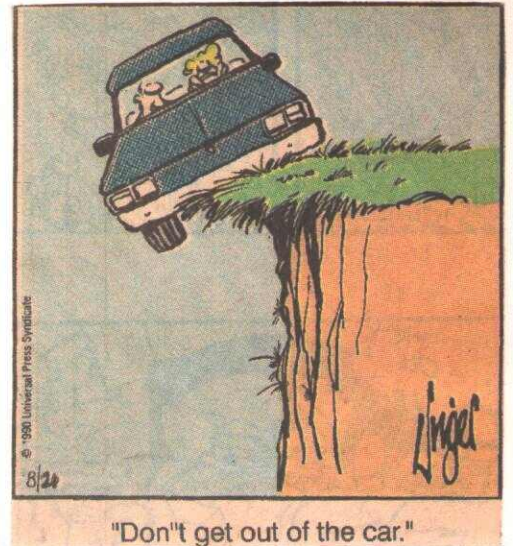
Nov. 22: The Beethoven Society for Pianists at SIUC tends to bring in pianists of two types: fading geriatric players who have lost their abilities to the infirmities of age, and young aspiring artists who have not succeeded in attaining a wide reputation. The former group of artists plays terribly; the latter group sometimes plays wonderfully. One such performer is Mykola Suk, from the Ukraine. On November 22, I attended a performance by this young Mr. Suk, and it was one of the three or four best solo recitals I have ever heard in my life. He had a great enthusiasm for his playing, and a very unique touch on the keys, with fine balance between the two hands, and an impressive ability to match power and volume with subtlety of phrasing.

Suk played everything perfectly. The concert was world class. Beethoven's Seven Bagatelles, Op. 33 gave Beethoven's score rare justice. Bartok's Out of Doors, although appropriately percussive, given the composer, had a delicate phrasing throughout which I have never heard anyone successfully accomplish with Bartok.

In this concert, I was most impressed by a piece called Partita No. 5 in Modo Retro by Myroslav Skoryk. A contemporary piece of music, it is very complex; but unlike most contemporary music, it had melody and thematic exploration even though it was quite unusual in form. How very nice it was to hear a piece of contemporary music which sounds musical instead of experimental. This particular piece, composed by a modern Ukrainian, is, in fact, one of the finest pieces of contemporary music in the classical vein I have heard, and I look forward to the day when it can be bought as a recording.

Suk ended the program with Liszt's Fantasia quasi Sonata: Apres une Lecture du Dante, and then did one encore, playing Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody. These pieces, often dismissed as mere technical showpieces, took on a rich emotional texture under Suk's touch, and ... yes, his recital is one of the best solo recitals I have ever heard. He is one of the world's finest pianists. If he is in your area, go hear him, and take your friends, thus to give him a chance to make a reputation for himself on the concert circuit. His certainly was one of the best concerts I have ever attended in my life. It was, by far, the best concert I attended this year.

Nov. 26: It was a low-key celebration, but the event was momentous: Marion's first birthday. Prior to this time, he had imbibed no dairy products. So this was his first exposure to ice cream. I baked him a banana cake with cream cheese frosting, and he was given this with vanilla ice cream. After



"Don't get out of the car."

one eager bite of each, he lost all interest. However, some minutes later, when I was eating the special dietary chocolate ice cream (actually, "frozen dessert," given its limitations), he clambered up on my lap and tried for a goodly helping. In the Baumli tradition, he found chocolate to his liking.

At the end of one year he is already losing his baby features, beginning to look like a little boy. He loves animals, especially birds. More than anything he loves his books. And my God he is a lot of work! How can a little person manage to virtually consume the time and energy of whichever adult has primary responsibility for him at that particular time?

For his birthday, giving homage to the fact that Marion already evinces much in the way of evidence that he (as was to be expected), is nothing less than a real man, I gave him two pairs of Channellock pliers.

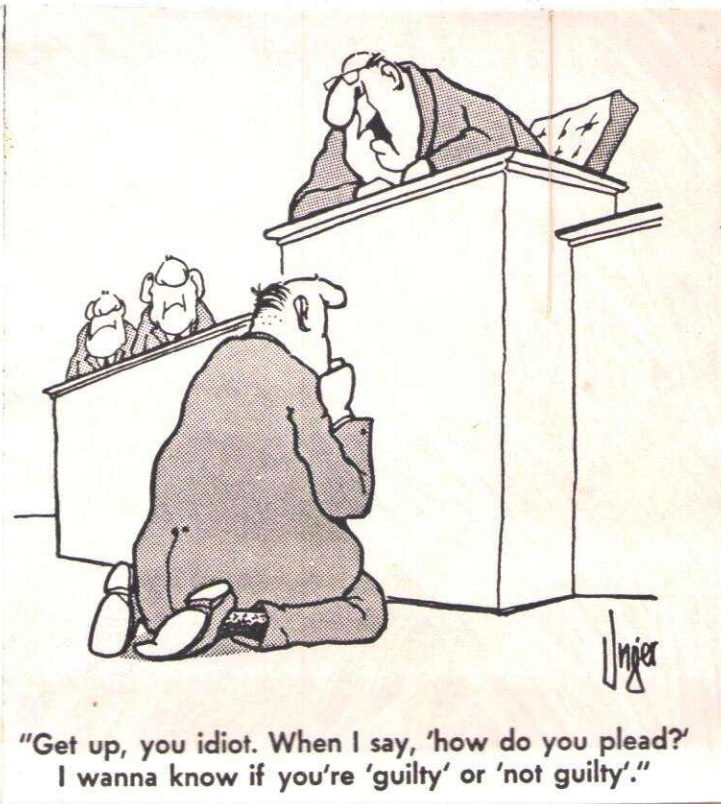
Dec. 6: I list this event merely out of a compulsive need to herein record every concert we attended this last year. On this evening we went to see a program by the Famous People Players. It consisted of iridescent puppets being manipulated in time to music. The puppets were held by people wearing dark clothes, and since black lights were used to illuminate the puppets, one did not see the people standing there with the puppets.

Some of the scenes were nice, but they quickly became boring. The attractive puppets would sway back and forth, in time to the music, and very soon we tired of this swaying--or dancing. Whatever.

The show's troupe was primarily composed of people who are mentally handicapped. The writer and artistic director had received many accolades for thus presenting an art form which could utilize the services of such people. I suppose she does deserve society's gratitude for her generosity, but, without meaning to sound overly critical, I must say that the show, except for the pretty puppets, soon becomes redundant, mechanical, tiresome. We left shortly after the intermission.

Dec. 16-18: I have been dreading coming to this part of The Aviary. These are the three days during which the court hearing took place.

Patty, Dacia's biological womb, had thrown in the towel after we managed to get Dacia brought back from Florida. But then something happened--Patty's husband began pushing for a hearing to reverse custody of Dacia to the Florida household. With him pushing it, Dacia wanting it, and Dacia's maternal grandmother willing to put out the money, the court battle began brewing. We tried various legal maneuvers, hoping to delay the hearing long enough so that the opposition would finally just give up. We could not obtain even one delay. The Judge appointed, for Dacia, a guardian ad litem, who turned against us right from the start. The Judge himself made no concessions at all, pushing the hearing forward as fast as possible. In the 4½ months prior to the trial itself, I probably put in one thousand hours preparing for the hearing, bringing to the fore all my experience in the men's movement, all my legal acumen (which I would like to think is not inconsiderable), and all my intelligence. I worked on those briefs and notes so many hours, forcing myself to get everything in order, that there were times I thought I would lose my mind. Truly, go temporarily crazy, or become totally amnesic, or some such--anything just to escape the unremitting tension. All the while, we kept hoping that the structure that was so well entrenched--the triad of Bill Irwin (Patty's husband), Dacia, and Ruth (Dacia's maternal grandmother), would start to come apart. Surely, we thought, there would be enough stress in those people that, given how dysfunctional they have been in the past, they



would begin falling apart, i.e., a crisis of the sort which has plagued those people in the past, e.g., Ruth's oldest son (Patty's older brother) going back to prison where he has spent most of his time the last twenty years, or Patty going into crisis with her suspicions that Bill might be having another affair, or the inability of Patty's household to function financially, or Patty's ennuie serving as an impediment to the whole process, or Bill going back to his customary addiction to drugs, or Bill's son, Matthew, who has severe emotional problems, again going into crisis or doing something violent ... any or all of this could have happened, and we kept expecting it to happen, i.e., for their weaknesses to work in our favor. But nothing worked in our favor.

The trial itself was horrible for both Abbe and me, but in very different ways. The opposing attorneys succeeded in getting all witnesses barred from the courtroom. Abbe, even though she has been Dacia's true mother for many years, was thus denied the right to be in the courtroom. So she endured the agony of waiting those interminable hours out in the hallway. I, on the other hand, endured the tortures the two opposing attorneys and the Judge were meting out.

Basically, the trial proceeded with little attention given to my role as Dacia's parent. Instead, the two opposing attorneys (Dacia's and Patty's) took the tactic of impeaching my character. They never succeeded on any one point, but they did succeed in general, i.e., they never proved any one thing that was negative; they just kept blasting away at me until by the end I looked like a very second-class citizen. Patty lied. Bill lied. Ruth lied. Dacia told very many lies. Neither Abbe nor I lied at all. And in the end the lies won out.

Our main problem was that the Judge, for reasons I do not entirely understand, was prejudiced against us from the start. I say "us" because, throughout most of the trial, his prejudice was primarily against our attorney. Our attorney, Joni Bailey, was truly wonderful. She ministered not only as an attorney, but also as a friend. In the many years I have worked as a father's rights advocate, and during the years I worked as a forensic psychologist, I probably saw 200 cases go before judges. I worked with, or was associated with, at least this many lawyers. And I never, ever worked with one who was as good as Joni. But she was losing the battle from the very start. Why?

I think it is very simple. She truly is one of the most intelligent people I have ever known. Intelligent enough to make that Judge look like a member of a lower species. Moreover, she is young, pretty, blonde, and aggressive. In the Judge's eyes, when she was being aggressive, she was being a bitch. When she was not fighting back against his misconduct in the courtroom she was, in his eyes, just another dumb blonde.

I refer to his misconduct. This judge made procedural errors; he showed his prejudices in the case by having a lengthy affable conversation with Bill about St. Augustine, Florida; but most heinous, he was consistently rude and aggressive against my attorney and against our entire case. At one point he was yelling at my attorney and she was yelling back. I was stunned. I had never, in all those many court cases I had witnessed, seen anything even remotely like this. My initial response was to try and get my attorney to quit fighting back at him when he was being rude, yelling at her, and such. But I quickly discovered that when she did not fight back, things were even worse. So the circus proceeded, with us trying to swim against the current, trying to deny the outcome which had been predetermined before the trial ever began.

We lost because of the judge's sexism--male chauvinism--against our attorney. We also lost because of his sexism against me as a man, i.e., his view that the father is less fit than the mother, and his view that a man is by definition morally inferior to any woman. We also lost because of the judge's prejudices, and the ability of the opposing attorneys to sniff out those prejudices and try to give the judge evidence that his prejudices had foundation. Put simply: he was prejudiced against me because I have multiple sclerosis. All the limitations that this disease causes me he assigned to laziness, judged that I do not do my share in our household because of this laziness. He also decided that because I receive disability benefits for this multiple sclerosis, I am a parasite on our society.

And so the trial went, with the Judge yelling at my attorney, sneering at me, heaving massive sighs whenever Abbe or I gave testimony, and slowly



but surely our case began to wither, and I began to feel like I once did as an abused child. I began feeling worthless, ashamed of myself, scared of myself, and afraid to assert myself in the face of this judge's bellicosity.

Why was this judge so hostile? Partly because I am a man. Partly because he felt very threatened by my attorney. Partly because he believed that I do not make a contribution to society. Partly ... but there is some mystery in it too. When the ways I do contribute to society were pointed out to him, he discounted those. My role as a parent did not count because I do not act in all the traditionally male ways, and because we sometimes would have Dacia do chores which are not traditionally female, e.g., doing yard work, splitting wood, and such. My book, Men Freeing Men, which is one of the most tangible contributions I have made to society, was but another weapon they used against me. How dare a man who is not an attorney write a book with advice to men about how they might get a better deal in divorce court! And as for the "explicit sexuality" in that book. This they really shoved in my face. The judge was especially offended about my having taped phone conversations I had had with Patty. In Illinois this is illegal, although the Illinois Supreme Court has been wrestling with this, and has decided that it isn't so illegal after all. Still, the judge thought my having done so was an indication of poor character on my part.

The two attorneys we were up against were awful. The guardian ad litem, appointed to protect Dacia's legal rights, was an old classmate of Patty's attorney, and simply took on the job of helping Patty's attorney win her case. Patty's attorney had a face that looked like the offspring you get when you mate a hatchet with a boulder. She herself had been a foster child, had run away from this foster home at a relatively young age, had grown up fast, and presently, in her fifties (one would guess; it is hard to judge a craggy face such as hers), is purportedly a "dyke who hates men." As for the guardian ad litem, she was a shrewd fighter and I had many more worries about her than about Patty's attorney. Indeed she won the fight for Dacia and Patty. But she was barely able to function during significant stretches of the hearing. The woman is seriously ill--about three or four years ago she weighed approximately three hundred pounds, but after a trip to Africa, came back with an exotic disease which has caused her to lose more than two hundred pounds. By her own report she faints about twenty times a day, and one would have reason to suspect that she is a very unhappy individual. Some years ago her husband discovered that he is gay, but the two of them remained married. This attorney, since, has become bisexual herself, and "rumor has it" that her weight loss, upon returning from Africa, is occasioned by her having contracted AIDS while abroad. Now I must concede that I do not have any proof as to the sexual identity of these two women, and I do not care at all about their sexual identity, except to point out that it is not uncommon in our society for women of lesbian persuasion, or inclination, to have stronger anti-male sentiments than do straight women. Hence, if the rumors are true, this might explain, to some extent, why these two women were so intent upon having a trial which scarcely heard facts, but instead, concentrated on maligning my character. But whether or not sexual identity had anything to do with how the trial came out, I must tell you that the visual disparity between the two tables in the court room was striking. At one sat the dignified and suffering Baumli, with his bright and beautiful attorney. At the other sat the stone-faced Patty, with her own attorney who is obviously a case study in emotional pathology, and with Dacia's attorney, who is an emaciated-looking physical wreck.

Patty sat there enjoying the killing. For her it was nothing of any more import than would have been another TV show. She had no motive for wanting Dacia back; in fact, she had expressly stated that she did not particularly want Dacia to come live with her. She had merely detained Dacia in Florida because this was what Dacia wanted. Now she was there because her parents were paying for it, and the trip to Illinois from Florida meant that she got to take a little trip, eat out--which she has always enjoyed--and have a few days during which her parents would take care of her own three young children.

The people wanting to win that battle were Dacia, Ruth--Dacia's maternal grandmother, and Bill--Patty's husband. Dacia wanted to live with Patty because she has always yearned for, and idealized, this absent mother. Much easier, it is, to thus excuse the behavior of someone rather than admit to a huge and irreparable grief--in Dacia's case, the grief she had experienced when abandoned by her mother when twenty months old, an abandonment which had been repeated--acted out--over and over ever since.

Why was it so important to Ruth that this battle be won, i.e., that Dacia get to go live with Patty? Because she has always considered herself to be part of the social upper crust of Columbia, Missouri, and it was a terrible blow to her social reputation when her daughter abandoned not only her marriage but also her daughter. Ruth's children have not been, for her, a source of pride. Her oldest son--a step-son--"came out okay." Patty's oldest biological brother is a sociopath, who has spent most of his years in prison. Patty's younger brother has always sponged off his parents. As for Patty herself, well ... she is a lazy person who has a Passive Aggressive

Personality Disorder. Despite these manifest problems in her family, Ruth has always been a blamer. When any members of her extended family have a problem, she excuses the person in her family and finds someone else who supposedly is at fault. It does not take a shrewd psychologist to see the dangers of this dynamic. It is dangerous for me because in this situation I am the one who got blamed. It is dangerous for Patty, because with her mother taking responsibility for Patty's irresponsibility, Patty never has to grow up and act like an adult. It is dangerous for Ruth, because it just breeds the same kind of pathology in her extended family--now also including Dacia--as is found in her own family.

What is Bill's motive behind wanting Dacia to come to Florida? Maybe it is simply money. He was hoping that the judge would award them huge sums in child support. With Dacia in Florida, Ruth would be more willing to bail out that household financially at the end of every month. Perhaps his motive involved guilt displacement over the fact that, prior to this last summer, he had not seen his own son, Matthew, in two years. Maybe he was wanting to save Dacia from our heathen environment, now that he has "gotten religion." Or (and this is our main fear) he now has a sexual interest in Dacia, who at the age of sixteen is a pretty, athletic, gorgeous young woman.

But we now are not in a position to protect Dacia from the stepfather, if indeed he has those motives. We are not even in a position to know what is going on in Florida, because both in letters and phone contacts, Dacia is evasive and artificial sounding. She is wanting us to believe that everything there is fine, because she wants to prove to us that her desires for living with Patty were not awry. And she wants to prove to herself, i.e., delude herself into believing, that Patty's love was accessible to her all along.

What was most difficult for Abbe and me was how this whole legal mess also involved a deterioration of Dacia's morals. For the sake of getting what she wanted, she lied, she stole, she betrayed us. The judge found out about my having taped phone conversations I had had with Patty because Dacia got in to my private journal and copied out sections, sending them to Patty. Dacia tried to get in to my study when I was gone, but was unable, because I had two locks on it and kept the keys with me at all times. Dacia got to where she would lie to us while looking us directly in the eye, and saying things to make us feel guilty for being so suspicious of her. In short, Dacia went from being the most honest teenager I knew to someone I no longer trust. I no longer admire Dacia, and I no longer respect her. Admiration and respect; these are components of love. I wonder how much less I love her.

But Dacia, through our country's domestic legal system, learned a profound lesson: if you want something, and you lie and steal to get it, then indeed you will be rewarded with it. We have yet to discover how she will apply this lesson in the future.

Meanwhile, there is the aftermath. For both Abbe and me, there has been all the sadness over missing Dacia--not only missing her physical presence, but mainly, missing the old Dacia who was fun, trustworthy, safely on the path to adulthood, but being given constant guidance when she asked for advice about many of those steps.

Abbe grieves because she felt like much more than a stepmother; she truly had become Dacia's mother. I grieve because I have been rejected as a parent. I have been told that I am a frightening person, that Dacia has never felt comfortable with me, that I always embarrass her.

This cartoon to the right, and also the one on the next page, had been selected by me some months ago. I had thought to put them in this *Aviary* as jocular comment on what would have been, by now, Dacia's dating and social life. But there is none of that. She had but a couple of dates, before leaving for Florida, and in preparing herself for leaving here made sure to form no new attachments with people, and even went so far as to weaken, if not sunder, old attachments. She saw her friends very little, and she avoided spending time with little Marion. The result for Marion is that he has not missed her at all; so I suppose her technique with him worked. The result for Dacia: now it seems she is in Florida, doing her best to "look good."

