

RANDOM IS JUST A GODDAM WAITING ROOM

A M B L E Perpetrated from the lur at 70 Worrall Road, Bristol 8,
Great Britain, by ARCHIE MERCER for the 40th OMPA Mailing
1 8 during the spring or so of 1964. It is still A MERCATORIAL
PUBLICATION. Yngvi is still a louse.

IF MR. GAUDEAMUS Higginbottom didn't already exist, it would be necessary to invent him, otherwise such episodes as the following would be lost to mankind for ever:

"We reckon to get all sorts of odd callers at G.H. Associates," said Mr. Gaudeamus Higginbottom as he paced his penthouse apartment. "People who want to get hold of some money - people who want to get rid of some money - people who don't know what money is even. Only last week, for example..."

To cut a long story short, the caller in question was an amateur inventor looking for backing. Mr. Higginbottom received him with a show of courtesy - one never knows just what corner the gold happens to be hidden round. When he heard the inventor's story, Mr. Higginbottom definitely sat up and took notice. Because the invention was, if it turned out to be anything like what was claimed, a potential winner. It consisted of a simple and easily-installed gadget that, if fitted to the engine of a car, would make drunken driving impossible. There was a tube coming up into the car's interior with a gauge that, if a drunken breath was breathed anywhere near it, would automatically lock the engine. The engine would stay locked until the drunken breath was taken away. If it worked, there was no end to the commercial possibility. It might even be made a compulsory fitment to every car, by law.

The inventor had a working model there with him, and since one of the travellers was in that morning a car was readily available. It was the traveller's own car of course - the only car actually belonging to G.H. Associates was the car that Mr. Higginbottom was disqualified from driving for a couple more years yet. But as a loyal member of the staff the traveller was amenable to the suggestion, particularly as he saw the possibility of a few free drinks out of the deal. So they went round to the parking meter (also a private rather than a company expense) and the inventor fiddled about under the bonnet for a few minutes. Finally he stepped back, closed it, and straightened up.

"There you are, gentlemen," he announced. "She's installed."

So they all piled in, Mr. Higginbottom beside the driver (the traveller) to direct him to a pleasant pub he knew of off Leicester Square. There they would have a few rounds on Mr. Higginbottom's expense account, after which an attempt would be made to start up the engine preparatory to driving back to Scavengers Yard. And if the engine genuinely would not start, then the inventor would have found a ready market.

The traveller pressed the self-starter. Nothing happened.

He pressed it again. And again. Nothing happened whatsoever except that Mr. Higginbottom looked at him with an accusative glint in his eye.

"You've been drinking, Jones," he told the traveller.

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The traveller was flustered. "I - er - honestly, Mr. Higginbottom, sir," he protested. "I haven't touched a drop since - er - night before last. Or - no, night before last it was." And to this story he stuck.

"Let me have a go, Mr. Higginbottom," put in the inventor, so Jones the traveller reluctantly made room for him, standing outside on the pavement to watch what happened. The inventor pressed the starter. Still nothing happened.

"I'm a teetotaler, Mr. Higginbottom," he protested in his turn. "Never touched a drop in me' life. Er - I don't like to mention this, sir, but could it be possible that you yourself might have had a nip this morning that's affecting the gauge?"

As it happened, Mr. Higginbottom had had a nip that morning, the same as any other morning, and he was honest enough to admit it. The notion that his brain-child might react to a passenger's breath as to a driver's had not previously occurred to the inventor; nevertheless, Mr. Higginbottom graciously consented to stand on the pavement beside Jones while the inventor had yet another series of tries at the starter.

Nobody need have bothered. Nothing continued to happen every time.

Everybody was beginning to get a bit het up by now. The traveller and the inventor both peered under the bonnet long and earnestly, but everything seemed to be in apple-pie order with the one exception that the car would not start. Jones was dispatched to fetch a mechanic from a nearby garage. In due course the mechanic arrived and rechecked everything with the same result: everything worked bar the engine.

So ultimately there was only one thing to do: remove the invention from the car again. This was easy - too easy if anything, the inventor thought. He'd have to see about making the next model more difficult to tamper with, otherwise people would simply be taking them out again and we'd be back where we started - except that G.H. Associates (and probably himself) would be somewhat better off in the pocket. He'd have to have a long hard look at this model first, though. Lovingly he wrapped it up and restored it to his suitcase.

Jones the traveller slid into the driver's seat again and pressed the self-starter. The engine started immediately.

It was the mechanic who eventually tumbled to the trouble. The invention worked all right. Perfectly all right. That was the trouble. Furthermore, neither Jones nor the inventor himself needed to be in the least bit drunk for it to work.

Just so long as the car ran on petrol, ^{the invention} would work every time, without fail. It was impossible for it to miss.

The inventor is now understood to be working on a refinement of the steam engine.

