

THIS IS CACOWTUES number something or other, and is intended for the Feb. 1971 mailing of WPA. It is perpetrated by Dian Girard, whose current residence is 2446 Centinela Ave. Los Angeles, California 90064. I am not usually home. My phone is 473-5244.

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I discovered this past weekend that a clear day in Los Angeles isn't. Saturday was truly lovely. It was hot (while the other half of the US was struggling with freezing weather) and you could see a lovely blue sky overhead. In an effort to get away from the heat Chuck and I drove up to one of the local mountain resorts. Skyline Park is sort of picnic area, actually. It is located on Mt. Wilson, where most of the L.A. television stations have their broadcast antennas. There are picnic tables, a childrens zoo, and of course the 100 inch observatory. The drive up was lovely. In about 40 minutes we moved from 80 degree weather in the Basin to a very nice 70, with snow still on the ground in the shaded spots. The whole point is, though, from that altitude ("520 ft over a mile") you couldn't see anything of Los Angeles at all except the tiptops of a couple of our highest buildings. A pale cloak of smog covered the whole kit and caboodle. Sort of un-nerving to realize that what we consider a clear day is really so full of gunk. A few months or so ago we were up at Lake Arrowhead and noticed that the searching tendrils of haze were reaching their brown fingers up as far as the 5000 ft. level. (Im, talk about mixed metaphores...) You have to drive out past Corona, which is a good hours drive from civic center to get out of it on a bad day.

The park was nice. Lots of reasonably good natured people, and scads of kids of varying sizes having a whale of time in the snow. A pack of cub scouts had located an entire slope that was still snow bound and were scooting down it on a large rubber tire. The childrens zoo (I'm a kid at heart.) had goats and miniature burros of some sort and lots of sheep and what I think was a guanaco. Or maybe a vicuna, but I think its hair was a little short. Anyway, it was some vaguely llamaish crittur which submitted with pretty good grace to having its obviously well-fed sides patted. (Knotts Berry farm has a tapir in its childrens zoo. I tend to think of such a zoo as being full of chickens and lambs and such. These innovations always startle me.)

The telescope there is the second of that type which I have seen, being a reflecting scope. I saw the big eye at Palomar last year. Being actual working telescopes they are both sheltered behind glass in temperature controlled environments, and one listens to a tape recorded spiel on their past history and construction. Ithough it wasn't mentioned in the little lecture I found in my encyclopedia that the primary mirror took five years to finish. Bigod, Michelangelo took only two years more to do the "Pieta"! -- that's the mirror of the Mt. Wilson telescope. I never did do too well at composing on stencil. I've been up to the Griffith park observatory quite a lot lately, to see their planetarium shows, and took a look at/through their refracting telescope once. It looks very much like a toy compared to the big fellows, and is pretty much used for classes and such. Astronomy has indeed come a long way since Galileo.

I spent several very pleasant hours at the park and then drove back down into Los Angeles in the early evening. It was still a very nice clear day. Maybe I should start paying a little closer attention to those ads for air purifiers. Either that or that or (sound like a broken record, don't I?) move out to the boondocks somewhere and hope civilization and all it's benefits doesn't catch up too fast.





# GAAAH!

YOU'VE POISONED ME!

When it comes to serving meals, there's only one thing worse than a finiky kid, and that's a finiky adult; and for some wierd reason most finiky adults are male. Women have been brow beaten by endless teas, socials, and bridge parties into eating whatever is put in front of them. (Besides, they know they can have their revenge the next time they are serving.) Some sort of reaction response is set up in the juvenile male, however. Having been forced into eating thousands of mouthfuls of goop by his mother because it's "good for him", he reaches some sort of crisis at puberty and determines never again to eat anything simply because it's been served. It might be well at this point to acknowledge the fact that not all men are finiky eaters. It's just that most finiky eaters seem to be men. Many men will down tons of neary indigestible junk that even the most hardened hostess would blanch at.

The finiky man, unlike his pre-pubic counterpart, can neither be bullied, coaxed, or cajoled. Gambits such as "If you don't down all of your cucumbers au gratin, you can't have any dessert" are totally lost on the typical man. (Strong arm tactics are, of course, out of the question unless the woman involved is built like Aunt Eppie Hogg.) Faced with such an ultimatum he will merely wander down to the local liquor store on some pretext and come back with a quart of ice cream (which he won't even share).

