

# ELMUR RINGS

## First Series

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Another year has wended its gentle and forgiving path into that bourne...gives it now time for another report to the constituency from lil' Elmer, least-loved, quondam worst fapan, once near brain-truster, and now -- ay, 'tis as Lincoln said and that's for real and for true.

Softly as in a morning sunrise the firrel twitches;  
gently as a greased goose come sliding the fickle  
rays of morning redness through the bedside window  
and a daliesque arabesque ringtails o'er the flo'er

The crooked cheer of cricket from beneath the  
heartstone nevermore...the raven ravin' from the  
shadow that the heartstone everwore.

Mayhap that will start the mood.

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Music, jam session, and quasi-fine arts department

Some four or five months heretofore, the urge for a good session got bad enough to taste. Lined up assorted musicians and music-lovers. Present: Hugh, professional artist and guitar-player for kids. His son-in-law Stan and drums. Their friend Bouldy, professional trumpet. Bill Miles, greatest baritone man that ever walked the Earth like a natural man. And five piano players, one an ex-pro. Started off rather latish, at about ten; ended up at about three. Mr. Condra dropped by with what was probably the most distinguished visitor that Baxter Hill shall see in a long, long while. Man was sent over by Air France to spend a couple of months looking over the aircraft factories here and learning all about their manufacture, and then was to return to France to design, construct, and manage a plant to build their own airplanes. That's a good man, ever. He was free for the evening, and wanted to hear some authentic American music and see authentic American family life. Mr. Condra brought him to the right place for the first motive.

Also present was the future production superintendent, a pleasant gentleman who spoke no English. Fortunately, though, drummer Stan and his wife had put in a couple of years after the war in Paris and so he was not completely alone...besides, he enjoyed the music.

And a moderately sober and very pleasant time was had by all, thank you.

Two months later, a repeat engagement was had at Hugh's home on a sunny Sunday afternoon. To diverge a moment, there are some all-too-few moments when the entire space-time continuum unites itself in a transcendent and intransigent lens which focuses the allness of allness into you in one blinding completion. Most people experience it several times in one lifetime. For the best description of the feeling I mean, try Algernon Blackwood and the tale titled "Malahide and Forden." And to a lesser degree, the same author's "The World-Dream of Callister." And at this session there was one fleeting instant of perfection...

As I said, Hugh is a professional artist. His paintings are the most beautiful that I have ever seen. Quiet rhythms in clouds, horizon, greenery; and the more you watch the greater come the cross-rhythms from bottom up and the perfection of the mingling with the horizontal... I've been through the Huntington collection. I've attended exhibits at several art shows. I have yet to see his painting rivalled.

So the walls were covered with landscapes, portraits, abstractions. I brought my sister along, who gets homesick at times for the old days when she sessioned often. Miles couldn't make it. Just trumpet, guitar, piano, drums. And for three or four hours there was music, an occasional beer, an occasional break for smoke and ~~xxx~~ gab. And then...

It was a quiet and slow number they were jamming. Forget what. Was idly watching a landscape with a lone cypress and cottony stratocumulus clouds. Hugh's paintings are great to watch while listening. Bouldy hit a very strange note. Sudden unity and group identification. Hugh and Bouldy both also



sitting facing the landscape. And bigod if they weren't playing the painting, and if I wasn't in it too with that strange rare identity-loss completeness!

Session continued about three more hours, but there was the high spot that cast a happy mood over my emotions for two or three weeks afterward.