 "AGE IS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS TO BODIES, NOT TO PEOPLE." - Bernice Black

THE SHAMBLES

PRESHAMBULATORY REMARKS OMPA has now seen 39 Mailings. THIRTY-NINE. I'm not 39 yet. That means that I've now been in OMPA for more than a quarter of my life, John Roles about the same, and Ron Bennett even longer proportionately. I wonder who'll be the first person to spend half his life in OMPA? ≠ As to the perennial question of What's Wrong With OMPA, I've been thinking - right now, I maintain, the main thing wrong with OMPA is that we don't get a thick VAGARY in every Mailing.

FARRAGO 3 (Larry Crilly) I'm not quite sure whether one should blame Larry for putting out something that apparently has no interest for him, or praise him for fulfilling his membership obligations despite all. Several OMPAns will probably go into details where you're wrong, Larry - and if you've made up your mind that you're right anyway, they needn't bother. Thanks for showing willing, anyway.

OFF TRAILS 39 (Oethel) Ethel, you shouldn't have volunteered to do OE for a second year. Not in Worldcon year. You're a Good Man and we all love you - but surely one of the Provincials would have been willing, if asked? Has everybody been asked? (Nobody's asked me, for example - which lets me out of a dilemma admittedly, but it would still probably have made better sense than pushing it on you again.)

WHATSIT SEVEN (Cheslin, Detroit Iron 5, BERSERK !!!) ^{Schultz etc)} Plenty here. The thought of Studebaker's grandfather drilling holes to let the water through from floor to floor had me laughing out loud - a thing I rarely do these days. Studebaker is a Good Thing - he amuses one vastly, and makes one ponder deeply, by turns. The sort of person it's worth being in OMPA to meet. ≠ The Ashmolean, I gather, is a sort of museum affair attached to Oxford University. But it took its name from one Ashmole - which is a name such as I dig. ≠ As King Haakon was over here at the time, Ken, I think you must mean Denmark. ≠ "Ofay" is generally derived from "foe", as in "Igpay Atinlay". Another possible derivation (usually ignored) is from the French "au fait". ≠ I don't know what the reaction is to my piece on the Kennedy assassination in the previous issue yet, but I'll stick out my neck again here and now - and attempt to justify it. In general, the reaction to the assassination has amazed me - and continues to do so with every mention of it in OMPA. I was shocked, certainly - but not that shocked. I didn't feel (as most of you seem to have felt) that I'd lost a personal friend or anything like that. On reflection, it occurs to me that this may possibly be connected with the fact that I have no telly, and very rarely get to see one (and neither do I go to the cinema). Whereas the average person (including the average fan) is used to having the great ones of the world in his drawing-room so to speak, and daily at that, all I know about them is what I read in "The Times", and so the impression of intimacy is lacking. There's more to it than this, though. I was under the impression that President Kennedy was doing his best to make the world a better place, true. I was under the same impression about Ike and Truman - and am now under that impression about President Johnson. But they're all still alive, so nobody bothers about them much. And all four pale into insignificance when compared to F.D.R., who is vastly bigger than all of them put together. (Yes - I can hero-worship if the hero's big enough.)

Also, I am appalled by the utter naivete of people who imagine that by, for example, changing Smith Street's name to Jones Street they are thereby ensuring immortality for the name of Jones. All they're doing is (a) denying it to Smith, and (b) setting a precedent for a future change to Robinson Street.

One place where I may possibly have been wrong, or at least premature, was where I assumed Oswald to be indeed the assassin. I see now that this is not necessarily the case. Whatever the assassin's identity, though, the substance of my remarks remains unaffected.

≠ DETENTION IN '66 - not that I'm likely to attend wherever it be, but you can count me as being basically in favour sure enough. ≠ Under the old OMPA Constitution, the AE had (in practice if not in theory) almost infinite discretion. Particularly when coupled with a rubber-stamp President such as Willis. ≠ But didn't you say something about having an OUTPOST nearly ready to get off to Ethel when you got back, Fred? I was looking forward to it. Or did you have six weeks' arrears of mundae to catch up on first or something?

PROCRASTINATOR 1 (Trimbles) All this talk about postmailing the issue - and it turns up in the Mailing after all. But I've long thought that California could do with a matter-transmitter. Any chance of us getting a look at the plans? ≠ That "...baby shop (for clothes, not babies)..." curled me up. Though of course there's a third possibility - a baby shop, that gradually grows up. Somebody should write a story about it. ≠ Anyway, I love being rambled at by massed Trimbledom.

BLEATHERINGS 35 (Ethel Lindsay) Actually, we only pay towards the NHS by the tax deducted from our earnings (along with the National Insurance stamp). The vast bulk of the money still comes from general taxation. ≠ "...to mentally score Bruce Burn off my list of people I want to know..." But Ethel, surely the whole point of Bruce's remarks was that he was trying thereby to get to know you and Ella etc better. ≠ I still have to think twice before I can remember which was D.H. and which was T.E. ≠ I can sing I Belong to Glasgow with the best (although I don't - belong I mean), but I can't sing Maybe It's Because... Perhaps somebody could throw some light on this for me?

