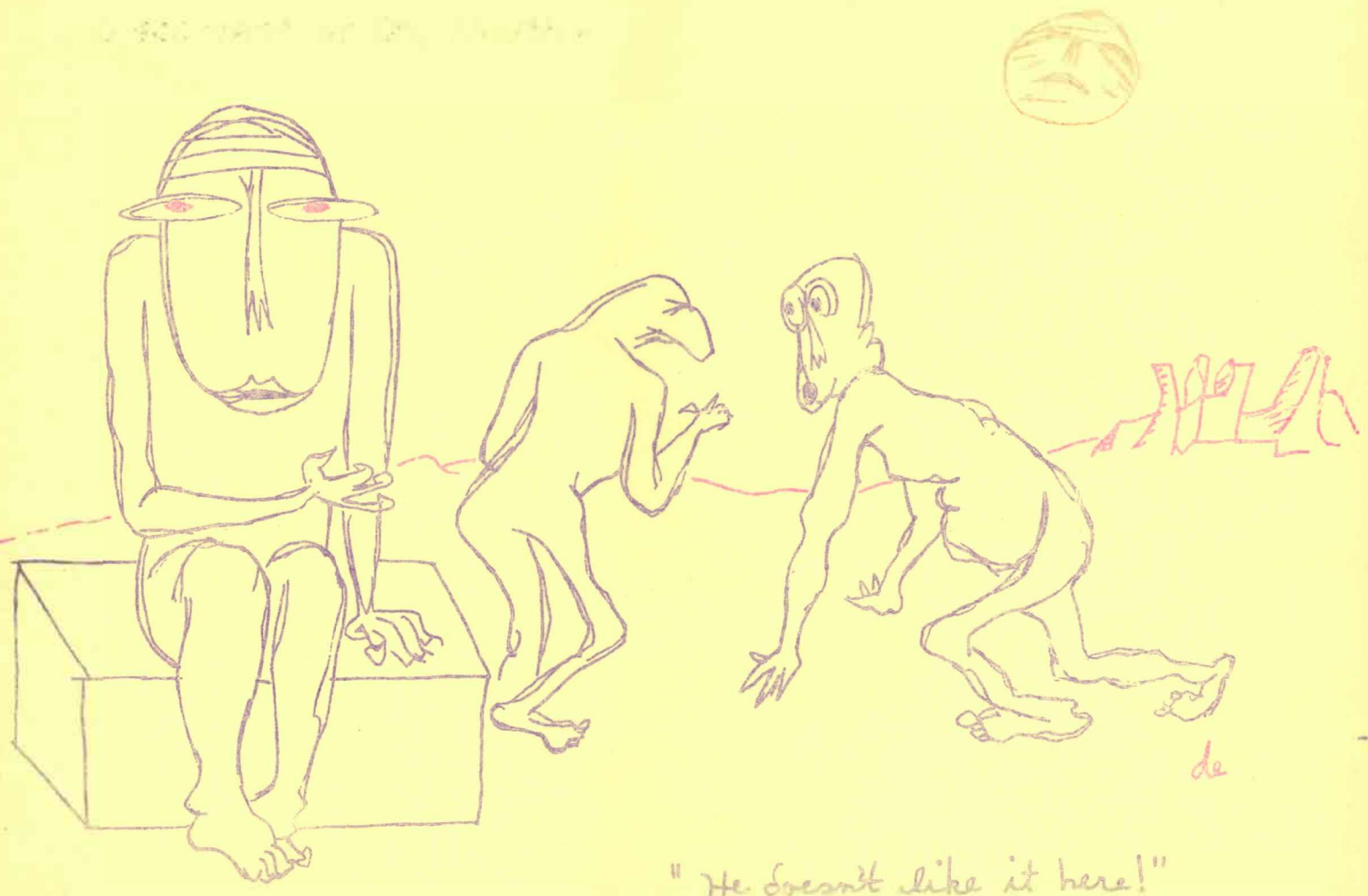


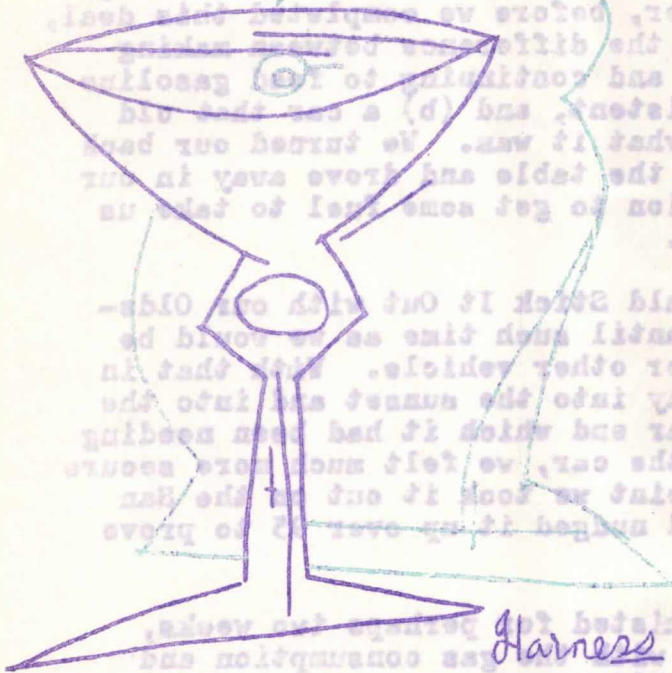
Watling Street XVI

© 1960-1961 by Dr. Martin



"He doesn't like it here!"

WATLING STREET



WATLING STREET is published for the Spectator Amateur Press Society by Bob Lichtman, 6137 So. Croft Avenue, Los Angeles 56, California. This is #16, for the April 1963 SAPS mailing, and it is Silverdrum Publication #66. Cover illustration by Dave English, interiors by Jack Harness.

We have grown somewhat disenchanted with our fine, large American car, the Oldsmobile which has been so instrumental in creating the contents of the last two issues of this magazine. It is a very fine car, as we say, but while it has its advantages, it has overwhelming disadvantages. On the credit side of the ledger, we can count its massive size, which lends to it a certain comfort lacking in smaller cars of the Volkswagen, Renault and Corvair varieties. It is this roominess that lends it to tasks such as transporting six or more hungry fans, fellow students, or just ordinary people to a Chinese restaurant for dinner. It is exceptionally comfortable on long trips and has a large quantity of luggage space in the gaping trunk. However, on the debit side of the books there is its cost of operation. Such a machine, with its power accoutrements (everything from power seat-adjuster to power radio-antenna raiser) and its large bulk and powerful engine (202 h.p.), is hardly judicious in its consumption of gasoline, and after a half-year or more of watching it gobble up a tank and a half of gasoline a week in the course of our ordinary driving, we decided that, by George, it was time for a change.

Contact with John Trimble, Ron Ellik, and Steve Tolliver, all of whom own and operate 1962 Volkswagens, and with Andy Main, who is a VW "nut," led us to seriously consider the purchase of a People's Conveyance of our very own. Not a new one, of course, for this would have taxed our patience and our bankbook considerably, but one of the vintage, say, of a fine Port, about 1956 or 1957. We sallied forth with this in mind, armed with the "used car, imported" section of our metropolitan newspaper, one evening, and visited perhaps half a dozen franchised Volkswagen dealers that evening. At these dealers, we found no dearth of the variety and age of VW we wanted, but the prices were by and large too dear for our pocket-

back, the trades offered for our bloated Olds were too small, and the dealers were too inflexible. Through several further days' shopping we located a '56 convertible in reasonable repair for \$800, at a dealer in Santa Monica, towards which the dealer was willing to give us \$300 on our car. However, before we completed this deal, we came to the conclusion that (a) the difference between making payments on a VW & operating same, and continuing to feed gasoline into my car, was almost non-existent, and (b) a car that old wasn't worth that much, no matter what it was. We turned our back to the deal when the chips were on the table and drove away in our Oldsmobile to the nearest gas station to get some fuel to take us back to our home in Los Angeles 56.

