

SELF - PRESERVATION

Issue Number One

of

The New Official

Publication of the

Society for the

Preservation of

Lee Hoffman as a

Member of FAPA

Spring 1961

Lee Hoffman
basement
54 E. 7th Street
New York 3, N.Y.

...NOT A CREATURE WAS STIRRING...

It is Christmas Eve, and the activity of a few moments ago is now completely passed. All is quiet again.

It had its beginnings several days ago...just after the Blizzard of '60, and I think that may have been a factor in its occurrence. You see, something that seemed so improbably to me that I had never even considered it, had happened.

What do you do when you have a problem you're not really equipped to handle? Somewhere I had heard that Alfred Nobel had said that you should never do yourself what someone else could do better, or something to that effect. Anyway, I thought over the problem and decided to call in an expert.

A very large number of New Yorkers keep cats. While these cats are frequently pampered housepets, most of them are also working animals. I would venture to guess that while there are a lot of working animals in this city; police horses, tv performing beasts, etc., the majority of working animals in metropolitan NYC are cats -- house cats and alley cats. It is their job to keep the wild life of the city in control.

This building boasts a quantity of working cats, seldom less than a dozen. They live in the hallway of the basement, and keep this section, at least, singularly free of wild life of all kinds.

This is the least costly apartment I've lived in, in NY. I have dwelt in an apartment costing about 5 times the rental, and boasting a uniformed doorman, and sundry other places, all of which were more plagued with intruders than this. I attribute my privacy to the horde of working cats in the hall.

However, the completely unexpected occurred. A mouse dared venture into this den of lions.

My first inkling that I was not alone came a couple of days after the blizzard. I walked into the kitchen and turned on the light. There was a noise from under the bathtub that sounded like the traditional "scurrying". It sounded large for a roach (which is the most common form of wild life in tenements). I thought of mice. I also thought of the draft that was making its way under the window, bent down and found a stray paper bag under the tub. It could have been the wind. But I didn't think it was.

I heard the sound again the next day. And early this week, I saw it. As I switched on the light, I heard the sound and glimpsed the flash of gray fuzz. It was then that I seriously considered the situation, and decided that I should call in an expert.

Since Sweet William died, I have not kept a cat of my own, since I felt that the supply in the hall was more than adequate. For a long time, I had let various of them in to visit, at regular intervals. But recently, in the rush and pressure of the new job, I had not taken the time for this, since a cat has to be watched, while in a madhouse like this, or serious damage can occur. (Too many heaps of things, etc.)

I remembered once standing in the hall chatting with Mike (the super) about the ten or eleven cats that lay sleeping around us. He had been pointing out the individuals, telling me which were good cats -- that is, catchers of things, and which were lazy worthless creatures. The black and white female, which was one of the two that were here when I moved in, he told me, was the oldest of the lot, and the best.

She was an affectionate, but temperamental creature. She loved to be petted, but had occasionally battered Sweet William when he'd foolishly ventured into the hall, and for that reason had been exiled from my kitchen while he was still alive.

She, I decided, was probably the most expert of these hunters. So I invited her in. I gave her a bowl of milk, and some petting, which she accepted with a purr. Then she confirmed my suspicions and assured me that she would take the job, by sniffing under the tub, picking a spot, and settling herself into it in the way of a cat that has found a quarry and is willing to await the return of the quarry.

I couldn't let her wait too long, since I had things to do, and I didn't expect the return of the quarry in the immediate future, since there'd been quite a bit of activity in the kitchen.

Each evening, I'd invite her in, give her her salary in the form of milk and petting, and let her make herself at home for a while.

Today, since I had nothing in particular to do for a while, I let her in early, and gave her the run of the place, while I got some typing out of the way. She drank her milk and hung around the typer a while, watching me. Then she drifted away, and the fact that she was in the apartment slipped my mind for the while. Then it occurred to me that I'd better see if she were into any mischief, and perhaps, put her out.

I went into the kitchen. She was nowhere to be seen. I called her, but she didn't come. This was unusual. I called again, bending down to look under the tub. At that instant there was a loud noise, and a prolonged squeal. Then silence.

She padded out from under the tub, purring loudly and proudly. In her teeth she carried the remains of the mouse, its back apparently quite proficiently broken. She laid it at my feet, looked up at me and purred.

30 December 60

For several days now, while puttering around in the kitchen, which is one of my usual Times For Thought, I've been thinking of things I wanted to mention in FAPA. Today, I got out of work early, bought a quire of stencils and have seated myself before the typer. I overflow with inspiration and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, I've forgotten what it was I wanted to say.

