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Last issue, I said I was going to try making a PDF version of the zine and e-mailing it to a few people (such as those who've sent me e-zines). Well, I did and I didn't. Did do a PDF version (in fact, that's what I printed the final xerox originals from), but never got around to putting together a mailing list and sending it out. So, I'm going to try again. Maybe this time I'll get ambitious enough to actually do it.

(It occurs to me, tho, that I ought to send the two out together, and include a copy of the "Comparative Religion" essay from no. 190, since that one seems to be influencing my vocabulary.

Living the Year

Last issue, I said something about having reached one of those familiar sci-fi years we've all read about, just like we did back in 1984. And while it would be rather futile to count up ways in which reality differs from fiction (after all, this is the year the Jupiter rocket was launched in *The Lights in the Sky Are Stars*, and 2001 may also have been used in one or two other minor sci-fi works), one interesting and (to me, at least) unexpected difference has turned up.

When this year was fiction, I (for one) always called it "twenty-oh-one". Now that it's real, most people seem to say "two-thousand-one".

Odd — I figured we'd just segue naturally from the nineteens to the twenties.

I prefer the "old" way, because it has a slight edge in brevity — not yet, but when we get out of the aughts, it'll save a syllable. Doesn't seem like a lot, of course, but I'll bet it's enough to where "twenty" will eventually prevail over "two thousand".

Or is this minutiae beneath your notice?

Death in the Extended Family

Rich Morrissey, prominent comic book fan and scholar and a former member of SFPA, died May 22 of a heart attack. He was 47. I was rather

stunned by the news not so much because he was younger than me, but because — well, actually, the "stunned" part pretty much is because he was younger than me.

But over and above the stunning, I feel a real loss. He and I weren't, like, bosom buddies or anything, but I liked him and enjoyed our occasional contacts. He'd pop up from time to time in the darnedest Internet places, like for example the Disney Comics Mailing List; also, I'd see him at conventions from time to time. About a week after I announced the Toonopedia's opening, he turned up on one of the message board threads where I'd made the announcement, with a minor correction.

There aren't all that many people a guy like me can talk about comics with. Rich was one of them. I'll miss him.

I'd been meaning to write him, too. Ran across something he wrote a couple of years ago on a really obscure topic — I've got a note around here somewhere, an offhand remark he made about an Archie Comics character named Li'l Jinx going back farther than is documented elsewhere, which I'll need to pin down when I get around to writing a Li'l Jinx article for the Toonopedia (which I'll eventually want to do because Jinx's father was a comic book collector and that's a cool thing to be able to mention). Guess I'll have to track that factoid down elsewhere.

Hoo boy, another guy I know who'll never be as old as I am now.

This "Grandpa" Business

Rachel (just turned 19) continues to be pregnant, a condition which will persist, if all goes as planned, until late October or early November. I continue to be undecided as to how I feel about it. Guess I can figure that out when I'm actually looking at the kid.

She's having severe roommate troubles right now, and will be moving out at the end of the month (i.e., right when all good little SFPazines are in the OE's mailbox). Unfortunately, the only

thing that "makes sense" at this point is for her to move back in with us until the baby is a couple of months old.

And oh, isn't that groovy! Rachel with hormones, living in my house. And I have such **fond** memories of the last time I had Rachel with hormones living in my house.

I think I'm going to make it a condition that I get to order her to her room, with the door closed, whenever I can't stand her one more minute. First, of course, we'll have to make her pay to fix the door she tore off its hinges while in the throes of teen angst.

Job-wise, she's moved up in the world. She's now working as a cashier at Wal-Mart. She was going to keep the Arby's job as a part-timer, but they dumped her. Given the prospect of a preggie on the payroll right when the insurance was about to kick in, they suddenly started treating her like shit until she quit. Naturally, I gave her a helpful lecture on how corporations manipulate people like her into quitting so they can avoid the messiness of firing them under such dubious circumstances, but it was too late. Anyway, she likes her new job much better, tho I do hope it doesn't satisfy her for long.

*Toonopedia*TM

Last mailing, I mentioned several sharp spikes in article views, y'know, like when a prominent newspaper links to one briefly. I just had the biggest spike ever. My Elmer Fudd article was read almost 3,500 times in one week — including 1,800 the first day of the spike. This makes it absolutely my most-viewed article of all time, by about a factor of three, with the exception of the front page itself (which usually accounts for about 12-14% of my hits).