Thereafter, we resolved that we would Stick It Out with our Oldsmobile 98 for several more years, until such time as we would be able to afford a newer Volkswagen or other vehicle. With that in mind, we zoomed off down the freeway into the sunset and into the pair of new tires for our car's rear end which it had been needing for some time. With new tires on the car, we felt much more secure and safe in it, and to prove our point we took it out on the San Diego Freeway that very evening and nudged it up over 95 to prove our point.

Our feeling of smug complacency persisted for perhaps two weeks, at which point we had had it again with the gas consumption and general high cost of living in our 202 horsepower pleasure dome. In the meantime, spurred on by our observation of other cars on the freeway and our scanning of the used car advertisements in our local newspaper, we had become enamoured of the idea of owning and operating a cunning little Chevrolet Corvair. This car, it was rumored, would perform quite as well as a VW, would get quite nearly the gas mileage, and besides was available with an automatic transmission. The latter fact alone was enough to tickle our fancy, and we set out one Sunday afternoon, armed with the "used car, American" section of our local paper, to find out how we would fare in buying a Corvair.

Unlike Volkswagen dealers, the individuals who deal in Corvairs and other American Cars are not at all inflexible. They are quite fond of making you an initial offer and then proceeding to join you in cutting it to a rock-bottom minimum. The object to the game is to work down the difference — between the trade-in you're offered and the asking price of the desired car (in this case, the Corvair) — to a minimum and then arrange terms on that. This proved to be great fun. In the course of one Sunday afternoon, we got to drive a considerable quantity of 1960 Corvairs, a few 1961 Corvairs, and even a 1961 Pontiac Tempest (for variety and kicks). Many of them were in good shape, some of them were little gems of cars. All of them performed at least adequately. We drove some which had stick shifts, too, just for the hell of it. However, we were unable to make a deal. The difference came out to be too great in all cases. We would discover this by "talking it over" with the sales Manager while the ordinary sales man would sit on the side and make comments about how Clean and Smooth-Running our trade-in was but how it was worth Only So Much. Finally, we would tell the sales Manager "no, thanks; I'm sorry, but we can't do business on those terms" and would turn around to leave. We would get into and start our car, at which point the sales man would come up and knock on our window and offer us a slightly better deal, but this

was never low enough, either, so we would drive off into the sunset, sadly, noticing that our gas gauge was down to a quarter tank, again.

We still haven't gotten a Corvair, or any other economy car, yet, but we are still trying intermittently. Perhaps by the time this is circulated we will have something to write about in July, if we don't go broke first feeding gasoline into the CLDs so we can cruise around looking for its eventual replacement. If we do get something, we will let you know about it.

-oOo-

Bruce Pelz isn't the only one who can start out on fannish parodies and not ever finish them. This is the result of a bit of inspiration on discovering that I needed to have pages in this mailing to retain my membership, after over three continuous years of not missing a mailing.

SAPS I've given you all and now I'm nothing.

SAPS "one page due April 15, 1963"

I can't stand my own dittography.

SAPS when will we end the mailing-comment war?

Go fuck yourself with your frigid faction.

I don't feel good I'm reading a crudzine in the mailing.

I won't fill out my pillar poll till I'm in my right mind.

SAPS when will you stop being fuggheaded?

When will you slipsheet your mailing comments?

When will you be worthy of your fourteen Coventranians?

SAPS why are your editorials full of stale jokes?

SAPS what do you have against PAPA?

I'm sick of your inter-apa bigotry.

When can I go into the stationers and buy what I need with my sensitive fannish face?

SAPS after all it is you and I who are perfect not the waiting list.

Your surplus stock is too much for me.

You made me get high on ditto fumes.

There must be some way to settle this argument.

Jacobs is in PAPA I don't think he'll come back it's sinister.

Are you being sinister or is this another TCarr hoax?

And there the would-be Brandon ends. Who knows what struck him at this point to cause him to abandon the project so nobly begun. Perhaps he read over what he had already written?

