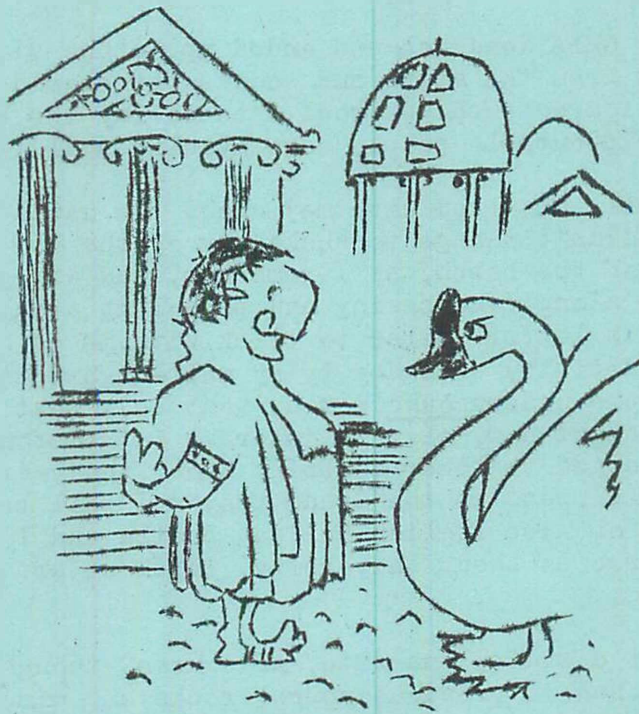


FRINGE



TAKE ME TO YOUR LEDA

number
three

Life Debt
DID YOU EVER GET BOWLED OVER BY THE SLIPSTREAM OF A LIFETIME RUSHING

BY.....? (or: WHY? WHERE? WHAT? WHO ME?)

It has been a full year; when tomorrow gets here - as seems quite likely at the moment - the year will have consisted of all of 365 days. Which leaves little room for complaint.

Eventwise (ecch!) things have happened, which, once again, is about all that one can expect of them. Other things - on the other hand - have not happened, which, I am told, is normal. Sheila and I bought a brand new Morris Mini-van in March and now have topside of 14,000 miles on the clock, included in which was one trip to London and two to the Scottish Highlands as well as I don't know how many to God-Knows-Where. In April, my father died suddenly, which still seems inconceivable.

I failed to meet my OMPA deadline and ended up on the sidewalk outside; I had been a member right from the start and so was rather sad about it, but could find only shadowy figures such as Crool Fate to lay the blame on, and no flesh-and-blood, gut-rip-outable people save myself, so I let it ride.

I acquired (and Sheila acquired with me) about the usual quota of new interests and, as usual, didn't manage to shake any of the old ones to make room for the new. First of the batch, as I remember, was air-gun shooting, in frozen February. Then along came caving and potholing about melting March; and Archery in April. This latter failed to click with me as hard as I had expected, perhaps being partially excluded by my well-nigh total obsession with the underworld (er, the underground world, that is). Next, for some reason I'm a little hazy about now, came an interest in gemstones, and this and the speleology kick merged together to bring about the year's Last Great Love, Geology. ('If you will send me the Grand Canyon I will be your Good Friend and send you a cup of nice English Tea'). Sheila and I then enrolled on an evening Geology course at Leeds University, which we are now in the midst of.

Books were bought at a ridiculous rate, of course, though perhaps just slightly less ridiculous than in previous years; rocks and minerals however, were collected quite ridiculously enough to make up for any small lag in the bibliophily department and often covered at least half the living room floor for months at a time. The usual fights with niggardly employers were indulged in with more sense of Sacred Duty than Gusto, and conducted with the normal - nay, perhaps I may modestly say 'expected' - Ashworth Moderation so that I only handed in my resignation twice, and Sheila once. We are both still where we were (with rival Advertising Agencies).

Finally, to round out the year in unforgettable fashion I decorated the living room. This may not sound like much but if you will pause a moment to reflect that we have only been in the house five years, I think you will begin to flavour the streamlined, almost ultrasonic, quality of this Thing That I Have Done. The decorations when we came in were utterly ghastly, so after only about three and a half years we decided to paint the living room. This was duly done except for the part which showed most, where we got only

as far as the undercoat before the total dissipation of that particular energy-burst. Then, a week before Christmas, I decided we would decorate; we spent about 15 minutes buying wallpaper and accessories and finished putting on the last strip of paper late on Christmas Eve. Now all that remains to be done when the next energy-burst comes around is to finish that particular piece of painting I mentioned. So that's that for another half-lifetime or so.