Why must she "look good"? Perhaps I have not explained everything. The



"Hold it right there, young lady! Before you go out, you take off some of that makeup and wash off that gallon of pheromones!"

stated that he had reservations about sending Dacia to Florida, that he considers Florida a dangerous place for a kid to grow up, and although he did not think the Florida home to be unfit, he did have reservations about it. So he was giving Patty only temporary custody. In six months, there is to be another hearing. At that time, Dacia will have to account for herself. If she becomes a delinquent, or starts using drugs, or smoking, or gets in trouble at school, or if her grades fall, then she will have to come back to live with us in Illinois. Dacia does not want to come back. She is especially concerned about passing her classes in chemistry and algebra/trig. So while in Florida she is not making friends, is not going to learn to drive, and is pretty much spending all her time at the house, studying those difficult subjects, trying to master them herself, trying to get by without the average of one to two hours of help Abbe gave her with those two difficult subjects every evening.

So ... there will be another hearing. I do not want to stand in front of that sneering judge again. I do not want to feel his contempt for me. I still have nightmares in which I am again in court, am this time trying to do things better, somehow, and I am succeeding, or so it seems, and I almost have the judge persuaded, but then I realize that I left something very crucial out of the testimony, and the judge is not persuaded, and we are losing the court battle. Other nights I dream I am again hearing Dacia slandering me while on the stand. Some nights I dream about those hours when Dacia was actually moving out of the house. From many of these dreams I wake up sobbing.

Dacia now is in Florida, and to be entirely honest, I am not sure I want her to come back. Not because she failed to "fit in to the environment in Florida"--to borrow the judge's words. I do not want her to come back unless she experiences true remorse, unless she is truly apologetic, for having been so dishonest with Abbe and me, so malicious toward me, and so cavalier about her own values--or lack of values.

And I am aware that whatever happens, the court battles do not mark the terminus of this difficulty with Dacia. I do not think this problem will ever be solved until Dacia finally has the personal courage to stop denying the fact that her mother abandoned her when she was a little child, and ever since continued to abandon her--emotionally neglect her--in every way imaginable. Will Dacia ever have the courage to admit to this, and stop idealizing the biological womb that injured her? I doubt it. The power of denial is very strong, and I suspect it will take years for Dacia to begin seeing the truth of the matter. Likely she will never see its truth. And so the situation will continue, with Dacia hating me, idealizing Patty, and carrying all these feelings into adulthood, continuing to deny me at later opportunities--e.g., weddings of Dacia's own children, major events in Dacia's life, refusing to visit us, or making it clear that she is choosing to visit Patty instead of us.

So life goes on. There is a big void in this household right now. But neither Abbe nor I will be destroyed by it--shattered emotionally. We will recover. And soon enough life will present us with another major trauma.

Will life ever get easier? Probably not. But maybe life gets easier when we stop hoping that it will get easier.

Dec. 29: I do not, in this Aviary's section of significant events, record those matters which primarily concern my friends. I leave that realm for my own private analysis, appreciation, concern. Such matters need not be broached in a public forum such as this. The result is that many of the most significant events in my life do not get mentioned in these pages. But the public events are enough; they will do.

The event at issue, which occurred this date, was viewing the movie, Raising Arizona. The first ten minutes of this movie involved an incredibly fast pace. The rest of it was a wonderfully funny, albeit simple, story. I have not laughed so hard in years, viewing that movie. It is almost a match for Blazing Saddles when it comes to pure fun, high and low comedy, and a humor with so much energy its kinesis seemed to be what carried the story forward. (Yes; I am aware that the sentence just previous to the last one is awkward, but I wanted to allow myself the indulgence of doing it just once--a sort of demon possessing me, I suppose; but I did make up for it in the next sentence, did I not?) (Thus does Baumli numb his critics' tongues, demonstrating to them that, despite the low level of his spirits during this writing,



"I can't wait till I see Daddy's face when he gets a look at you!"

he has neither succumbed entirely to a spiritual ennui, nor has he lost the ability to compromise his saintly demeanor, thus benevolently bestowing upon his readers further energy by which to complete the task of finishing this Aviary, such energy coming from the mild anger Baumli's indirect and benevolent prodding evokes.)

Looking over the above, I am impressed by two things. This last year has involved a terrible amount of stress. And as for artistic events attended, there has been a great deal of mediocrity even though there have been a few wonderful experiences.

I apologize to those of you who look forward to this Aviary, welcoming it as a worthy piece of literature. This year it is not that. Not really. I am tired, sick at heart, and I fain would lie down for a very long sleep.

But no. Sleep, amidst my neurotic terrors, is too akin to death. I will drive myself forward a little while longer.

So let me go on, at this point, to list those events which are not so specific as to warrant being listed by date, but which nevertheless are somehow significant in Baumli's crippled, albeit empyrean, scheme of values.

GENERALLY:

1. You have heard of people "adopting" a stretch of highway--agreeing to keep, say, half a mile of the highway cleared of litter? More than a year ago, in April of 1990, Abbe and I did something similar. After months of working through the necessary red tape required by the state, we finally succeeded in "adopting" an intersection. It is the main intersection coming off of the highway, leading on to the street where we live. There is a large volume of traffic at this intersection, and there are no lights--either from pole lights or any nearby houses. The result is that it is almost a "blind" intersection when approaching it at night. Small vehicle accidents have happened; we hear the crash, hurry out there (a distance of perhaps 200 feet), and luckily discover that the damage--to vehicles and bodies--is minimal. Our cat Kimmy-Sue was killed there, and other pets have been killed there. We wanted to prevent all this carnage, which would happen at night when there would be no visibility.

So our "adopting" this intersection, although it involved a great deal of work in terms of finally getting the state's permission, was actually a rather simple task: we arranged with the local electric company to put up a large pole light which extends out over the intersection. The state was unwilling to pay for this themselves, but once we made it clear that we would pay for it, they approved it, albeit reluctantly. It is a huge 400-watt sodium-vapor lamp, and lights up the entire area. We now feel much safer when coming home at night, and Abbe feels safer when she has to rush away from here in the middle of the night on an emergency. The cost is about twelve dollars per month, but it seems quite worth it when one considers what otherwise might be the cost in terms of a bad vehicular accident.

2. Working at a white heat, I finished Volume 14 of my Phenomenology of Pseudo-Sentient Aeschatology, and began the 15th volume. Volume 14 is written in a better style, more terse, and I kept it at 389 pages. I begin to think that I shall one day actually finish this thing.

3. As of early March, the U.S. had won the war against Iraq. Or had it? Within days, Southern Iraq was in revolt against Iraq, Iran was pushing over the borders into Iraq, and Iraqi citizens were fleeing from the war, pouring in to Kuwait as refugees. The Kuwaiti people were not in a friendly mood toward the Iraqi refugees, and tried to turn them back. So the U.S. soldiers took on the task of trying to sort out the "friendly" Iraqis and the "hostile" Iraqis, and turn back only the supposedly hostile ones. Then, on March 5, Amnesty International warned that in Kuwait armed bands of citizens (we call them vigilantes in this country) were going from house to house, rounding up Iraqi citizens along with Palestinians and Sudanese. Palestinians were being beaten, and Amnesty International warned that all Iraqis, Sudanese, and Palestinians apprehended by these vigilante groups were in danger of torture and execution.

We won the war? Which war?

I did not take the view that this war was one of "blood for oil." No; anyone with a rudimentary grasp of mathematics or economics could easily discern that the money we were spending on the war was much more than we would ever regain in terms of cheap oil. This war was being fought for a different



reason. Very simply, it was a way of keeping the defense contractors in the good ole' U.S.A. happy. Their munitions were being used up, and would have to be replaced. I heard, on the radio, an official for Raytheon Corporation--the one which made the Patriot missiles--crowing about how this war was being so good for business, now and in the future. Listening to his statements about how the company's stockholders were going to be very happy with the company's profits, and how this would also have the benefit of bigger salaries for the company's executives, was truly obscene.

Some days after the Iraqi troops were routed, a newspaper release described how Iraqi citizens fleeing from one city to another--between Najaf and Karbala--were killed by Hussein's troops because they had been ordered not to flee. The number of these citizens killed: between twelve and sixteen thousand. At this point, citizens were eating animal feed mixed with sea water to live, and babies were dying from thirst and malnutrition. Some months later, when water and electrical services were finally being restored to Iraq's major cities, the tally was: 400,000 children dead from starvation, dehydration, dysentery, and related diseases.

Yes; Hussein is a crazy tyrant. But ours is a crazed world, considering that our own country, and our European allies, along with several Soviet states, are the ones who armed this madman in the first place.

I begin to think that the phrase, "man's inhumanity to man," contains a glaring misnomer. It would perhaps be more accurate to describe humankind's exemplary cruelties as, "man's humanity made manifest."

4. For some years, whenever we would be in Kansas City, Abbe and I would go to the Nelson-Atkins Art Gallery. There we would view our favorite paintings, among them a huge painting by Rubens entitled, "The Holy Family with St. Joseph and Elizabeth." But then, for the last four years, it had been absent. We would inquire of personnel there at the gallery, none of whom ever knew anything as to its whereabouts. We began to assume it was merely in storage for cleaning, but after its being down for some years, we wondered if it had been sold. Hoping to be able to view the painting with Abbe on her next birthday, I at last made serious efforts at the gallery to find out what did happen to the painting.

After many a long-distance phone call, I at last found the man who knew what had become of it. Roger Ward, their curator of European paintings, and a most convivial chap, informed me that the painting had been determined not to be a Rubens. In fact, when the painting was bought by the gallery circa 1972 for \$70,000, there was good reason to believe that it was not actually a Rubens. However, certain officials at the gallery, placing wish over exactitude, had decided to exhibit the painting as a Rubens until definitive proof as to its authorship were established. Several years of scholarship by various experts determined that the painting was done by a fellow who had indeed worked in Rubens' workshop, but Rubens himself had in no way participated in its execution. This painting's creator: Erasmus Quellinus the Younger (the Elder was the official "town painter" of Antwerp); in fact, it was determined from old engravings of that period that about one-third of the canvas on the right had been lost.

The gallery, at last lacking any basis for claiming the painting is a Rubens, determined that they could not devote that much wall space to a painting by a minor painter, and sold it at auction. Christy's in New York handled the sale, and it went for a mere \$80,000. Considering that the painting had been bought for \$70,000, restored in-house, and then sold for only \$80,000. a mere fifteen years later, it had not been a wise monetary investment.

It is sad to realize that we shall never see this painting again. It was one of Abbe's favorite "Rubens" in all the world; we had spent hours with that one painting. The very sad irony of it all is that this painting's aesthetic value certainly could not have decreased upon finding out that it was not done by Rubens. Yet, they removed it because now, they realized, it was done by an "inferior" painter. A clear statement, is it not, that some paintings are exhibited with no consideration whatsoever for their aesthetic value, but rather, with the end in mind of touting the gallery's reputation by exhibiting famous painters.

5. Some time this year, I believe it was in early May, I discovered that a hair was actually growing from my left ear. This explained the constant itching. Realizing that its presence constituted an aesthetic flaw in my physiognomy (certainly, however, not a flaw approximating the proportions of the curators' judgment in removing the painting referred to above), I confess that I, not without some pain, promptly plucked it. As of this writing, I am relieved to note that it has not reappeared.

6. The entire month of July involved further aesthetic assault against my sensibilities, this time against my appreciation for the silence in the rural (the descriptive, "pastoral," would never be appropriate in Southern Illinois) setting where we live. I refer to the cicadas which came forth this month, all of them combining to create a cacophony of piercing, buzzing sound which was truly painful to the ears. We stayed indoors with the windows closed.

7. This year I have been practicing my bass considerably more than I have for the last several years. I have not put such practice to good use, however, except in one instance when some people in the music department at SIUC phoned me, desperately needing a bass player because the only bassist in the music department would be out of town. I did the gig, and enjoyed it very little, given that the other musicians were, with a couple of exceptions, as unfriendly as the peasants of other vocations here in Southern Illinois, and also given that these musicians--all of them but one from the music department--played very badly.

8. It was some time in September I discovered that I had been committing a grave sin against all common laws of decency and proper language usage. In the course of speaking about a trivial matter, I said to a friend, "I don't want you to think that I'm trying to jew you down on the price, but ...," and my friend was terribly offended. I had no idea why. Well; this Jewish friend claimed that I had just made a racist remark by speaking of, "jew you down." Truly, I was astonished. I had never in my life put the two together. I had never had occasion to look up the entymology of the word "jew" used as a verb meaning trying to haggle someone down on a price, and had never at all considered the possibility that this word might be traced to behavior attributed to Jews. To me, the words "jew" as a verb, and "Jew" as a noun, had no more commonality than do the words "fire" used as a verb--as when discharging someone from employment, and "fire" used as a noun. I was contrite, and also quite embarrassed. Likely, I have used the word "jew" as a verb around my many Jewish friends quite a number of times. If so, then, to all of my friends who are Jewish, I apologize for my having been so gauche as to offend you in this truly unseemly way.

A few days after the above discovery, I also found out that using the word "chink" as an adjective is considered demeaning to Chinese people. Many has been the time when, discussing plans for eating out with my friends, I have made a suggestion which went something to the effect, "Why don't we go out and eat chink food?" Truly, I had thought that "chink" is simply a common adjective, somewhat more pedestrian than "Chinese," but nary the more offensive. I was shown the truth on this matter too, and thereupon resolved to mend my verbal ways.

If I slip up in the future, and accidentally use one of the above words wrongly, then please forgive my ignorance. But yes; feel free to angrily chastise me nevertheless. There is never, ever to be any excuse allowed for Baumli committing a verbal solecism.

And if you, yourself, have in the past been offended by my having committed a mistake such as the above, then send me the penance you wish to impose. I will waste no time in attending to it. Gladly will I grovel, and do my best to atone for my transgressions.

9. Toward the end of September, unable for the life of me to understand why my laundry duty is so unending, for three weeks I kept track of how many diapers Marion goes through per day. The average: 28 per day, or 196 a week. No wonder.

10. On October 3, my reading glasses broke. I had my eyes checked the following day, thinking that I might be ready for a slight prescription change. Indeed I was, and the glasses were ordered, i.e., two new pairs were ordered, since I wear one pair for reading and one pair for distance. The new glasses came, but they were wrong. They were ordered again, and kept coming in wrong. As it stands, a correct prescription for my distance glasses was received on December 20. At the end of the year, my reading glasses still have not come in. Or rather, reading glasses of the wrong prescription keep coming in.

And to think: in Columbia, Missouri, there are at least two shops I could have walked in to and have obtained a correct prescription that very day. I now wish I had just made a trip to Columbia to get new glasses, but I did not in the beginning, paid a large amount of money for the new glasses, and now must take them from the company here in Southern Illinois.

So ... what have I been doing for reading? I've been reading very little, doing the best I can with my broken glasses more or less wired to, and suspended from, my face.

A friend of mine tells me that he had less difficulty than this obtaining glasses when visiting Nigeria about ten years ago. One more reason, this, for one day getting the hell out of this area.

11. In late September, my book, Men Freeing Men, went into a fourth printing in this country. This makes 7,500 copies in print, which approaches a respectable number.

It does seem that the bigger commercial publishers are beginning to take more of an interest in men's books. Several have sold well over the last year. A plethora of new titles is coming out. Most of these, however, tend to dabble in poetry and



myth; they are not the sort which delve into the hard issues of men's liberation, much less topics which deal with such imponderables as feminism. Hence, they get published, even though they scarcely speak to the needs or emotions of a real man. My point being, here, that the success of other books in men's liberation is no indication that mine is going to be any more successful than it already is. But it sells steadily, and this, to me, is preferable to the fate of many books: selling well for a few weeks or months, and then having sales virtually dry up, whereupon the publisher lets the book go out of print.

12. Toward the beginning of November, Abbe and I were becoming very worried about what we consider to be serious shortcomings in Dacia's education. The most glaring of these is that, even though nearly half-way through her Junior year in high school, she has yet to do a single research paper which involves footnotes, bibliography, and such. We went to Dacia's high school to discuss this matter, and from the teachers met with sympathetic nods of concern but a general attitude that no one of them felt there was time in that particular class to have the students do a research paper. The English teacher felt that other things are more important. The history teacher assured us that when Dacia is a Senior, she will have to do a research paper in Government class, but as for now, he could not foresee being able to assign a research paper, given the obstacles the students face in doing one. Obstacles? His students have not learned how to do a research paper in English class, so he can't

assign one without taking on the role of showing the students how to do a research paper. He hasn't the time for it. Plus



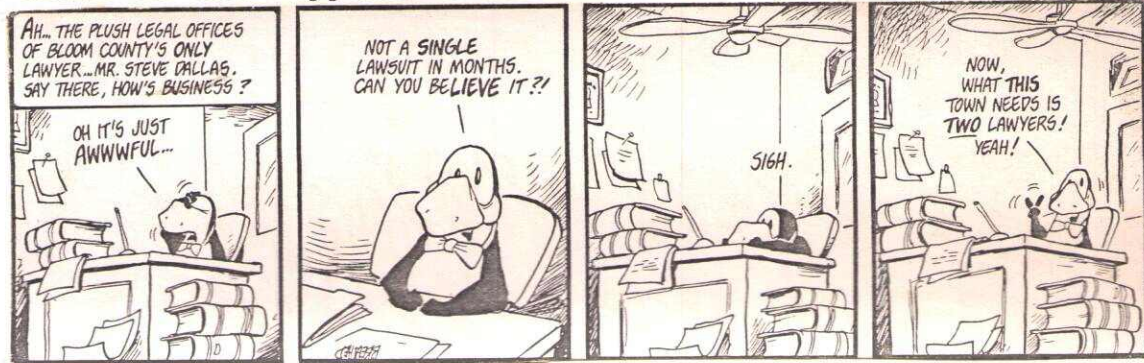
there are other problems which prevent such a project. Even for those students who do already know how to complete a research paper, most of them would not have access to sources since the library can only be used during studyhall, and since now that school is one hour shorter than it used to be (due to budget cuts) most students do not have studyhall. These students could nevertheless stay after school, or come in on weekends, to use the studyhall, but this would mean that parents would have to provide transportation. Most parents would not be willing to provide the transportation; thus, those students living in town, or those with cooperative parents, would have an advantage over those students who could not arrange for such transportation. So attempting to utilize this option for the students would not be fairly applicable--some students simply would not be able to do a term paper, even given the option of these arrangements, since they would be unable to take advantage of this option. What about using books at home? The teacher pointed out to me that just because, in our home, there are as many as ten thousand books, this does not mean that every home has books. Some of these children's homes likely have no more than a dozen books; perhaps a few have none.