The source of this one wasn't hard to track down — for some obscure reason, a porn site linked to it. This site seems to consist mostly of links to other porn sites, with fresh links added daily. The guy doing it has this long list of short descriptive phrases, and each one is a link. Right after "Ashley Judd" he put "Elmer Fudd", and that's where my huge spike came from.

Why, I'll never know. I guess he liked the sound they made in juxtaposition, but surely his readers must have been disappointed when they got there (by the way, that page now has

about a third as many reloads per original view as most). Maybe he tosses ringers like that in regularly. I didn't get any complaints, anyway, and I hope he didn't get too many either.

I wrote him a thank-you note, as follows:

Dear Sir:

I don't know why you linked to my "Elmer Fudd" article last week, but I do appreciate your doing so. It resulted in over 3,300 hits. Of course, probably very few of them clicked through to any of my other articles, but hey — 3,300 single-shot hits ain't hay!

I hope your readers weren't too disappointed to find a pot-bellied, dim-witted, fully-clothed male dwarf instead of — well, whatever it is they were looking for.

New articles since the last SFPA: Bitchy Bitch, Mel Blanc, Gelett Burgess, Captain Marvel (1966), Captain Tootsie, R. Crumb, Doctor Solar, George Herriman, Walter Lantz, Man-Thing, Rube Goldberg, Rube Goldberg Devices, Night Nurse, Phantom Lady, Julius Schwartz, Smilin' Jack, Stanley & His Monster, Tomahawk, Toonerville Folks, Universal Studios cartoons

Also, I added a Privacy Statement (required by advertising brokers, but at least I tried to make it entertaining -- it started out with over 50 things I won't do with your data) and started a new "Toons Online" section, containing links to Web toons (cannibalized from my old "Daily Dose" site, one of the ones I did for practice before starting the ToonopediaTM). Two pages in it so far — syndicated comics, and Web original comics. I'll add editorial cartoons shortly, then start seeking out good sources of Web animation (something I've hitherto managed to avoid getting hooked on). Anyway, those also count as articles in the way these things are reckoned (by me, at any rate), so the new total is 347.

To continue averaging three a week since opening, I have to have 352 by the Tuesday after the SFPA deadline — but since I'm working on SFPA as well as facing a deadline on a Horace Horsecollar story for Egmont, that's not going to happen. No problem, really, as I've fallen behind before. I'll try to get one a day done week after next, which will put me a bit ahead — and past the 350-article mark!

I'm starting to see evidence of my ToonopediaTM being used as a reference work, by the

way. For example, the news story about Mighty Mouse appearing in the new "Power of Cheese" commercials mentioned the character was created by Isadore Klein. I don't know they got this relatively obscure factoid from me, but since I'm in the major search engines now, I'm probably the handiest source of it for a writer facing a very close deadline. I'd be at least mildly surprised if it came from anywhere else.

I now have advertising up on the site, but the revenue from it is a joke. Talk about your "dozens of dollars" projects! ("Dozens of dollars" is how I refer to things that are designed to make money, but aren't likely to bring in millions, thousands or even hundreds.) Seems the bottom dropped out of Internet banner advertising right after the dot-com bust of 2000, so page views can now be had for less than a tenth of a cent apiece. I'm disappointed, of course, but not discouraged — any new market is going to have some wild fluctuations as it gets established, but if it has inherent value (and the Internet certainly does), it'll come back. Meanwhile, I'm gaining experience in dealing with this sort of stuff, and every month or so they'll mail me a check for lunch money.

Also, I have confidence in my product — it's a good piece of work, and should continue to prosper in terms of drawing people in. I don't have to worry about a financial house of cards falling in, which is what happened to last year's dot-coms, because there isn't any financing or debt (all the value in it comes from my own work, what they call "sweat equity"), and the operating expenses are so low I can afford to run it in the red for as long as I have to. When the cycle again makes it possible to make money on Internet advertising, those flimsy dot-coms will all have been swept out of the way, but I'll still be there.

