

BOBOLINGS 7

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Fanzines don't really need a cover anyway, so who cares if there is a dearth of usable cover artwork in the household? Fanzines do, however, need some identifying information. To satisfy this need, you are advised that this 7th issue of BOBOLINGS, dated November 1961, is the product of Bob Pavlat, of 6001 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville, Md, USA.

1961

C'EST LA GUERRE

The first car that I ever owned was a 1940 green convertible Pontiac, which I purchased in April or possibly May, 1952, for something like \$300. At the price it was a steal, and it wasn't the car dealer on whom the steal was perpetrated. It's customary to praise one's first car, even including its faults, but if I've ever praised that car it was on a day that I wasn't thinking too clear. But, if I did want to praise its faults, I could sure find a plenty. It isn't surprising, considering that I bought it before I learned how to drive, and didn't even test drive the thing.

There were really only four primary troubles. It was old, and it showed its age in every move that it made--or didn't make. The tires were old, the top was old, the upholstery was worn, the fenders rattled, she lacked power: name a symptom of age, and you could find it there. That was the least of the troubles. Secondly, it had rather an unusual gas pedal. Part of the floor mounting was missing, and the rod with which it connected had long since been bent at a 90° angle, and as a result nothing happened when the throttle pedal was pushed straight down. This disturbed parking lot operators no end. You had to sort of push down while giving it a bit of right english with you foot, and when you felt a slight "click" suddenly ram it straight right. Even Derry, who is one of the few people that ever mastered this car at all, never fully caught onto the gas pedal operation. The third difficulty was overheating. I'm now convinced that this could have been corrected with a good reverse flushing of the cooling system, but this was my first car and I didn't know about such things then. Many's the dollar I spent for cooling system cleaners, and many's the pound of rust that poured out of the system, but there was always more, so that the car could never be trusted on a trip of more than twenty miles. This trouble was compounded by the fourth and most serious problem, which was the fact that the brake system stored up pressure. Someplace in the line there was a failure of some sort, such that after every stop a bit of residual pressure remained in the system. This would bleed away overnight, but after some twenty or thirty stops the car would start to act a little sluggish, after fifty or so there would be a decided brake drag, and after another twenty or so the brakes would freeze up entirely.

No, C'est la Guerre wasn't much of a car, and frankly I didn't enjoy owning it. I probably put something over \$500 into repairs on that car (new transmission, three brake system overhauls, one new top, new tires all around) and probably didn't get more than five months use out of it. The sole use of that car was to teach me how to drive a real monster; every car I've driven since has been a pleasure in comparison.

The reason that I bought C'est la Guerre was because of my then-impending marriage. This turned out no better than the car, and altogether this period, from mid-52 through mid-54 was the worst period of my life and, coincidentally, the period in my adult life when I was furthest from fandom. As a consequence,

^{she} met very few fans, and the only three that I'm reasonably sure rode in the car are Derry, Isabel Fine, and Karen Anderson (then Karen Kruse). Karen and Derry seem to have survived the experience.

INTERLUDE I

I owned C'est la Guerre from April or May 52 through May 54, even though I only used it about five of those months. Most of the rest of the time I used shank's mare or Interlude I, which was my brother's 1942 grey Chrysler business coupe. This was a real honey of a car, tremendously big, surprisingly powerful, and sound as the day it left Detroit. My brother was overseas at the time, so his car served me well for many months. This was still in my non-fanning period, and this car probably saw only Derry, though it is vaguely possible that Karen rode in it once. The first of the real fan cars, however, is the next one. This I picked up in May 1954 (I seem to buy all my cars in May), and as attested by the name, I'd pretty well gotten over my marriage troubles by then. The car was named

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

It was a darned good name considering my mood at the time and during the years that I owned it, and also considering the fact that it was a red 1951 Ford convertible. Accordingly to my count, only two single girls are going to see this fanzine, and I don't think either of them will mind if I tell the many single men in the audience that red convertibles actually work, but not on girls in pink dresses. Oh, well; buy your own and learn a little. But be warned that red cars require a lot of cleaning and polishing.

I'm not going to spend too much time describing "Churchy" to you, for it was used mainly in local fandom, and never ventured to an out-of-town fannish affair. ("Town" includes the greater Washington area--it just isn't possible to go to a fannish affair within the limits of Hyattsville.) During these years, I ventured back into the world of science fiction conventions, but Cleveland (1954) seemed a bit too far to drive and a car would have been utterly useless in New York (1956), so Churchy stayed home.