Then there came the 100th FAPA mailing, which I intended to be represented in, but missed of course. (Thank you, Dick Eney, for the great pleasure I have had from that massive, monumental volume you put in. AH, SWEET IDIOCY particularly has given me a great deal of enjoyment.)

A small aside for things that have amused me during the year; the telegram someone is supposed to have sent to our.....Minister of Transport, Ernie Marples (please fill in your own insult, to by-pass the libel laws, but make it n-a-s-t-y, will you?), after one of his particularly dubious bits of 'legislation': 'TO HELL WITH YOU. STOP. OFFENSIVE LETTER FOLLOWS.'///The comment of PRIVATE EYE, a newish undergraduate type satire magazine, on the question everyone was asking at the time of the Cuban Crisis, i.e. 'Why wasn't Mr. MacMillan told? Their answer; he was, but he forgot.///Then there are the things which are just funny in themselves without anything having to be said about them: Pandit Nehru, for example; or Jimmy Hoffa on trial again./// And the cartoon of Jack Kennedy sitting holding a copy of PLAYBOY, looking rather sternly at the foldout Playmate-of-the-Month section; caption: 'Jackie, would you come here a moment please'.

Oh, yes; one thing I mustn't forget to do is try and patch up Dan McPhail's poor opinion of me, if only for the sake of accuracy, if it isn't too late. This is harking back some little while now, but as I haven't had anything in the mailings since, this is my first opportunity to put the score straight. So...One mailing, Dan, in commenting on someone else's earlier remark said "Some government workers would take embrance at what you say..." etc. So the next mailing I said, in effect, 'Take embrance, would they? Some of these Ghoddamn government workers will take anything won't they?' Now the point of this, as I feel quite sure everyone else in FAPA realised (with the exception of Jack Speer) was not that I believed government workers to be vilely dishonest, larcenous and what-have-you but that I believed Dan's spelling could do with a brush-up. Leastways, I couldn't find 'embrance' in any of my dictionaries, but I could find 'umbrage'. Dan, however, took 'embrance' and came flying out to the defence of the government workers of the world. So, er, like, I'd - er - like to say, man, please I didn't mean any offence to the government workers - why some of my best friends would be government workers, if I had any best friends; and if I had a sister I would certainly insist upon her marrying a government worker. But - please - what's with this 'embrance', man? (And if you still want to know what I do for a living, Dan, I'll tell you. I'm a Print Buyer, or Production Manager or Runaround Charlie (I disremember exactly which it's supposed to be at the moment; these things change so quickly in this game you know) in an Advertising Agency. You know - I grind the faces of the poor in the mud so they'll buy more soap and all that stuff. Plenty of good red meat in that, huh?)

IT IS A PROUD AND LONELY - PING!

'Air-gun shooting' the man said back there, his head lolling ashamedly at having uttered such words in front of the Gunmen of FAPA (oops) who, so one gathers, would not be seen dead in the vicinity of anything smaller than a howitzer (Sheila is never just sure between this and a Wurlitzer which is the gun and which the organ, and she's got me a little hazy too, by now, but I think I have it right). Leastways, I seem to recall reading Gregg Calkins pouring scorn on a piffling .22 rifle; and then there's Dean - shudder, quake - Grennell, and goodness knows who else.

