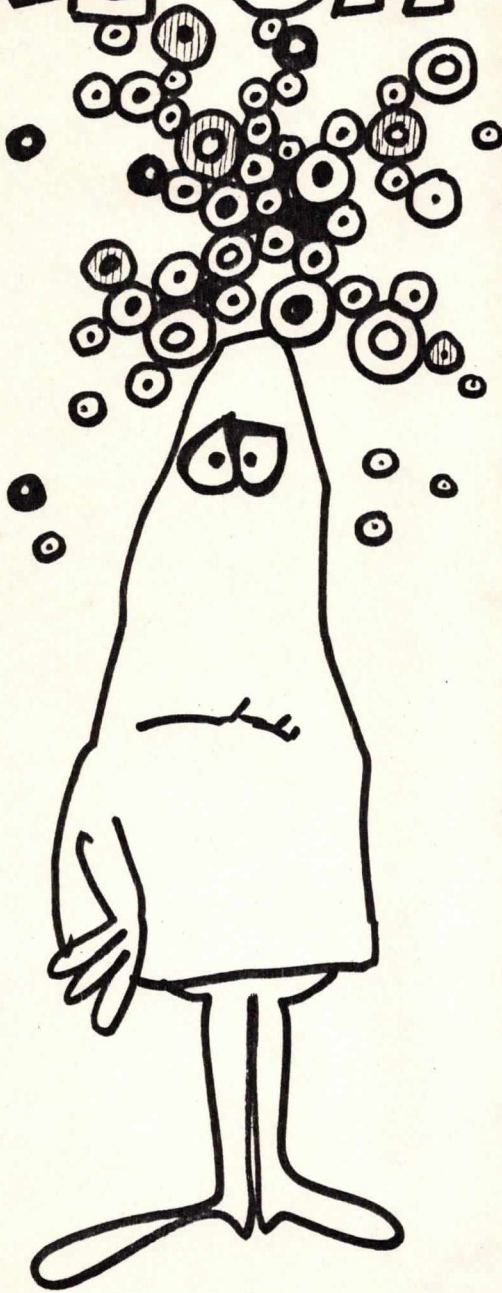
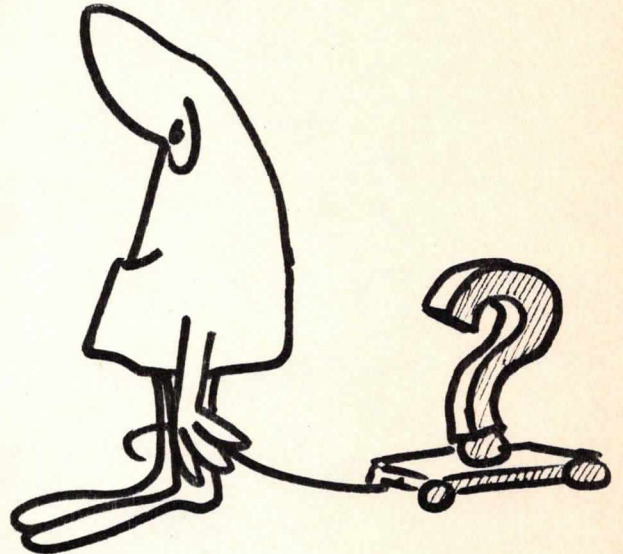


THE BEST LINES ARE OFF THE XEROX



CAN YOU COME OUT
AND PUBLISH?



A FAREWELL BURBEE-TYPE ONE SHOT FANZINE
THE WORLD OF KIDS ISSUE

THE BEST LINES ARE OFF THE XEROX, August 1978. Publisher, Charles Burbee, 9781 Acacia Ave #18, Garden Grove, CA 92641. Intended for the August FAPAmailing and a few people who deserve something like this now and then.

When I got the idea of Xeroxing this magazine, I didn't know I would run into trouble. At this point in time--if Dean Grennell will excuse the expression--I have a lot of un-Xeroxed material, and the deadline is rushing down upon me. I've been sneaking into the Shipping Dept and using their machine while the crew was out to lunch. One night I forgot my copy. Another night the machine was nearly out of paper and I didn't know how to load it. That, incidentally, is why this thing is being done on one side of the paper only. I don't know how to load-unload a Xerox. Another night, in the middle of a run, the machine stopped and, robot-like, began flashing a code signal "Call Key Operator." I didn't know any such operators and didn't really want to meet a steely eyed 300-lb maiden who might brusquely inquire as to the nature of my material and why I was running it off in such quantities.

