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OFFLINE READER

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MUMBLE, MUMBLE

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Kay has more physical problems, and different doctors, now, than anyone can keep track of. The latest was falling over a misplaced step stool at Chamblee Library (one of the two she works at). There are so many interactions, now between all her various TMJ, fibromialga, other muscle and nerve problems, allergies (especially to ANY drug they give her) etc., that I can't begin to figure it out.

I'm well. The house needs work that can be delayed. The yard ... is pretty ... but needs work. Some of the clearing and spraying, I just have to do myself.

I'm joining Myriad. (Is there anyone here not familiar with that APA?) To start with, I'm going to turn my stuff from this zine into tiny general articles and make my first four pages, there, that way. I may, later, do the same thing in reverse for my MC's made there.

FOR SFPA 219 -- MC's on 219

Jeff C in SOUTHERNER 219: A delay inducing side effect of your putting SFPA stuff on your web site is that I cannot resist going online to look at it ... which means doing my usual other stuff on the net ... which means....

Ned B. in NEWS 195: Trinlay Khadro, apparently a frequent correspondent of yours, bought a couple kitty hawks. While at it, I tried to talk her into joining SFPA.

What you do for thorns is buy wire cutters. I wore out one pair and now must buy another. You also buy the heaviest rubber gloves they have at Home Depot. Then, gloves on, you place the wire cutter around the thorn stem (assuming you got the kind of cutters with indentations just the right size for this), as near the ground as practical. Clip. Repeat process every week or two until the thorn vine gives up.

I'd leave the squirrel alone unless it gets inside the roof. Killing one will only make room (in the territory) for others. As long as there's food anywhere near you, one or two of them will at least pass through regularly.

Guy L. in CHALLENGER 13: Rosy works? (Remember, for me, she's still the teen ager or little older than that, from when our paths crossed, long ago.) What kind of jobs? I can see already who's going to pay for the new dwelling.

Re me: <sigh> You perhaps pulled up that wrong address for me in your letter column from the years old, and two addresses ago, labels that Toni was using. Rather than what's on the SFPA roster <GRRRRUmble>.

The saving grace is that stuff sent there might, after 2+ years, actually be forwarded by the current resident. Recently the USPS sent a money order for the amount that was in Chattanooga Mensa's Second Class Postage Account, two++ years ago. I was the last newsletter editor before they virtually shut down. The address you gave for me was the last thing the local PO had since no one has even looked at that account for well over two years. Apparently, they close them out, after that.

I left stickers and stamps with the guy I sold the place to (and begged that he pass them on when he sold). He (whomever) slapped a sticker and my name on the envelope. When I got it, I dug up the address for the current Chattanooga Mensa caretaker and sent the MO.

Something like this happens about once a year and I expect, based on past history, that something worth forwarding will hit there, every two or three years, for about 20 years. (Based on people occasionally tracking me down regarding stuff in my ancient fanzine, from the 1970's.) We were in that house over 40 years.

David S. in MERRY 35: The key to repelling more ants is to leave the SMASHED BODY of an ant in their trail. A sprayed dead ant doesn't give off whatever repels them;

then the spray evaporates. (If not, maybe they walk in it and die, like the spray is supposed to do.) In any case, I've seen no ants inside our house in quite a while. I did have to have the yard saturated with poison, recently, to surpress mounds which would otherwise turn the yard into a red mud sea (or black mud in back).

Then of course there was also the recent $1150 water heater death with related, and as yet undealth with, subsequent problems. <pauses for laughter from non-home owners>

Richard D. in GAZETTE 68: Re your comment that no one would find a SFPA web site: they would if we were registered with search engines and promoted mutual links with other outfits. That's how everyone else does it. That and mentioning the URL in newsgroups and e-lists. Including Ned's book related link list is another lure; when we get going for real, we ask for mutual links with a gazillion "general SF fandom" pages -- we're one of the few live APAs they can use as examples.

There is also the matter of meta-tags to be put with our pages so "searches of the web" will find us. A recent example of this sort of thing was discussed in rec.arts.sf.fandom when "Joe and Nancy" put up a "Legal Documents on the Ed Kramer Case" page. Their choice of "tags" was ... mmmm ... met with hostile comments. We, on the other hand, would likely be pointed to with great glee by the trufen and similar crowds, as a remaining bastion of print fanzine fandom.

On GS ranks: GS-13 is a supervisor in most Civil Service outfits OUTSIDE of DC metro. It's a flunky in many places in The National Capital Region. Of course, some agencies tend to have worse grade inflation, while others are settle for what they are given. At DTIC a "Director" was a GS-15 but there were a considerable number of Senior Technical types who were non-supervisor GS-14s. We were lucky.