We came away from this conference quite bewildered. Lack of access to the school library or a library at home means that the very students who are probably most disadvantaged in literary skills are precisely the ones who could never take advantage of the option for doing a term paper were it offered. So Dacia continues with her education, not learning the basic research skills which are indispensable for college, and which both Abbe and I had learned by the time we were Freshmen in high school.

Another skill Dacia lacks is the simple ability to write an informative, well-organized, and interesting personal letter. Her letters sound as though they are written by a very young girl--age nine or ten--and are little more than a formality even when she is communicating with a friend. I had begun addressing this problem, asking Dacia now and then to outline one of the letters she plans to write, then go over the outline with me, organize it better, flesh it out, and then write the letter. This had proved to be very successful, and I was hoping that during the second semester, i.e., late winter and early spring of 1992, that Dacia would finish a major research paper for me. But now with her gone, living in Florida, in the custody of her biological womb, there will not be opportunity for any of this. I begin to fear that she is going to enter college very handicapped in her research and letter-writing skills.

13. Late in 1991, Mitsuko Shimomura, Japan's foremost nonfiction writer, the woman who had translated Men Freeing Men into Japanese, was awarded The Award for Excellence for Promoting Men's Issues. This award, given by The Coalition of Free Men, was but one more laudation, albeit indirect, which the valiant Men Freeing Men has received.

14. The earlier difficulties with Dacia and Patty were referred to on specific dates, but actually they have constituted more of a general event, having no temporal confines, but generally being the one thing most on my mind during the latter half of 1991. In conversing with people about this, I kept referring to the custody battle as "my divorce." It was an unconscious choice of words, but after it had happened a number of times, I realized that the phraseology I was using was actually quite accurate. This was actually my second, and again unsuccessful, attempt at getting a divorce. When there are children involved, one never quite succeeds in bringing



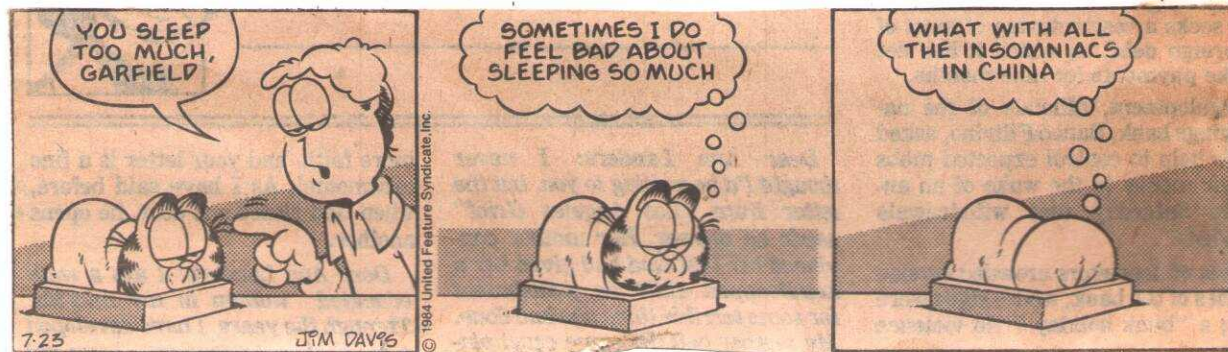
that divorce to an end, i.e., with either emotional closure or with a final and workable definition as to one's future relationship with that ex-spouse.

So ... 1991 was the year of my second divorce. I hope that 1992 will be happier. I will spend my days avoiding judges, lawyers, and the legal system in general. This may provide some small preventive safety. Our legal profession lurks everywhere, ever ready to leap out and ensnare your bank account, not to mention your emotional peace of mind. It truly is a pestilence. Does anyone have any workable ideas as to how we can start eliminating this profession? I assure you, all ideas are welcome, and I'll even be most willing to try and put a few into practice, even if that practice be somewhat gruesome.

15. I believe I can safely say that the truly pathological dimensions of insomnia which afflicted me for some years has now been cured, i.e., the extremity and anxiety of the problem is much abated. But



now, what with all the anxieties of this last year, I am afflicted with a different, and, I readily concede, milder form of insomnia. This is more stress related, and results very directly from all the anxiety over Dacia. I awaken in the middle of the night, from one of my usual nightmares, or



because of a need to urinate, and then the brain goes to work, I start thinking about Dacia, or remembering that trial, or worrying about how we are going to

deal with Dacia, i.e., interact with her, when she returns for a visit this summer. And then I can not get back to sleep. The result is that, once again, it appears that I am going to spend a major portion of my life walking around in a daze of sleepiness. This more aged body of mine is not so resilient at dealing with this problem as it once was.

16. Not at all a hypochondriac, I say as little as possible about the state of my body's malaise, i.e., this multiple sclerosis I have. Rather that I battle it than give it too much homage by always complaining about it, describing the symptomology, and such. But since this is a form letter, intended for my friends, and thus far being published no more often than once per year, I will herein be so self centered as to give a brief descriptive

of my corporeal struggles.

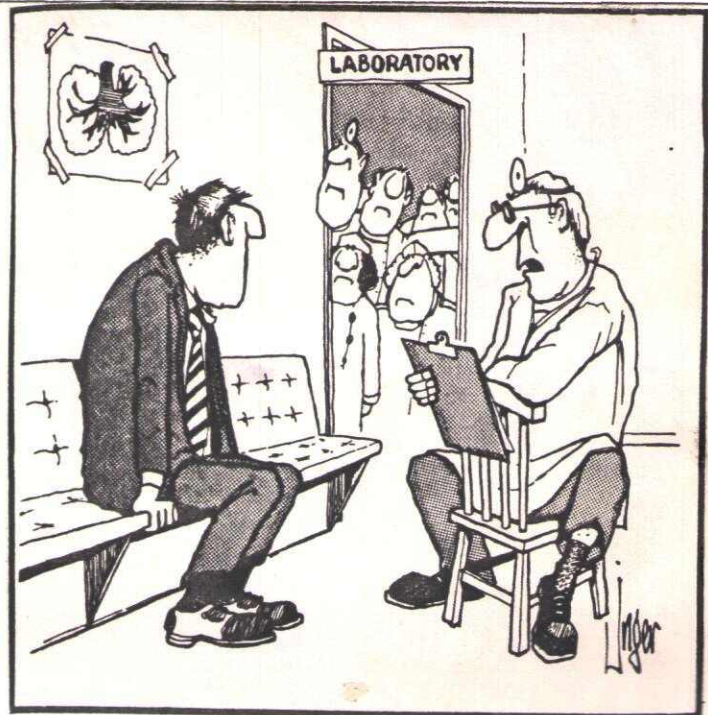
Despite all the stress involved when dealing with Dacia, I managed to avoid a major exacerbation, even though the situation was ripe for one. There was some added difficulty with my hearing which resulted from those six months of panic and stress. The hyperacusis (sometimes spelled "hypercousis") has worsened. The old difficulty I have had--hearing things much more loudly than I should--is even more pronounced. While my failing eyesight is the part of this illness which makes me most sad, and which frightens me the most, the hyperacusis is by far the most difficult aspect to deal with on a day by day basis. So much that I hear is painfully loud; the noises come smashing in with such sudden intensity that at times it seems I am going to lose consciousness. I wear cotton in my ears at all times to help lower the volume, but this only helps minimally. Aside from the pain of the loud noises, I end up having a great deal of trouble hearing conversations. People tend not to understand this. They think that if I indeed hear things more acutely, or rather, at a greater volume, then surely I can hear better than can most people. But it does not work this way. The world about me is such a loud, buzzing confusion, every small sound such as someone cutting their fingernails, or the sound of a car going by, is so amplified that my trying to hear ordinary sounds, e.g., a simple conversational exchange, is like an ordinary person trying to converse while standing beside a buzz saw. I have to deal with these hearing difficulties daily. I adjust, to the extent I can, by being a recluse, avoiding people, staying away from loud noises, and giving up certain activities I have enjoyed in the past. For example, I do not, except on very rare occasions, eat out with friends. The noise in a restaurant, with all the conversation from so many people, the dishes clattering, silverware being clinked, lips smacking--I tell you, it is overwhelming, and it makes conversation a virtual impossibility.

While I weathered the problems with Dacia without much added difficulty, the earlier half of the year was not so kind. In March-April I experienced a very severe exacerbation. The symptoms were many, and after two months most of them disappeared. The residual damage is primarily in my jaw and my hands. My jaw is very weak now, at times, and if I am tired while conversing at length with someone it tends to chatter somewhat. And as for my hands, I have virtually lost the ability to distinguish between wet and dry. Hot and cold I can still feel, and I can move my hands without difficulty, and the tactile awareness is not much diminished. But I can scarcely tell the difference between wet and dry. Very curious.

What brought on that exacerbation? A number of things, I think. There was the added stress, and activity, and sleeplessness, with Marion's birth in November. For some months before his birth, we had been dealing with all the dire warnings about a possible earthquake, and taking measures to stockpile food, water, medicines, and such. Then, about one month after Marion was born, we drove to Northwest Missouri to see family and friends. It was a long, arduous trip, during which we encountered snow or ice nearly the entire time we were on the road. There were wonderful times during that trip, and also the many holiday stresses that surface around families. We averaged about four hours of sleep a night, and the rest of the time worked at trying to enjoy these people I had not seen for about three years, and caring for this tiny baby. It was all too much, and my body succumbed, albeit temporarily, and partially.

And so it goes. The disease indeed is progressive. But I do my best to keep the grim reaper, and worse--the debility, at bay.

17. For the last several years, I have been doing so much better at dealing with the intrusions of the telephone. I have been assertive; at times I have



"Okay...here's the results of your medical."



"The phrase 'Pull the plug' seems to keep him alert."

perhaps been obnoxious. I now insist, for example, upon people treating me with the same courtesy they would extend me were they to drop by, unexpected, for a visit. I.e., I expect them to ask me if I now have the time to talk to them when I answer the phone.

But the problems with the phone worsened greatly during those first few months of dealing with Dacia. Truly, it is obscene to contemplate, here again via a resentful memory, what I experienced with all too many people! I tell you, this truly happened: people took advantage of the situation to gain access to me and talk about their problems. They would phone, ostensibly to commiserate with me, to give me sympathy, and within two minutes they would steer the conversation around to talking about their interminable (and usually childish) problem. In other words, they were bargaining for my time; they had given me sympathy, now I was obligated to give them some, i.e., a lot.

What were their problems? Well, you know as well as I do. What is the usual problem which plagues the average person of this twentieth century? It is "relationships"--as they say. Always the need to talk about the hopes, the peregrinations, the demise, and the continual disinterments, of their romantic loves. I do not exaggerate: one fellow called me, spent less than the obligatory two minutes asking me how I was doing in terms of Dacia, and then proceeded to bare his soul to me, telling me all about how he and his bride-to-be had, the night before, experienced an altercation over the kind of lettering they would put on their wedding invitations! Yes; I swear I am not exaggerating! This was what they had had their fight about! And it had been the most volatile fight the two of them had ever had! He was terribly distressed, very scared, and ... he wanted to talk about it. After an agonizing forty-five minutes, a very weary and shaken Baumli managed to extricate himself from that conversation. There were others. The woman I had not heard from in years who needed advice about what to do with her new lover, whose penis was too small to satisfy her. (Just the sort of thing Baumli, already mucking about in his mire of depression and self-recrimination over Dacia, needed to hear about!) There was the woman who was trying to decide what to do about her husband and three lovers. My recommendation, which was to quit giving them blow-jobs and she would find out which one of them loved her the most, was not helpful. So, with her too, I gave her maybe half an hour's worth of advice about a nonproblem. One fellow (I had not heard from this guy in almost four years) wanted advice about his new girlfriend because their relationship was beset by a huge problem. Namely, she was not interested in going kayaking (Is this really a word?) with him. Yes; that was their huge problem, and he was afraid it might make the relationship come to an end, because kayaking is such an important part of his life. Tell me; what kind of advice can anyone, much less a weary Baumli, give to someone about something as trivial as this?

Oh well. I finally began fighting back against this onslaught, and began getting it back under control. By this time, however, I had begun encountering other problems in terms of the phone, problems which likely would never have surfaced had I not been on the phone so much with those many crafty vultures--of the sort that feed on others' reluctant generosity.

For one thing, I learned that these days, when talking on the phone, there is a new interference which I had not noticed in previous years. You have heard me complain about those people who phone me and try to carry on a conversation while they are watching TV. Well, now there are people who try to carry on a telephone conversation while they are working at their computers. The pecking of keys, the talking to oneself about what is on the computer screen, the impatient exclamations: all this, along with telling me about the latest problem with the girlfriend. No wonder I do my best to stay off the phone.

But there is another problem too: it is called "call-waiting." I find this little distraction especially irritating, partly because of my hyperacousis. In the midst of a normal conversation, there comes a clacking on the line, which is the sound their phone makes when someone else is ringing in. If they choose to ignore it, the clacking sound becomes very painful for me. But they virtually never ignore it. Instead, it is a, "Hold on," and there I am, left holding the phone while the dimes roll by, and then, finally, the person comes back on the line, usually only to be interrupted once again. Why, I ask you, do people insist on having this feature? Some say it is so the kids won't tie up the line. Why not set rules as to how long the children can stay on the line? Others say they are afraid of missing an important phone call. What incoming phone call could be so important as to warrant interrupting an audience with Baumli?

My only defense against these things is to stay off the phone as much as possible. Long ago I learned the proprietary sine qua non which should characterize every phone conversation; namely, to be considerate enough, when you call someone, to simply ask if it is a convenient time to be calling. And ... I insist that other people extend to me this courtesy. I have been learning, however, that I have to be very careful about what I convey to people even when they are considerate enough to ask me this question. It seems that too often, if I tell people that yes, it is a convenient time for them to be calling me, they immediately assume that this means I can stay on for an

indefinite (for me, seemingly infinite) amount of time. So now I have learned, when people do ask this, to tell them that yes, I can stay on for X number of minutes, but then I must be on to doing something else.

So it goes. Baumli does his best to limit the number of interviews people can have with him. He does it by avoiding the phone, not answering it, often leaving it unplugged. This last year a colleague offered to give me an answering machine which would take messages. Why would I want something like that?! It would allow people more access to me than I want, and there would be the added expense of returning all those long-distance calls. Only today--this very day I am writing this section--I was in my local Radio Shack store, and the salesman, a nice chap I've come to know on a friendly basis, was trying to sell me a car phone. I explained to him that as it is I already spend a great deal of my time avoiding the phone, and entirely too much time on the phone. He tried to understand, but I think he believed I was making fun of him in thus rejecting his sales pitch. I feel rather bad about it; I was merely telling the truth, and doing so most politely, but it bewildered him and hurt his feelings.

Maybe one day people will finally get the message: Baumli, at heart, is a recluse. He therefore would rather not do very much talking on the phone. He concedes that appearances are somewhat otherwise; given his frequent social contacts, it would appear that he is anything but a recluse. However, the fact of the matter is, since he is a recluse but has not yet succeeded in promulgating this truth to the world, he remains a closet recluse. One day he will come out of the closet and, upon succeeding at being a recluse, will then leave that closet behind, with nary a regretful farewell, and therefrom will proceed to the blessed privacy of his cell.

18. It almost never happens anymore that I bother referring to what I have, in the past, described as those attributes which make of Baumli a real man. These qualities are always with me, and like the fish who knows not what water is because it always swims within it, so also I scarcely know what a real man is. The only time it becomes apparent to me, it seems, is when someone arouses my ire over a matter, and upon reflection, I realize that they are failing to appreciate the full dimensional expanse of a real man's personality. For example, not long ago several guests were at my house, and commented on how well cooked was the steak I served. One worthy woman politely inquired if I had marinated the steak overnight. My reply was most indignant. A real man would never do something so wimpy as marinate a steak. If a sauce is to be added, then put it in while cooking the steak. A steak is a slab of dead animal corpse, made of muscle and fat and bone, and it is not going to soak up any marinating compound. Marinating meat is merely a ritual housewives go through to give themselves the idea that they have done something important. They could better spend their time reading a good novel, or listening to Brahms.

There was, of course, a peripheral issue involved with that woman asking me if I marinated my steak. One should never ask a real man how he prepares steak. If one wants to know, then go out and buy a few slabs of cow carcass and ask him to cook it. Then stand afar, look on with awe, and learn.

19. My war against being proximal to cigarette ~~smokers~~ smoke is beginning to make progress. People no longer presume the right to smoke in my home. They no longer ask to smoke in my vehicles. (One fellow, this last year, asked to borrow my pickup and I readily turned it over to him. When he returned the pickup, and I realized, from the lingering offallic odor, that he had smoked in it, I gave him an ass-chewing he will not soon forget.)

The main problems I now have with cigarette smoke occur in two situations. One is when I go out to eat in a restaurant. If but one person in that facility lights up, my clothes and my body are covered with the olfactorily repugnant grime. My solution to this problem is to stay home. If one rarely goes out, then one rarely encounters the air-borne sewage which smokers exhale. But being a recluse does not protect me from the odor which clings to mail I receive from smokers. Opening a large envelope of mail sent me by a heavy smoker can be very uncomfortable, almost overwhelming at times. What I now do is open such mail, go hang it on the clothesline with clothespins, and let it air out for a day or two. The only problem with this method is that, given our climate here in Southern Illinois, such mail often gets soaked, then has to be dried, and by that time the news is as stale as the paper it is printed on, and sometimes is virtually illegible because of the water damage.

20. During 1991, no televisions succumbed to my pistol; but I am able to vouchsafe that 1991 spelled one more year I watched no television.



It still stands that the last time I sat down to watch a program was when I watched the second of the Reagan/Mondale presidential campaign debates. It was a gruesome experience, and I have not since subjected myself to the tortures of the tube. But I should qualify this statement somewhat. Those infernal television machines are so ubiquitous that one can not avoid them entirely, i.e., can not hope to completely avoid watching them simply because it so often happens that when out in public, among



human beings, one suddenly finds a TV poking itself into your field of vision. I confess that sometimes my morbid curiosity gets the better of me, and I may actually allow my eyes to remain fixed on the screen as long as two minutes at a time, though certainly no longer than this. These brief exposures convince me that I am doing the correct thing. The advertisements are inane, the programs absurd, the audience cretinized. I am astounded that anyone who has not yet been lobotomized by the television would consent to such toxic exposure. Yet they do. I am told that The McLaughlin Group (I am not sure of the spelling, or if I have the name correctly, but it is something like this.) is a very successful program. I have seen it. As many as half a dozen times, for as long as one or two minutes per viewing, in the last two years. Why do I see it? Because there are times I spend the night at the house of certain people, and that show happens to be on at the time I stumble out of bed and force my balking, sleepy body toward the kitchen. En route, I traverse the living room, and there it is--the TV machine with The McLaughlin Group. The moderator (sic) has a talent for stirring the guest commentators up against one another, and whatever the topic he introduces, he has the other people on the program actually shouting at one another within seconds. The main point--perhaps the only point--seems to be to be heard. Whichever commentator is shouting the loudest, that is the one the camera fixes on, and he (they have always been men) is the one whose microphone is being heard. I tell you, upon seeing these adult men shouting and squabbling, like indignant hogs at a crowded trough, a rational man begins to wonder if they are of the same species he is. Does this spectacle evoke similar wonderment about the television viewers who sit transfixed before the screen, all but groveling as they whimper in humid pleasure at the carnage before them? Well, I suppose I should be kind here, and not only forgive them their intellectual transgressions, but also eschew further comment.