And another bit of trouble--got another shoulder?--Dean Grennell, not believing in new-fangled Xerox-things, brought three cut Gestetner stencils. Crusty ole devil resists change. Ed Cox was supposed to run them off on his machine, and the machine started ripping up the copies as though editorializing. So, outside of the Round Robin thing, no high-class Dean Grennell in this installment of BEST LINES. Perhaps next mailing we will issue Installment #2 of this unspeakable one-shot. A fannish First! A one-shot in two installments! Make a note of that for the next Fancyclopedia.

At the session were the Three Grennells, Dean, Jean, and Bleen. Orrather, Bill. Gus Willmorth and Leonore Cannon. Dave Locke and Jackie Causgrove, Ed Cox, Charles and Cora Burbee. Socorro, rather. Yes, a girl's name that ends in "o". Did you know that Pancho Villa's real first name was Doroteo? Masculine form of Dorothy. All knowledge is contained in fanzines.

Socorro ran off the cover. She also made a gigantic pot of chili beans, enough for a decimated regiment, and although we made off with a lot of it, there still was a lot left. Enough for another one-shot, but, I fear there will not be another one-shot on Gabbett.

I'd invited Bill Rotsler and his lady Sharman, but they ran off to some comic book convention in San Diego. Dammit, I'd wanted to look at his fabulous typing finger and report on its condition to you, but now that'll have to wait.

Elmer Perdue called to say he couldn't make it. His lovely 24-year-old Lebanese housekeeper was there, working, in her new bikini.

I have seen the lady and I must declare that she is eminently watchable, even in old blue jeans and blouse.

Changing the subject abruptly, Elmer began talking about having an operation on his penis, "So I can once more indulge in sex, Meyer."

I didn't comment much on that. He told us years ago, a large group of us at a party in Whittier, that he'd had this operation performed. In a loud clear voice he spoke so graphically of the blood and pus spurting under the surgeon's knife that several of the people --in the dining area--felt their appetites waning.

We had a joyous time at the one-shot session. There will no doubt never be another emanating from the La Mirada area, so fondle this one a bit, will you?

---Charles Burbee

'Twas a balmy Sunday afternoon and a goodly crowd was there, that well nigh filled Burb's kitchen/In the corner of the square. To this (Brace yourself for an unavoidable cliché, please?) point in time, I am functioning as a one-man crowd; a role I am better suited to play than your casual, millrun average. ("Where IS everybody?" Burbee just asked, quizzically, to no one in particular. Were my benign bonhomie not legendary on at least eight continents, I might feel as faint yet to resent that. Hey, Burbee-san, I'm here, okay?) At any rate, I must beseech thy forgiveness if my typing is not the impeccable thing you have every reason and right to expect of me. An explanation, not an excuse: This is a truly antediluvian manual/portable Smith-Corona, apparently on the imminent throes of suffering a Smith-Corona. Fourteen happy years of symbiosis with an IBM Exec typer have spoiled me rotten and it's distracting to have to supply the muscle for typing once more. The bod at the keyboard is DAG, until further notice.

Speaking of manual typewriters, I am reminded of an incident long ago (they just don't make nostalgia like that any more...), concerning Bob Silverberg, also a member of this august group. I had described to him a fun-type session I'd had, doing some painting in oils with some music to paint by. He came back commenting, "I decided to try your approach for writing, so I put a record on the turntable and started typing. When the record ended, I found I'd just typed the same paragraph over and over, a little darker each time. I guess I shouldn't have tried it with Ravel's Bolero ..."

I had recently to recall Agberg and Boggs recently. Doing some heroic neatening-up around the home 29, I came upon a mass of old WO#3W communiques and lost valuable time poring over them with mist-blear'd eyecojones. There were some passably priceless lino's, I thought; e.g, c. 1958:

Our OE who art in Whittier, Burb bee thy name

&

A eunuch is a man who has lost his pappary glands.

Eheu fugaces and all that jass. Whilst engaged in whapping down all the foregoing, another face joined our midst; a shaggy, craggy but kindly sort of face that, for reasons I never quite understand, always sort of reminds me of an unfrocked rabbi. What I mean to say is, Ed Cox is here. I propose to turn over the typer to his manipulations, which reminds me of Tina Hensel Jones' immortal lino:

Woman titivates; man nipolates.

(Tailgunner's 20-10 & 10-8)

Shaggy? Hell, I've had a haircut this year...

