

PM T O 47

# REQUIEM

BY BETTY & ELMER PERDUE

OCTOBER 18 1947

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BY BETTY B. ELMER PERDUE

1947

To the members of FAPA:

In the current mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association is to be found an item titled Half-Length Articles, #1. Written by Charles E. Burbee Jr., the magazine was published by Andy Anderson, with assistance in one form or another by F. Towner Laney. This is in rebuttal to the above.

In the past, the tradition has built up that the mailings are subject to no censorship save that of mailability and "representing to a substantial extent the work of a member of the organization." Since their magazine meets both qualifications, its distribution thru the official mailings of the organization has my approval in my capacity as president. An attacked member has of course the right to reply in whatsoever way he sees fit.

It is quite hard for me to defend myself, knowing that I too have given others hell, particularly Mr. Evans, and in the current mailing, Mr. Liebscher. However, the present situation is quite different. My shafts were cast at Mr. Evans solely because I became annoyed by his continual gladsome optimism, and at Mr. Liebscher solely because he is a better piano player than I. And the comments thrown were supposed to be witty, not muck-throwing; for the sake of the gag, and not snidely to embarrass them.

Mr. Burbee has given a substantially accurate account of the events of that night. For the record, let's put down that this was just about the high spot in the battles of the Perdues; and add that we had been married for two months before I struck my wife, and that we are getting along much better of late: we have had only one battle in the past three weeks.

Later, you'll find in my wife's account that she takes the greater share in the responsibility for the lateness of the mailings. In fairness, I add that she was not wholly to blame--I'm lazy; and one afternoon that she spent with her friends, telling me to devote the time to FAPA, I cut only two stencils and spent the remainder of the time in playing solitaire.

People are funny characters. It seems that nothing brings out stubbornness more than opposition. She and I are both more than ordinarily stubborn, and it seems now as though our battles were the sole outlet whereby our opposed conflicts could be resolved. However, now the future looks bright--many of our conflicts were because of highly irritated, jumpy nerves--have you ever tried to begin married life in a furnished room?--and that beautiful little apartment that is all, all ours to live in is doing much to resolve the overly great tension under which we used to live. And in addition, I am working with a psychiatrist to get my mental conflicts resolved. As you know, I was a psychopathic 4-F during the war, and now I want to become cured.

Mr. Burbee and Mr. Laney both had knowledge of this.

Sure, this article by Burbee is funny as hell. Every time I reread it I find some new truth trenchantly presented. A pen dipped in the ink of truth writes bitterly indeed and fact cannot be opposed.

My gripe is manifold. For one, the dividing line between good clean fun at another's expense, and malicious scandal-mongering is at times hard to place. Not so here. Burbee well knew this line had been passed before he started to write.

For another, Mr. Laney's no-doubt seraphic smile as he insisted on publication, annoys me. I neither saw nor heard of it; but I can well imagine his insistence. So Perdue had a fight with his wife huh? And you've got an account written of it huh? Meyer, it must be published... Why this insistence from you, Mr. Laney? Are you guiltless in these matters? Do you believe that your spotlessness is such that you can cast the first stone?

And again, Anderson is not so guiltless as my wife believes. Many's the bull sessions I've had with these three characters; and my boy Anderson stood up to the rest--a hard thing for a young innocent to do.

And more, the events of the epilogue are distorted. We did leave town. Of course. We went to Pico, a town in California, and stayed with her cousins while she tried to regain her destroyed equilibrium. What is Burbee screaming about? Did he seriously expect me to desert my wife, to leave her to bear her grief alone, while I addressed and mailed a batch of envelopes? Hell, that was all that he had to do--just address and mail.

But my biggest and main gripe concerns the blackening of my wife's character knowing that she could not fight back. I'll grant that without her presence in the story, all story value is lost. So what? Is story value in itself, adequate to justify the damning of another? The night that the mailing arrived, she was feeling particularly dejected over not being able to defend herself. I told her that if she'd write out her reply I should be much more than happy to publish it for her. Her section follows:

--Elmer Perdue

By  
Betty Perdue

Charles E. Burbee made one great and glaring mistake when he wrote the story of how the FAPA mailing came out last time. He thought I would take it lying down. Well, I'm not taking it lying down.