But I have excuses; lessee now, which is first out of the cabin trunk. Well, there is the Law. I don't just know how this is worded, but the effect of it is that in Britain an ordinary individual can own only an air-gun or a shotgun (or, presumably, a flintlock, etc., etc., because they have smooth bore barrels) without obtaining a Police Firearms Certificate. Right. Obtain a Police Firearms Certificate. Well, generally speaking, you can't, unfortunately; and if you do manage to, it is for just one weapon, as I understand it. You might get a Certificate if you could convince the Firearms Officer that you had very desperate need of one for protection due to the nature of your job; if you own a certain minimum amount of land at a certain distance from roads, etc., as in the case of a farmer or a Capitalistic Robber Baron; or if you are a member of an accredited Rifle Club. So join an accredited Rifle Club. Hm - ye-e-s; and shoot at a single target, at a single set distance, in gentlemanly progression, with a single-shot, silver encrusted .22? Could do, I suppose; but I'd rather shoot than dance a minuet, as it were. A little old pump action Winchester repeater would make me far happier than that sort of ritual. So - for all practical purposes, for the moment at least, firearms are out. Perhaps I could get up an agreement with some farmer and wangle a certificate that way, and I may try this eventually but for the moment we are left with air-guns and shotguns. Shotguns are dandy; they are for Gentlemen. Our Leader uses a shotgun you know, Mr. Harold MacMillan. He goes up on the moors with a lot of other Gentlemen, like the Duke of Devonshire who owns a lot of the moors in Yorkshire (don't ask me why), and they have big gangs of Gentlemen's Gentlemen called 'Beaters' who drive hundreds of grouse and pheasant and suchlike creatures towards them in big droves and then our Gentlemen raise their shotguns and Pow! down come some grouse or pheasant. This is a Very Good Sport because if you are a little bit tired or the sun is too bright or anything you can almost keep your eyes closed if you like; you just pull the trigger and Pow! down come the grouse and pheasant. This is because Gentlemen - and shotguns - use scatter shot, which spreads of course and is almost bound to get something even if it is only a sheep. This way you can kill more than one grouse or pheasant with one shot. In this way our Gentlemen kill many brace of grouse or pheasant in a day. This is a Fine Old English Sport but it is still developing. When it is finally decided to have the Beaters round up all the grouse and pheasants in a big net I fancy the marksmanship of our Gentlemen will improve and they will probably then be able to kill a dozen or a score of birds with a single shot. After that will come the nuclear cartridge which will kill twice as many birds by fallout as by a direct hit and that will be a Wonderful Thing. This is the Fine Old English Sport which is carried on with Shotguns.

That leaves air-guns. There are three main types of air-weapon; spring-operated, in which a spring is compressed by the cocking action and when released compresses the air in the chamber and so ejects the projectile; pump-up, in which air is pumped into an air-reservoir and when released expels the pellet; and gas-operated, in which a cylinder of carbon-dioxide provides the motive power. In recent years all English air-weapons have been of the spring-operated type. I don't know how prevalent this type is in the States but I have the impression that the majority of air-weapons over there are either pump-up or gas-operated, the leading makes, so I understand, being Sheridan and Crosman. The other obvious sub-division of air-weapons is into rifles and pistols (we will ignore old-time items such as air-canes, grand as they were, as they are quite rare nowadays). Virtually all decent grade air-weapons, of course, have rifled barrels. So. The gas-operated weapons, being powered by that disgustingly lethal carbon-dioxide which you use to re-charge your soda siphons, can be made subject to the Firearms Certificate rule (although they do not develop a significantly greater muzzle velocity than other types of air-weapon) and this is left to the discretion of individual Chief Constables, most of whom, of course, don't have any. If they can slap on a restriction, they slap. Some of these types of air-gun are now available in Britain but I haven't got around to getting any yet (I probably could buy them in some city or other); I believe some users have found some bugs in the operation of them. The only US brand so far as I know, of both gas-operated and pump-up air guns available generally in Britain is the Crosman range. I have both the model 130 pistol and the model 140 rifle, both pump-up action. I'll get back to these in a moment.

The main brands of spring-operated air-weapons available in Britain at present are B.S.A, Webley, Diana (manufactured by Millard Bros. in Scotland who, I believe, took over the patents of the German firm which manufactured the pre-war Dianas); Original (made in Germany, largely, so it is said, to the original Diana patterns) and Slavia, made in Czechoslovakia. Rifles, generally, are of either 'break-down' pattern, in which the barrel itself hinges and pivots downwards to provide the cocking lever, or 'underlever' in which the barrel and chamber are all of one piece and cocking is by means of a separate pivoting lever usually fitting into the underside of the stock, under the barrel. This is reckoned the best arrangement, when one gets to a really crucial level, but it is a fine point.