But about this unfrocked rabbi business... I've been thinking about that phrase for some time... about 30 seconds... and have wondered just what that could mean. I mean, in this day of flexible mores and standards of sexual designation, the Men of God not only renouncing celibacy but some of them not being too traditional about the sex of their partners, or pioneering for the Forces of Gay Liberation... well, being an unfrocked rabbi could be a very confusing concept. Maybe that means he's still in the closet....?

It is indeed--now that I've got the above out of the way--a pleasing and comfortable thing to be engaged in the perpetuation (remember what I said about that usage, Jack) of another Burbee One-Shot. This will probably have to be the Mark III One-Shot among the various types.

ALL STOP !

ALL STOP ! I have just witnessed a sight that I would never have ever thought of being possible. In fact, I doubt if the thought of the possibility would ever have crossed my mind, the improbability of it being so improbable. But it has happened and it has swept through my senses as a hurricane across the Florida Keys. I just saw Dean A. Grennell drinking strawberry soda !

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In fact, my mind has so goggled, or even boggled (Hi, Redd), that I'm gonna have to relinquish this typewriter to somebody else. Even turn it over to another one-shotist. (More about this concept later...)

Milo Beanfang here. My hobby's running over toads with a power lawnmower. What's yours?

Lawd. I've been pacing the floor waiting for Ed Cox and Dean Grennell to get off this typer --by the way, my name is Burbee, Charles, yes, the very same-- because I felt, as I paced the floor, that I had a lot of unsaid stuff that begged to be said. So, soon as I sat here in front of the typer, the unsaid stuff fled. But, as we all know, not having anything much to say has never yet stumped a fanzine editor; as we all know, all of us today are fanzine editors. I can't seem to make a sentence out of that last attempt at English, so I am just going to let it go.

Right now the people in the front room are talking about the fine bargains in likker to be found here and there in California, now that the so called Fair Trade prices have been struck from the likker business. Actually, this section of the Round Robin Editorial (but Dean says it isn't that) is suffering because of the recent repeal of the Fair Trade prices. I am at this moment full of Olympia beer which is going for \$1.39 a six-pack. In the old days a fella could write something like Confessions of an English Opium Eater and make four hundred dollars; but I feel damned sure that this paragraph, even though I title it Confessions of an American Olympia Beer Drinker, is not going to net me enough to buy me so much as one six-pack.

A quiet typewriter is a non-productive tyewriter (believe typewriter?). Stout heart sets to the breach, men! Suddenly, just about everything is getting to be legal in California. Soon, it'll be like Nevada, where the only thing that's against the law is taking a dog into a grocery store. One of the things they recently legalized for California is the home brewing of beer. That's still against the law, federalwise, but California has no objections; an anomalous situation if ever one existed. What blew my (DAG's) mind was an article in the paper dealing with a local club of homebrewers. It was what they called themselves that thrilled and delighted me: THE MALTOSE FALCONS. Isn't that neat?

Anybody whod go that far wouldnt stop there...

Ed Co just came rushing up saying we're about to be inundated by fans, and hardly a moment too soon. Perhaps we can get Dave Locke (of the Panama Canal Lockes) to say a few words for the radio audience. Dave Ronnie-baby!...

I resent having to sit down at a typewriter before getting a chance to fix a drink. So I didn't. Took a while, though, because every glass in the cabinet looked like a hand-blown piece of art which had never been touched by human lips, so I had to stop and contemplate my worthiness before performing a laying-on of hands and ice cubes and bourbon and cola and lips. All this talk of drink is whipping me into a frenzy. Is someone else in line? Next.

Burbee here. That is Dave Locke up there. I don't know why he didn't want to admit it. He spoke of looking at "hand-blown" pieces--we don't blow by hand around here--and not wanting to touch them with human hands; but I told him he looked like a fuckin' Klingon and so could touch them. Don't all fans look like Klingons, kind of?

 "I used to have Ethics — it was a '37, near as I can remember — but I traded it in on a '39 Chivalry..." —Redd Boggs

Which sort of somehow reminds me of a vague gag in one of the mens' mags from a few years back. A bunch of tourist-types were being conducted through the seamier aspects of Stockholm nightlife. "And, on our left," the guide proclaimed sonorously, "we see a Swedish vulva."

"I had one of those once," observed one of the tourists, "but the transmission went to hell on it."

My turn, I see (me being Jackie). I hope it is not required that I tell jokes. It's not that I am the world's worst joke teller — I'm not, I don't think — but I hear few jokes, appreciate few, and remember less. I'll leave the joke-telling to Dean or Dave or whosoever feels so inclined. Just so long as I don't have to read or listen to them. So what shall I talk about? I think I'll go fix another drink and think on it for a while. Maybe if I think on it long enough I'll finish the bottle I brought. Of course, if that happens (*shudder*) we'll have to rush off and I won't have the chance to tell you about whatever subject I came up with. But — parties without Southern Comfort — well, you'll understand.