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#### Funny-story department

So there's this newspaper man who has been thoroughly recommended by the connoisseur that wrote Ah Sweet Idiocy. So he has this fabulous apartment with the swimming pool for a bathtub. So he and his photographer are somewhere along the coast between Long Beach and Laguna covering a story and when they drive back here's this god damn seal. A baby seal, lying on the sand alone, yelping his little head off. Lonely. So the newspaper man says bigod I'm not going to stand idly by and see this seal cry himself to death. Isn't that right? he says. Yes says the photographer. So let's get the son of a bitch and fix him up so he won't be lonely. Yes says the photographer. And so they put the damn seal in the back seat and drive him to Los Angeles and put him in the bathtub, which is about five feet deep and about ten feet wide and about twenty feet long and about full of about cold water. The little bastard is really happy for a change. He isn't lonely any more. They go swimming and the little devil splashes all around them clapping and chortling. Really stoned, ya know? But there's a devil in the woodpile and some discourteous busybody has seen them take this seal and has taken their license and notified John Law. And John Law tracks them down with a don da don da and pulls out a warrant twenty feet long and takes away Buster and even yet when I think of that poor damn seal sitting on the beach near Laguna a yelpin' his guts out with loneliness and when I think of that poor damn swimming pool with the John in the corner but no Buster in the water I get so unhappy I could just bust down and cry ... pass the butter will you, honey!

Ah hell the whole town's still as funny as

ever if you give it a chance to be. Ride public transportation all the time and some things go on by golly a fella doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. Ya know what I mean? You see all types go by and then you idly look out of a window just as the car picks up speed and sudden time falls out of joint and you see the babe you'd have loved when you was a slave in Ninevah except when you was a slave in Ninevah she was a-buildin' the Great Wall of China with her own four little hands and so you couldn'ta known about her except by the ache in your chest that special kind a ache ya know that can only be cured by squeezing one certain especial fennel and since the pain is there the cure must be somewhere and you know then that somewhere there is something and something is bound to be some where or some when or some what and as Abe Lincoln said some what and some whit but never the whit shall what.

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#### America is Going to Hell Department

First there was this comic book called Mad. Let there be Mad, he said, and there was Mad. And then everybody and by everybody I don't just necessarily mean almost everybody but everybody (and Rover and Prince and Spot, too, let us not forget) saw that Mad was selling hanover foots and so evvabody (and Sandy and Tige too, the dogs!) started printing imitations. Many of them look like Sandy and Prince and Rover were responsible. By which I mean that the imitations were generally the most puerile mess of slop that these weary bloodshot old eyes have ever. Indeed.

But then its sister magazine Panic was banned in Boston. And, even though America is going to hell, it gave a fine chuckle when the publisher banned the sale of his Stories from the Old Testament and Stories from the New Testament to Boston distributors. I was pleased to the brass bottom of my cast-iron heart.

Something called the United States Municipal News comes out monthly. Published, I believe, by the American Association of Mayors. Lists various ordinances proposed and passed in cities which would be of interest to members of said Association. Among proposed ordinances: City of



Detroit: Ordinance prohibiting policemen from belonging to any organization other than those on a list previously approved by said City.

Get on some of the darndest sucker lists. Man sends me a letter every couple of months wanting to cast my horoscope for me. Last week, got mineo letter from the California State Control Committee, Prohibition Party, mentioning their happiness at managing to remain on the ballot in California, since they can continue with their program of bible reading in the public schools, and steps leading to the enforcement of the alcohol Education act, which requires teaching of the Evils of Alcohol to our Children. Ends up with a pitch for a spare ten-spot or double sawbuck or whatever I could spare. God will bless you! says he, for aiding in the battle to bring decency and sobriety to the nation.

The man doesn't know me, does he?

Not only is america going to hell, but so also is little elmer. Play my jazz records only about once a week; don't sit down with myself for a bash at the keyboard more than seminonthly; even leave the damn radio diled for the local classical music station. However, this classical station KFAC has very few and very unobtrusive commercials...justify myself in that manner.

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Funny story department continued:

- Man named Coates, Paul N., whose reputation is rather fixed, has daily column in local paper. Read said column daily, account the idiots that publish the paper put it up in the window of the publishing house where any passerby of whatever race, creed, or sex, can stand and read. Weekly this Coates prints a batch of peurile letters and comments thereon. One mad is awfully mad at marijuana users -- no crazy mixed up kids they, no. Ratpackers. Wolves. Rapists. Oh my dearie but the man got indignant. His final paragraph was, "Jail is too good for these marijuana users. They should be stoned."