The "standard" (going by the rules -- with the word "rules" having special meaning in federal government service), unless they changed it, was that GS16 - 18 are reserved for special cases and such cases are frowned upon. I used to have to work with the regulations on that sort of stuff (while doing cost stuff). The highest number of GS16-18s in existence were lawyers -- who got those grades so at least a few competent ones would work for the fed's despite their counterparts "outside" getting hundreds of thousands of dollars more per year.

SES is a grade structure between the "normal" ones (GS isn't the only such) and "ES." ES are the political appointees. SES are ... well ... strange.

The true lowest graded personnel -- sweepers and furniture movers -- aren't usually GS3s in my observation -- they're contractor employees. You can't get normal humans to accept GS3 jobs in many places except as a stepping stone to "get inside."

However, I actually saw a live GS2 once, at the Pentagon, operating a copier, 8 hours per day, as their entire job.

I also was on the same installation as GS1s were reported, once. They'd been summer hire grass cutters. The "management" refused to ever do it again as these "kids" spent all their time playing and throwing bottles at each other instead of working.

A lot of strange cases are produced in DoD due to regulations and laws that fail to take reality into account ... but reality catching up with them, no matter how masterful are those whose living is made by causing other humans to say that black is white or vice versa, and believe it.

Guy L. in MUNDI 181: So Rosy's put you on a walking regiment. I SAID you'd be reorganized. Good for her. (I need to do the same as does Kay.)

Ph.D., she? What in?

Business? Late husband's estate? <sigh>

Re your reply to me: I guess I should find something to talk about, here, besides the bugs. Flowers? White camellias, I think.

If you think my stock stuff is alien ... I agree. It's probably to you as <looooong pause to think up an example> ... maybe Jeff discussing the fine points of non-Intel machine language, would be to me. I know what it's about, and why I should care, but there's not a prayer I get "into" it. OTOH, it sounds like Rosy knows enough to cover both your rear ends; it will be interesting to see what she does.

Randy C. in PRESS V2N13: I still want to do natter on my stocks as others do on comix and sports but I'll spare everyone the pages of charts. I reran them, however, a few days before the mailing came in. They're pretty and had turned green.

I think Brenda has your palindrome GA Filk 2002 logo on the web site. That's www.gafilk.org, everyone. Y'all come. We're probably moving to a newer hotel (Clarion).

Gary B. in OBLIO 132: Re Vanguard investments (presumably their mutual funds, not stuff in the brokerage): as you probably know all too well, right now they're down down down. Long term ... I'm still slowly moving stuff back into them from individual stocks, but I hope you don't have to cash in much this year.

Meanwhile, Suretrade (the brokerage I moved my trading account to, in order to get lower margin interest), folded. It was folded into Quick & Rielly, both have the same owner. Higher charges on everything and "my own personal advisor in Atlanta" (to sell me stuff on the phone). <HA!>

Also, meanwhile, Ameritrade had offered me $75 if I'd send them $2000 and reopen my account with them. I did. Bought some junk that paid big percentage income, and ... the account was sitting there, already to go, when I bailed out of Suretrade, moving the stuff back to Ameritrade where it had come from. And Suretrade waived the transfer-out fees since it was an involuntary move (to prevent the default move into Q & R).

When the move back finally happened, I had, BTW, totally wiped out my margin debt and gone about $2000 positive. The first time in about two years I owed nothing to the brokers -- but they owed me. I should have quit while I was ahead, but will save that story for later.

Janice G. in PURSUITS 93: There's not much you can do about your SUNW stocks and options except wait it out. As in "don't look until it goes up again or you retire." IF they're just giving this to you -- it's salary. If they're MATCHING money on your purchases, etc., this is the time to BUY MORE. If you bought it yourself in support of "the cause," well ... Sun will be there when the melt down is over.

The funds are another matter. Basically, if you're on a regular monthly buying plan, what you put in NOW will cancel out the overpriced stuff you bought previously. This assumes you've got a fund that is as good as the S&P500 average/index, mentioned in previous issues. It's another "don't look until you retire." Unless it's a poor fund -- then it's time to switch what you're putting the stuff into, each pay check, and leave the existing stuff alone.

A massive current problem is that everyone (or many) are taking money out of mutual funds -- with the ones most deeply into tech stocks and such high vapor content stuff, being hit the worst. (Sun will come out of all this, well enough, but MOST "dot coms" and vapor purveyors will not.) As people redeem their shares, the funds have to sell what they've invested in. This drives the price down, which panics more people which causes more selling and drives the price down until the only people left in the fund are willing to tough it out.

Now I remember why I used to do bonds and will return to doing so. (My funds, that I'd moved stuff into, relatively recently, are from 20 to 50% down too, except the bond fund. Since they're supposed to just sit there for another 15 years, I can wait this out.)

Since some of this stuff they sell will be at a profit, you will be 1099ed with capital gains that you never saw, unless you had the fund set to distribute them to you rather than reinvest. You will be charged taxes on these paper gains.