I must, however, remark on one further thing before leaving this topic be. I here make note of it primarily to register (or, perhaps cathart) my astonishment. I am referring to the fact that as many as eight times, over this last year, people who came to visit us actually brought with them a television! Mind you, each of these people know me well. They are fully aware of my having mortalized many a television in previous years. They know there is no television in our home. And they know that my being upset by those things is not merely a joke, or a small exercise in facetious banter. I hate being around a television, and I absolutely detest the programs that get aired. Yet these people, with not a trace of embarrassment or shame, come walking up my sidewalk, planning to stay a day or more, and they are carrying a television. On two of these occasions, the prosthesis that was being fondled as it was carried along was actually quite large. In the other six situations, the machines in question were small and relatively portable. In all eight situations, the people were informed that certain things are barred from our house. We do not allow smoking, guns, televisions, or dogs on our property. If they brought the television with them, then they have but one choice: take it to their car and leave it there over night. One fellow, to my order, protested that it might get stolen. "Then the thief will have stolen his own punishment," was my immediate, and final, reply. One woman, when I told her to take the thing to her car, gushed violently, "But it's such a little thing." My reply, "And your mortality is such a meaningless thing," actually caused her to burst into tears. She glared at me a few moments (in that pitiful way a tearful woman with plump cheeks can), and then turned toward her car. "I don't know why I come here," she said, "if I can't even watch my soap operas." Baumli's apt reply: "I don't know why you don't commit suicide, given that you watch those soap operas."



Am I making myself clear? Leave your televisions at home. Better yet, next time I come to visit you, let me show you how one can, very simply, vastly improve the reception of your television. It requires but two simple

tools which I will be glad to bring with me if I am asked in advance. And be informed that I am very generous about performing this little improvement upon televisions. I do, after all, believe that whatever someone else does they have a right to do well. In this spirit, I will, since you watch television, do what I can to improve the experience.

Or, if you would rather perform the operation yourself, I can herein tell you how to do it. As I said, it requires but two tools. A measuring tape, and a pair of wire cutters. What you must do is first unplug your television set. (This step can be avoided if you are one of my enemies.) Then, taking great care to be exact, you measure the power cord from where it leaves the television set. Measure off a length of exactly 17½ inches, and then place the jaws of the wire cutters precisely at this distance. Give the handles of the cutters a firm squeeze, thus making a clean, even cut. Take the length of power cord you have just cut off and deposit it in a wastebasket. Now put the cutters and measuring tape away, and sit down in front of the television. You will note that the screen's reception is vastly enhanced, and the sound is much improved.

21. A few weeks ago I was driving along the highway between Murphysboro and Carbondale. I noticed the litter of campaign signs; election time is drawing nigh. And among those signs, I saw one which read, "Vote No on Proposition Yes." Another reminder that I remain incarcerated in Southern Illinois. A further reminder was that I was reading that sign through a downpour of rain and the sweep of windshield wipers on my car. This rain; it never seems to let up. There are people, in fact, who think I exaggerate about the amount of rainfall here. From a September newspaper--the Sunday edition of The Southern Illinoisan I cut out the weekly weather prediction, intending to paste it in here to prove my point. But I just dropped it on the floor beneath my desk, and as I rolled my chair back to pick it up, one of the casters crushed the piece of paper, tearing and soiling it. So I can not paste it in here, but I nevertheless shall here, in the same format they use, type it for you:

Mon.	--	drizzle
Tues.	--	drizzle
Wed.	--	drizzle with showers
Thurs.	--	hot and humid, followed by drizzle
Fri.	--	rain followed by drizzle
Sat.	--	drizzle with showers
Sun.	--	drizzle

The one thing people in Southern Illinois do better than people in Missouri is weather predictions. These people are almost always accurate. All they have to do is predict rain, or some variation thereof, and virtually all the time they will be more or less accurate.

All this rain causes certain problems in one's house. I reported in a previous issue of The Aviary how, before we acquired a large dehumidifier, an aggressive green mold was taking over our house. The dehumidifier does not work for closed closets; hence, we must leave the doors to our closets open most of the time. Many people who build new houses do not even put doors on their closets. The humidity rusts anything and everything. I am always spraying oil, or smearing grease, on my tools to keep them from rusting. Even all the door hinges in our house had rusted to the point that opening or closing a door constituted a painful assault to one's ears, given the squeaking of the rusty door hinges. My attempt to cure this problem took some months. My first approach was merely to spray some light oil onto the hinges. This did no good at all. So one day I set aside several hours, and removed the hinge-bolts from every door, sprayed them with rust remover, wiped them thoroughly with rags, then oiled them well and put them back in. The problem was solved ... for a few weeks. Soon they all were creaking again. So again I took several hours out of a day and removed all the hinge-bolts. This time I again went over them with rust remover, wiped them very clean, and then greased them with the best, most heavy-duty wheel bearing grease money can buy. I not only smeared each bolt with this grease, I packed the bolt-holes with grease, hammered the bolts in, and then wiped off the excess grease that came squishing out. There, at last, the problem was solved. It has been nearly eight months since I did that, and they do not squeak. But to think that heavy-duty wheel bearing grease was required to accomplish this!?

When I complain to the people who live hereabouts, they always say something to the effect that, "Well, yes, there is a rainy season here." "Season" they say. When I ask them what they mean by this, they always seem to think that there is a finite, circumscribed period of time during which it rains a good deal, and then there follows the converse: a "non-rainy" season. I have asked these peasants when the rainy season occurs. They are not in agreement with one another on this subject. About 40% of the people say the rainy season is in the fall. About 20% say it is in the winter. About 20% say the spring, and about 10% believe it is during the summer. The fact is, it rains here nearly all the time. My experience is that there is never a dry, i.e., "non-rainy" season, although the last three weeks of July and the first

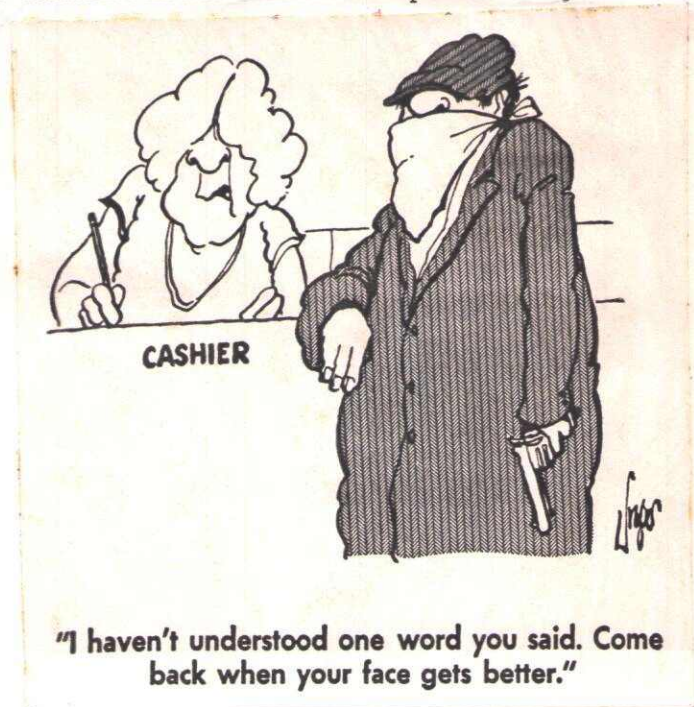
three weeks of August could be termed more or less normal, i.e., there is intermittent rain, and even one or two periods of two or three weeks without any rain. Except for this reprieve in mid-summer, the weather here is always rainy. Or, to use the wimpy and indecisive nomenclature of the peasantry hereabouts, there is always "drizzle."

Oh well; I am complaining a good deal about something I really can not do anything about. And my complaining is not going to change anything. I have, in past issues of The Aviary, gone on about how people in this area can scarcely speak a language, are virtually never friendly, and are afflicted with a strange inability to finish anything they set out to do.

Actually, I have begun trying to do something about the unfriendliness. People are so hostile over the phone, even business people whom one otherwise might think would find it in their financial favor to be friendly when on the phone with a potential customer, go out of their way to be surly. But I have hit upon a way of combatting their hostility. When I phone a business about a matter, I pretend to have a serious speech defect. Or I act like I am somewhat retarded. Sometimes I feign both: the dysarthria and the dysthymia, and these two combined can work quite effectively, eliciting a certain sympathy, even occasionally a warmth and seemingly genuine good will, from the people I am talking with. I have on occasion let my friends hear me doing this. They almost always wax indignant at this dishonesty. My view is that I usually get to accomplish what I need, no one is harmed, and people usually rise to the occasion and evince a virtue they might otherwise never know they have.

I can thus do something about people's hostility; but I succeed in doing little about the virtually indiscernible accent people hereabouts indulge. There was even a period, of about two weeks worth of agonizing duration, when my dear friend and wife Abbe, was beginning to pick up the locals' speech habits. In the course of two days, she said, "uhvuntualuh" for "eventually," and "luck" for "look." There were other, milder commissions, which caused Baumli to wince, sometimes writhe, and do a good deal of protesting. She soon sloughed this habit, and I was grateful. She realized that she had taken it on in an attempt to get her patients to understand her speech better; she later realized that they might understand the world better if she gave them a rare opportunity for hearing speech spoken the way it is supposed to be.

Her lapse is understandable. It is not dissimilar to what happens when we, for example, travel to the United Kingdom. When there, we tend at times to take on the British accent, not unconsciously, but in an earnest attempt to help those people understand our own accent. I even concede that were it not for the fact that I am such a recluse, always doing my best to avoid people and keep to myself, I probably would be picking up a bit of this Southern Illinois accent too. But as it is, given that I so effectively isolate myself from people, I manage to retain a pristine and even impeccable diction. My method, you see, is very simple. By staying away from these people, I do not have to talk to them, and I do not have to listen to them talk; so I remain untainted. The only other way to avoid having one's speech corrupted is to do the very opposite of what I do, i.e., talk all the time. The result of this is that one never hears the speech of the locals, and one's verbal skills are consequently uncorrupted. I have found that there are two classes of people who thus escape the sullyng. They are professors, who talk most of the time and do not listen to others, and preachers, who talk all of the time. As a matter of fact, the person I have met in this area who has, better than anyone but myself, retained good habits of speech, is a born and bred Bostonian who, although now retired, was both a preacher and a professor of religious studies. The combination, in this man, is deadly. His diction and precise grammar were refreshing, but my God he is a bore. Always talking, incessantly going on and on about the same old topics he had belabored last time, and puffed up with a great deal too much self-importance. He has not been worth associating with, given his rude and intolerable addiction to his imaginary podium. But



the extent to which his vice of verbal incontinence has preserved his grasp of verbal exactitude is most amazing ... and, in a perverse sort of way, edifying, given that I have always been interested in why some people take on such a demented accent, while others about them, more or less sharing the same milieu, succeed so well in keeping their language correct and pure.

That adjective, "demented," has slipped into my prose a couple of times. It is most appropriate for describing these peasants' speech, and in fact is even more pertinent for describing their actions.

I will here describe one such action--if this is the correct word. And let me warn you beforehand that some of you will be tempted to think that I am exaggerating with this story. Not at all, I assure you. I was as astonished as you perhaps are skeptical in hearing it.

I encountered this incident most indirectly. I phoned the local NAPA auto parts store about getting a car part, and got a fellow named Jim on the line. Jim is one of those unusual chaps hereabouts, i.e., he is not originally from this area, and therefore does not evince the same dementia one encounters in the local natives. As Jim and I were discussing my need over the phone, I heard a woman's voice interrupt him with, "Uh need me uh come-uh-long."

Jim said to me, "Just a minute, Francis," and then to the woman, "We don't have any come-alongs. You'll have to go to the hardware store to get that. Or maybe Wal-Mart."

"Uh'd huv tuh druve tuh get thure un uh cun't. Muh husbund's unnernuth the cur. Thut's whuh uh need me uh come-uh-long." (But no; I can not go on this way. It is too cumbersome, trying to describe her speech via my typing. I shall simply render her speech as though it were spoken correctly, and let you supply the guttural expectorations if you wish.)

"Underneath the car?" Jim said. "You're going to get a come-along to pull a car off him when he's underneath it?"

"No. I'm going to pull him out from underneath it. The car fell off the jack and he's stuck under there."

"Lady, you don't need a come-along! You need the police and an ambulance! I'll call for you! Where do you live?"

"No. I don't need no police or ambulance. He ain't hurt. He's just stuck. He wants me to get a come-along to pull him out from under it."

"He's just stuck? He isn't hurt?"

"No. He ain't hurt."

"Lady, it's cold outside. Maybe ten above zero. He's going to be getting mighty cold under there."

"No. He ain't cold. He's got a bottle of whiskey I gave him under there."

"I don't think you can pull him out from under a car with a come-along."

"I tried another jack. The car kept slipping off the jack."

"Lady, you do that a couple of times, and you're going to kill that husband of yours."

"No. He ain't killed. He's just stuck."

"I think you'd better call the police and a wrecker right now. Do you want me to call them?"

"No. I just need me a come-along."

"Well lady, we don't have any come-alongs. You'll have to go somewhere else to find one."

"But he's just stuck."

"Call the police."

"No. I don't want me no police."

"He'll be frozen."

"No. He's got a bottle of whiskey."

Jim was losing his patience. "I can't help you lady. You get some help from the police or a wrecker."

The lady said something as she left; I did not catch the words. Within seconds, a very nonplussed Jim was back on the line, "Okay Francis, where were we?"

I paused for a moment, almost wondering if this were some kind of small comic drama staged for my benefit. "Jim, was that for real?" I asked.

"It takes all kinds," was all he answered.

And I suppose he is right, although it does seem that Southern Illinois requires too many of the same kind of people in order to succeed in being Southern Illinois.

I have, however, made a great discovery! For about three years, while living here, I had tried to understand one very, very curious trait which characterizes these people; namely, their inability--their rank refusal--to finish any particular job they have begun. I was so curious about this--and for me curiosity is such a weakness--I had even talked to Abbe about our possibly continuing to live in this area until I had figured out this very strange phenomenon. But the day came when I spent an evening with a very intelligent fellow who explained it to me. This fellow is from Chicago and owns a business here, making a nice profit from the college students in Carbondale who frequent his record store. He has observed these people for a long time, had experienced the same frustration I had, and having worked with these people in different settings--ranging from forestry to farming to various

business ventures, had finally deciphered this mystery. His explanation was simple, and it rang true. He reminded me of the poverty of this area. The people here are angry. Actually, a better word, in this instance, would be to say that they are "pissed." They are pissed that they make little money, have little chance of ever making money, and generally they are just pissed about everything. They see no future. They never valued the present, so they see no past--they have no history. They can see about twenty paces back into their past, and as for the present, they are always looking for a fight because they are pissed. They drain off some of this surly anger by beating up on each other, by getting drunk, by watching TV, by breeding, by beating up on each other some more. Husbands beat wives, wives beat husbands, children are abused, booze is consumed, cigarettes are smoked, cars are wrecked, a few people get killed, and they just get more and more pissed.

Along comes a friendly, jovial fellow like Baumli. He tries to interact with these people. He tries to get them to loosen up. Will they ever become friendly with him? Never. They will only become more pissed. The more you try to be nice to them, the more they become pissed at you because they see that you are different from them. Of course, if you were exactly like them, they would be pissed about that too. But since you're different, and don't even have enough sense to be pissed like they are, then that makes them even more pissed.

How does this fit into their not being able to finish a task? My friend explained it well. These people you hired to do a job were pissed at you the moment they saw you. They were pissed the entire time they were doing the work. And finally, when the job is almost done, they simply can not bear to walk away without having done their best to piss you off also. So now that the job is nearly over, what can they do to piss you off? They can refuse to finish the job. It's the one sure way of getting you pissed too, and this way, when they leave the job--unfinished as it is--they can be sure that their antagonism toward you is all the better justified because now you feel almost as pissed at them as they are with you.

In other words, these people are backward rednecks who feel economically deprived, are educationally bereft, have no work ethic at all, and walk around constantly angry at the world and at you. Their anger, which is too diffuse and undirected to actually be called anger (which is why I refer to them as being "pissed"), is constant, and it clamors for expression. Within their own circle of family and acquaintances, they express themselves overtly. With a stranger--someone new to the area--they can't get by with being so overt. At least not all of the time. Occasionally they are openly hostile, but more often it is a disguised hostility, or, more accurately, a hostility that is held in check somewhat. But the disguise becomes tiresome; they must express their hostility. So now and then, even with a stranger, they break loose into a tirade, or become violent. More often, they become passive aggressive. Not finishing a job is but one form of this. Refusing to be friendly is another. (Abbe and I have almost quit waving at people who drive by our place; it becomes tiresome watching them stare back with a leer. Also, one begins feeling a bit ridiculous, waving and trying to be friendly, and watching them merely stare back.) They express it in the way they hang up a phone. If you accidentally dial a wrong number, expect a tirade and a slammed receiver. Even if you get the correct number, they will slam the receiver down when they are finished talking to you. I do not exaggerate. I have even watched people, at their homes, or where they work, do this. They finish a conversation and either slam the receiver down, or, what is more common, they suspend the receiver about one foot above the phone's cradle and then drop it. Not infrequently, if you are looking on when they hang up the phone, they will grin in your direction just as they drop it, as though inviting you to join them in their moment's worth of malice. If, however, you are the one who has been talking to them over the phone, then your ears are going to be ringing from that dropped receiver. Unless, of course, you have, over time, learned the trick Baumli uses; namely, to snap one's wrist away from one's ear the moment the conversation ends, so as to thus place some distance between yourself and that noise. Another thing these people do (and this is another idiosyncrasy of this region I had been trying to figure out) is to pull out in front of you when you are driving along on the road. This is something that truly has amazed me. One can be going along a highway, say, in a 35-mph speed zone, and see a car a full quarter of a mile away, stopped at a stopsign where a road intersects the one you are driving on. As you approach that car, you begin slowing up if you have lived in this area for very long, because that car, which could have pulled out into your road a long while back, or which could do it twenty seconds later after you have passed, will wait and pull right out in front of you just as you are 100 feet away, or perhaps only 50 feet away.