But in-town fans needed lifts here and there, and out-of-town fans showed up now and again, so Churchy met a number of fans. His favorite (and it seems funny to me that this car should have been masculine; all my other cars are referred to by the feminine pronoun) was probably Pamela Bulmer, who probably looked better in a red convertible than any of his other passengers. Among those others are Bob Briggs, Ken Bulmer, Dot Cole, Derry, Lee Hoffman, Larry Shaw, Fred von Bernewitz, Ted White, and probably a few others that have since slipped from memory. Let it be said of Churchy that he did his job, and that when I parted with him in 1957, although it was a relief to get rid of the troubles he was beginning to develop, it was with a considerable amount of nostalgia. We'd shared some happy times together.

LA BELLE FORTE

My French is doubtless execrable, but my next car knew no better than I whether or not its name made any sense, so it didn't seem to object. This car was bought on 5 May 1957, and it was a 1957 blue and white Ford. It had been a demonstrator, and had about 5000 miles on it when I bought it, but it was still the nearest to a new car that I'd ever owned. It was also the first sedan that I'd ever owned. I remember that Alan Dodd mourned the passing of Churchy when I bought La Belle, just as, several years later, Bennett was to mourn the passing of La Belle.

La Belle's main defect was that she objected to being driven in the speed range 55-65 miles per hour. Above or below that she was pretty good (though always with some front wheel tremor above 65), but she'd shake you to death if you tried to hold a steady 60 mph. The only time I tried to hold a steady 60 mph was on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, where the speed limit is 60, and where I was checking the accuracy of the speedometer over a five-mile measured stretch, with Bennett doing the timing. And on that day they had a radar patrol out which issued me a warning ticket for doing 65. C'est la damn Vie. I pretty much ignored the speedometer after that, except in the winter. Something was wrong with the speedometer which showed up in its indication of speed at all times, and wildly so in the winter. In the winter, until the interior of the car was completely warm, warm enough to really penetrate, the speedometer would vary wildly from 0 to 120 mph, whirring and wailing berserkly the while. It was impossible to ignore the speedometer in the winter. The mad meanderings of the needle meant nothing, but it would have taken a man with a stronger constitution than mine to ignore the banshee wails coming from the dash or the indication that you were going at 120 mph while cars were still passing you.

The first indication I'd had that anything was wrong with the speedometer was on the trip to Los Angeles in 1958. On the way out, my car would quite frequently be pacing that of Fred Prophet, and naturally we'd compare notes along the way. It was either on the Turner or the Will Rogers Turnpike in Oklahoma that we discovered that when Fred's car was doing 85 mine was only doing 75, even though we were travelling at the same rate of speed. Considering that the road was straight, this seemed somewhat odd, and was in fact the reason that some two weeks later I was testing my speedometer over a measured course, with the results noted above.

This was the first car in which I made any number of fan trips, and a brief summary of these trips might be in order.

First came the 1957 Midwestcon with Madle and White as passengers. Nothing notable, except a rather gory accident on the return trip (in which I was not involved--just one we saw along the highway where some idiot had tried to pass on a hill), and a faint wonderment in my mind that Raeburn and Stewart should be impressed at the fact that I'd driven the 500 or so miles from Washington to

^{Cincy}without relief. I'm still vaguely puzzled by this, and will someday take a sports car on a long drive just to see if they are that wearing on a driver. I'll admit that I don't find a 500 mile drive in a day to be any great pleasure, but normally I don't find it to be a particular strain. If it is a strain in a sports car, I'd not want one except as a second car.