My underlever rifle is the B.S.A 'Airsporter' (.22) which is quite widely reckoned to be the best there is. Personally I have reservations on this point. It has a detachable telescopic sight, a claimed effective range of 60 yards and a muzzle velocity of around 550 feet per second if my memory deludes me not. In addition I have a breakdown model, the 'Original' 35B, once again a .22, with no quoted muzzle velocity or range. I would guess the muzzle velocity at only slightly less than that of the 'Airsporter' and the range at probably around 50 yards, maybe more. I still have to test the two guns out against each other, but I have no doubts at all about which gun is the more accurate and smooth in operation; the 'Original' has it every time.

Not surprisingly, there is a very considerable kick inherent in the action of a spring-operated gun and whilst this can be minimised in the manufacture of the gun, it can not be eliminated altogether. Point No. 1 to the 'Original'; it is milder, much milder, and has a deliciously light, even

trigger pull-off. While I have lightened the trigger pull-off on the 'Airsporter' as much as is feasible, it still has a kick, if not actually like a mule, at least something like a small donkey. This reflects quite clearly and unmistakably in the accuracy of the two weapons. The 'Original', also, has a superb sighting arrangement - what is known as a Micro sight, consisting of a small aperture rearsight which can be adjusted vertically and horizontally on a graded scale, with a selection of four alternative front sights - 'barleycorn', 'blade' and large and small beads. A further alternative is a selection of semi-circular, triangular or square notches in the rear sight, but I haven't even tried them. The combination of aperture rear sight and small bead foresight suits me to a 'T'.

We have two more rifles in the family. My other model is the aforementioned Crosman 140, pump-up action .22, a squat little beastie measuring only 34½" overall, which we have christened 'Butch'. Well, now, you put Butch alongside the Airsporter or the 35B and he sure as heck looks pretty shoddy; what has he got? A stock, a barrel, a trigger, a safety catch and the pump fitting into the stock; oh, and a crude, often twisted, open-view sight. He can, however, develop a muzzle velocity of just over 650 f.p.s at full-power - and he happens to be the most accurate rifle of the three. I say this without having tested him out thoroughly against the 35B, because I believe it will still be true. He starts with something of an advantage; he has no kick. I mean NO kick. This is a pretty strange thing (if something which isn't there can, in fact, be 'a pretty strange thing'). Once the air has been pumped into the built-in air reservoir all that remains to be done is to release it by pulling the trigger; this involves no reaction whatever and I can tell you it is a pretty startling experience to change over from firing a spring operated gun to using one of pump-up action. If you didn't see some result from your shot, you'd hardly know you'd discharged it. (This, incidentally, I would think, might **very well be a worthwhile experience even** for you experts who live by the 'real thing'. It is Some Fun.) That is why I say that Butch starts with an advantage. Under normal circumstances, it seems, a pump-up gun should always have it over a spring-operated gun for accuracy, however well made the latter.

The disadvantage of an individual like Butch, of course, is that he can be pretty hard work, requiring 10/12 strokes of the pump to develop full power, around 6 for normal shooting. This could make an afternoon's shooting something like a chore. On the other hand he is the ideal hunting gun. (I haven't done any hunting with him and you may wonder if, after what I said back there about our 'Gentlemen' on the moors, I ever will. So do I wonder. I think I stand like this about it. I don't like the idea of killing, be it a rabbit or a rhino; but I also feel it is a thing one ought to be able to do. I eat rabbit which is killed for me so I ought to be able to kill rabbit for myself. And clean and cook it. Once at least. All this may seem kind of pettifogging sentimentality to you Big Game Hunter types, but I just am not overly fond of killing animals. Humans, now.....but, we won't go into that. Furthermore I would object far less to our moorland gentry if they killed their prey with a single shot from a rifle; they would then deserve their kill - if any.) With a spring-operated air rifle, one should not keep the mechanism cocked for more than maybe a minute at a time as this, naturally, weakens the spring. With a guy like Butch, that don't amount to nuthin'; you can pump in the air and the air will stay there until you need it, without

NYAA..... :

Having bored you at some length with one of my interests, I can't think of any overriding reason for not boring you more briefly with a passing mention - a mere, cursory, selective list, I assure you, not, by any manner of means, a comprehensive catalogue - of some of my other interests. This may well serve a double purpose in not only allowing any other FAPAn who shares any of my bonnet-bees and I to get into a huddle over them, but also of giving me some idea what I am interested in too.