I have always thought of myself as a redneck; I have even avowed (and claimed) this status many a time. I have even said that I like rednecks. Now, however, I realize that I have been wrong all along. The people I was accustomed to calling "rednecks" during my many years of growing up on the farm, were not actually rednecks. No; the people I had

been calling rednecks were actually hard-working farmers. It was these hard-working farmers whom I liked; not these passive-aggressive, wife-beating, husband-hating, boozing, loafing, passive but malicious creatures with sun-burned necks, atrophied brains, and dangling hemorrhoids.

As I above stated, these people are angry at their poverty. Unfortunately, Illinois has done little, as a state government, to help these impoverished people. A recent news report, in fact, reports that Illinois, out of 50 states, ranks 49th in terms of procuring available (sic!) Federal dollars for projects of all types, ranging from welfare to education to highway funding. In other words, there is all that available money, and these Illinois state officials, who complain about the state's dire financial straits, can't even get off their duffs and gain monies that are available for the taking, if only someone would bother to fill out the forms.

But does the citizenry hold Illinois responsible for its economic woes? The people around here don't. They blame Missouri: "Ull thuh jubs ure thure un peopul guh wurk thure un puy uncome tux tuh that state unstud uh uhrrs." Or they blame Chicago, stating that all the state's money goes toward funding that city, while the rural areas such as this one must do without money: "The Norn purt oh thuh state gits it ull, un thuh Sun purt don git uh bit." I have no way of knowing if there is truth to this claim, i.e., that Chicago's needs as a city deplete the state treasury. I do know that when I hear statements such as the above one made, I become sick to my stomach. So many things in this area where I live are named "Southern something-or-other," e.g., Southern Stereo, Southern Steel, Southern School for the Handicapped, Southern Church for the Blind Bowels, Southern Church for the Sedentary Thighs, etc. This "Southern" is always pronounced either as, "Su-un," thus utilizing a full two syllables, or, more commonly, it is pronounced simply as, "Sun," the enunciation not quite like the word which refers to our star, but instead, containing the addition of a guttural groan attached to that short u.

I have come to realize that there is actually a certain amount of regional identity, although certainly no regional pride, in this area. Even though Illinois was a Yankee state during the Civil



War, people in this part of Illinois think of themselves as living in the "South." They then, however, sometimes add that they do not live in the "deep South." To more than one of these natives, upon hearing this qualification, I have asked if they mean that they live in the "shallow South," but thus far not one of them has ever understood my question, let alone the judgement behind the question.

So ... we continue to live here. We are committed until summer of 1993. We hope to move away shortly thereafter. There may be further delay simply because we will have to sell the house we bought, and also find a place where we want to move. We hope to live near a city, in a house hidden in the country. After having lived in the country before, we are acutely aware of how little privacy we now have. At my farm outside of New Franklin, it was not uncommon for Abbe and me to walk down to the woods on a nice day, take our clothes off, and lie out amidst glorious nature for a time. Here we have 3.15 acres, so wooded that in the summer the shade is too thick and the temperature almost too cool, but we dare not go outside without our clothes on. Almost invariably, when we are outside, someone pulls in the driveway, gets out of a vehicle, and comes knocking at the door. If they do not get an answer, they come looking for us in the back yard. Usually they are "wuntun tuh know if you huv sum wuhrk"--this guttural clause uttered around the stale smell of beer and a cigarette. So unless we are doing work in the yard, we stay indoors, where there is a little privacy since one can ignore the knocking at the door.



Why do I continue complaining about this area? For several reasons. First of all, it really is an awful place. I hate it here, and have never adjusted to this area at all. Now, even after having lived here for 3½ years, I still, out of habit, give my old phone number of 3½ years ago, or

my old address of 3½ years ago, when either are requested. The second reason I complain is because it helps alleviate the strain; the small bit of injected humor helps relieve the tension this incarceration causes. The third reason is because I am aware that while living here is an awful experience, moving elsewhere will be a major stress too. The idea of moving is so forbidding that sometimes I am tempted to remain here, just so I won't have to move. But that would be a kind of spiritual suicide. Thus, I make sure to let the whole world know how much I hate this place. Staying here would thus mean having to eat all my bitter words, and I am making sure that there are too many words to eat, and that the gruel containing them would be too unpalatable for me to even try.

I do concede that things are better in one way; I have finally made some friends here. They all, every one of them, are from other parts of the country, and their relationship with this area is, at best, uneasy. Some of these people will be hard to leave behind. But I solace myself with the thought that if I leave, then perhaps they will be inspired to leave too.

Some of you, my dear friends, may be interested in knowing that this area--or, more specifically, the town of Murphysboro--has something of a worldwide reputation in terms of a natural event which happened some years ago. Allow me, in conveying this bit of information, to quote from the June, 1987 issue of National Geographic, page 712: "The single most deadly tornado on record claimed 689 lives in three midwestern states on March 18, 1925, 234 of them in the town of Murphysboro, Illinois." My response, when I came across this statement, was simply, "Well, that was a good start."

***** READING FOR 1991 *****

I did even less reading this year. There are several reasons for the decrease. Marion takes much time. My eyesight continues to worsen. And the last five months of 1991 were primarily devoted to preparing for that custody hearing. The result was that I read but 57 books during the year, only about half as many as I usually read.

The best books I read during 1991 were:

1. The Days Run away like Wild Horses over the Hills by Charles Bukowski. This was the usual fine fare (like going into a wonderful restaurant and knowing you can count on that one particular dish) put forth by our foremost meat poet.
2. Septuagenarian Stew by Charles Bukowski. A different feel to this book. Bukowski is getting old. Some of his values have mellowed. He questions more and pontificates less. His general writing style is changing too; this takes some getting used to, but I do not consider it a diminution in quality as do too many other readers. This book is less anarchistic in its approach to the cosmos, instead focusing more on certain topics. At the age of 70, Bukowski has not matured, nor is he wiser. But he is more graceful, which is a fine quality, conjoined as it is to a tortured mind in search of peace.
3. Anton the Dove Fancier and other Tales of the Holocaust by Bernard Gotfryd. I have tired of this type book over the years, but I was attracted by this book's lean style and the author's genuine compassion toward so many people, including Germans, he came into contact with when he was an incarcerated Jew in Germany. The book is not inspiring, like other books on the holocaust, nor so very horrifying. It contemplates human nature, and reveals much about ourselves. I like this approach. It observes, presents facts, and lets us infer our own axiology.
4. Pictures from an Institution: A Comedy by Randall Jarrell. This was the best book of the year. And it is probably the wittiest book I have ever read. To be frank, I do not think it worked as a novel. The characters were presented too much in isolation from one another, and there was not that sense of dynamic force that emerges when characters come together, clash, and take on a life of their own within a novel. But each character, if sketched separately, was drawn with such precision that I was reminded of many a person I used to know in academia. All those self-important, odd, and odious creatures that peopled Jarrell's college! He described them perfectly, did so without pity, and the result was a collage more brilliant than any I have ever seen. The book is full of sentences worth remembering and quoting, full of passages I wish I might have written (actually, wish I had the talent to write!). Surely this book will some day be recognized as one of the classics of this century!

The disappointing books of the year were:

1. St. Francis of Assisi by G.K. Chesterton. I read this book, hoping that

my patron saint of yore would thus, indirectly, provide me with some spiritual strength during the months preparing for that custody hearing. I should have picked a different author. The book was not well written, and it scarcely gave any insight into either the history or the spirituality of St. Francis' soul. Chesterton began the book by claiming that there are three ways of dealing with a book on St. Francis: as a totally disinterested person, as a Catholic, or as an explorer. He slyly claimed that he is incapable of the first two approaches. He could not do it as a Catholic; this would be to make too many presumptions about St. Francis. But he could not be totally disinterested either, he humbly confessed, given that he goes to St. Francis with a strong sense of piety. He would take the middle ground and explore who St. Francis was. Well; Chesterton thus tried to cleverly disguise, or claim some slight immunity to, the influence of his Catholicism. But as the book proceeded, it quickly became apparent that he could only deal with St. Francis from the perspective of a devout, dogmatic, but scarcely ingenious Catholic. It was a lengthy prayer, for the most part, which any but a kneeling Catholic would find boring.

Chesterton's prejudices might have been forgiven, but his writing style in this book is terrible. He is redundant, and given to very lengthy (and unnecessary) digressions. His digressions would wander about aimlessly for a very long while, only to at last be rescued with a paragraph beginning with the word, "Anyhow" One might have been better off reading only these paragraphs which begin with "anyhow;" they contain all that is essential in the book.

If memory serves, this is the fourth book I have read by this author. I do not think I shall ever be tempted to read another.

2. Under a Glass Bell by Anais Nin. It did not have the "feel" of the usual Nin book. There was not her usual confessional (albeit deceptive) tone. Instead she attempted surreal

imagery with terse, epigrammatic descriptions. The result was a mixture of Kafka and Borges, which, however, lacked the genius of either. Her approach was too pristine. Everything was always

being viewed through a crystalline prism that attempted to filter out the human impurities, or at least sanitize them--not only for the reader, but also (and especially) for the writer.

Years ago I admired Nin very much, but I must admit that, as time goes by, her stature as a writer diminishes for me.

3. How to Father a Successful Daughter by Nicky Marone. This book's message was, very simply, that today's fathers are worthless shits because they condition their daughters to be so feminine that they can not grow up to be liberated women. If the mother does any of this conditioning, then it is not the mother's fault since the husband and other men made the mother act this way. It is up to the husband not only to raise his daughter to be a liberated woman, but also to help his poor oppressed little wife throw off her feminine helplessness, while at the same time being sure to inform the daughter, as he liberates her, that it is not the mother's fault that the daughter might have difficulty ignoring society's many messages that she should be helplessly feminine. In other words, this book's offensive message was: raise your daughter to be a responsible adult, but if she fails, assure her that's not her responsibility.

4. Religion in the Making by Alfred North Whitehead. I suppose this book actually should not be listed here, since I could not bring myself to finish it. I had read it many years ago when I was an undergraduate in college, and did not like it at all. But over the years I had often felt that I should pick up this little book again and give it a second chance, being aware that my neo-atheistic beliefs of yore might have prejudiced me against it overly much. So I returned to it, but this time I found it even worse. So bad, in fact, that I gave the book away, not even considering it fit to keep on my shelf for reference. Whitehead is a genius in his philosophy, but in this book, he put forth no effort and scarcely managed to do philosophy.



While the above-mentioned book by Nicky Marone almost takes the prize for most offensive book, Herb Goldberg's What Men Really Want edges it out. Goldberg's book assumes that men are forever locked into a self-defeating macho role, that they are regressive, self-destructive, and nothing but creatures to be tolerated, pitied, avoided, abhorred. I found the book more critical of the male psyche than anything I wanted to read; but even more so, I found the book's prose scarcely readable. The author was terribly redundant, not at all novel in his approach to issues, and did a

fine job of illustrating the depraved depths to which modern nonfiction prose has sunk.

Herb Goldberg's What Men Really Want also takes the prize for being the worst book I read this last year. The Intimate Connection by James B. Nelson runs a close second, given its thesis that we need to approach religion through the body, whereupon the author then creates a Christic symbiology of divine flesh made somehow sexual, thus giving his readers a ritualistic camouflage by which to approach corporeal dimensions garbed in so much religious raiment that they are protected from ever having to actually embrace what is flesh and body within humanity.

As for Goldberg's book: why was it bad? Well; it was offensive to me as a man, it was poorly written, but most of all it was nothing more than a garbled collection of disjointed words. The book never really said anything, Short, chatty, anecdotal, it is the sort of thing I could write, merely as a joke, while on a weekend drunk. Fortunately I would never be tempted to write such a thing, given that it has been years since I have ever troubled myself and the world by going on a weekend drunk.

During past years, I have used this section of The Aviary as a forum in which to air grievances about how other people misuse the English language. Has it done me any good? No. I have protested very specific usages, have shoved a copy of The Aviary which registers that protest under the noses of my offending friends, and what is the result? They read, they nod, they chuckle, and then they go on using the same repugnant phraseology and inappropriate words. So why should I go on complaining? It seems to do little good. Only the other night, a fellow who was over for supper was talking about his relationship with a woman, and how he has been very upset because she has decided she doesn't want to see him anymore. Well; this all made sense, until he began talking about how they were going to be doing some things together in the near future, but not "seeing" each other. I had no idea what he meant. I do not consider him a handsome fellow, and it therefore was difficult to imagine that this young woman would blind herself so that she might spend time with him but avoid the stirrings of love by having deprived herself of sight. So I asked: How does it make sense that the two of you will be doing things together, but not seeing each other? He was embarrassed, and gave an awkward explanation, encumbered with many euphemisms of its own. I finally divined that by "see" he meant "fuck." His girlfriend had decided not to "fuck" him anymore; this was what he meant by her refusing to "see" him anymore.

Tiresome, is it not, putting up with this kind of language? Perhaps dangerous, too, considering that in these airheads' brains, "see" means more or less the same thing as "fuck."

Suppose I were to say something intended as innocent, e.g., "I'm seeing my secretary tonight." Such a statement could ruin my marriage. Suppose a grandfather were to say, "I'm going to see my grandchildren this weekend." Or suppose a woman were to phone her husband's boss and say, "He just can't come in today. He's sick in bed with the flu. I've seen him three times this morning, and I think he'd better just stay in bed."

Rather lewd, is it not, this way of avoiding the subject, and thereby accentuating the subject.

Another equally offensive phenomenon is this new use of the word (actually not a word!) "er" as an interpolation intended to inject a prosaic stutter as the writer supposedly pokes fun at the correctness of his word-usage. For example, a fellow writes, "As I drove to work, I kept thinking of how that wife, er, ball and chain, of mine was driving me crazy," Even a scholarly journal claims, "The theory, er, hypothesis, of neutrinos constituting mass is a postulate by which equations are balanced; it is not proven by empirical fact or observation." And in a women's magazine: "How many rug-rats, er, children, are you planning to have?"

Oh well. Like I said, complaining about such things is not going to change anything. I suppose I must begin accepting the decay of our language. Maybe then I can better withstand the odor of its putrefaction. Living where I do, I certainly am more exposed to its ubiquitous corruption than are most people in our country, given the fact that in Southern Illinois people's speech is scarcely discernible, and for them the National Enquirer is high literature. But I must not blame our language's demise on Southern Illinois only. The virus--or rather, the people--afflicting our language has proliferated throughout our country. One big, but relatively unknown, example of this is the fact that for more than ten years now, a tax has been levied against books which exist as unsold inventory at the end of each year. The result is that bookstores are loathe to keep a heavy inventory of books, and book publishers are much more likely to let a book go out of print rather than pay taxes on unsold copies at the end of a year. At the end of each year, there is a mad scramble among both booksellers and publishers to unload their

unsold inventory. No one wants those books; they are an expensive liability. The result: at the end of each year (or rather, fiscal year) the bookstores rip the front cover off the relatively inexpensive unsold books, throw away the rest of the book, and mail the front covers back to the publisher for a refund. This way, the books are cheaply disposed of, and no one has to pay that tax. It is cheaper to throw the books away.

I was in 710 Books, the best bookstore in Carbondale, on March 20th of 1991, and witnessed the following obscenity: 68 books were having their covers torn off to be returned. I knew this commonly happened to pulp novels, but 12 of these were paperbacks of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Albee. There were as many copies of A Streetcar Named Desire. There were plays by Euripedes, Sophocles, and others. I counted the stack being disposed of: yes, it was 68 in all. The covers were torn off and put in a package for mailing back. The remaining corpse of the book was ripped in half, then all were taken out to the dumpster, i.e., the paper was not even being recycled. I asked the

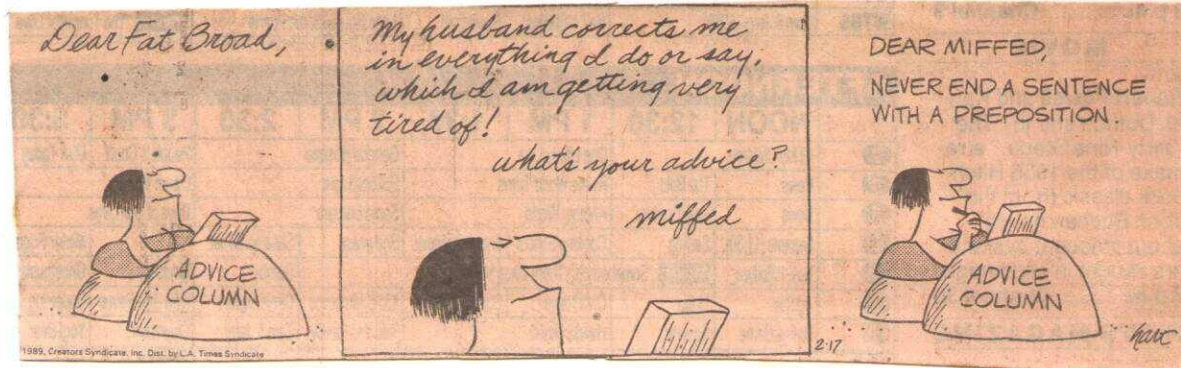
fellow who was performing the dismemberment if it didn't bother him; he replied that he hadn't even thought about it. I asked him if he had disposed of as many books the year before. He

replied that he had thrown several thousand away, but he couldn't remember how many. I was astonished, and asked him why they threw away so many more last year than this. He explained that they hadn't. The ones he was presently disposing of were for one class only. They would actually be throwing away more this year than they did last year. Thousands? Yes, he assured me, thousands.

And people have a difficult time believing me when I talk about how different the attitude is in Europe toward reading and literature. In Europe they read books, they celebrate them, they treasure them. In this country a very few books get read. As for celebrating them? No. We tax them, or rip new ones up and throw them in a dumpster.

Well, the TV and video businesses are booming. I truly believe that in another five years they will have almost replaced books entirely. At present the average American reads one book a year; the average college graduate reads two books a year. This includes the romances and westerns. I usually read about 100 books a year, all of them good literature. My biological mother reads several hundred romances a year--she says about 300, but is not sure of the count. So, if this is the case, then the averages would say that if between us we are reading about 400 books a year, this makes for 398 people out there who are reading no books a year. My point is that books aren't exactly being embraced in this country at the present. With the dawning of the "Age of Video," I think the day will soon come when, except in libraries, books will be rare oddities, lying about here and there, like those trinkets and tools from the pioneer times, no longer used except for decorative purposes.

It has been a long era. Counting the Egyptian heiroglyphics, and some of the early Assyrian writings, literature has reigned for about four millenia. Maybe we should not be greedy and ask for more. Still, it is sad for me to be a writer at a time when video is replacing books. To see those wonderful classics being ripped up and hauled off to a landfill. To hear people pronounce the word "book" as "bawk." To realize that the age of literature is fading out, and that in its place there are empty, staring eyeballs and arid minds whose only awareness is that of boredom.