The above is a patent fraud (copyright 1978). That wasn't me, that some short, hairy fellow with whom I am acquainted. The only reason I'm typing on this at all is that the honor of Southern Comfort has been maligned by the host. He claims it is a drink used by winoes who want to graduate to the hard stuff. *Hmph* Say I. Of course, he keeps referring to it being a forty-proof liqueur, which shows how much he knows about the subject.

Southern Comfort, the drink of the Olde South (St. Louis and environs) is but a pale imitation of itself in this State. There's only two places where 40 Proof S.C (as the cognozeti (sp?) refer to it) is sold: Ohio and California (love that name for this place). Is it any wonder I want to go home? Where Men are Men and S.C. is S.C. and not fermented Kool-Aid? The only problem is that the Men in the Midwest have the same relationship with the aforementioned short, hairy fellow that California S.C has with the Midwestern varietal. I really hate to have a disagreement with mine Host so soon after meeting him, but so be it. I am forced into behaving in an unguestlike manner.

Burbee (the host) here. Yes, I meant $\frac{1}{2}$ host. Because ^{Secorra,} Cora, my ex, is the other half of the host. In English, the other half of the host is called the hostess. Didn't know that, did you?

Damned right I said Southern Comfort is for winos who are tapering off. I don't know exactly why I said it, except that I wanted to disturb a drinker of Southern Comfort. Anybody who drinks sweet likkers is just a little bit off-center. Okay, Burbee gone. I now introduce the next guest editor.

Speaking of graffiti (however one spells it) the Builders Emporium in El Toro has a bit on the wall of the gent's room. To quote: Notice: If you voted for Carter, you can't shit here because your asshole's in Washington.

Graffiti, grafitti. That was two BEST LINES ago. Bjt, since the man brought it up, two more graffitis (how, anyway, does one spell that word?): "Eat shit. Forty billion flies can't be wrong." "Why is shit tapered? Ans. So your asshole doesn't slam shut." All right, all right, who started this graffiti caper? Burbee over and out.

(Cannon here) The party is rather interesting. The dialogue becomes more ribald as the minutes pass by. I often wonder how a FAPA party would be if four letter words had never been invented.

I'm overhearing a conversation about sex, liquor and politics. I think this is the American way of life at the average cocktail party.

I wonder what would happen if I asked anyone if they had ever read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason."

I realize I'm sounding like a snob. I don't really mean it. I'm having fun. I love Burbee's parties.

Locke back at the hot seat, having gone through several drinks at this point, but Charlie is drinking Coors and we're waiting for him to have his first real drink of the evening. On the last page we see him, filled with audacity (or Coors, same thing), disparaging Southern Comfort while swilling a beer which is run through the kidneys of a wolverine before they bottle it (or can it). This man has tongue-in-cheek, no doubt. Next we'll see him drinking Southern Comfort while writing funny stories about people who drink Coors.

Thank God I'm drinking rum and diet cola, which exempts me from hearing slights about my drinking preferences (my drinking preferences are well known, so everybody knows I'm not drinking this shit because I like it...). Cora, who keeps feeling my stomach (the last time she saw me I weighed 60 pounds more than I do now), knows what I'm talking about.

Take it away, Deano.

Dino Gremelli here, that nice Italian boy, getting ready to light off the boilers on the Snarling Canary and steam sedately out of the harbor. Be of good cheer, mes enfants. Get lots of starch in your diet so's you can keep a stiff upper lip, y'heah?
Ciao, y'all...

GW66— My earliest recollection goes back some e333 years. When I was 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ —my very earliest recollection, an event that probably warped my whole life, was of the great mechanical marvel, the elevating bridge at Portland, Oregon. We were bound, my father, mother and I, from Charleson, Wash, my birthplace, the Yakima as a destination. We were stalled at the bridge for what seemed hours, while the bridge crept up and slowly descended. About five boats slowly crept under the span—I was absolutely fascinated, gripped in the utter impossibility of a solid bridge breaking right in two in the middle. The bridge gradually subsided, while we waited patiently, and we continued on our way. I can think of no other reason for my fascination with things mechanical. Certainly a salient event. I could undoubtedly been interested in any one of a dozen agricultural or literate pursuits. Instead, I became fascinated by science fiction and the potential of things mechanical. What a waste!
Willmorth