Meanwhile, I'll be adding another revenue stream shortly after this zine goes out — I plan to huckster every toon-related affiliate program I can find, starting with several hundred books on Amazon.com, continuing with most of the inventory of DisneyStores.com, and on to points beyond. This is going to involve a lot of work, not the least of which will be to acquire and learn software packages I never even suspected the existence of just a few months ago.

I'm still groping around, and am likely to try

all sorts of things before I really know what I'm doing. Lots of fun, but it can eat up about as much time and energy as I'm willing to allow.

I keep thinking how nice it would be to have high-speed Internet access right now. There are all sorts of Toonopedia™-related things that would be a whole lot easier if I had it — for example, as I recall, the most time-consuming part of setting up Amazon.com affiliate pages is twiddling my thumbs while the book covers load. Hopefully, by next mailing, that will no longer be the case.

Man, technology — the more I have, the more I want.

In case you came in late, my Toonopedia™ is located at <http://www.toonopedia.com>.

The B. C. Flap

Naturally, by the time the Easter *B.C.* strip hit the papers, I'd already noted the Great Controversy of 2001 in the Toonopedia™ *B.C.* article.

If you missed it, it's pretty amazing. You can easily find it on the Web (or I could e-mail you a copy), so I won't describe it except to say its message seems to be that Judaism was fine in its day, but everybody needs to be a Christian now. Needless to say, the minute a single Jewish newspaper employee saw what was about to go into the Sunday paper, the protests began — but it was too late, as the Sunday comics had already been printed for insertion into the paper. Within hours, it was being denounced by clergy of practically all stripes — the only monotheistic religion that wasn't prominently heard from was Islam. There was a smattering of minority opinion, of course, but by and large, everybody but the "get science out of the science classes" brigade loathed it.

Naturally, Johnny Hart issued a statement saying he meant no such thing, that in reality he meant in some way to exalt the Jewish faith. I don't doubt his world view is warped enough to where he thinks he's telling the truth — just like he no-doubt meant to exalt the Jewish faith in various interviews in which he stated positively and without a moment's hesitation that all Jews are going to Hell. True Believers are capable of **amazing** leaps of logic and common sense, as SFPA's Orthodox Republicanists repeatedly demonstrate.

Mark Evanier has a good statement on the controversy at <http://www.evanier.com>. I agree with most of what he said, so I'll keep my own comments short and sweet.

Yes, it's vile and grossly offensive. Yes, anyone would do it is an asshole. No, I don't believe there's a benign interpretation for it. No, I don't think the strip should be dropped from newspapers for this, because there's room for diversity on the comics page and free speech protects vile, grossly offensive assholes just like it protects you and me. Yes, however, I do think it should be dropped from newspapers because it stopped being funny decades ago.

I think that about sums it up.

Oh yes, one more thing — amid the flap, the syndicate made a claim that Hart is the most widely read writer in the world, which is absolute, unvarnished bullshit. If the most widely read writer in the world should happen to be a cartoonist, there are dozens ahead of Hart, and the PR flack who wrote that bald-faced lie could not possibly have avoided knowing it. As a Christian, doesn't Hart, who lies by silence in letting the statement stand uncorrected, know that God hears every word he and his close business associates say?

LepreCon 27

My goodness, the numbers are getting so large! LepreCon was still in single digits when I first moved into this area and started attending.

I sat on a few panels, as always. This time, I think my favorite was "Writing Derivative Works". There were two *Star Wars* writers, a *Star Trek*, someone who wrote a sequel to *Lord of the Rings*, a Cthulhu Mythos guy — all novelists. I was the only funnybook guy there, with my Mickey Mouse and Mighty Morphin Power Rangers credentials. Lots of fun, talking about the similarities and differences of dealing with various franchises, and of course a lot of their experience carries over into what I do.

The family all wore Toonopedia™ T-shirts Saturday of the convention, and Rachel's had a smaller logo on the belly for the kid. I also handed out Toonopedia™ business cards (which I'd previously done at parties and on visits to the comics store) — just the logo, URL, and slogan ("A Vast Repository of Toonological

Knowledge"). I started the con with a fresh batch of 300, put a big stack on the freebie table, and carried a handful around with me. I picked up the leftover freebies as we left, and counted them all on the way home — 151 not given out, of which a hefty percent are stapled to this very zine, you lucky ducks.

And believe you me, I just looove being able to make full-color business cards and T-shirt transfers right here in the house.