Coates' comment: "They are, man. They are."

Miscellany department:

Uncle Cy Condra introduced me to Mad.

Go out book hunting about twice a month. Find things sometimes. Good haul last trip--two dollars for ten books, including Odd John. Still looking for about four issues of Animal Comics. Missing about eight issues of Mad. Must really get down and dig soon. Comic books are the most evanescent of all literature. Don't think the second issue of Panic ever appeared in Los Angeles.

School continues, and continues to wear one out. Homework and wasted hours that could be devoted to constructive research into unanswered questions. Such as whether it's worth splitting a pair to draw to an inside straight. Or whether it is true, as the text books say, that two pints make one cavort. Two courses in accounting, one in advanced math.

Life in the teeming metropolis that is Los Angeles continues its unending pattern from the prenuptials to the court deciding administration fees for the probate lawyer. Due at work at seven forty-five. Get to City Hall about seven. Drink coffee in employee's cafeteria for a relaxing half hour completing the process of gentle awakening that is recommended for tired old men. To office at seven thirty. Pick up office copy of the local legal newspaper and finish gentle awakening by reading roster of who's suing whom for what -- divorce, determine parental relationship, foreclose mechanic's lien; skim through the list of marriage certificates granted, noting idly that over the years about one in twenty, on the average, list the same address for both bride-to-be and groom-to-be; wonder why. Certainly not one in twenty marriages is preceded by shackup; and yet boarding-house romances are equally certainly not that frequent; and then the occasional sentimental remarriage of the already so, celebrating the fifth or the tenth anniversary, is a rarity squared. So why? And then on through the permits granted to operate auto parks, personal property rent, motion picture production class B, watching for the listing of second hand books. When a permit is granted for a location unknown to me, try to get down within the week.



Pays off sometimes, as in pile of some thirty V-discs, all jazz, for two dollars and a quarter...

A perusal of the ordinances, then, to see what lighting districts will get my taxpayer's money; what streets are to be improved, vacated, or made one-way; and by then I'm sufficiently bored with the furshlugginer mess that I turn to work with relief.

Which work, this year, has been a fascinating assortment of the unusual and the different. A recent promotion to assistant engineer brought a transfer to the research section, where any question that is brought in is to be answered. First was the question of the Subway Terminal building. Could it be converted to bus operation, and for how much? There's girders all over the damn place, pillars and columns holding up the building. So it turned into a study of strength of materials, turning radius, how much the nose of buses stuck out on a turn, the drag of the rear end, how to span such columns as were to be removed. Ended up with tunneling under Mill Street as the cheapest answer. Good, says the boss, now how many cars would it hold if we were to convert it into a parking lot? Study of back-in space, aisle space, 30 degree parking, 45 degrees, 60 degrees, and parallel. Come up with answer. Dodging pillars all the time, and making varying layout in accordance with conditions as found to exist.

So then one of the Commissioners said that he wasn't certain in his own mind that the rail cars were making the best speed they could. Are they being held back deliberately to make the buses look better, or in other words, Elmer, how soon could you get me to Broadway and Brand in Glendale if you obeyed all the lights and all the laws and gave the car all the hell it could take without breaking any law? Did so. That's my job, research. Plotted distance-time graphs until hell wouldn't have them. Made acceleration curve at 4.75 mphps; deceleration curve at 6.00 mphps; both speeds being existing limit for P.C.C. cars. The balancing speed of a modern P.C.C. car is 41.5 mph running empty and over level straight track. That's the point, Meyer, at which the electric motor is pushing electricity back into the wires as fast as it is withdrawing same.