I knew he had an acid pen. I knew he had no consideration for anyone's feelings, friend or foe. I knew that his particular type of humorous writing depended almost solely on making a fool of somebody else. What I didn't know was that he would be low enough to seek his literary prey outside of fandom, (I'm a fan only by marriage), and pick on some one (me) who had never done him one single personal injury. By what right then, is he justified in injuring me? I ask you, fans--has he played fair?

I do not write this to denounce him as a liar. So far as I can remember that unfortunate night (and it isn't too well), he gave you a play by play accurate account of the whole episode. What I do write this for is to denounce his article as one of the most caddish things I ever knew a man to do and an absolutely unnecessary piece of writing.

I have followed Burbee's writings for a long time. I have yet to see him write a kind word about anyone. And do any of you know why? It is because he has such an inferiority complex of his own that he seeks to bolster it by deflating the other fellow's ego. He is very unsure of himself. He'll laugh at this, but it's true. It sticks out all over him.

My opinion is that he would derive a great deal more good from doing his griping to a psychiatrist instead of the fans, and it certainly wouldn't make as many people mad.

I resented being made to look like a dunce with my repetitious speech and stupid questions. Most people have these faults more or less when they have inbibed too much. Perhaps I really was this bad, but knowing Burbee, I'm inclined to think he was not able to refrain from polishing up a good story.

I resented his criticism of my housekeeping. It was bad I know. But why didn't he go on and tell the fans that Elmer and I were living, eating and sleeping in only one room, due to a housing shortage; that our one room was so stocked up with Elmer's magazines and our wedding presents that we finally gave up the ghost and just decided to be bad housekeepers?

We have an apartment now and do considerably better. If you don't believe it, drop around to 524 West 46th St., Los Angeles, and see for yourself.

I resented his comment upon the soggy sandwiches we gave him. They were sandwiches left over from a picnic and we ate them too and suffered no ill effects. I do believe if I had been a guest in his house I would have been more polite.

Why did he have to make such an issue of not liking poetry? And if he doesn't like it and doesn't read it, unless forced, then what makes him think he knows so much about it? It makes me sick the way he plunged into

such an erudite discussion of the relative virtues and faults of poetry in general, and Sidney Johnson's poetry in particular. Sidney Johnson's poetry is still good for my money--so concise, well knit, and logical.

I'm also partial to the poetry of Dale Hart--a real artist at painting mood pictures. And while I'm on the subject I might say I'd like to exchange poetic attempts with you fans, if interested. I burst forth in verse occasionally myself. Very bad verse of course, but even so---

But let us not depart from the subject. Tell me, fans, is not the FAPA mailing supposed to pertain to fantasy, or kindred subjects? Then just where does this long-winded, irrevelant, pure unadulterated piece of gossip come in? I think it is a disgrace to FAPA that such things are mailed out.

I wonder if any of you paused for reflection at the scene where Elmer was beating up on me in the club room and Burbee stood calmly by watching, and asking for a match. While I was getting choked, all Burbee can think about is wanting a match. It burns me up. It burned me up then. And it burns me up more now that he has had the gall to make a joke of the whole thing.

But it is a true picture of Burbee. Selfish, self-centered to the end. I could tell you another story of Burbee. It has nothing to do with the present incident but will give you another picture of his total selfishness.

He and Elmer have known each other well for a long time. I thought they were friends. Then one night after club meeting Elmer asked him if he would be so good as to help us get a chair home we had just bought. We had no car; Burbee had. The chair was already at the club room. We lived a long ways away. Yes, Burbee would have had to go out of his way, but we thought he was our friend. When Elmer asked him to take us he said, "Can't make it Meyer--I'm sleepy--I'm going home." And he did. And we did--on the street car, with the chair. It took us three transfers, many inconveniences and much time. Yes, Burbee is a real friend!