Finiky men come in several different styles. Perhaps the most common is the Martyr. The Martyr will jab tentatively with his fork at the comestible under consideration, push it apart to see where the ground glass is hidden, and then resignedly force an infinitesimal amount into his mouth. He chews determindly, agony in every line of his face and the patience of the doomed in his eyes. He swallows convulsively, sighs, and then pushes the remainder of the helping around so that it looks like twice what he had originally. He may or may not eat the rest of it. In any case, he will make you feel like you have violated every tenent of the ASPCA.

The Researcher always asks with great interest about the recipe. "What did you do to the Mulluk Pillet?" he inquires in a mild tone. Any denial of culpability leads to intensive taste testing and cross examination that would do credit to the Nuremberg trials. Continued denials will drive the Researcher to his final denunciation: a muttered "Well, you did something to it." (Note: if you did do something to it, admit nothing. Doing so gives him Grounds for dissapproval. Having announced that he doesn't like it this way, he will next time declare that he doesn't like it that way, and you will spend the rest of your life trying to remember whether he likes his Peanut Butter Stew with or without asperagas tips. Sometimes, however, a misleading fib will jolly him into acceptance. The intoxicating joy of having caught you at it leads him to gloatingly decide he is a truly discriminating gourmet. Having shamefacedly admitted that you did, indeed, leave out the  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of asafoetida, he may magnanimously forgive you and eat it all up. This puts you in an excellent position because next time



you serve it you can announce that you've made it just the way he likes it - with asafoetida. It is well to comment occasionally on the excellent discrimination of his palate. You may, of course, be saddled with a truly hard core finicky eater who will simply greet your little white lie with a disgusted "I thought so" and still his hunger pangs with huge slabs of bread and butter. That's the chance you take. If you do follow the white lie tactic, always claim to have omitted rather than added an ingredient. All he can really do then is say it tastes "different" or "flat". Any specific addition lets his imagination run riot.)

Another type of finicky eater is the Disinterested Observer. This gentleman will totally ignore any food item not actively interesting to him. Some psychic gift renders any such object totally invisible. A serving bowl placed in front of him simply doesn't exist, and a helping on his plate might as well be bare china. This can't even be called the "Ignore-it-and-it-will-go-away" approach, because he never admits it exists in the first place. Queries such as "May I help you to some sauteed crab-grass?" are totally ignored. One of the most amazing things about this sort of finicky eater is his ability to disassemble what seem to be thoroughly homogenized mixtures. Like some sort of fodder magnet his fork passes over his plate and magically abstracts those items considered acceptable. Attempts to dice the ingredients into smaller and smaller fragments will merely leave his plate looking as if someone had sprinkled sand over it. Tactical maneuvers such as a deft slight-of-hand substitution of his salad or bread plate with the substance you wish him to eat will merely make him look a trifle vague.

The diversity of finicky eaters is endless. From the man who won't eat anything, to the man who will eat anything "but...". There are those who reject all of certain types of foods - "rabbit food", "stuff with preservatives in it", "things" (I never have been able to figure out what that covers), "all rotten" - you may spend your life looking for a substitute for flour, ~~xxx~~ for instance, but at least you know where you stand. There are also those who abhor "foods"; chinese foods, mexican foods, seafoods, japanese foods, Armenian foods, etc. So go to a steak house when you go out with him, and sneak out for the yummys on your lunch break. To me the oddest of all finicky habits are those which involve specific items. Meat eaters who like their meat "not raw and not real rare, but not too well done either.", Coffee drinkers who never seem to achieve Nirvana, and corn on the cob eaters in general. It should all be put down to man's eternal search for individuality. In a world of mass production, a world of numbers and statistics, surely it is a hallmark of one's own personal identity to be the "one who likes them with a touch of nutmeg."