In 1958 came the long trip to the Solacon, some 6000 miles round-trip from Washington. My previous round trip maximum had been the 1000 miles to and from Cincinnati, and I looked forward to this trip not only as a chance to see the South-West, which I'd not previously seen, but also as a chance to see how I did as a long-distance driver. The trip more than lived up to expectations and hopes on both counts, for I visited country that I love, and found myself perfectly capable of driving some 2000 miles without switching drivers. This stretch of solo driving had not been planned, but I found that with Sylvia Dees in the car, White did not place quite the concentrated attention on his driving that he had before she joined us. I think it was Ger Steward who asked where I got the designation "Honorary Boy Hero Race Driver" a long time ago. It was during this trip. It was also during this trip that I unintentionally put Jim Caughran in a bit of a spot. Jim was riding in my car on the day we went up to Grand Canyon, and we'd decided to take the back road, past Sunset Crater (a side trip I highly recommend to anyone with a couple of hours to spare). I'd taken the morning driving shift, and Ted was catching a nap in the back seat (this was before Sylvia joined the party), and I decided I'd had enough driving for the day, and so turned the wheel over to Jim. He'd told me that he could drive, and I hadn't gone into details with him over where or how much he'd driven before. The stretch Jim had to drive was a graded narrow road, with a number of twists and turns, quite frequently with a drop-off on either one or both sides. It wasn't really a tricky or dangerous road, but it was a fair challenge for an inexperienced driver. I watched Jim's driving carefully for a few miles (I'm a nervous passenger), but found that I had no complaints and so settled back and enjoyed the scenery. An hour or so later Jim admitted that he was getting a bit tired so I again took over, and then Jim informed me that he'd only driven a very little before, and that only on good highways; no wonder he got tired! I was then and am still quite favorably impressed with the way Jim handled the car. I felt quite relaxed with him at the wheel.

I learned a lot about driving on that Solacon trip, including what little I know about getting through city traffic in a hurry. White has fast reflexes and is (or was then) a more aggressive driver than I, so normally I tried to time things so that he did the city driving. The big eye-opener for me was the day that White was following Falasca through city traffic. Nick is also a bullish driver (or was on that day), and I would have lost him within half a dozen blocks. Ted not only didn't lose him, but caught up the two blocks we'd started behind him, and then looked unhappy that there wasn't any more traffic to be passed between him and Nick. I examined the car carefully after we stopped, and there wasn't a scratch on it, though it

did for a few days seem to me that the car was somewhat narrower than it had been before we took that epic ride.

There were quite a few other trips taken in La Belle, and she got to know quite a few fans during the four years I owned her. In addition to the passengers already named, Donaho and Ellik were her brief passengers during parts of the Solacon trip; Madle, John and Joann Magnus and Mike Becker during the 1959 trip to the Detention; Evans, the Magnuses, and Phil Castora during the false Faparaid on White in NYC in 1959; the Youngs and Larry Stark at the November 1959 FAPAcon in Cambridge; and Madle on the 1960 Midwestcon trip. Sandra Caton, Dot Cole, Chick Derry, Marion Malinger, and Don Studebaker are other passengers remembered, and who can recall which people rode in which cars during the Disclaves?

The last fan trip taken by La Belle was the trip to the 1960 Pittcon with Studebaker and Madle on the way out, then the rescue expedition almost immediately after arrival to pick up Eney, the Youngs, Sarah Lee Thorpe, and Nancy Share, and then finally the visit to the midwest following the con with Eric Bentcliffe in tow. All told, about 50,000 miles was put on this car while I owned it, and about one-quarter of the mileage was for fannish reasons. Those were the miles that were fun to put on.

AFFAIRE DU COEUR

The latest car is a beige two-door hardtop Buick, purchased new in May (there's that month again) of this year. I don't yet know whether the name will stick--this depends more on a pal of mine than it does on the car itself. Evans is supposed to have a write up of some of the travels of Affaire in this FAPA mailing, so I won't go into detail here. I should, however, say that it's the best travelling car I've owned to date, and it leads me to wonder how I ever thought La Belle had good travelling qualities. To date I've put 15,000 miles on Affaire, some 9000 of them in conjunction with fan doings. With this start, Affaire may yet surpass La Belle as a fan car.

SAGWAL

No, that's not the name of yet another car. SAGWAL stands for the Society of American Girl Watchers and Lechers, founded in August 1958. Its name was slightly different at the time, probably on the order of American Society of Girl Watchers and Lechers, or ASGWAL for short. White founded the society on our way to the Solacon, and together we developed the basic girl-watching rules of the society, criteria for designating towns and cities where girl watching could best be practised, and finally guidelines for admittance of prospective members. I bring up the association here since it was formed on the way to a con, amended on the way from the con, and since most of its ratings of national girl-watching areas have been developed on later trips to major and minor cons.

The basic criterion for membership is quite simple. You have to like girl-watching. You have to like it so well that

a watch-worthy girl will cause you to interrupt even an egoboosting conversation about your own fanzine. A secondary criterion is that you have to possess a fair amount of discrimination.