I have no fascination for mechanical things. My opinion regarding things that raise and lower, however, is a different matter (I want to maintain the quality of conversation that Leonore mentioned). (This is Jackie typing, by the way) The only acquaintance I've had with draw-bridges is in Chicago (from which area I hail; proving that grammatical accuracy is disrupting to comprehension) and the only thing I've noted about them is the ungodly amount of time it takes to get the damn things up and then to get them down again. Somehow I doubt that was the phenomenon Gus was referring to... I suppose that I have managed to - in my fumble-fingered fashion - to use up the ten lines that Burbee wanted used up, so allow me to introduce mine $\frac{1}{2}$ host!...

Oh shit, if I am introduced, it is no more than my duty to appear in some guise or another (this is Burbee, dammit, I wasn't ready, I was talking tail with Dave Locke) and so here I am and what I am going to do about it I cannot at this time say. Maybe I ought to try like hell to introduce another guest editor. I think I will do this. Whole problem now is: Can, gentlemen, we get to the bottom of this pge? I think all of us assembled here will realize the problem and will girl up the loins--girl up the loins?--gird up the loins and really give it the old school try to get to the bottom of the page. Don't let the side down, men. And ladies: Or mss: Used to be, ms meant manuscript. I have this feeling of deja vu...along with a definite feeling that the last person who typed on this forgot to space after their paragraph...

...but it seems as if I've been here before. At this very same typewriter... on this day, in this place...by god, I am Here...geez, feels like the second coming (a topic that is explored in somewhat graphic detail in the new plethora of books on people, relationships, sex between one or more people and the like). But, here sit I, Ed Cox, in far off exotic La Mirada, with people drinking beer, scotch, rum, gin, diet cola and more exotic beverages, with the local, or nearly so, radio station in Don Fitch's hometown, playing music of the 40's, all day long, Charles Burbee talking dirty, Gus Willmorth talking into the tape recorder, Dave Locke looking even thinner...all manner of weird, faannish, exotic goings-on that would not normally be found during a really serious & constructive FAPA one-shot.

What the hell I'm doing here I'm not sure. But upon 30 seconds of reflection, it is definitely to eat Cora's cooking, drink beer, listen to Charles Burbee talking dirty, watching Dave Locke drink diet cola, listen to Gus Willmorth talk into the tape-recorder about early LASFS days, Dave Locke drink diet cola and all that sort of thing. This, of course, taking place during the fractional time when everybody isn't talking about sex. Talk, talk, talk! Let's do something.....!

Here I (Ed Cox) sit at the typewriter while the rest of the crew sit in the living room, reliving, into the tape-recorder, their days in the Olde LASFS. They talk about Francis T. Laney, the LASFS and all that jazz. Even jazz. Which was what was mainly playing over KGRB until they turned it off to talk about all this other jazz...so this is Ed Cox, neo-LASFASian (death does not release you) signing off for the time being until I can get some other turkey to finish this page....

Locke again. I haven't been drinking as much diet cola as the discussion would tend to indicate. I'm drinking rum. The diet cola is merely an agent which causes me to make frequent head calls so that the rum does not build up a coating in my tubes. Most anything could serve this purpose. Except Coors. If I wanted to drink Coors I could merely take a ladle into the bathroom.

Or is it ladle? Damn, I need another rum and diet cola.

Burbee here. It is ladle, you lecherous bastard. Oh, excuse me, Dave, I didn't mean you call you a lecherous bastard. You, in fact, are the only man here who is not a lecherous bastard. Take it away, next Editor.

WILLMORTH SOMEWHERE. Just last month I was talking to Oliver King Smith, once considered only a figment of Tuckers imagination, concerning the matter of Singleton's Suicide. Forrest J. Ackerman was there and quite interested in all the things that had happened since the days in a small dorm room at MIT. Ollie and I were lamenting the manner in which the data processing world was passing us by while John (ol' Earl) rode on the crest of the wave. Ollie said that he had been in to see Singleton some weeks before, about the time that he had been featured in Forbes Mag. Won't even talk about SF anymore. Very few of fankind ever make it into the hundred million dollar class, dead or alive. Oh, well. We can console ourselves with the fact that we kept the faith. ...Baby. So, someone else can take the seat while I go console myself with another JB (Locke just got back with some fresh ice.).....