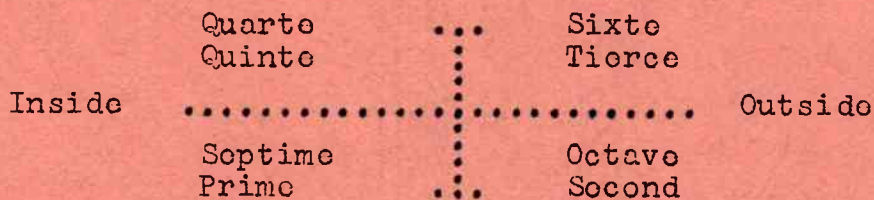
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Speaking of foods, a friend at work passed on a rather unique dish from the Navy collection of comestibles. You have to really like mushrooms and onions, but if you do it's very good. Take about three large white onions, peel, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch slices and quarter the slices. Cook until transparent in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup pure butter. (don't use margarine or oil) Add a large can (you know, the 75¢ ones) of cooked mushrooms, juice and all. Either whole button or stems and pieces are fine, depending on how affluent you feel. Cook down until the mixture is quite thick, without much excess liquid. That's all there is to it, and it makes a delightful accompaniment to a nice thick steak. You can mess around with the proportions depending on how you feel about onions and/or mushrooms because the basic method is pretty near fool proof.



ASIDE FROM A VAGUE fannish interest, my main occupation these days is trying to learn to fence with french foils. We've been taking fencing for several months now and I find it a really fascinating study. Chuck and I go to classes together on tuesday and thursday evenings and then try to find time to work out during the week. Our fencing master, Ralph Faulkner, whose studio is in Hollywood, is a one time Olympic champion and puts a good deal of stress on form. He is responsible for most of the fencing scenes in the classic movies and still spends a lot of time at the studios. Aside from that, he is a very likeable taskmaster, if a bit "sot in his ways. Having foils, masks, and gloves, we were both informed the other day that we had advanced sufficiently to get into jackets and go at it a bit more sincerely. It amused me to discover that women are supposed to wear padding of some sort under the jacket, and the most common type is metal breast plates. Shades of the old amazing covers. I'd use a pair if I could get away with sticking them on the outside.

Fencing is, of course, a very old sport, and derives from the still older occupation of trying to lop someone's head off with an edged weapon. The terms and the positions are very formalized, if the action is not. Fencing divides the torso (essentially) into quadrants: Inside high line, inside low line, outside high line, and outside low line. When your opponents blade is to the left of your own your position of defence is inside, when it lies to the right, your defensive position is outside. I have a tendency to think of the positions themselves as "right hand" and "left hand" and would be thoroughly censured for it if he but knew. There are eight basic positions: Quarte and Sixte are the most common for foil work, followed by Septime and Octave. These are unified in that you hold the foil with your hand palm up (in supination). The other positions Quinte, Tierce, Second and Prime are "natural" positions because you hold the weapon with your palm down (pronation). A position diagram looks like this:



My instructor claims that the first three positions are simply derived from the position of the arm as the sword is drawn out of the scabbard and lifted up to a usable position. The terms are French, obviously, as are most of the terms in fencing. It was the French, after all who did most of the development of parry, ripost, and the composite forms of attack. Prior to the advent of modern, light handed, methods of fencing the basic idea was simply to look for a likely opening and then wham your opposition with all you had in you. Of course, if you missed he probably recovered quicker and split your skull, but you weren't supposed to miss.

There is one rather unfortunate fact about having a fencing jacket. When I was taking lessons in my capris and a light jersey Mr. Faulkner just sort of threatened me - out of deference to my fragile femininity or something (some of the T-shirted fellows got pretty well "touched"). Now I get jabbed. He is especially fond of saying "You wouldn't cheat on the parry, would you?" as he pokes you amidships with his foil. The foils are all flattened at the end, into a little spot about the size of, oh, a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " circle, but they do have a way of emphasizing the point.



I CAME UP WITH what I thought was an interesting idea for a series of drawings; based on the old weekdays rhyme. Unfortunately, time runs out and I didn't finish all that I would have liked to. So here is the rhyme, and here are four of the seven illustrations.

"Monday's lady is white and cold,  
Tuesday's lord is harsh and bold.  
Wednesday's lord is sage and grand,  
Thursday's lord had a strong right hand.  
Friday's lady wears a royal guise,  
Saturday's lord is old and wise,  
And the Lord who rules the seventh day  
Appears in splendid gold array."