Relatively few people have been found fully qualified to date.. When Bennett joined our party on the way back from the Solacon (he rode in other cars on the way out since we knew we'd have him on the return trip) we promptly found that he was fully qualified for membership, and he was, in fact, the reason that the title of the group was changed. He wasn't an American, so he obviously couldn't be a member of an American society. On the other hand, he was watching American girls, as were we all, and so the perfectly logical change of name from American Society of... to Society of American... came about. A good thing that it did, too, for the next fully qualified member that was found was none other than England's own Eric Bentcliffe. Eric would even stop talking about Harrison when a watchable girl showed up, and greater devotion to girl-watching than this could hardly be asked of any Englishman. I haven't spoken to White recently about the Society, so I don't know whether he's found any further members. I have admitted one more on a probational basis, Chicago's Marty Moore, but there are still certain doubts about his qualifications. His taste is, in general, adequate, but his rating system judgments need improvement.

SAGWAL uses a six-point rating system. Towns with superb girl-watching potentialities are rated five-star, and towns which should be avoided like the plague get no stars. The town must be rated not only on quality, but on proportion of attractive to repulsive. Marty makes two errors. He'll say, for instance, "Now there's a five-star" and it comes as somewhat of a shock to realize that he's rating an individual girl, which is never done under our system. He also attempts to rate some cities, such as Chicago, far too high. I'll grant that Chicago has some interesting sights, but proportionately Chicago cannot merit over two stars. Marty insists on four. Marty further refuses to recognize the place of Salt Lake City as a 4+ star city, and this to me is proof that he was either blind or drunk while there. These errors were almost enough to disqualify Marty, but one day recently I took his advice and visited a certain small Pennsylvania town which he'd rated as 4+ stars, and found that he had, if anything, underrated the town. I won't tell the name of this town, but for those interested I did discover another town of almost equal quality in Pennsylvania. Paoli.

Sylvia once wanted to know if a woman's auxiliary of SAGWAL could be formed. It seemed rather ridiculous at the time, but I've since found that some few women, Sylvia included, can serve as spotters. The only other one I've found is Peggy Rae McKnight, who shares with Sylvia the defect of being distracting and of spotting only after the car has passed the quarry, which makes watching darn awkward, particularly when I'm driving. I somehow think neither of these defects will ever be corrected, and this doesn't even seem to bother me.

AND SOME RANDOM COMMENTS

Evans tells me that my remarks, in BOBOLINGS 7, about the poor quality of eastern drivers created a bit of comment and controversy in FAPA. One day I'll go back and read the mailings that intervened between then and now, but for the present I want to say that opinions previously expressed remain unchanged. Virginia drivers are close to the worst in the country, and assuredly are worse than those in any western state with the possible exception of Missouri. Driving quality generally increases from east to west, with Indiana seeing about the last of the lane hoppers and road weavers. Bad driving seems, in general, to be associated with large cities and congested conditions. I rather imagine that the principle at work is that individuals in the congested areas find they have to be bullish in traffic, and have never learned to use a somewhat different driving style on the open road. This can't be entirely true, for cars with DC plates are generally far less of a nuisance than are cars with Virginia plates, but I can't think of anything else which would explain the situation as I've found it.

Well, heck, after saying that much I decided to screen through those mailings myself and see what was said, and now I find that what little comment was evoked was in agreement, except that White didn't agree particularly with my remarks about Virginia drivers. It's really the case Ted, but maybe all the bad ones come from over in Eney's direction. Since I've read the comments, I might as well add that the reputation of Buick drivers as bad drivers is not limited to Washington state. The same reputation holds here, and I share the impression. I hope that I'm an exception.

There have been a number of names dropped in prior pages, but I've long wanted to record some of the activities of my cars, and these activities are of interest, (if at all) only in terms of fandom. This article or whatever it is doesn't half do what I wanted to do, and I'm not quite sure what I've done wrong except, perhaps, thinking that I could write an interesting abbreviated summary.

To round out the required eight pages, a very unimposing map is appended giving an outline of where that 20,000 odd miles of fannish driving has taken me. Without the conventions, I'd never have driven it. Without the Falasca and Kemp organized caravans, the driving would have been much more difficult and perhaps impossible.

I expect I'll drive to a few more cons. Right now I'm plotting out a route to take me through Colorado Springs and Santa Fe for the 1964 west coast (LA?) convention, with return via San Francisco, Donner Pass, and other interesting places. If I can make it a four week trip, I want to go to Glacier Park and the Canadian Rockies again. Anyone besides Evans want a ride?