ED COX here: I always thought that Oliver King Smith was a typewriter or a character in a Tennessee Williams play. But then, I am not all that cognicent of all the myriad aspects of the Fandom That Was/Is/ And no doubt always will be, in the minds of the timebinding type of faanish mind. All knowledge may, in fact, really be contained in fanzines. If, of course, we only had all of them and knew in which ones to look for the Secrets of the Universe or Sevagram or Tynoal of whatever it all is...

Somehow it has ended up my responsibility to finish out the rest of this page, editorial (Round-Robin editorial they keep saying, but how can this be true of a non-NFFF publication?).

It therefore falls onto me to assume a stance of grave respectability, sombre aspect and justifiably humble aspect as the end of an era grinds to a nostalgic halt. The last of the Burbee one-shots. The Gabbett Street address will fade into the rosy sunset glow of vanishing FAPAL glory, along with the golden days of 1958, GRUE, the Cambridge group, elephants graveyard, Rick Sneary, Joe Kennedy, Fancy Expensive Restaurants, English Accent (from New Zealand), It's Eney's Fault, and all the rest of the Trivia from the Pantheon of FAPAL Glory. Now what do I say?

Redd Boggs, where are you? Harry, be sure to spend three chapters on this in the next volume of your FanHistory. Jim Murray, devote one Sunday column to this deplorable situation. It's almost as bad as when the Dodgers leave the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth when it's three to two in favor of the visitors, with two out and Reggie Smith strikes out.

What will happen in the future, namely in the November mailing, when the whole fabric of the FAPA depends on the catalyst of a Burbee-type one-shot to spur on the juices of creativity, spontaneosity (if that's a real word) enthusiasm and joie de vivre or whatever the hell those French fans talk about when they refer to sex. (What else would French fans talk about?)

A new era must somehow, like the Phoenix (not considering the WorldCon) rise from the gray, cold ashes of the previous manifestations of the Burbee One-Shot, Mark I; now in the twilight of decline. Be verbose or of good cheer, for this shall all take place one more time, in the golden days ahead, when we shall all sit around, typing a Round*Robin editorial, drinking beer, ogling the women-folk, talking dirty and all that type of stuff. All will, once again, be right with the world. And the only world, of course, is fandom. And FAPA is of the essence of that World. All Rise! -----

August 1978

This is a somewhat different, though not the first, type of one-shot. The Xerox-master concept has been done before, but not at a Burbee-Type Mark I one-shot. It will not, however, be all that much different for me. I'll still have the same problem with typos, repeating "a's", "l's" between words, etc.

The topic is the thing that worries me. Especially since I can not find the flyer outlining what it is we're supposed to do this time. Oh, I know we're supposed to drink beer, ogle the women-folk, talk dirty, type a round-robin editorial, the usual things, but I only vaguely remember what the topic ~~ix~~ supposed to be for this pre-typed part. Something about childhood, first memories, and all that.

If only I knew what "childhood" was...

My problem in remembering stuff from that era is, as Dave Locke has eloquently revealed--advanced senility--that it happened so long ago that I have trouble remembering the French and Indian Wars, let alone my childhood. Which also makes it difficult for me to remember the first times of various happenings to my young life. Of course, there are still first times that take place in later years...

...like the first time a lucious young thing smiles brightly at you in the office and calls you "Sir"...

I suppose I can dredge up from the sludge of my memories a variety of things that evoke sharp images of deja vu...because I really did experience these things and for an instant, it is almost as if I was experiencing them again. Some small item, a quick scene flashes and abruptly from the dormant memory banks, which we are as yet unable to utilize at will, a slice of reality from long ago flares into immediate reality, faading rapidly despite all attempts to retain it for one more gigasecond.

Like something as ordinary as my first ice scream. As some of the older echelon of FAPAns may remember, I used to live in a small town in Maine. It consisted of a hill on the end of a peninsular. I lived most of the way up the hill and the shopping area was on the street fronting the shore. To get down town to do important things like buying groceries or scanning the drugstore for the new PLANET STORIES, one had to go down the hill and trudge back up again. In the winter, and they were long and fierce, the hill became a glaze of ice. The idea was to go down the hill on a sled, make a sharp turn onto a side street to avoid bulleting through a storefront window, get the stuff and make your way back up the hill via a less precipitous street. I remember one below zero day when I made my first trip of the day. It had partially thawed the prior afternoon in the direct rays of the sun and glazed over during the night. So as I barreled down the hill, I realized things weren't going right. Steering was ineffective, even dragging your foot to create drag. The wind was whistling past my frozen earlobes as speed

mounted and when it came time to angle sharply into the flat side-street, the sled did turn sideways but continued down the hill! I remember a Tarzan-like ululation as I swept down the hill, through the main intersection, a storefront looming rapidly. I realized it was me, as the enormity of the situation penetrated my freezing cranium. So it was that I experience my first ice scream....