I keep thinking today is New Year's Eve. It's a natural sort of mistake, today being Friday and all that. I mean Friday evening always feels like something special. But anyway, here it is the eve of New Year's Eve, and just in the nick of time I got my good deed for 1960 done.

It happened this way.

I was walking over to the subway stop from work, when I am approached by a very small child, in a snow suit. I am not sure whether it was a boy or a girl.

"Will you cross me?" it says.

"Cross you?" says I, thinking of a Catholic friend.

"Over there," it says, pointing to the other side of the street.

A glow of comprehension dawns on my brow, and I nod, accepting the small hand that is held out to mind.

I am reminded of the old joke about the small child who is running away from home, and wonder if I am now an accomplice to such an act. I have visions of this youngster making slow but steady way across the country, each block with the assist of some kindly adult.

A couple of weeks ago the world was made of snow. But today it is solid slush from the ankles down.

We had a grand and glorious snowstorm. It started one Sunday afternoon while we were at the kart track. As we left the track, there were gentle flurries falling on the last few races of the day.

Driving into Manhattan from Long Island, we got tied up in typical Sunday snow traffic, and by the time we reached the city, there was a traditional mantle of white on just about everything.

By morning most of New York had disappeared.

What wasn't buried under the snow was hidden from view by the stuff

preachers...

But me knitting is like dogs walking on their hind legs and women public wear. I figure it'll do for a mimeo smock in cold weather. it's not knitted very well either, and certainly won't be fit for cost me about what two store-bought sweaters would, too. However, thirds of the way threw knitting myself a sweater. The yarn only However, I would like to inform the assemblage that I'm about two-

Now, knitters are a pretty ingroup lot with a secret language all their own, full of mysterious words and phrases like "purl two", "bind off", "damn, I dropped a stitch," etc. But since I don't think I've got anything to say about knitting, I don't think that will be a problem.

My new kick is knitting.

Browsing a new semi-issue of VOID the other day, I noticed someone commenting to the effect that folkknidon was proly keeping me busy, and I think to myself that this concept is far behind the times. Even TIM's reply that it is sportscardom that's keeping me busy is a bit aft of the hour. It's ax the off season for sports cars now. I haven't been to an auto race since October.

Just about every time I pop my head above ground I notice, either somebody else of I, myself, ask where the hell I've been all this time. Usually it's me who asks.

With the mittie and the sanitation department working hard, most of it finally disappeared. Then yesterday morning it started coming down again. Only this time, the temperature rose mid-snow, and it turned to rain. Then things chilled up enough for both ice and water to coexist on the sidewalks and in the gutters. Today the city's a mess.

Actually a snowfall like that is worse for pedestrians the day(s) after. While it's coming down, you can paddle through it somehow and get a footing of some kind. But after a few hundred feet have slushed it wet and the chilly winds have refrozen it, it's a bloody hazard.

After a couple of tries, I gave up. I found out later that they had opened belatedly with a sub-skeleton crew. I wasn't part of it, though.

In an attempt to get down to Astor Place (my friendly neighborhood subway stop) I found myself sinking past the knees in the drifts. I wondered if anyone would make it to work. It seemed doubtful, so I waited a while and tried phoning in. There wasn't any answer.

still falling.

30 December 60 -- 3

Don't get the mistaken impression that knitting is taking me away from sports cars though. Once you've got Castrol in the blood, there only seems to be one treatment -- racing -- and that's cure or kill (if not you, your bankroll).

There's still karting. All winter, weather permitting.

The MSV Mark I is presently incapacitated, however, by a rather unattached engine mount, which has to be welded before she runs again. It let go during the last race we were at. We managed to get through eight laps, though. For a while we even had visions of finishing.

31 December 60

The time machine in the living room has been doing rather well by me lately. Last Monday (a holiday, you will recall) it took a fit of daytime entertainment that suited my fancy, but gave me the notion that the programmers up at WOR-TV are a moody lot.

They were in a sandy mood Monday. I don't know the name of the film I came into the middle of. It's one of the rare ones I hadn't seen already -- a pre WWII adventure about a newsreel cameraman (played by John Wayne) in what appeared to be Arabia. This was followed immediately by the pic I'd come for, FOUR FEATHERS, which is set in the Sudan (the thin red line and all that). A little later they threw in a contemporary-type thing about some archeologists in what appeared to be Egypt. Today they capped it with GUNGA DIN.

For a scenic break, WNTA-TV gave with a feature to bill with GUNGA DIN!, also featuring Cary Grant, namely ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS. This is set in the mountains of South America, and features Ford trimotors as well. Ah, that scene where the triis coming in with two engines on fire...

Theres a third Cary Grant pic today, too, but I'm skipping it. Some kind of sophisticated comedy.

That's not all from the machine in the living room, though. Last night it gave with Mr. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN, and it's promised that within the next few days it'll show me Mr. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON, too.