There are many cases in which poor old couples were given (similar) giant "stock dividends" and then the stock they got became worthless, leaving them with giant tax bills and no money.

Without knowing more about what funds you have, I can't say much more. <G>

Eve A. in PLEASURES 17: Having just written and edited your own book likely made a difference in your "eye" of the ones you just read.

Gary R. in TRASH 39: The person you want, who understands the bits on the motherboard is Avery Davis, currently in Myriad. Machine language. Aliens....

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STOCK STUFF

The Fed. rate cut and refugees from elsewhere continue, in general, to drive MY stuff UP. In most cases I will only natter about what's changed since last issue, or is of commentable interest. Also note that everything is "as of before open of market on March 16." Things change so fast that when the day is over, I may be in trouble, or out of trouble.

Borden Bond and *Bethlehem Steel Preferred* -- continue to recover in price instead of going bankrupt. So have most of my REITs.

Gabelli Equity Fund (GAB) -- I won't say I made out like a bandit on the rights offering, mentioned last time for this stock, but I did well enough to make up for a host of other problems.

By the way, this is a closed end fund. I advise people who would otherwise put their money into open ended (normal?) mutual funds (**JANICE**) to put it into this one instead, during the bear market. When this one goes up to 12+, it will be time to put salary savings elsewhere, as they are paid.

Since it's "closed end," meaning there is a set number of shares, unlike "open ended" (typical) funds, they don't have to redeem shares and thus sell in the face of things going down, nor buy (as money is forced on them) when things are high.

They also distribute at least ten percent of the net asset value of the fund, each year. This beats the usual problem with closed end funds, that they sell at less than the value of everything they own. For those who find investing alien <grin>, I'll put it another way: they give you enough money each year to beat most other stocks and in doing so keep your share value up.

That's before the "spin offs" and "rights offerings" they do every few years. With all that they consistently give you about a 13% return on investment. My only problem with this is I don't dare put over 10% of what I have in any one stock. I've <looks> ... hmmm ... actually, slightly less than that, now. How did that happen? Well, that answers what I'm going to do, next, in the trading account.

High risk, eh, I mean *Income, Fund (HIF)* -- is selling about 10 or 15% ABOVE it's NAV (net asset value) and the dividend doesn't look like it's going down any time soon. The problem is they own too much Russia bonds and other VERY high risk -- MAXIMUM high risk -- stuff, for me to feel comfortable. But replacing the income here with anything safer .... So I've decided that unless it goes WAY up, I'm just going to hold it, as is. If it goes up enough, the sell order is sitting there.

On the SBR and LRT Gas & Oil Royalty Trusts that I bought with money I got from selling other stuff, I dumped them as soon as I found out I'd have to file 6 additional state income taxes on the income from them. I made a good profit on the sale and put some into various Vanguard funds but most into HCP.

Health Care Properties (HCP) -- is probably the best of all the health care REITs. It's been on my watch/buy list for a long time. The price was going up and I figured that if I didn't buy in right then, it would get too expensive for me. As is, I'm only getting 9.35% on my money (vs. the 10% I need), but that will go up, as will the price. I bought only about half as much as I really wanted to, but that will have to do, unless we get another big bear market in REITs like we had for the last two years.

Meditrust Common REIT -- is mostly just sitting there, while I still think that just holding it, even though it pays nothing, and sells for about 3.4, is better than dumping it. I still think they'll get back to 9 within two or three years and THEN I'll sell. The most noteworthy item here is something their President said during the Conference Call. "You ask how I sleep at night with all the debt we have. I sleep like a baby. I wake up four times a night and cry." Well, at least we've got someone honest in charge, for a change.

They have, however, sold a lot of their nursing homes and such, using the money from sales, even sold at big losses, to pay off debt. This means they get lower interest and longer times to pay what's left. (It should mean that. It doesn't always.) Plus, in April, the money per patient that they get from Medicare goes up to about what it actually cost to care for such. (Costs have gone way up since Congress listened to the wails of bankrupt operators, and, maybe, the relatives of the residents of bankrupt homes.)

Anyway, I did buy more of the Preferred version of this stock, even as the price kept rising. As long as they keep losing money, these dividends aren't taxable, either. They just reduce what is counted as the price I paid for the stuff. Since I'm not about to sell, I am double happy here.

NHI is doing well, but I am out of room for stories about it. The same applies to my "Calls" on Ford (twice), Coke, Pepsi, and my short sales. The short version is that I made enough, plus the various Option stuff, to go positive. Then I decided to do risky stuff again and am in a small amount of trouble.

Active Power -- when the unlock came, nothing happened. Then someone dropped five million (sic) shares on the market, at one time. It went down, I got my money, and then it went back up <shrug> **-o0o-**