Oh, if you were wondering....what happened was that I hit the snow-bank in front of the store at a terrific rate of speed, pushing the building off the pilings into the Narrows.

It was a long time before I lived that down...

I also remember the first time I made love. I hadn't been playing for very long. Just learning the preliminaries, how to service and all that. So, the first time, I mean for real, I was sort of nervous. She obviously knew more about it all than I did but probably was accommodating me because this was my first time. So it was that, in a sort of haze, I found myself on top. First thing she double-faulted, then I made a passing shot, then she hit my return into the net. And on and on until I won the first game. And it continued. Shaky as I was, I tried not to let it affect me but after I'd broken service, I even got an "ace", kept on the attack, played up to the net. It all seemed to go so smoothly and I won the first set, 6-love.

That's the story of how I first made love (especially dedicated to Dave Locke....).

The only problem was, she came back and won the next two, 6-0, 6-0 in only about forty-five minutes....

I suppose I could regale the assembled FAPate with other, equally thrilling, stories of "firsts", but I suppose I ought to let the tension ease off for a little while.

Maybe in each mailing I could relate a "first". My first fanzine, the first time I met another fan, the first time I met Charles Burbee, the first time I spilled a glass of beer...the possibilities are endless. The first science-fiction magazine I read, the first science-fiction Book I ever got (and in those days, that was an event equalled only by the first Atom Bomb or something). But then, the patience and understanding of the readership of this here stan-long furzine (hey, the first time I ever read Burbee's description "sterling fanzine?") may be the first to give...

So, this is two more pages toward the eight. See you elsewhere...

CHILDHOOD: IT'S CURABLE IF YOU SURVIVE IT

Perhaps it was because I subconsciously realized the most likely reason for "Burb" - for so the return address on the grass-green envelope read - to be sending missives to Dave, but for whatever reason, I wasn't surprised when Dave announced we had been invited to participate in one of the famous (to relatively neo-ish me, at least) Burbee One-Shot Sessions. I smiled; the idea pleased me. At one time I'd harbored vague yearnings to be an Anthropologist and I may have considered this an opportunity for some scholarly Field Studies (but I'd also nurtured the urge to be a Zoologist...).

"You'll only have to do 2 pages," Dave added. My inward smile faded.

"Me?" I croaked. "But I'll be going with you."

"Everyone participates," Dave said with that note of finality that allows for no leeway or argument. "Of course," he cocked an eyebrow suggestively, "you could do some artwork instead..." Dave knows how I loathe extemporaneous drawing. I'm even more inept at that than I am in speaking off the cuff. I swallowed. Hard.

"The topic is 'Childhood'," he read from the mimeoed invitation - which had somehow lost most of its attractiveness in my eyes. "Since all of us had at least one childhood per person and I'm coming up on my second one, this is an endless subject. Tell us about your first sexual contact, why the days used to be a thousand hours long and aren't any more, why you're sorry you helped bait the village idiot, the fun of Xmas, the first time you heard a foreign language, your first pair of skates, how you nearly drowned and wish now you had, and so on."

Hoo-boy. What a topic, thought I.

Childhood is a state of being sometimes recollected as a vaguely pleasant time, but when actually considered, becomes recognized as a time one had virtually no control over one's doings, and even thoughts were policed - or so it seemed if you were raised Catholic.

"And what sins have you committed, my child?" the Priest would ask in the confessional. The miscreant would then reel off the response; a list of Masses missed, punches aimed at siblings, trinkets snatched from shop shelves, fibs told to or about others. Then the follow-up question would come.

"And what sins of thought have you committed?"

Gulp To a kid, it seemed that every thought, unless it was glowing with reverence for God, Mom & Dad, Sis and/or Brother, the priests and nuns, the Pope, America and Danny Thomas, was sinful in some fashion. The reply, if any, was generally stammered weakly.

One priest in our parish would occasionally be extra-helpful in prying loose the evil plaque that clung to his charges' immature minds. "Have you been thinking 'Dirty'?"

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What a question! How awesome in its ambiguity! So all-encompassing to a naive child so totally unsure of this incomprehensible world where mysterious doings by adults (those blessed by the sacrament of Marriage, of course) were forbidden and, therefore, Evil and Sinful - except under the aforementioned conditions. What were these arkane actions? We weren't supposed to know, after all, and the facts were rather efficiently suppressed.