I reballasted the track, realigned curves, and threw in passenger delay and signal and traffic delays; ended up with an eight minute saving in a thirty-two minute trip. That's nice said the boss, now tell me precisely how much and in precisely what manner buses contribute to traffic delay in the congested areas. And that's the present job assignment. And the answer is not yet.

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The poet was quite hungry,  
His form grew lank and thin.  
He took to writing verse like this  
To sell as fillers-in.

\* \* \* \* \*

This has indeed been a happy beginning to what will be a happy year. First a promotion; then a raise by the City Council to bring wages up to those being paid on the outside; and then an automatic pay boost January 1st of next year--between them all, there'll be a short period next year when I'll be making 86 dollars more per month than the comparable month of the year before. Hell, when I first started work ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ in 1940, my gross salary was only ninety a month! So as I say, I'm pleased as all hell with the way things work out.

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Genesis department, which is put on the last page because of interest to only those idiots who read every last word of a fapa mailing. Last mailing got here in the middle of a quite heavy school assignment. Laid it aside; two weeks later, got caught up on school, meanwhile had forgotten about the mailing. While cleaning house last week, found it, and says begorra that means I'm out account of forty-five days must be up. Then saw the postmark saying the twenty-fourth of february. Added forty-five and twenty-four and got sixty-nine. The lieutenant patted me on the haid, said I was a good adder. The addition, though, was not the point; the question was do the members of FAPA approve of sixty-nine?

So then I translated sixty-nine into days of



the year and ended up with I gotta get baby out this weekend. Charles E. Burbee, a sterling character (sterling is a manufacturer of gear-head motors, which have wheels in their heads) (sterling also means that it is not as good as gold) offered the use of his mechanized mimeo machine with the torque transmitting and the fluid drive. My thanks to Burbee.

This typewriter belongs to my wife. It's a special job built by two gentlemen named Smith and Corona, obviously of old English and rare old Cuban descent. It has nine spaces to the lineal inch instead of the twelve that my machine has. It also runs five lines to the inch up and down where ~~mine~~ mine takes six. Between the two factors, this ten-page magazine is six pages at most of thought and four pages triumph of mind over bladder.

And inasmuch as there is as yet no rule defining eight pages, I plan to borrow same in the future whenever quantity is a desideratum as well as the quality of said.

Mr. Cyrus B. Condra, Esq., of Playa del Rey, a fine gentleman whose back yard is some two miles in area, dropped by between pages six and seven. He has written a one-page summary in re that sterling (Williams Gennings Bryan ran for president on a sterling at sixteen-to-one platform) character Charles E. Burbee. Whilst cogitating here and laughing over the third issue of Panic, he was talked into writing another overpage of comment to swell this issue. Unless said sterling (not to be confused with starling, which is strictly for the birds) character objects, you will find it as page ten. It would be nine plus, extept that this machine has no plus key.

I love you and you and you but I don't love you and you I very actively dislike you, you no-good. But you I love and I love you sometimes and sometimes too and I love you, you, you, you. Gad what a song title.

And the hell with the rest of you.

## CHARLES E. BURBEE: A DEFINITION

Cyrus B. Condra

Charles E. Burbee is a hard teacher, but he teaches.

No other person ever taught me so much that is valuable in so brief a time.

In a sense, both Bill Rotsler and myself were Burbee's pupils a few years ago. Bill was the better pupil, and the better man. He has great creative ability; he understood Burbee. He expanded.

I have little creative ability, but even so I learned a great deal. Not understanding Burbee, I criticised him. We are no longer friends. Yet every day I use the thing he taught me -- which was first, and chiefly, a viewpoint -- to advance myself.

After a lapse of years I can say that my life is richer because I knew and learned from Burbee. Because of him I can understand and do things that I might otherwise have missed.

Many ~~xx~~ people have said many things about Charles E. Burbee, trying to fix his character on paper. Now it is my turn.

Charles E. Burbee is a man to be greatly respected.

He is a great teacher.