But now I will tell you the biggest reason I think Burbee takes all records as a cad. He published this article at a very bad time. A very bad time indeed. Three days after this unfortunate night with him my mother dropped suddenly dead in my far away home in the south. It was a terrible shock. She was not even sick. My broken heart collapsed and has not yet regained its equilibrium. She had only left Los Angeles in May, having come out in April to my wedding. Memory of her was still fresh in my mind and it seems incredible to me, even yet, that anyone who was then so vital, was already marked by death. And so knowing this, Burbee still published his scathing article and gave me just one more thing to worry about. One more big thing!

And why do I worry--mainly speaking? Of course it's bad enough and I do mean bad enough to have you fans let in on all the battles royal of the Perdues. It's going to be infinitely worse if perchance one of these articles should fall into the hands of some of my relatives, and I have millions of them, sprinkled all over the south. I have one especial relative, very elderly, who will be killed (and I mean this literally) if this article should ever stray into her hands. I do not strive to be melodramatic. I simply know whereof I speak. Her heart could not stand the shock. And she is my closest and dearest relative. If ever this article falls into the hands of my aunt, if she ever even hears about it, I shall hold Burbee personally responsible and there will be plenty of trouble.

So I am asking you fans to do something for me. Please keep your copies of this article at home. Please do not send them through the mails to others nor give them to others nor show them to others. I shall appreciate it more than I can say, if you will cooperate with me in this way.

Perhaps you think I am overanxious about it all. But I know that the printed word travels fast and far. Already here in Los Angeles a copy has strayed into the hands of a non-FAPA member, and caused us plenty of embarrassment.

Of course I am aware that Burbee had a couple of henchmen in this deal, and although he is mainly to blame they also come in for plenty of censure.

According to a telephone conversation Elmer had with Burbee last night in his complaint over the article, it seems that Burbee, in his typically loyal way, has tried to pass the buck off on to two other fine upstanding gentlemen. Namely F. Towner Laney and Andy Anderson.

It seems that Burbee, according to him, didn't mean to publish the article anyhow. It was just a sort of a diary--a place to blow off steam. But then one fine night F. Towner Laney, editor of Fandango, also supposed to be a friend of Elmer's, came over to call on Burbee. Burbee let him read about that night of August 11th. Laney just laughed himself sick and said it just had to go in the current FAPA mailing. The fans just couldn't be deprived of such a stupendous piece of literature.

"So," said Burbee, "I gave in---"

Yes, even against the advice of Isabel, his wife, a very likeable woman incidentally, he gave in. Personally, I don't imagine it was hard to persuade him. He's such a glutton for seeing his name in print, break friendship ties though it may!

The second henchman is Andy Anderson, a tall blonde kid, not quite dry behind the ears, who published the article and drew the pictures. I am plenty annoyed with him, but am nonetheless less griped with him than the others. He scarcely knew Elmer and I, and was thus not violating a friendship to partake in that ill-fated article. But still he should have had enough sense to know that such things should not be sent through FAPA mailings. But he's young, and maybe he doesn't have any sense anyway. Who knows!

So far, I have spoken only in defense of myself. Now I shall tell you what I think of Burbee's attack upon Elmer.

As I understand it, Burbee's three main gripes at Elmer are his continual tardiness at getting the mailing out, his continual alibis of why the mailing isn't out, and his surprising lack of funds with which to get out the mailing. (The last mailing).

All three of these are legitimate gripes. Burbee had a right to comment on all of them, he even had a right, I think, to make a passing comment upon Elmer's being too much under the influence to get out the last mailing. But instead to go into all the long and lurid details of what Elmer did while he was drunk, what he said while he was drunk, and what he looked like while he was drunk--that stinks!

Elmer's pride has been badly hurt over this irrevelant revelation, and it won't recover soon. He may go on laughing at Burbee's jokes and thinking he is funny as hell, but I know it will be a long, long time before he forgets this article.