So then: by-passing air-guns, caves and potholes, gemstones and geology, we immediately stumble over:

Psycho-pharmacology (like, drugs, you know, man - and their 'mental effects. Believe there are a couple of recent books published in the US on the subject, one, at least, a paperback, and one called 'The Drug Experience'. Anyone care to trade me copies for anything from this side?),

Korzybskian General Semantics, and language in relation to mental processes,

The Mafia and the Crime Syndicate in the US (affectionately known as 'De Boys'), its history and ramifications,

The Vikings and (particularly) their sagas,

Oddballs, freak geniuses, scoundrels, rebels, rogues, rascals, vagabonds, (yes, Virginia, I have been reading Alexander Klein), hoaxers and hoaxes, frauds, fakes, con-men and the like,

Disasters, tragedies, catastrophes, mysteries, particularly of the sea,

Gunmen and other colourful characters of the Old West, in fact only, not fiction,

Hindu philosophy, literature and sculpture,

Ancient Chronicles, writings, etc., of all peoples from the oldest Egyptian papyri through to Icelandic sagas of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the 'Popol Vuh' of the Quiche Maya probably even later,

Myth and legend, witchcraft and magic,

The Greeks and, particularly, their literature and philosophy,

Mountains, moors, glens, rivers and deserted ancient places; and seashores,

.....I guess the other 18,492 $\frac{1}{2}$ will have to wait for some other time.

This special Weapons of Modern Warfare edition of FRINGE is published in February, 1963 for FAPA Mailing No.102, by Mal Ashworth, 14, Westgate, Eccleshill, Bradford.2., England and his old friend, Bulky Parcels, 40 Makin Street, Tong Street, Bradford.4., England. World War, anyone?

doing any harm to anything. Add silence, accuracy and extreme portability and the case is clinched. (The only 'free' shooting in Britain is between high and low water mark on the beach, believe it or not; all the rest of the land is 'owned' and shooting there without permission is 'poaching' and can mean not only a fine but having one's gun stolen from one, 'legally').

The last member of the rifle family is Sheila's .177 breakdown action B.S.A Cadet Major, a nice smooth slender gun, simple and easy in operation and pleasantly accurate over its own range of around 30 yards.

Pistols, we have three: the 'Webley' Senior, most handsome of the trio, squat, business-like, heavy, the 'Crosman' Model 130, all black metal and looking long and unbalanced, and the 'Slavia' looking even longer and more unbalanced, and heavy too, almost like a baby rifle. The 'Slavia', breakdown, spring-operated, here again like a rifle, .177 bore, is the largest and heaviest gun of the three. Rather surprisingly, Sheila has adopted it as her favourite and it is now 'her' gun. The 'Crosman' 130, .22 bore, pump-up action, similar in operation to the 'Crosman' rifle is my own favourite and is, without doubt, the most accurate of the three. The 'Webley', spring-operated with the .22 barrel (a .177 can be fitted interchangeably) mounted over the chamber and pivoting through a 180 degree arc to cock the mechanism, is to my mind the least accurate and even the least powerful of the three guns; maybe all is not as it should be with it but instead of finding out and having it put right, I fancy I shall sell it.

The last time Tom White, my old BEM co-editor, came to see us he cast an appraising eye over my collection. 'A lovely gun' he said of the Webley, 'This will still be a gun when that' (indicating the Crosman) 'is just a chunk of scrap iron'. Then I took him down in the cellar where we have a small (4 yard!) permanent shooting range. Coming back up the stairs he looked at the Crosman; 'I wouldn't have thought they could make an air-gun so accurate' he said.

I also remember rather fondly the day we took my brother Vernon with us for a day's target shooting out on some deserted moors. We set up our targets - rows, piles and other agglomerations of small tin cans, small balloons and so on and then Sheila and I sat down at the 30 yard mark and lazily potted off tin cans and balloons, Sheila with the Slavia and me with the Crosman pistol. Vernon got a little glazed; 'Don't be ridiculous' he said, walking off to pick them up, 'You can't hit things like that at 30 yards with an air-pistol'.

I don't suppose the beautiful '35B' or even the eminently practical Butch will be an awful lot of good when The Revolution Comes (but then I think I shall have a repeating shotgun for that event; there is a little of the Gentleman in me, buried way deep down), but in the meantime they make for very happy plinking.

And what more - I put it to you - can a man fairly ask of Life than happy plinking?