I wonder if movies really were as much better in the Good Old Days as they seem to me, or if it's just the Miniver Cheevy in my soul...

Speaking of the big eye, I keep hearing Good Things about the current series, TWILIGHT ZONE. I haven't seen many episodes in

31 December 60 -- 2

this series, and maybe that's my problem...but the ones I have seen have all been clinkers but one. And that one was so much in keeping with my prejudices (all about a WWI flyer who gets himself through a time warp in his bi-plane) that I'm not sure whether it was good, or just to my taste. But I have seen some pretty crummy S-F on that muchly-touted show. And in the several scripts by the Name, Rod Serling, which I've seen have amply demonstrated that Mr. S. has the ability to take a trite idea, deck it with cardboard characterizations, and sell it for money (I trust he gets money).

I've seen a few episodes of another somewhat touted S-F type TV show, too, namely MEN INTO SPACE. This strikes me as having several virtues, though perhaps not for the S-Fan. For one thing, it doesn't try to be a class-type, art-type show, and it doesn't make a lot of noise about itself, like TWILIGHT ZONE. It is space opera set in the immediate type future, takes pioneer space flight as its premise and accepts it. The approach, to me, is much more agreeable than the gosh-wow school of presentation of TZ.

I came into S-F with a background as a fantasy buff, and I'm still a fantasy buff. But I'm pretty particular about my fantasy. One of the rules, as far as I'm concerned, is that there are rules.

To me, fantasy, as much if not moreso than other forms, must be logical and consistant unto itself. And a TV show which has presented several items which I consider to be pretty good fantasy is NBC's THRILLER.

Another show that's occasionally good for fantasy, but frequently terrible is a thing called STRANGE STORIES. I have a notion that a lot of their presentations are re-runs that originated elsewhere -- as half-hour episodes on various TV theatres, etc. Once in a while they come up with a good one.

Curious and interesting this week was that THRILLER presented a play called THE CHEATERS from a story by Bob Bloch, which was quite good, and very well done, in my opinion. Strictly a short-short, and suitable to the length -- three and a half "scenes" well-paced and well-climaxed.

A few days later a thing called THE EYEGLASSES was on STRANGE STORIES. It, too, dealt with a pair of glasses through which one could see people as they really are (i.e. read their true feelings), and like what a difference. This was a script that could nicely have fit into ten or at the most fifteen minutes. It was dragged out to the twenty odd minutes one gets in a half-hour TV production, and it was pretty painful dragging. On top of that, it was done with some really ghastly narration.

Made for an interesting comparison in the treatment of the same gimmick by two different organizations.

19 (?) February 61

"And it's hard, hard times..."

I think today is the 19th. Anyway, it's the Sunday that falls closest to that date.

Last year I was inundated with calendars. The corner drugstore gave me one, sundray friends gave them to me, I got at least one Xmas card in the form of an all year calendar and they came from various other sources. I had one in the living room, one in the kitchen, and four or five in this room.

This year, unlike last, I have two bank accounts (in two different banks), a charge account with a large firm, and my name on many more mailing lists (for insurance, cosmetics, magazines and ghu-knows-what else). And I still do business with the same drugstore. But no calendars. Not a bloody one.

I don't understand it.

Also, I don't know what date it is.

I do know, though, that it is far too late to get this into the Winter mailing, where I originally intended it to be. And one reason for this is the chill winter we've had. Worst since '83, or something like that.

You see, this cozy little cave of mine has heat in three of its four rooms. This is the other one.

Besides that, the way stuff has accumulated, wandered, etc., I find that I'll have to do some major housecleaning before I can even get to the mimeo. I'll give it the old college try, though. (If this isn't in the Spring mailing, you'll know I didn't make it.)

Today the weather is too damp for an excursion out of doors, but warm enough for mobility indoors. So in a few minutes, I will begin shovelling debris away from the mimeo, and then proceed with the business at hand.

Speaking of the Winter mailing, as I was a few paragraphs ago, it hasn't come yet, but it has been heralded by a postmailing -- Dick Ryan's BANDWAGON. Therefore, I will launch myself into a mailing comment regarding that sterling contribution to this noble organization. Said comment will commence immediately overpage, if I can stall long enough to bring the text for this page down to a reasonable spot to end stencil.

Da da dee de dum.

Bandwagon; Dick Ryan

I watched a part of the inauguration on the Big Eye, and thought the high point of the whole shobang was the fire in the lectern.

Welcome to the ranks of Huck Hound buffs.