Nothing earth-shattering, but a pleasant weekend, as usual. Which ain't bad, considering the first piece of hot gossip I heard at last year's LepreCon was Blake Shira's suicide — there's another guy I could talk with about comics, who'll never be as old as I am now.

Gary Brown:

First off, thanks for plugging me in K-a, and for sending me your 200th issue.

No, *Roger Rabbit* was as far from being the first feature to meld live action with animation, as it was from melding it for the first time altogether. It did the most thorough job to date of the melding, but Disney released features of that sort as early as the 1940s (e.g., *Song of the South*, *So Dear to My Heart*). And remember that little sequence where Gene Kelly danced with Jerry of "Tom and —"?

(By the way, I'm currently in the process of having my eyes opened [through Toonopedia™ research] by how **much** of that was going on from the late 19-teens to just before sound came in. Walter Lantz, for example, interacted with his cartoon stars so often that strangers recognized him on the street.)

I don't know why a medical person would say it's impossible to get a cold by going from air conditioning to outside heat and back again. Changes like that put stress on your body, and stress interferes with your immune system, making you more susceptible to the germs that are always in the environment. Seems pretty obvious that it's not just possible, but likely.

Randy Cleary:

As you probably realized shortly after reading my essay on Comparative Religion, I distinguish between Republicans and Orthodox Republicanists. There are 'doxies in and around SFPA, but you ain't them. If you're a Republican because

you think they're the marginally less hypocritical party, then I think you're mistaken, but don't see all that much to argue with.

I do, tho, detect a whiff of Orthodox teachings in your stuff. For example, where you say "this comes from a member of an administration that needs 'is' defined," you've touched on an area of their dogma. In reality, of course, in answering the question "Is there a sexual relationship between you and (whoever)?", Clinton is the one who got the meaning of the word **right**. Seizing on the technicality that the relationship was in the past was certainly a weasely and lawyer-like thing to do, but if the attorney who asked the question wanted the past tense included, then he should have included it — **any** lawyer will advise his client not to volunteer information by answering questions that weren't asked. Y'see, as Clinton (but apparently not his Orthodox Republicanist detractors) knew, "is" means "is" — it doesn't mean "is or was". When he made the statement in question, he was ridiculing them for not knowing that — in fact, I'm at a loss to guess how the 'doxies could possibly be interpreting what Clinton said, so as to make it sound like he's the one who doesn't know the meaning of the word "is", rather than that stupid lawyer of theirs who doesn't even know how to phrase a simple question.

Arthur Hlavaty:

We didn't need the spectacle of the last-minute Clinton pardons (so similar to those of Bush except, as you point out, that none of Clinton's could have implicated **him** in criminal wrongdoing if brought to trial) to explode the myth of the Liberal Media. The entire eight years of Clinton's presidency constituted a severe test of faith to anyone who accepts that article of dogma. (Amazing, how many passed.)

Janet Larson:

An awful lot of people are like you, wishing government would spend less. I'm one myself. The Republicans have been very successful in promoting themselves as the party that stands for less government spending, and that's why so many people vote for guys like Bush — almost as many, in the recent election, as voted for Gore. But as "everyone with a brain to think about it" knows, what they actually **do** isn't

reducing government spending in the least — just diverting it from one class of uses to another. Less on welfare, more on bombs. Less on education, more on enforcement of victimless crimes. "Unfortunately, there are enough uneducated Americans that are easily" led into believing their rhetoric rather than their actions — in reality, they're devoted to bigger and bigger government just like all the other politicians. They do differ in where they get the cash to drive it all — Democrats tend to tax; Republicans tend to charge it to the next generation (Reagan, e.g., quadrupled the National Debt). Both methods impoverish us ordinary folks, but one of them is sneakier about it, enabling them to convince uneducated Americans who lack brains to think about it that they're not actually digging ever-deeper into all our pockets.

(For an explanation of portions in quotes and italics, please see my comment to Toni. I don't mean it as hard for you as for her, but you should be aware that it's there.)