-oOo-

I am not a Collector like Norm Metcalf, but I like the paperbacks I buy to stay together for at least a few readings, since I cannot afford hardcover editions and do want to keep the paperbakes on display for a while afterwards, until they are perhaps consigned to a dusty doom in an orange crate somewhere. However, I seem to have horrible luck in buying paperback books with well-set spines. For me, they always fly apart.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this was last semester, when I purchased a paperback, William Faulkner's Three Short Novels (from which I was to read "The Bear"). I made a special effort to find a copy that was in good condition so that it would be fit to exhibit

on my bookshelves after reading. There were perhaps fifteen copies of the volume at the magazine and book store where I went to pick it out, and I went through them carefully, quite carefully, looking for one whose exterior appearance was good and whose binding appeared nonpareil. Finally, I settled on one, paid my cash, and walked out happily.

That evening, upon finishing the third page of "The Bear," the binding fell apart with an horrible cr-rr-aack. I wasn't too surprised. This is something that I seem to fall prey to more often than anyone else I know. I don't think it's because I hold the books open too far, or anything, since I'm pretty careful in that respect. I think I am just Poor Binding Prone.

However, I have become an Excellent Book Binder, and if anyone evinces the slightest interest, I will go on at great and boring length on How To Rebind Your Shoddy Paperbacks with Material You Probably Have Around The House (Or Apartment, as the case May Be).

-oOo-

This is a short note to Jane Ellern, prompted by Wrai's mailing comments.

I'd like to refer both of you to Joe Kennedy's and Lloyd Alpaugh's letters in the fifth issue of my SAPSzine (in the 51st mailing) for some background on why SAPS was formed. Briefly, SAPS was not formed as a literary sewing and criticism circle. SAPS was formed by the New Jersey Spectators as a reaction to FAPA and as a joke. It wasn't ever intended to last out more than a year, and when it showed no signs of folding up after the first year, the Spectators engineered their way out of control of the organization and quit pretty much en masse a couple mailings later.

The material in the real early mailings — say the first year and a half of them — was largely the sort of thing one finds these days in inferior crudzines. That is, short & bad science-fiction stories, puzzles, articles of insufficient length and/or depth on scientifiction authors of the present and past, etc. There was no real tradition of or feeling for lengthy mailing comments, which evolved much later. As Rick Sneary once put it to me in a personal conversation about the early SAPS (Rick was a charter member), most of the early SAPS were neofans and were interested in discussing s-f. However, few of them had enough experience or talent to do it well.

In short, SAPS has a tradition of wanting to do great things, but not doing them well. Or something like that...

-oOo-

Tom Armistead's brief essay on love amazed me. I was startled to see the article in itself, first, and then gassed to dig so much obvious thought going into these notes of Tom's.

However, I don't think that Tom came any closer to Defining Love than anyone else whose writing on the subject I've read. I think this is because love, or Love, is a sort of transcendent emotion. Like the happiness of Charles Schulz's book, Happiness Is A Warm Puppy, I don't

think love can be pinned down in one all-encompassing Definition. I think love varies in its effect and very nature from person to person. For some men, love may be turned on by no less than a 40" breast measurement. For others, maybe this is enough to turn it way off. Some women may like men who drive sports cars. Others may prefer men who eat nothing but a staple diet of garlic bread. These are purposely silly remarks; don't let them bother you.

If love is anything definable, maybe it is a sort of people magnetism. The degree and effect of love would then depend on how strong the attraction between two polarities happened to be. But this doesn't tell one what love is, nor does it tell one why, which is even more maddening, sometimes. If you were to ask me why I loved this or that being, I'm sure I couldn't begin to tell you. I've asked a few people, at times, why they love thus & such a person, and gotten similar response.

About all that can be done, really, is to communicate some of the emotions one feels towards a loved one. It is pretty easy to pin down some of your actions resulting from love. It is next to impossible to explain why you react as you do. And besides, is it really worth explaining it away? I tend to doubt it.