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

A most interesting year for music, 1991 was, given all the emphasis on the fact that it was the bicentennial of Mozart's death. The celebrations were wonderfully enjoyable, and it was nice to see so much of his music being recorded. The Philips company put out that huge 180+ CD set of Mozart's complete works, which has caused longing and lust in my aesthetized heart, but my bank account is not ready to go forth and encounter such merchandise. I confess that I was not so pleased to see that many (although certainly not all) of the new Mozart recordings were being done on period instruments. Like many people, I enjoyed the upsurge of interest in period instrument recordings for a time; but, like most people, after the novelty wore off, I found that I not only prefer the modern instruments, I tire quickly of the period instruments. My point is: I would rather that a larger proportion of these

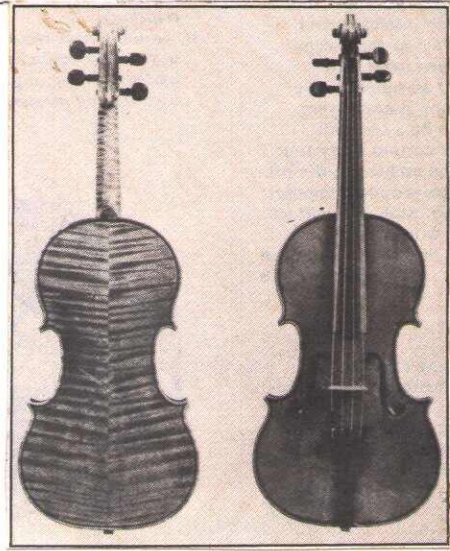
new recordings had been on new instruments, instead of on those wheezing, clunking, plinking period instruments.

I was a bit saddened, too, seeing how the Mozart celebration eclipsed several other composers whose anniversaries might otherwise have warranted more celebration and comment. People seemed to forget that other commemorations were due too. For example, 1991 was the 100th anniversary of Prokofiev's birth. It was the 250th anniversary of Vivaldi's death. And the 150th anniversary of Dvorak's birth. I would especially have liked to have seen more attention given to the greatest of these three composers, i.e., to Prokofiev.

One musical event of significance, during 1991, happened in our household. We sprung for the money to buy Dacia a top quality open-hole Armstrong flute. Solid silver, except for gold at certain crucial points, especially in the mouthpiece, it truly is an exquisite instrument, with a tone that is heavenly. Dacia made the transition to the open-hole flute within about one week; most students labor more than a month to make the transition. Within months, her instructor, Dr. Jervis Underwood, told us that Dacia had better breath control at the flute than any of his students, including his college students. This is a supreme compliment, because breath control is probably the most crucial quality which distinguishes flutists who can go far, versus flutists who all their life will be unable to surpass a certain level of accomplishment. But (as with most things that happened in 1991) this event has been contaminated by the custody hearing, and change. Dacia felt that in Florida she would want to spend time getting to know her mom, and hence, did not want to continue flute lessons. We were not about to send along the new flute with her, when she thus was stating that she would not continue studying it. So now this very expensive instrument lies idle in my study. If things are not changed, i.e., if Dacia does not come back to live with us, displaying a renewed interest in the flute, then we will sell it. Very distressing, it is, to see her thus abandon something she was so accomplished at. We were tempted to send the flute with her, thinking that its presence might inspire her; but we also were aware of the financial chaos which usually reigns in that household, and that Dacia's biological mother would not hesitate to take the instrument to a pawn shop and hock it for a pittance, if the inclination struck her. So the flute stayed, and Dacia took along her old closed-hole flute.

There were, this last year, certain impediments to the enjoyment of music, Marion being the main one. It seems that, given his many demands, that the only time I have for listening to music is when I am with him. And he is very particular about the kind of music he listens to ... or, will let me listen to. With the exception of an occasional baroque piece, he does not like classical music. He accepts some rock music, but prefers jazz. As for myself, as much as I enjoy playing jazz, I do not like to listen to it overly much. Occasionally I do, but a steady diet is not suiting to my temperament. But, because Marion likes it, we listen to a good deal of jazz. As for those lengthy, complex, and inspiring classical pieces, I seldom imbibe. There simply is not the time, nor is there Marion's requisite approval.

Another impediment has involved the saga of Baumli's struggle with his turntable. Not his old trusty Sony PSLX-520. That little turntable, while far from being a high-end turntable, had proved to be generally reliable and worthy when it comes to sound quality. But knowing that the era of the turntable is vanishing, I thought that now is the time, if ever, when I am to get a high-end turntable. So initially I purchased an AR ETL-1. This purchase happened on April 8th, but there then were necessitated about 100 phone calls to get the dallying repairman to come out and set the turntable up. This very fine turntable worked about 10 hours, and then began developing circuit problems. Months went by as the turntable made the round of repair shops. Being under guarantee for three years, and still not working, it was at last sent back to the factory. There they discovered that they lacked the spare parts to fix it. The final resolution was that they gave me my money back on the thing. I next purchased an AR ES-1 with all the Merrill modifications. It was shipped to me, and arrived after being damaged in transit. Much time was spent getting these problems addressed. Finally the turntable seemed to be working and seemed to be in adjustment, and then it began developing motor problems. The first one went out after about 30 hours of playing. The second one--the first replacement--arrived broken. The third motor developed noise and hum problems. And so ... all this time Baumli has had to live without access to good analogue playing



equipment. This deprivation has been but nothing compared to the distress and anxiety he has gone through, trying to get a good turntable up and running. As of the end of the year, he still had not succeeded.

This year, rather than enter upon any lengthy analysis of music, I shall refer in brief to some of my more momentous listening experiences, listing those recordings which I found to be the best, those which were disappointing, the most offensive one, and the worst. I must tell you, however, that even this list may not be entirely indicative of my musical tastes, given that I will here list only those recordings which I listened to all the way through. There were many which might have been put on my disappointing list, or would have come in for the honor of being worst, had I listened to them to their end. For example, I again, this year, tried to enjoy recordings by Keith Jarrett. I sat down to listen to at least half a dozen of his records. None of them did I listen to all the way through. His music--his improvising--sounds like a constant flow of Debussy diarrhea, and I simply could not soil my ears with such offal. I ended up trading away my several albums by him.

But first, for the sake of being cheery about things, let me list those albums which were the best of what I heard. An eclectic grouping, this is; I think you will agree:

1. Farewell, Angelina by Joan Baez. Much of Baez is simply too mournful, too pained, too much of the folk-protest genre, for me to enjoy. Moreover, I think her voice began deteriorating after her first few albums. But those first five or six display a purity in the mezzo-soprano range that no other folk singer has ever mastered, and this album, which I had never before listened to (unless at parties--does that count?), is a real treat for the ears, with a soprano that cuts through the body as surely as does the thunder of an organ pedal.
2. 20 Golden Hits by Patsy Cline. She has a country twang that is odd to the civilized ear, but her soprano voice has a rare admixture of tonal accuracy coupled with dynamic idiosyncrasy. Hers is a unique voice, and no vocal enthusiast, even if addicted to classical music, should overlook this woman's contribution to female singing.
3. Brand New Dance by Emmylou Harris. She really does seem to be dancing, the way she moves you on this album, i.e., her voice puts forth a strength that seems to move you physically because it pours forth from her entire body. There is a new joy in this album. The sadness of earlier years seems to be dissipating, or at least mellowing.
4. The Art of the Coloratura by Beverly Hoch. Masterful classical soprano, this. I especially liked her rendering of the "Queen of the Night" aria from Mozart's The Magic Flute. This aria is my favorite, in all of classical music, and her approach, although she compensated with slightly abridged volume to hit the high notes precisely, was sterling. A real treat on this disc is the Concerto for Coloratura Soprano and Orchestra by Gliere. While her version is not as good as Sutherland's, it nevertheless is a rare and wonderful rendition. I should mention that the accompanying orchestra on this disc is the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kenneth Schermerhorn. They are, or were, unknown to me, but they prove themselves a worthy and even admirable combination.
5. Black Angels by the Kronos Quartet. I agree with those who complain of the weak cello in this group, but still, their overall approach to all their music is balanced and innovative, and they are one of the few groups that can present contemporary music to me in a convincing way. This album is the best of theirs I have heard, with an emotional admixture of anger, compassion, and resignation in these pieces. A couple of the cuts were a bit too atavistic, as opposed to being novel, in their approach, but still, the disc is worth listening to in its entirety. I will complain that they could have deleted that Ives piece. And I do not see why, in this album, they could not have been considerate enough to list the percussive, and occasional orchestral, help which they received.
6. Maria McKee by Maria McKee. This album is a good example of when transfer from analog to digital loses sound quality. I had bought the CD (AAD), had listened once, and then traded it away. It simply did not have very good recorded quality. But then I found a cut-out of the LP, and bought it at a very cheap price. The sound was glorious! Her songs have a poignant, haunting quality with a pleasant admixture of rock, folk, and Celtic. Not all the songs are compelling, but some of them will stick in your memory for years.
7. Mahler's Symphony No. 2, the "Resurrection" as recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gilbert Kaplan. I have already spoken of having attended a live performance of this work, with Kaplan conducting The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. In this recording, he is with an even better orchestra, they are giving their all, and whether or not it was Kaplan or the orchestra which pulled off the performance, I can not tell. But it is a brilliant interpretation, with awesome sound quality--one of those few compact discs which suggest that the CD has the potential for sounding as good as the LP.

8. Sor & Martin Y Soler sung by Teresa Berganza. This album includes a wide variety of selections by Fernando Sor and Vincente Martin Y Soler. The singing is true classical in approach (as opposed to flamenco), and Berganza's mezzo-soprano voice is filled with emotion, but not to the point of being frantic, as are some approaches to the Spanish repertoire of vocal music. Jose Miguel Moreno, accompanying Berganza on the guitar, enters a flawless performance. This is a most unusual album, worth hearing because of its novelty, if nothing else. Yet, its quality is of the highest order, and gives both of these relatively neglected composers (especially the latter) a noble hearing.

9. High Lonesome by Randy Travis. (See why I embarrass so many of my friends. They simply can not keep company with a man who loves classical music so much, and then puts on a piece of country & western music.) Travis' voice has grown on me over the last few years. At first I did not like his songs, but that voice of his, which has a timbre that almost nudges George Jones aside, grows on you and you come to like the songs because of the voice. On this album, I love the song, "Point of Light," even though my political convictions would want me to feel otherwise.

10. Divas: 1906-1935. This compilation of female vocalists of the classical scene is truly amazing. The sound quality is excellent, considering that this CD is transcribed from 78s. The liner notes are excellent, and one learns a great deal about these singers of yore. Hearing Amelita Galli-Curci's voice is a real treat here, and Nellie Melba is totally endearing. Frieda Hempel does a "Queen of the Night" aria that is very idiosyncratic to my ear, but I wonder if it is simply the fact that conventions have changed, and I am hearing her sing it the way everyone sang it back in those years. I have never studied the score of The Magic Flute, and must do so someday so I have a better idea of exactly what Mozart intended on this piece.

This has been an interesting review, noting what appealed to me so much during 1991. I managed to slip Mahler's 2nd in one weekend when Abbe was gone with Marion for the day. The other classical discs were mostly late night listening with headphones. It is curious to me that this year I was so impressed by female vocalists. There is something about that range of voice which has gripped my soul this last year.

There were a fair number of disappointing albums too. My experience with albums is rather like my experience with books. Once I begin, I find it hard to put the work down, even if it is not proving to be good. But I am getting better. Now, if it appears that the album simply is not going to move me, then I do not listen all the way through. The following are albums for which I sustained hope, but in the end they failed to deliver:

1. Grosse Fuge and Other Works for Piano Four Hands performed by Stephan Möller. This pianist has given what is probably the best solo performance I have ever heard in my life. But the performance I heard a little over a year ago is not equaled by this recording. This recording is done on the Bösendorfer 290 SE computer-supported concert grand piano. On this piano, the performer records the first part on the computer, and then plays the second part while listening to the first as it is being played back--and this way all four hands then are being recorded. An amazing instrument, this, but Möller did not bring it off. One had the impression throughout the playing that he was frightened of the music, unsure as to whether he would succeed in properly accompanying himself, and only in the last bars of each piece would his power come forth. I look forward to his recordings of the Beethoven sonatas, but my anticipation is based on having heard him live, not on this recording.

2. True Blue by Pat Benetar. This woman has long been a rock n/ roll favorite of mine, but here she tried to do blues, and came off sounding rather like an old-fashioned female Elvis. I wanted to like this album, given that I have liked all her other works, but it never quite held together. There was a lot of artificial reverb, echo, and tremolo with her voice, and the bass back-up was especially weak, meandering along uncertainly, finally getting into the groove just in time to slow everybody down, and then losing its way again. I traded this one away.

3. Strange Weather by Marianne Faithful. Her voice is gone on this one. She tries to take advantage of this cigarette-choked whiskey voice, and perhaps even exaggerates the rasping tone for effect. But the result is neither comely nor convincing. She has abused herself to the limit, and neither masquerading nor exaggerating conceals this fact. Broken English was a better album; her voice, there, is suffering too, but at least she sounds somewhat vital and creative. But on Strange Weather her vocal cords do little more than put one in mind of embalming fluid.

4. Straight to the Heart by Crystal Gayle. This woman is one of my favorite C&W singers. But on this one she sounds old, tired, uninspired. As though she merely put this album together because her manager told her it had been too long since her last. The backup sounded canned, there was too much use of synthesizer keyboard, and as for the songs--they scarcely even had the feel of being country. If this is her new style, then I cease keeping abreast with what she is recording.

5. Duets by Emmylou Harris. Some of the cuts on this were tremendous, no doubt about it. The familiar "Wild Montana Skies" with John Denver, "If I Needed You" with Don Williams, and "All Fall Down" with George Jones are some of the finest country songs done over the last several years. But as for the rest, it seemed that certain of these singers were trying to ride her coattails, i.e., skirts, and the result was a CD that simply does not sound like good music. Moreover, the transfer from analog to digital on this album is terrible, and makes the CD so bad as to almost deter listening. (Will my reader kindly note, here, that Baumli was in no way tempted, in the midst of the above prose, to render that sentence as, "... coattails, er, skirts, ...")

6. Nine German Arias sung by Emma Kirkby and accompanied by the London Baroque. Kirkby's singing was very good, although it had an uncharacteristic amount of tremolo (one has difficulty calling it vibrato, given the purity of her voice). The album was ruined by those three people grinding their way along on their period instruments. There was a baroque cello, a baroque violin, and a harpsichord (which was exchanged for the organ on one work). These musicians sounded terrible. They had a monotonous, lifeless quality which not only could not do Kirkby justice, but also managed to undo the entire recording of these otherwise lovely songs.

The charge has been levied that musicians who today are specializing in period instruments have taken this route, for the most part, because they could not succeed with modern instruments; i.e., they could not get jobs with the leading orchestras or chamber ensembles which use modern instruments, so, taking advantage of the upsurge of interest in period instruments, they have moved in to satisfy that interest. But because the better musicians prefer modern instruments, these period-instrument recordings (with exceptions, such as The English Baroque Soloists led by Gardiner) tend to sound bad, not so much because of the instruments but because of the musicians. I do not know how much credibility to give this view, but having heard the London Baroque, one is tempted to believe it.

7. Some People's Lives by Bette Midler. When she's hot, she is the best; but on many of her albums she has a couple of numbers that never get off the ground. On this album, not a single song has the energy to really fly. A disappointment all the way through.

8. Results by Liza Minnelli with The Pet Shop Boys. The Liza voice was coupled with unimaginative synthesizers, lots of loud drumming--much of this on synthesizers too, and the result was a music that, although unremittingly frantic, was both boring and irritating. Liza Minnelli seemed to feel the same way; at times she scarcely seemed awake during the songs.

9. Piano Concerto No. 20 in d, K. 466 by Mozart, played by Paul Badura-Skoda with the Orchestra of North Germany conducted by Wilfried Boettcher. This piano concerto is my favorite by Mozart. And my exposure to Paul Badura-Skoda in the past has caused me to seek out anything he records. As for this recording? This disappointing album was actually part of a four-album Mozart set on the Sine Qua Non label's "Masterpiece Series." I bought the entire four-album set because of my great expectations of the above-listed concerto which appeared on but one side of one album. The orchestra played adequately, but that is all. Badura-Skoda's playing, although sometimes rather ideosyncratic, was fine. But that is all--fine. His playing was not up to its usual level. And very irritating about this recording was the fact that the piano's action was very muted, as though they wanted the piano to sound like a pianoforte. Most irritating, however, was the fact that the piano was tuned slightly sharp to the orchestra. I have been told that solo musicians sometimes do this so they can better be heard above an orchestra. I do not know if this was what Badura-Skoda was attempting, but regardless, the result was, at times, glaringly dissonant. If the piano was tuned sharp so it could



"Five bucks if you start practicing your violin."

better be heard, well, that was a big mistake. If it was tuned sharp by accident, well, one would think that a musician of Badura-Skoda's stature would have noticed, and protested.

10. Mozart: Concerto No. 22 in E-flat and Beethoven: Concerto No. 3 in C Minor played by Sviatoslav Richter with the Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Ricardo Muti.

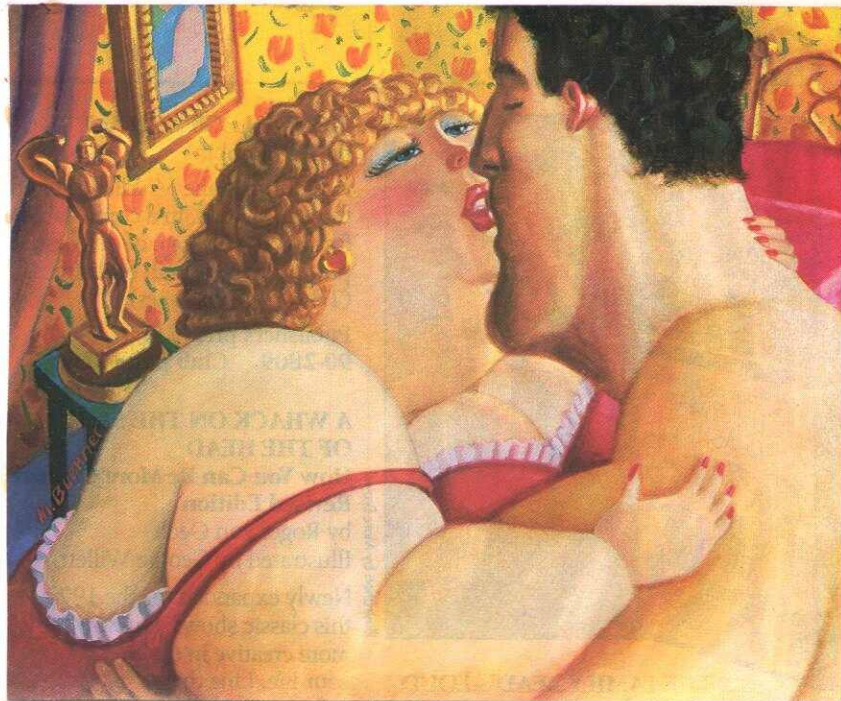
The Beethoven was fine, although not better than many other recordings of this concerto. Most impressive was Richter's power in the left hand, but the timing and such were not impressive. The Mozart, however, was sluggish, without definition, lacking power, with very little of the lyrical quality this piece should have. And I personally found the cadenzas to be very distracting. Written in 1966 by Benjamin Britten at Richter's request, and first performed at the Aldeburgh Festival on June 13, 1967, these are truly masterful exercises in pianistic virtuosity. In fact, they are so unique and even overwhelmingly beautiful that one can not but wish Britten had written, instead of these cadenzas, an entire set of variations on the themes in this concerto. But the cadenzas simply do not fit into the emotional tenor of this work. They are too progressive, at times antiphonal and then rather dissonant. While they are wonderful 20th century writing, they are too discontinuous with Mozart himself. I was tempted to keep this CD simply for the sake of going back and listening to only the cadenzas at times, but no ... this felt like too much an indulgence. I traded it away.