I caught another fascinating item on the machine this week past -- UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. The 19-0-26 (or so) version, with added narration by Raymond Massey. Much fun. I am invisioning it on a double bill with a fillum I caught at an uptown movie house a few weeks ago -- BIRTH OF A NATION. After the show, as you leave the theatre, they would give you a carpet bag with a white sheet in it.

Well, compared to collecting bubble gum cards or complete sets of OUT OF THIS WORLD ADVENTURES, Karting is a pretty expensive hobby, but compared to collecting daVinci manuscripts or racing Maseratis it is pretty reasonable. In our case, which is unusual, if not unique, it's been rather profitable, since each of the active participants kicked in a sum total of \$15 per head, and we now have one complete kart, one spare engine, one spare set of wheels and sprockets, sundry miscellaneous spare parts, and have turned a fair amount of cash by selling articles (not to mention the ten glorious days in Nassau I got out of the deal). That, of course, is due to our patron, L.T. Shaw, who put us on to the article writing bit, and got us most of the goodies cost free.

Actual racing expenses (not counting fixing what one bends) run as follows: \$1.25 each admission and driving fee, \$1.25 additional fee for the kart, about 30¢ gas and oil, for a day's racing. In over a year of running, we've worn two tires. How's that compare to the MGA, Ger?

While waiting around for the sports car racing season to begin, and in between sieges of knitting, I had been dragged into an new activity. Last Sunday I got took skiing.

Skiing is even worse than knitting for secret ingroup language.

Dick Greenhaus, who must take the blame for having introduced be to both sports cars and skiing, has told me that people who dig the one usually dig the other. In searching for a common point to explain this tendency, he has suggested that there are some people who dig travelling sideways. We are trying to work out details for xx introducing king-crab riding as a sport.

Although last year I managed to become a ski casualty without ever having been on skis, I was never too sure of my inclination or interest in this activity. But circumstances conspired against me. Another member of the gang had been inducted into the ski bit last season, had acquired a set of second hand skis with bindings and boots of a sort, and then had moved on and bought himself new skis and better boots. So there was this spare pair of skis, and boots that happened to fit me, just sitting around unused.

And here we were with a winter of snow and a weekend predicted to be perfect, not too cold and pleasantly sunny. Kiki was out of town on tour with the dance company, so Dick offered to lend me her poles and give me a lesson, if I wanted to join the bus trip up to Belleayre on Sunday. My overall investment need only be the \$5.95 for the bus trip, plus whatever I spent on food, and if I didn't like the ski bit, I could relax and enjoy the scenery and fresh air.

Not having sampled fresh air since the last race at Lime Rock, in October, I thought I might as well.

I spent most of the day intentionally sitting down and getting up, which is a basic part of skiing for beginners. It seems that until one learns a little control, the sudden sit is the best system of braking.

By the end of the day, I was busy being frustrated by my inability to control a straight line snow plow down a shallow slope. Even so, I have been told that next time out, I will be required to master the snow plow turn, and once I have that in hand, will be prepared to go onto a beginners' trail. To which I answer: "Jolly."

Anyway, I gave my friend \$4 for the skis and bindings, with the promise of indefinite loan of the boots, until I get the cash to pick up a pair of my own, and I've got to go shopping for some poles. You can send the Get-Well cards to this address.

20 Feb 61 T H E H A I L I N G C A M E T O D A Y !

If my strength holds out, I'll whup up some mailing comments. But just in case, I want to make short reply to kindly comments from a couple of people who posed direct questions, or similar...

PETE GLAHAN Well, you see, originally we had to make adaptors to fit the bearings to the axle carrier, and then when we switched to the larger diameter axle, we had to adaptors to adapt the first adaptors to the larger i.d. bearings.

ELINOR BUSBY: I don't know what I'll do with those many stencils that hang like icicles by the wall. Maybe I'll publish them in installments, or something. I know there's not enuf mimeo stock around the place to run them, and ghu knows when/how I'll get more (how does one get a 10-ream lot of mimeo paper when there's no one home during the day to take delivery?) Anyway, I'll re-read them one of these days and if I said anything interesting I just might be vain enough to preserve it in print.

F.N. BUSBY: I've got my doubts how many people would be interested in plans for go-karts. But if I don't publish anything in the line of drawings (oops, count yourself another space under your name there, I goofed) I'll send you some...like the plans for the Mark II, when we get a chance to make some copies.

Well, problems have arisen which are bringing this somewhat haphazard production to a sudden end. Namely, just as I was getting started composing a long eulogy to GNC, typer keys started flying in every direction -- at least as many directions as one key can fly at once.

So we come to a rather abrupt halt.

Joy to one and all...

This is

SELF-PRESERVATION #1...

This is a HOFFMAG product for the 95th FAPA mailing by

Lee Hoffman
basement
54 East 7th Street
New York 3, N.Y.