Maybe this sounds very negative, but it isn't meant that way. I would like there to be more love in the world. People often tend to suppress their feelings and too often when these feelings come to the surface they are hate feelings, not love feelings. If there is any love present, it is suppressed by the hate or by feelings of shame, guilt, or fear. Why isn't there love suppressed? Suppressed love would be better than suppressed hate, since it would be more worthwhile working away peoples' suppressions.

If anyone has some answers to the questions implied here, I'd sure be glad to hear them speak up. I've got more to say, but I'd rather key in to others' responses rather than shooting in the dark.

-oOo-

Maybe I am an old stick in the mud, fifteen years behind the times, but I purchased a radio the other day about the size of a package of cigarettes, for only \$3.00, and I am reasonably fantistied over it. I got it in Cosmopolitan Inglewood at one of the numerous discount stores that opened up and then went bankrupt there not long ago. I got it during a bankruptcy sale.

It has two transistors, a diminutive speaker, and a simple enough printed circuit, but for its size it's got rather amazing fidelity, although somewhat lower than lo-fi, and a pretty good receptivity to the local AM radio stations, even though it's not too sensitive inside large buildings. The front of it is fairly attractive, black and white with a gold grille over the speaker, and it says it's a Cornet radio. The rear is all black and says Boy's Radio, Made in Japan.

I carry it out with me sometimes in one of the pockets of whatever coat I happen to be wearing and have taken it once to the beach. At one point the off-on switch became loose, so I took the whole radio apart to get to the screw that tightened it and fixed it.

Some of you probably have children who would dig something like this.

It doesn't represent a very large investment, and if you live in a reasonably large town, like Los Angeles, Chicago, or Seattle, or even Oakland, you're sure to have a handful of these discount, or "junk," stores in your downtown area. Look one up and see what they have. Let your kid be the last on his block. This is your chance to bug Ray Bradbury if he comes to your town.

To top this off, Paul Turner the other night was talking about the new process of microminiaturization, in which transistors, resistors, capacitors, and all that other electronic garbage is replaced by one tiny unit. Coming up in the future, I'm sure, will be television sets straight out of Dick Tracy; that is, you'll wear them like a ring. In the house, it will be possible to devote one whole wall to an huge television screen, perhaps, with microminiaturization making it unnecessary to have the lengthy picture tube of the present day.

And maybe an age-old question of philosophers will be reworded slightly and again be a subject for debate? Maybe the question for the coming age will be, "How many circuits can be crammed onto the head of a pin?"

-oOo-

In order to close on the same note this issue was commenced, we are pleased to announce, for rebroadcast at a later date, that we have now disposed of our Oldsmobile and are the proud owner of a 1957 Volkswagen with a sunroof top. It is painted the color of a good mixture of cream of tomato soup, and looks pretty nice, if we do say so ourselves. We paid only \$700 for it from a used car dealer in the Crenshaw district of Los Angeles, and after having about \$100 worth of repairs done on it at a VW dealer, we have a pretty smooth-running bugmachine. It has not had a real road-test yet, but we have taken it as far north as Malibu Beach, and in the near future, shortly after the mailing arrives at your door, we plan to hie ourselves northward to Berkeley to see people and do things. Maybe next issue we will tell you something about our travels and travails, if you will be interested.

It occurs to us that there are one helluva lot of Volkswagen owners in fandom... John Trimble, Ron Ellik, Steve Tolliver, Bob West, Dave Fox, Jerry Knight, and so on. Maybe they ought to get together and form an apa, or something?

-oOo-

The most enjoyable single item to me in the last SAPS mailing was Madeleine Willis' commencement of her TAWP account. I will be looking for this as a staple feature in future mailings, and will convey my egoboo her way by way of a copy of this publication. And that's about all you'll hear from me this mailing about mailing comments. It seems that these days I don't have the energy to write those long sets of mailing comments that I used to. The mailings are too big, for one thing. The only mailing recently that I've been able to do comments on was that tiny 101st FAPA mailing, and I was pretty dissatisfied with the results of my trials.

Maybe I've lost the touch, or something. Stay tuned & see.

--- Bob Lichtman, April 1963