11. The Lion and the Cobra by Sinéad O'Connor. I very much liked her album, I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got, and hence was eager to hear this earlier work. One song, "Troy," was rather well done, but the other songs on this album were boring, driven by out-of-phase electric guitars, verbal clutchings for profound meaning that sounded sophomoric, and an attempt for lyrical dignity that ended up merely sounding trite. It was a waste of time and money.



The Monk Musician by Kramer

As for the most offensive album of the year? It was Mother's Milk by Red Hot Chili Peppers. Misogynistic, lewd in both the physical and the spiritual sense, and thoroughly obnoxious, this piece, which constituted my introduction to rap music, gave me good reason to not want to hear more. Why did I buy it? Dacia wanted it for her birthday. I agreed to get it for her, and also tape it. As it turned out, I listened to the album with Dacia while taping it. I was shocked, and found it necessary to (again) broach the issue of the custody hearing. Namely, one of the main charges being leveled against our household by Dacia was the fact that she had felt so embarrassed by some of the paintings on the walls (very abstract paintings of nudes), that she could not bring herself to ask new friends over. I pointed out to her, very accurately, that the lyrics in this album were much more sexually explicit, graphic, lewd, and disrespectful of the body, than anything on the walls in our house. I further pointed out to her that the picture of a nude woman, her breasts partially concealed by superimposed pictures on the front of the album, was much more offensive than any of the visual art in our house. My verdict: I was sorry to have promised her this album, but I was not going to give it to her. Instead, I was going to force her to be consistent with her professed (and feigned) values: I was not going to keep the album in the house. She was angry, but I was both self-righteous and stubborn about it. If Dacia was going to act offended and embarrassed by what I consider to be quite innocent art, then she was going to have to live with my being offended and even defiant about her choice of art. In this instance, I found the supposed art not only offensive in what some might term a pornographic sense, it also was offensive against anything that is beautiful about human nature.



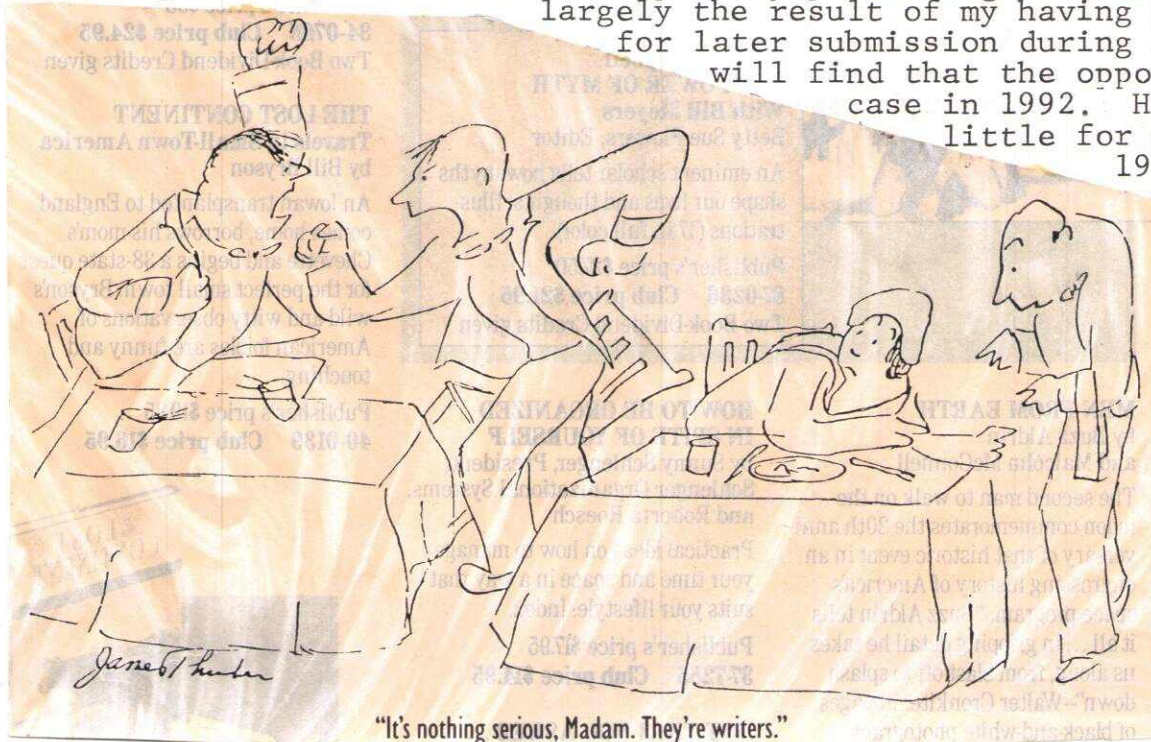
As for the worst album of the year? Same as above. It was a lot of noise, a lot of shouted words, but nothing there was lyrical, nothing ... well, I am not going to bother myself with trying to find a vocabulary. I will simply take out a moment to comfort myself, or rather, reassure myself that I am not prejudiced against the music teenagers are listening to these days. I may not like most of the music, but I do not therefore judge that it is bad, i.e., poorly done. For example, while I do not like the music of Madonna, or Michael Jackson, and other artists Dacia listens to, I have to concede that they do a most impressive job with lyrics, melody, production of their albums and such. So ... if I am this open minded about modern rock music, then surely it is not prejudice that causes me to detest Red Hot Chili Peppers.

ARTICLES

In my last Aviary, I stated that I had published 12 articles in 1990. I was wrong. There were 13, but I did not know about one until well after it had been actually published. So, as of the end of 1990, my total publications amounted to 156. By the end of 1991, I had published another 20 articles, bringing the number of my publications to 176. Why so many? I am not sure, because my memory of 1991 is that I primarily worked on that court case regarding custody of Dacia. I suppose my publishing so much in 1991 was

largely the result of my having prepared so much for later submission during 1990. I likely will find that the opposite will be the case in 1992. Having prepared so little for publication during 1991, I will probably

publish very little during 1992. This is pretty much fine with me. I have no great desire to publish a large number of articles. They each take up so much time, and frankly, I've published so many I do not feel much reward anymore when I see my name in print. Plus, there is a new,



"It's nothing serious, Madam. They're writers."

and major, aggravation I am experiencing when I publish articles. I refer to editors taking liberties with my manuscripts without ever having received permission to do so. It is happening often, and it infuriates me. I submit a manuscript, it is accepted, and then, when published, I find that many a change has been made without my ever having even been consulted. This, even at times when editors have explicitly agreed not to do it. I tire of the practice. The changed manuscript never comes out as well as my original, and besides, it is rather insulting for an editor to take such liberties without at least showing the writer the courtesy of a consult.

I should, however, modify what I above said. While I do not care to publish more in the way of articles and short things, I would very much like to succeed in publishing a lengthy work of fiction. I have tried a good deal over the last year. I've submitted to agents especially, but also to a few publishers. Always the same answer: We are so over committed that we are not taking on any new authors at this time. The result is that those precious works of genius lie idle, unread by the public, unsavored by other artists.

In the past, I have made it a point to list those publications (or often, the publication) I am most proud of. This year I am especially proud of two, the first because it involved breaking into a publication which is pretty much outside my formal training, and the second because I believe it presents a very authentic-sounding, and unique, perspective on a difficult topic. The first article I refer to was, "Temporary Testicular Disappearance (TTD)" published in Men's Health Newsletter during May of 1991. The second article was "Abortion and Nurturing Women: Confessions of a Secular Humanist" published in the December issue of The Liberator.

In past issues of The Aviary, I have proffered for your appreciation (or sneering) one or more examples of my writing. I shall continue the tradition this year, aware, however, that these little exercises, being rather out of context in The Aviary, may not interest you as much as have previous articles.

The first of these two profferings is a "Letter to the Editors" of Men's Health Newsletter, and I realize that, given what it says, I may have hereby sabotaged the possibility of getting any congratulations for having published therein, given what my letter reveals about the prosaic inability of their editorial staff.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR:
HEALTH ISSUES AND HEALTHY LANGUAGE

Dear Men's Health Newsletter,

On page 13 of the July '91 issue of Men's Health Newsletter, a reader complains of your tendency to use so much italicizing, boldface type, and underlining for emphasis. You replied that no one else had ever written to complain about this. Well, I am writing to complain. The constant italicizing not only is very distracting, it also gives your prose an amateurish, juvenile tone. It is as though you never can bring yourself to believe that your readers are intelligent enough to get your point unless you italicize.

I find even more irritating your habit of trying to spell words like they sound in lazy dialect, e.g.s, gonna, gotta, wanna. Even this, however, is not as offensive as that unseemly rabble of words you insert such as:

nope
yup
zow!
yow!

(and your favorite): hey!

Over the years, Men's Health Newsletter has become steadily better in terms of content. But in terms of writing style, it has been deteriorating ever since Mike McGrath took over as editor. When he stepped down as editor a few issues back, I was hoping your newsletter would give up the grammatical gutter. It has not.

We in the health field appreciate your reporting. It is an excellent resource which allows us to review the latest information, and then decide which topics to pursue in the medical journals. But unfortunately we can seldom recommend your articles, much less quote them. The sophomoric language is too much an embarrassment.

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My second letter to the editors addressed not the habits of an entire publication, but rather the attitude of a single writer. This attitude, I think you will agree from reading the following, is truly execrable. Bear in mind, if you please, that the opinion I set forth is not only because I believe the culprit in question was demeaning women. Even more, I believe he was demeaning himself in a way that, by association, to some extent denigrates and ridicules every man. In other words, when he acts like such an adolescent fool, then it adds fuel to the misandrastic flames which already are quite an inferno in this land.

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LETTER TO THE EDITORS:
ON THE LACK OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
CHIVALRY AND CHAUVIN\$SM

Corey Greenberg's coverage of the June '91 Chicago CES show (Stereophile, August 1991) was preciously cute, but neither pertinent nor appropriate to the task at hand. It seemed that in his review his main goal was to proclaim that he--Corey Greenberg--is a powerhouse of macho virility, with such copious quantities of thick testosterone coursing through his brain that his eyes never espied a woman or a lady at that show, but rather, saw only bimbos--or, to use his term--babes. On page 74, he treats himself to the following reminiscing:

" ... a woman so lovely, so effortlessly striking ... I found it impossible to avert my locked gaze As she crossed and uncrossed her long, perfect gams, my pulse grew loud inside my head, pounding ... [in response to] this combination of all that is good and right about life Her jet-black hair fell in laughing tresses upon her soft, rounded shoulders, and when she giggled ... a billion white doves burst forth I could barely walk I wanted to tell her how beautiful she was, how I wanted to take her away from all of this ... where we'd live totally naked ... and she'd never have to lift a finger" On page 89, his self-indulgence knows neither bounds nor shame as he presents a sub-section within his article entitled, "Best Babes of the Show." He observes other men standing about, asking meaningless questions just for the opportunity to "stand downwind of" these babes. These "goodlooking womenfolk" include a woman "resplendent in a red silk dress" and another babe wearing a "T-shirt that hung down past her knees"

Is Corey Greenberg hoping to transform Stereophile into a one-handed magazine? Maybe he should go see if Playboy or Penthouse will hire him, although, given his maniacally shrill, albeit boorish and pedestrian, writing style, they would probably send him over to Hustler.

When I open Stereophile, I want to read about stereo equipment and music, not about how your ungentlemanly Mr. Greenberg reduces women to sex objects so he can fawn and grovel.

I suggest that next time Corey Greenberg goes to a CES show, you send him along with a jar of vaseline. This way he can rush to the bathroom every few hours to relieve his glandular itch. For him and his writing, vaseline just might prove to be the ultimate tweak.

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(A footnote to the above. The author in question, reporting on that show, didn't just refer to these women in the abstract. He named names-- something I did not want to do in my own letter to the editors. I figured if one of them were to sue him for sexual harrassment, I did not want to get myself somehow involved in something so juvenile. A plethora of other readers wrote letters of protest too. A few wrote letters of support. I tell you, reading that article by this fellow, as he described how the mere act of beholding certain of those women provided such a stroking for his libido, was almost enough to make me apologetic about being a man.)

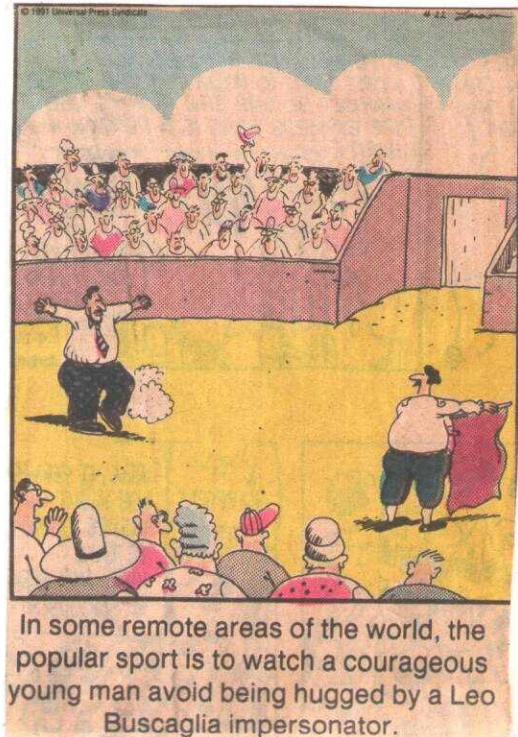
NOTES FROM TWIN FRANCES

On the phone with Francis, I was in a jolly mood. The first thing I asked him was when he wanted my contribution to his Aviary. He said it didn't really matter. I replied that I would await his admonition that I keep it short. The tone of his answer was not surly; rather, it was quite passive. Again, he replied that I could do what I want. I put aside my levity. When my brother is morose and brooding, it does no good to try to be happy with him. His world, if awry, must be set aright before he will tolerate even a moment's playfulness.

He told me he was losing interest in The Aviary. Few people seem to read much of it, he says, and he wants to be doing other things. His Aviary, given its length, can take two or three weeks' worth of time. "In the mind of an artist," Francis said, "that feels like eternity. An eternity of waiting."

I understand his point. Given the trauma Francis has been through over the last year, he has all but stopped work on his fiction, which is the true expression of his artistry. He needs to get back to his fiction, and avoid distractions such as The Aviary. It is my opinion, too, that Francis would be well off to cease doing so much work in the field of men's liberation. I am glad for his dedication to these issues, and I know they provide him with a valuable (perhaps necessary) outlet. But he has his life's work to do--his fiction, and he hasn't the time to be all things to all people. Surely some of those other fine writers in the field of men's liberation, who live in the United States, will be doing enough when it is a matter of advancing theory. Francis is a busy parent, he is a busy novelist, and also, he is very unhealthy. Given the stress of this last year, his eyesight has deteriorated further, and his hearing is also growing worse. I tell my brother that he must focus his energies more on eternal things, e.g. his fiction, and leave those ephemeral things, such as the social issues of gender liberation, in the care of others.

Even though I admonish him to leave those many peripheral concerns of his life alone, I find myself wanting to protest his thought of foregoing future issues of The Aviary. I have become rather attached to this yearly exercise, and would miss it. But, although my brother asked me to go ahead and send him something, on the possibility that he might proceed with one more



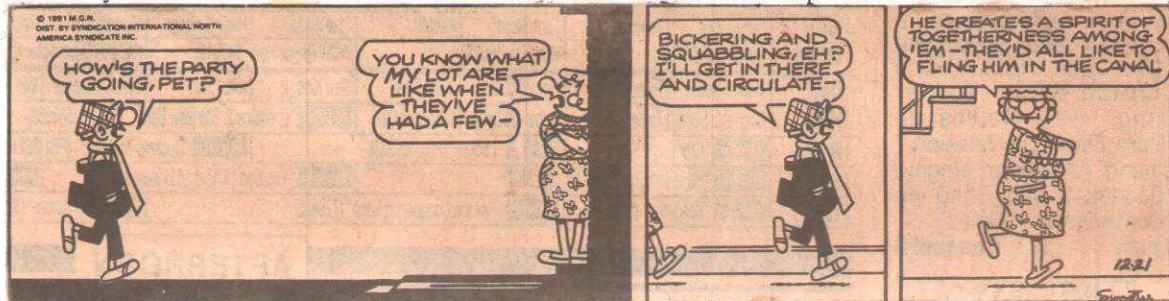
In some remote areas of the world, the popular sport is to watch a courageous young man avoid being hugged by a Leo Buscaglia impersonator.

Aviary, I shall generously keep in mind that this may be my last exercise (vicarious as it is), in my brother's little literary annual.

Part of my reason for wanting his Aviary to continue is because it provides me a record of what Francis has been up to for the year. Plus, there have been some very nice letters to me from Francis' friends. Unlike previous years, when there were those very odd letters propositioning me sexually, I have been hearing from several men who are forthright and realistic about such matters. There has, this last year, been the added pleasure of having heard from three different women, every one of them obviously dear and worthy friends to Francis. This provides an added dimension to my participation herein, and I would be sad to lose these enjoyable contacts. Still, if Francis halts production of his yearly narcissistic foray, then his decision will surely serve art, even if it does not serve my own trivial whims.

During the last several months, I have been giving a good deal of thought to moving back to the U.S. I would like to be near my family members, although not so close as to lose my sense of independence. I very much want to establish a close relationship with little Marion.

There also would be the advantage of once again being able to spend protracted periods of time with Francis. He, in fact, says it is time for me to come back to his country, never



failing to remind me that I have taken on a formal, British accent which does not become me. He hopes that my moving back to the U.S. would repair my crippled tongue. I suggest to him that the possibilities for encountering, and succumbing to, verbal toxins are much greater in the U.S. (especially where he lives) than they are in the United Kingdom.