LEFNUI 2 (Fred Patten) But Algeria and Tunisia are not East - they're South. Of if they're East, then so is the whole of Europe, which is ground zero for traditional orientation in the first place. ≠ Has the title anything to do with the difference between a "leftenant" and a "loo-tenant" perhaps? ≠ Good ramblings, anyway. (And Ethel - can't you make the obvious distinction between "Americans" and "Californians" ? I've been making it for years.)

MORPH XXXIV (Johannes Roleus) Well, the wind in the trees, the laughter of happy children and the pop of a cork from a bottle are music to some people. (Not necessarily to me. Not at all, I suspect, to Holbrand Yash, Mrs. Grace Turlang, or Stanley Purcell.) To other people, too, they're not so much music as poetry, and therefore probably can be written down. Though offhand I'm not quite sure just how. ≠ Cheddar cheese is made, if not within the actual Cheddar parish, at least in the neighbourhood still. All over the world too of course. ≠ Despite the off-putting micro-elite (which I therefore haven't read), still an issue of unusual interest John. Neater than it has been, too. (Tidier-neater, not undiluted-neater.) The "labelling" biz for instance.

BIG DEAL 5 (Dave Hale) You should ask Moorcock about McColl some time. ≠
At first I thought that Alan Burns was responsible for the Eschritt thing, until the author said he was a Sect. Scots we have a-plenty - but they all live in London nowadays.

BINARY 101 (alleged) (Joe Patrio) (The "1/2" is a very in-groupish reference, which is possibly meaningless to everybody else in OMPA, in case anybody was wondering.) ≠ But why should a socialist be expected to argue against America and a conservative to argue for America? I would expect each to argue for one side of America and against the other side. ≠ Bruce may misquote Burns, but you mis-spell "Britannia" so there. ≠ At least one can laugh at the Beatles, which is more than can be said for Sinatra-types.

SOUFFLE 7 (John M. Baxter) Music was made before notation was invented. Music is still made by illiterates. Not simply in the jazz field, either. ≠ Aside from the films and the fiction (neither of which is for me), there's a surprising amount of interest in this. I think you are becoming mellow, too, John.

AMBLE PIE ERG 19 (Ferry Jeeves) WEIN OMPF 2 (Colin Freeman) BURP! 22 (Ron Bennett) All these were enjoyed, particularly the Mailing comments. And unless any more postmailings arrive verysshortly, that's all this time. Glad, anybody?

! I'LL DO IT IN SIX PAGES YET !

FAMOUS FRED'S NO. FIVE

FREDERIC REMINGTON

(1861 - 1909)

Painter of the West.

Despite some extensive checking, the name of the Indian remains unknown.

Illo and text by
Jim Cawthorn.



(Incidentally, although it had not occurred to me before, it is now obvious that my hitherto anonymous Remington Travel-Riter Deluxe has really been named Fred all along. AM)

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, ARCHIBALD HENRY MERCER, LIVE AT 70 WORRALL ROAD, BRISTOL 8.

"WORRALL" - W.O.double-R.A.double-L. - is the only correct way to spell the name of the road. The Lord Mayor of Bristol and the local Head Postmaster will say the same if anybody asks them.

Little did I realise, when first I moved to this address, the trouble that I was letting myself in for. OMPA seems to be at the seat of most of it - first somebody dropped an "l" off the end, now the "a" has mysteriously become an "e", and the result keeps appearing as "Worrel". I don't know how much further this process can safely be taken, but it's beginning to worry me. (Worry Road perhaps?) Already I've had one letter addressed to me at "Wirral Road" (from a non-OMPAn, incidentally though). I received that one OK. What, I'm wondering, about the ones that got labelled (for instance): "Sorrel Road", "Barrel Road", "Wormall Road", and so on? Perhaps it hasn't got that bad yet. If it has, though, then they've never got through.

So I would be obliged if everybody would look up their records (if any), and make sure that my address is as stated above, viz., 70 WORRALL ROAD, BRISTOL 8.

Thank you, Ethel.

THE HIGGINBOTTOM HYMN

Gaudeamus Higginbot
 Talks about himself a lot.
 Blind acceptance is a fault;
 Take him with a pinch of salt.
 If his pearls you must collect,
 Be extremely circumspect,
 Contemplating every single word,
 And discounting much of what you've heard.

A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, I discovered a way to create more free time. I stopped reading.

It worked, too. I'm sorry I didn't think of it before. I can recommend it.

And that's why there isn't any Lair this issue, children.

 DON'T LOOK NOW - but this is Page 6 of AMBLE 18, and I haven't got anything else I particularly want to say. This is unprecedented, not to mention altogether unheard of. Apart from that, it's never been known to happen before. Perhaps it's a good omen for the future - who knows?

I strongly suspect that if I was to leave this issue open for a week or three, AMBLE 18 would start climbing again. So I won't. I'll be ruthless. (Go away, Ruth.) I'll close it off, duplicate and assemble it and get it in the post to Ethel.

Meanwhile, what of AMBLE 19? The world watches with bated breath. Will it still be six pages? Or four, or zero even? Or something ridiculous like fifty or something? Watch the Mailings, filks. AM (23 March 1964)