Norm Metcalf:

There is another possibility for that letter you have, signed "Morton Addison Walker" when Mort Walker's actual name is Addison Morton Walker. Walker is so famous for the number of assistants he employs, that Scott Shaw! once referred to an extremely prolific cartoonist as a "one-man Mort Walker". Tho his name is signed to everything that comes out of his studio, you never really know whether or not he actually touched it. Your letter might have been signed by a new guy, who got the boss's full name slightly wrong. In fact, that would be my guess.

You say, "Movies aren't science-fiction, they can only adapt science-fictional ideas." Why? I seem to see possibilities for science fiction in all kinds of media, not just prose, and can't think of any reason movies should be exempt.

Sheila Strickland:

I see (by your use of the locution "Mardi Gras itself") you've fallen prey to the pedants who insist the common expression "Mardi Gras Day" is a solecism. I used to buy into their elite pronouncements, but finally decided fuck it. If "Mardi Gras Day" contains a redundancy in the French/English patois certain aspects of New Orleans society try unsuccessfully to affect, who

cares? I speak English. In English, as spoken in and around New Orleans, Mardi Gras is a part of the year that lasts a couple of weeks or so, and Mardi Gras Day is the Tuesday when the Mardi Gras season reaches its peak. The linguistic reactionaries will probably be able to make people feel less than fully literate about using the term for a long time to come, but like the ones who have prolonged use of "whom" centuries past its time, they can't change the way the language is actually spoken.

Joni Weisskopf:

Patrick J. Gibbs "*displays an amazing ignorance of history and*" politics if he believes the founders of this country had benign reasons for deciding on a republic rather than a democracy. They were economically privileged white men — many of whom actually held slaves — whose non-interest in extending power far beyond their own social class led them to the skewed view of history Gibbs parrots in his essay.

Furthermore, he "*really [doesn't] believe in or understand*" the political structure of the United States if he swallows the oft-repeated civics class bromide that the states are sovereign and the federal government is merely something they ceded a few powers to. It may have started out that way (and I'm not positive that's the case, at least during the Constitutional era), but ceding powers is kinda funny — it seldom stops with what's ceded. The question of whether the states remain sovereign or have become mere subdivisions of the U.S.A. was firmly and decisively settled in 1865 — if the states were sovereign, they'd be able to pull out. I don't know how old Gibbs is, but I'll wager that was before he was even born.

And if a lack of "riots in the streets" is his criterion for a political institution "working", then his performance expectations are appallingly low. We just watched as a single district, by laying out its ballot in an illegal way designed to nullify votes cast for the candidate who was openly — even flagrantly — disfavored by the election commissioner, put a man in office whom the majority of voters, even in Florida according to the Miami *Post* announcement, didn't want. Even if people do choose to express their outrage in more civilized ways than the one suggested — you call that "work-

ing"? Without an electoral college, such attempts to steal elections would be well submerged in the huge mass of popular votes. With it, small "irregularities", strategically applied, can swing entire states. The idea that the current system **prevents** such subversions of the system from being effective is so far removed from reality that it could only be held by a True Believer.

The reason some phrases are in quotes and italics is because I don't want to be too subtle. Last time I threw the words of your own zine back at you, it went right over your head.

And since even this might be too subtle for you, I'll state it baldly. You and your contributors have a strong tendency to insult those you disagree with, and are utterly undeterred when called down on it. Others, including myself, may lapse into such behavior from time to time (e.g., when I give voice to my recent realization of how much your form of True Believerism resembles that of a religious whacko), but you do it constantly, consistently, in a variety of ways, and have been doing it for years. I think you show less respect for others than anyone else in SFPA. I've made a lot of jokes about it over the years, and will undoubtedly make more, but I do want you to know the humor is not entirely pure.

Not that I don't love you, of course.

Now, on to the SFPA Web site. A revised edition of my 50th-mailing history of the apa (removing mention of ancient feuds that really don't need to be raked over again, at least where they don't directly relate to the main thrust of the organization's progress) is a definite possibility. But I'd want to do the editing myself, so it might have to wait until I have some free time for it. (Do you have a timetable for when this putative site might actually go up?)

But I'd also probably want someone else to look over it after my editing — I'm kinda biased as regards some of that stuff myself, which is why I haven't attempted to write SFPA's more recent history (and strongly believe that certain others should have the courtesy and good sense not to try, too). I may ask you to do that for me. After the foregoing, I'm sure you're not inclined to let something that unreasonably favors my point of view go unchallenged.