So far as the three accusations are concerned I shall hereby answer them. I try to save nobody's neck, not even my own, but will present the truth as I see it. If I know fans that's the way they like it.

1. The tardiness of mailing.

Burbee has been griping at the wrong person. I am more to blame for that than Elmer. After we were married in April one of the first theme songs my ears had to get used to from Elmer was "I got to get the mailing out, I got to get the mailing out." I got pretty tired of hearing it and being a newlywed and jealous of my husband's time I got him to put it off from day to day.

Finally one night he flat footedly announced he was getting the mailing out anyway. He did. He spread it all over the floor of our one room, all over the bed, all over the chairs, the table, and the bureau. There was no place for me to stand, sit, or sleep. I left the house and passed the night elsewhere. After that, we both had a full fledged case of neurosis over "the mailing," with the result that the mailing was always chronically late. But as I say, this is primarily my fault, so if any griping is to be done, do it at me and not at Elmer.

2. The continual alibis of why the mailing isn't out.

It's true. Elmer is an alibist--a first class one. He's all yours, fans--take him away. I won't raise a finger to save him. I've stood, tongue in cheek, many a time as I've heard him explain the whys and wherefores of why this and that wasn't done and have been awed by his spontaneous imagination. He's the world's best evader of the issue and anyone who needs to learn what to tell their family, friends, or foe in a tight spot need only consult Elmer. He has a complete assortment of alibis, ready for all occasions.

However, Burbee's article may have taught him something. We'll hope so. At any rate he is now your President, and so long as you are stuck with him, give him another chance. I dare say he'll do better than when editor.

3. Why the funds for the last mailing were lacking.

Nobody is to blame here. Elmer was broke! What with my mother's death necessitating flowers, wires, and phone calls back south, we were left flat busted. And that's all there was to it. Need I labor the obvious any further?

All the foregoing is in the defense for myself and Elmer. A few words more for the defense of others who have fallen under the acid pen of Burbee, Laney, and others. You fans know who they are. I do not defend them because they are my friends. They aren't. They are my acquaintances. I defend them not because I believe them to be necessarily innocent (but neither do I believe them to be necessarily guilty--I simply do not believe, one way or the other) I defend them because they, like us, have the right not to have their names vilely splashed across the whole United States of America, Canada, and England--in front of fans who do not know them, nor of their alleged foibles or alleged sins. In front of fans who do not wish to do anything nor who can do anything to remedy their alleged foibles or sins.

In short, I am griped to the teeth at seeing FAPA turn into the equivalent of a gossipy old ladies' sewing circle. And that is exactly what it

has turned into! That is, the FAPA mailing which stems from Los Angeles. The rest of you men and women out there are not accusable. If you have personal items to report, they classify as news and not gossip.

To begin with I believe that these FAPA writers in Los Angeles who seek to pick the mote out of their brother's eye should first be sure they do not also have a mote in their own eye. Why does Laney want to take a mental horsewhip to those alleged unsavory characters at the club who call themselves men? Does he question his own masculinity and believe that by allying himself upon the side of "men" he proves himself? Psychiatrists tell us we are most often prone to hate those faults in others that we have ourselves.

Why does Burbee invariably characterize most of his literary characters as stupid jerks? Is he wrangling with the subconscious notion that possibly he is a stupid jerk himself? Does he think if he first calls a person a jerk then they can never say that he is a jerk instead of them, because he (Burbee) has already said first that they were a jerk. Such logic!

In resume, I shall state again, briefly, my reasons for writing this article. I am griped at the irrevelant and scathing and dangerous revelation of the private lives of the Perdues; I am griped--and amazed--at the time selected to publish this account. And lastly I am griped at a mere human (Burbee) perennially setting himself up on some high pedestal on Mount Olympus and while looking earthward muttering to himself, "My God, Meyer, what fools these mortals be!"

The defense rests.

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