I confess to another reason as to why I am considering a move back to the States. I become weary of the English scenery. It is beautiful, and going up to Scotland is always a great treat. But this country does not have the variety of climate, seasons, and such, which the U.S. has. In what other country can one experience differences in climate ranging, as it does in the U.S., from the hot dry heat of an Arizona summer, to the cold damp chill of a Minnesota summer, to the humid and lush climate of central Florida, to those remote regions in Louisiana which are unlike anything else on the face of this earth? All this appeals, I must admit, and even now, writing about it, I feel the temptation again stirring within me.

Just as quickly, my reservations come to the fore also. I am afraid of the United States. There is the violence. All those guns which any crazy person can buy at whim. And there is what we Europeans perceive to be a terribly oppressive political climate. The U.S. citizenry has been blissfully considering itself represented through a governmental democracy for more than two hundred years. It seems that one must leave the United States, and view it from the outside, to see that there are only the vestiges of democracy; all else is plutocracy which does an excellent job of masquerading as democracy. Most curious is the fact that the American citizenry never seems very upset when human rights are taken away. They seldom seem to even notice, much less protest. How many of you remember (or were aware of this at the time), that in May of 1991, your Federal Supreme Court handed down a ruling stating that a person arrested without a warrant may be held for up to 48 hours without a hearing? This news was in all the newspapers in Europe; it made headlines everywhere. It was even in the Cuba newspapers, and many of the Third World newspapers. It was the main topic of conversation in England, and yet, it seemed that very few U.S. citizens took note of this ruling, and those newspapers which did note it gave only brief mention. I was the first to hand the news on to Francis. His response: "Do you know how many times a man could get butt-fucked in forty-eight hours while waiting in a county jail?" I suppose I do not know. It is no secret, in a Socialist society such as England's or in a Capitalist society such as that of the U.S., that a man in prison is scarcely accorded the rights, much less the amenities, which a woman in prison receives. I do know Francis tells me men outnumber women in U.S. prisons by a proportion of 25 to 1. So this ruling is going to affect men primarily; but it will affect women too. My point here is not a gender-related issue (Francis will take care of that perspective); my point is that to those of us in Europe, the U.S. more and more comes to look like a police state. To think! Even with a lawyer, even with money, even with all the resources one would need to plow one's way through the legal system once one has been arrested, one would have to wait two entire days for that probable cause hearing, and arraignment, to take place! It was most interesting reading in the London newspapers how your supreme court justified its decision. Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the verdict, and in her decision called it, "proper deference to the demands of federalism." Do you note these words? "Deference." "Demands." "Federalism." This is scarcely the sort of terminology I associate with democracy. The absurd part of this ruling is that the suspect can challenge the arresting officers' right to hold him or her for 48 hours; but the challenge must be done in court, and, the burden of proof is on the suspect to prove that the delay is unreasonable. Tell me, if you please, how it is that a person being held in jail is going to mount such a hearing--an emergency hearing--in a court which is already exercising its right to hold him for 48 hours because it does not have time for a probable cause hearing? And how is such a person, already incarcerated, going to mount such a legal skirmish? Only someone with a wealthy, influential family could "beat the system" in these circumstances. Anyone else would be without recourse.

Do you understand why I find this frightening? If you are arrested, they can hold you for 48 hours before arraignment, and the burden of proof is upon you, the prisoner, to show that they lack grounds for holding you.

Your most conservative Supreme Court Judge--Antonin Scalia--wrote a dissenting opinion against the verdict. He was joined in dissent by the three justices who are considered liberals. But divisiveness on the Supreme bench is not comforting; the verdict is now in place, and states, counties, and such will rule accordingly. Francis was very alarmed when I told him about this verdict, and went on to do some research about this matter. What he discovered was not comforting. Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, 29 states in the U.S. required probable cause hearings after arrest within 24 hours; in fact, Missouri's requirement is 20 hours. But 7 states already allowed that the prisoner be held more than 48 hours. In fact, Illinois law did not require a probable cause hearing for 30 days! When Francis spoke to a Mister Madsen of the Illinois Attorney General's office, he was assured that probable cause hearings do not usually take this long; on the contrary, they are usually held in less than 24 hours. Still, the fact that Illinois was allowing itself the right to delay such hearings for a full month makes one's blood run cold. Thirty days in jail can ruin an innocent person's life. One can realize that the hearing thus has done a bit of good; states which were holding prisoners for protracted periods of time without a hearing now must give them a hearing within 48 hours. But for most states, this ruling from the Supreme bench is regressive, dangerous, and shows a police state mentality. It makes me want to stay in Europe. Here I feel relatively safe.

I did not mean to go on about the above topic so much. I began, merely intending to register one reason I would not want to return to the States. Obviously that reason continues to upset me a great deal.

There are other reasons I am reluctant to return. I love the fact that art, and the appreciation of art, so permeates the European spirit. Here people go to art galleries, they play music, and most of all, they love good literature. In the U.S. one does not see such appreciation for the arts, and even being in the States a few days makes one aware of how arid is the artistic climate there. A further impediment to my returning is the fact that still I have not learned to drive. My American friends criticize me for this. They can not understand it. But for various reasons, I had not learned when I came to Europe, and once here, the public transportation facilities are so convenient, and vehicles so expensive, I simply have not wanted to own an automobile. My work on the Isle means I ferry over; ferrying a car is expensive. The Isle of Man is a relatively small place; I can get around by taxi. In London there is no place to park a car. And, I do confess, there is a further difficulty for me. Not having learned to drive at a younger age, I have now, while not a phobia, certainly more trepidation than I would have had at a younger age. In Europe not driving is convenient. In America, it is a major impediment. I could not live in most places without a car, and I confess this is a deterrent for me. But then there is my family, my need to see Francis more, my want to spend more time with my new nephew Marion, my enjoyment of Francis' wife, Abbe, and my other family members whom I so seldom see.

I am uncertain of it all. In Europe one feels so alive and poised; in America one feels so frantic and dead. Yet, the people I love the most live in that land of frenzied death. Should I join them?

I shall come to a decision within a year. I would rather not decide, but that, of course, would be a determining decision in itself. So I must take a stand.

Meanwhile, I continue with my work--managing research security at the laboratory on the Isle of Man, and doing occasional modeling in London. (At the age of 43, how much longer will they consider me appropriate, i.e., attractive enough, for this? Fortunately I make a very sufficient salary in my work for the government.)

This year Francis placed no limits to how much I could write, but out of consideration for him, I must here desist. He must retype what I send him, and his fingers will grow tired. There also is the fact that, as I said, I wish he would give up The Aviary and devote himself to fiction. So I must not impose the trivial details of my scarcely fictional reality upon his yearly newsletter.

I here reiterate my thanks to those of you who kindly wrote me. Your courteous and interesting letters suggest that Francis is keeping company with more sophisticated and refined people these days. Most unlike that animal, I must say, but then, he has gentled himself as the years go by. "My screamings have mellowed, not subsided," he wrote me recently. An enigma, he would be, were he not so much the buffoon.

My very best!



"Americans are tired of the same old cliches! They want new ones!"

Francis

profinis

I should have predicted it. Again, this last year, there were angry letters to me. Letters criticizing my Aviary, but most of all, criticizing the author of this Aviary. I do not understand why people are so touchy about my newsletter, and I am beginning to suspect that there is something about me which brings out the worst in people. Maybe it is my gentleness of soul, and the easy compassion I extend toward people. Perhaps these natural virtues arouse in others a kind of jealousy for, when comparing themselves to me, they can not but feel that their souls are wormy and perhaps even irredeemable in the eyes of whomever would compare their morality to



mine. It is understandable that someone who feels despicable when compared to me would be put into a morose state of mind and subsequently nurse not a little hostility toward me. It is unfortunate that such people do not adopt Baumli's philosophy that all people are scum, himself included. The only difference being that Baumli happens to be the crust atop the scum.

Speaking of scum: I have indeed adjusted somewhat to living in Southern Illinois. The main thing which has aided this adjustment along has been making friends. Of course, even with friends, there are problems. At one time, during my younger years, I was accustomed to complaining about having to relate to other people in terms of a "couple image." I.e., any friendship with another person contained the automatic presumption on their part that their spouse or "significant other" was included in the friendship. This presumption also entailed the other person believing that a friendship with me automatically included my spouse, or whatever "significant other" I might have been bedding at the time. For example, I would be invited over for dinner, and upon showing up, receive a barrage of indignant queries as to why I had not brought along my wife. To which I would reply that they had invited me only. They then would protest that I should have known that my wife was included in the invitation. Well; I did not know, and I wasn't about to assume it. Now, however, the situation is even more complicated. People not only assume that the spouse or (insignificant?) other is included, they also assume that their children are included. Many has been the time over the last two years when Abbe and I have invited a person over for supper, and that person shows up not only with spouse in tow but also with a couple of children. The ambiance then is quite different from what I had hoped for. One spends too much time dealing with children, instead of interacting with adults. Don't get me wrong; I love children, and sometimes I am pleased to have children over. But I do not like the presumption. There is even another problem I am

encountering with new friends. Namely, they seem to have no sense for when it is time to call a halt to an evening. Hints they do not listen to. Even pointed statements that Abbe needs to get to bed, or I need to get to work, are ignored. Even a caustic



person such as myself does not like being so pointed as to say something like, "Listen, the hour is late. You're going to have to leave now." But sometimes it seems that nothing short of such brutal candor will prevent people from telling that one last story. And then, again, one more last story. The result is that too many people simply can not be nudged out the door at the end of an evening; they have to be shoved out. I do not like doing this, and the result is that I often pass up opportunities to socialize with such people, and instead am content to be the recluse--which is what comes naturally to me anyway.

While indeed it is true that I am better adjusted to living in Southern Illinois, I also am less well adjusted. I have always been especially troubled by, and vulnerable to, individuals who are passive aggressive. But I had never given much thought to how passive aggression is manifested not only at the individual level, but also at the social level. Of course I have been aware of how passive aggression may be, and has been, utilized at the social level in ways that are justifiable. Ghandi's program of passive resistance involved a kind of passive aggression, as did the black slaves' covert subterfuge against our Southern plantation owners during pre-Civil War days. But passive aggression, at the social level, simply for the sake of being aggressive? I once read a sociologist's analysis of passive aggression by blacks against whites in our cities. I remember he remarked upon the fact that blacks he interviewed (he was black himself) admitted to intentionally upsetting whites when driving. The black person would come to a stopsign, and then when a white person driving by on the street would approach, the black person would suddenly let his car lurch forward a few inches just as the white person was going by, thus to frighten the white person into thinking the black person's car was pulling out with a collision resulting. This sociologist found this particular manifestation of

passive aggression almost universal among male black drivers in the three cities where he did his interviewing. (I think this was in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, but I am not sure.) Perhaps passive aggression at the socio-psychological level is something more pervasive than many people realize. It certainly is a phenomenon I had not much considered before moving to Southern Illinois, but now, having encountered it, I am acutely aware of its many hostile manifestations. The passive aggressive manifestations are, as I before mentioned, unique to this area. Unlike the black males in that sociologist's study, the drivers do not merely pretend to be pulling out in front of you; these drivers do pull out in front of you, and it is up to you to avoid the accident. They slam the phone's receiver in your ears, they yell at you over nothing, good will is met with seething resentment, and so on. I am a person who, because of my upbringing with a mother who suffers from a passive aggressive personality disorder, has a terrible time dealing with such passive aggression in individuals. No wonder that when such a trait is ubiquitous--pervasive, in this instance, at the social level--to Southern Illinois, Baumli all but succumbs to its debilitating effects.

I stated that I am not adjusting to living in this area. This is not entirely the fault of Southern Illinois. There are other difficulties too. The custody battle over Dacia, and the continuing tension, has worsened my health and taken a great toll on my sense of emotional equilibrium. My eyesight is deteriorating. I can not read as well, or for as long, in any one day. Slowly, but surely, and now not so slowly, blindness is overtaking me. Jorge Luis Borges has written of his own progressive blindness, stating in a poem:

This growing dark is slow and brings no pain;
it flows along an easy slope
and is akin to eternity.

(This, from his poem, "In Praise of
Darkness," from his book, In Praise
of Darkness, p. 125.)

These are fine words; I wish I could report a similar state of tranquil resignation. Instead, this approaching blindness brings with it a great deal of sadness, grief, and sometimes terror. The idea of not being able to read, of experiencing so much difficulty with writing, is very frightening. I have much of my life's work ahead of me (said by every man on his deathbed!), and I am not ready for impediments of this magnitude.

Meanwhile there is not a great deal in this world to make of one an optimist. The war in the Gulf has left me even more a pessimist than I was before. I continue to be upset by the folly of our world governments. I experienced first hand, again, the oppressiveness of our country's legal system. I realize that I live in a world peopled by too many lawyers, who get fat off the sufferings of others. The U.S. has but 6% of the world's population; yet it has 70% of the world's lawyers. A sad commentary, especially when one realizes how dysfunctional is our legal system.

The larger issues of the world, for example environmental issues, are most oppressive also. The following statistics, true in 1970, again in 1980, and again verified in 1990, are most telling:

The U.S. has 6% of the world's population
The U.S. uses 33% of the world's energy.
The U.S. consumes 42% of the world's natural resources.
The U.S. produces 70% of the world's solid waste.

(Seventy percent of the world's solid waste! And seventy percent of the world's lawyers. This, I suggest, is a telling parallel!) In our house, we try to save on energy, we recycle what we can, we use cloth napkins which get washed, we use cloth diapers, and every now and then either Abbe or I get rather preachy about what we think others should do about all that solid waste. I have pointed out, for example, that disposable diapers and disposable training pants constitute 2% of the solid waste in this country. If we produce 70% of the world's solid waste, then this means (2% of 70%) that usage of disposable diapers in our country produces 1.4% of the entire amount of solid waste in the whole world! A rather sobering statistic, I think. Most people who hear about it are not impressed. "Less than two percent?!" they chirp cheerily. "That's a very small number." Whereupon I glower and begin talking about tonnage of disposed diapers. Square miles of such waste. But my words seldom have any effect. I talk to people about how our country is shipping toxic waste abroad, and dumping it in desert areas in, for example, the Honduras. My listeners yawn. They are not worried. They haven't heard of anybody in the Honduras dying of exposure to toxic waste. And surely, they opine, the business must bring spending money to a country which is very poor to begin with. If dumping a little (sic) toxic waste gives their economy something of a boost, who's to complain?

Well; I complain. But I suppose I should desist. I've done too much complaining in this issue of The Aviary. Unlike my usual stance herein, which is to praise all that is beautiful and do my best to ignore what is ugly in life, I have this time spilled a goodly number of words calling attention to the sad facts of life--my life, and the world's. The truth of the matter is that this last year has not been a very pleasant one. When I look back at pages already completed in this issue of The Aviary, I see a great deal of pain, of bewilderment, of spiritual uncertainty. As for the many mundane things in life, even that is somewhat disappointing. I exposed myself to so much that is mediocre, unfulfilling, even boring. Of course, given my temperament, no exposure to what is boring succeeds in causing



Baumli to succumb to boredom. I am too restless for that, and besides, I am too proud.

Will next year be better? The optimist's fervor would prod one toward hope. But I am not much of an optimist, and hope, even though it is considered one of the Cardinal virtues of the Catholic Church, has to me always been little more than one more manifestation of idleness.

While 1992 may not be any less painful, I do think it will be less boring. This year I shall not expose myself to so much mediocre art. I've had enough of attending second-rate concerts, reading books that provide nothing in the way of inspiration, contemplating paintings that are (not beyond, but) beneath me. Henceforth, if an aesthetic experience is not pristine, not inspiring, then I call a halt to my being there. It will be that simple. And that self protective.

As for my next Aviary? Will there be one? I am not sure. Most years I have very much enjoyed putting together The Aviary. It is always fun to remember all I have done. The musings on paintings and music have been most enjoyable. The blessings conferred upon my many friends and all of humanity so copious as to inspire me to a compassion familiar to saints only.

But this year things have not felt the same. I could perhaps blame this on the many angry letters I have received, but really this would not be true, since such letters do little more than arouse me to even greater heights of compassion. The fact is, I am simply losing interest.

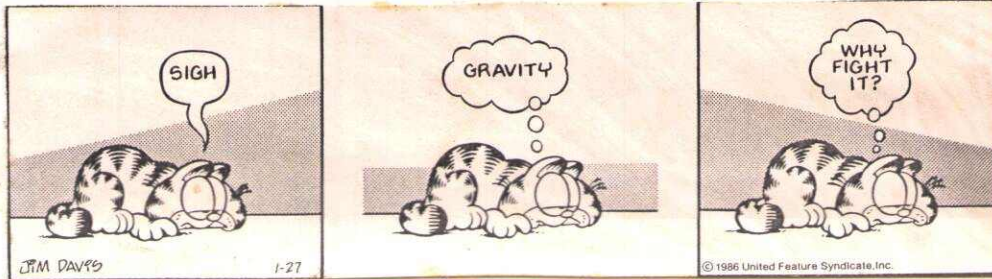
Perhaps this is understandable, given that many of my friends have lost interest. They simply do not read these ravings, and I suppose I should not blame them. A narcissistic exercise such as this presumes too much. Interesting as these pages may be, it is simply not possible for people to put aside the many practical demands of life and sit down for a protracted period of reading such as this missive demands, especially given their addiction to TV.

So ... will there be another Aviary? Unless my several friends and my many enemies plead and grovel at length, begging that I do another, this one may very well be my last. The truth of the matter is that I simply have not enjoyed doing this one. My eyesight is bad, I have suffered at recounting the various unpleasant events of this last year, and there are other things--better things--I would rather be doing. Life is short, the silence of eternity beckons, and I need to direct my voice toward my fiction, where it is at its best.

Looking back over this Aviary, realizing how negative it is, I can not but think that I would be doing the world of morals a good turn were I to simply call a halt, once and for all, to the cavailings my Aviary so naturally elicits from within my otherwise virtuous and untainted soul.

It thereupon behooves me to question why it is I seem so negative in this Aviary--the one you hold in your hands. Looking back over it, as far as I can discern, my negativity is the result of my spending so much time in my daily life being positive, cheerful, even (as some would put it) thoroughly and enviably beyond all moral reproach. Please realize, if you can, that maintaining such a high standard of morals is not easy. I therefore must allow myself, once a year, a catharsis during which I allow all that is venomous, bilious, or in the slightest way less than exemplary to be released. Thus my soul is purified, and I can again go forth among humanity cleansed, translucent of soul, prayerful, inimitable in my adherence to a rigid yet graceful expanse of pristine moral virtue.

Yet, even though I attain an echelon of ethical exemplarism this enviable, it nevertheless remains the case that I am just as much a sinner as anyone. Perhaps even more so, given that I have less of an excuse for my infrequent transgressions than does the average person. Yes; I am very much a sinner. Perhaps more so than most people. But always, of course, in my own saintly way.



Yours, most timidly,