True enough, whispered rumors were passed along in schoolyards, but from the reading I'd done (my parents being somewhat Enlightened), I knew them to be inaccurate in many respects and therefore suspect. The priest's question was asking the penitnant to consider, then, the Unthinkable, to think about what was Forbidden even in thought; in other words to sin and then be absolved from that sin. Too bad our parish priests were Diocesan; such reasoning was worthy of a Jesuit.

For the young child who had difficulty in building up a modest-sized list of sins to be reported each week, the question offered a cop-out. One had only to answer "Yes I have, Father. Forgive me." A string of Hail Marys and Our Fathers would then be assigned and the kid could leave the confessional feeling 'normal' - as sinful as the person next in line.

The older child sometimes used the question as a means of deriving data; "What do you mean?" being the most obvious counter-ploy. It could be amusing to listen for little signs of discomfiture from behind the grilled screen - baseless coughs, uneasy stirrings, quick changes of subject. Sometimes, rarely, hard facts were offered; usually one merely received frustrating hints. The term 'Dirty' wasn't of much help in defining the crime. If it was suggested as an activity one could 'Play' at, it did tie it in as an action and one that could somehow be thought of as enjoyable. However, adults had a knack for using words for one thing that had opposite connotations for the child. "Playing" could mean gaily splashing in the mud left behind after a Spring flood, or it could refer to sitting sedately on Grandma's porch swing so one's Sunday Best clothes couldn't get mussed (to actually swing on the swing was also forbidden; the Sunday Best shoes might get scuffed). The child couldn't be sure.

As a rule then, the child was sent out shriven in the eyes of the Church, but still shriveled in knowledge in the eyes of the World. The role had been played, the script performed well, and Life could continue until next Tuesday's grilling session, when the game would resume.

Childhood memories? I've spent my adulthood mainly repressing them or sneering at them. It all depends on where you came from, of course, and where you're at now. But, no thank you, Mr. Burbee. I don't want to write about them.

The topic is THE WORLD OF KIDS.

I was a kid once, but I recovered.

- - Jackie Causgrove

UNTITLED ONSHOT CONTRIBUTION

BY DAVE LOCKE

I can remember when my parents stopped buying short pants for me, and how much of a big deal I thought that was. I hated the goddam things. Made me look like a little kid, and at the age of four this was a cruel thing to encounter. Finally, though, they weren't being purchased for me anymore, and all I had to do was to quickly wear out all the pairs that I already had. When I set my mind to it I can sometimes work wonders, and I think it was during the short-pants phase-out that I first discovered this fact.

It might say something to note that it took thirty years before I tried on another pair of short pants. Now I own one pair of walking shorts and bum around in them a bit more than occasionally. In fact, Jackie keeps hiding them on me by burying them in the laundry. So far I've been lucky: they've only been laundered once before I managed to retrieve them.

Never having enjoyed that part of my childhood which occurred during the early short-pants years, I have the feeling that I delayed the experience and am only now getting around to it. This is not my second childhood; I'm still plugging holes in the first one.

I hesitate letting those last words serve as segue to Charlie's suggested topic of "your first sexual contact." I have never told that story to anyone, and interestingly enough I try to avoid thinking about it myself. This must be disappointing to Charlie, who can't remember his first sexual contact and probably was hoping to use everyone's stories as a springboard for memory rejuvenation. Sorry, Charlie.

Unlike some fans, I have some pretty neat childhood memories, in spite of the fact that I didn't have as much childhood as most people. Until about the time I got into fifth grade I'd spent the heftier part of my childhood in a hospital bed. An occasional wheelchair race was the only thing around which could serve to provide any kind of adrenalin surge at all. Maybe that's why I enjoyed my childhood subsequent to that: everything was pretty new to me, I'd regained my health, and nobody had to tell me that childhood should be one of the better parts of one's life. I didn't get eased into it, I got tossed into it, and I loved it.

I count myself fortunate that my family moved from the city to the country (lakes/mountains/forest country, not farm/cows/pigs country) shortly after finding me to suddenly be a normal child. Being free in the city was better than bedsores, but the country was nirvana. When I wasn't in the mood to accept the company of other people (and I get like that every once in a while), I wasn't relegated to staring at storefronts, alleys, or suburban housing; I could slide a canoe into the lake and enjoy nature in solitude, go hiking in the mountains and enjoy nature in solitude, or wander through the woods and enjoy nature in solitude. I am fond of this country's "Forever Wild" areas (remind me later to tell you about a bar that I know in Marina del Rey...), whether in solitude or not.

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