



Number 19

Redd Boggs, editor

Spring 1970

"Improve every opportunity to express yourself in writing, as if it were your last." -- Thoreau, Journal, 17 December 1851.

Volvo 144S: The best car for drunken driving on mountain roads.

In A Green Shade

As I sauntered toward Dwinelle hall on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, I spotted three people ahead of me, climbing the front steps of the building: a graying professor type, a pretty and prettily dressed woman, and an erect, bespectacled man carrying several books under his arm. And although I had not seen the bespectacled man for about 20 years, I said to myself confidently, "That's him, that's Joe."

The three people turned down the corridor to the left after entering the building. I walked straight ahead and then turned into 145 Dwinelle, a rather large lecture hall, and sat down near the back. A lectern had been placed near the center of the platform in front, with a microphone attached. On a small table to one side was a yellow plastic pitcher of ice water, and two small white Dixie cups. Perhaps 40 or 45 people sat in the room along with me, quietly awaiting the arrival of the guest of the evening, who was to read from his own works.

He entered the room from a door to the left, accompanied only by the graying professor; the woman was no longer with them. They sat down in the front row, and chatted together till a third fellow, young and grinning, hurried down and greeted the man like an old friend. I wondered if I too should rush down and introduce myself, but I decided not to. The woman -- the guest of honor's wife, I presumed -- came in and sat behind the guest and his companion.

Finally, about ten minutes late, the professor -- who was Mr Jonas A. Barish, of the English department -- walked to the platform and introduced tonight's guest. Although our guest was regularly a member of the faculty at Tufts, he said, he had spent the past year as writer in residence at UC, Irvine. He mentioned the man's books, with particular

attention to his book of verse, Nude Descending a Staircase. "It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mr X. J. Kennedy."

X. J. arose amid warm applause and ambled to the platform. I got my first good look at him since I had a long chat with him at the Torcon in 1948 or perhaps the Cinvention in 1949. In those days he was known to FAPA and fandom as Joe Kennedy, or JoKe. After all these years, he no longer looks as young as he did in 1948 or '49; but then, none of us do. He is beginning to lapse into a comfortable, early-middleagedness, but he still showed vigor and bounce, even though he hasn't managed to publish an issue of Vampire or Green Thoughts lately. (He left FAPA with the summer mailing of 1951.) He wore a dark suit and a red striped tie, and is tending slightly toward baldness. He is reasonably happy with the academic life, I would say.

JoKe has a good, if somewhat hollow, speaking voice. He spoke haltingly, almost stammeringly, at first, but soon mellowed. He recited a poem by Hugh MacDiarmid to start out:

Wheesht Wheesht, my foolish hert,
For weel ye ken
I widna ha'e ye start
Auld ploys again.
It's guid to see her lie
Sae snod an' cool,
A' lust o' lovin' by --
Wheesht, Wheesht, ye fule!

He gave it in a loud, booming voice, and then paused to define "ploy" before he continued with the next poem, which he said was "the worst poem he could find" -- obviously because he no longer belongs to FAPA. It was written by "a Turkish gentleman on Cyprus," and was called "My Indian Girl." After that, he recited a number of his own poems, mostly from Nude Descending a Staircase (see the review of this book in this fapazine, spring 1963, mailing #103), but including a few newer poems. One was called "Lazy Plumbing," which he said had never been made public before. He paused in the midst of reciting that one to sip water to help his own plumbing along.

He had, he admitted, "an old-fashioned liking for rime," and most of the poems he recited indicated that Joe (as I said in the above-cited review) is "at his best at his lightest, like breakfast rolls." He teetered back and forth on his toes, seldom looking at the copy before him. Occasionally he rubbed the back of his head amusedly. He read a poem called "The Shorter View," which like several poems in Nude Descending a Staircase, is sort of science-fictional.

Once he made a passing reference to "skip-rope rimes," and I was reminded of the fapazine in the Gafia Poetry leaflet series I published circa 1951 which bore that title and which Joe wrote me an appreciative letter about. (How well one remembers egoboo!) He made a few autobiographical references. He said he was born of a Catholic father and a Methodist mother, and "along about puberty they cancelled each other out." He called himself "a fallen-away Catholic." Driving up from Irvine, he noticed a restaurant in San Luis Obispo: the Madonna, which,

he reported, features the "Madonna-burger." He listened to the audience chuckling, and rubbed the back of his head again.

He ended the performance with "an attempt at song": "In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus One Day," which he sang in a loud, shy, quite melodious voice to the tune of "Sweet Betsy from Pike." The words had been published in Nude Descending a Staircase. In the midst of the generous applause for this a capella solo, he unceremoniously left the platform, modestly, without a bow or any obvious acknowledgment. The whole thing had lasted about 45 minutes.

Professor Barish had said there would be coffee afterward in Alumni House, "just across the creek." X. J. K. was surrounded by people, so I decided to see him over there. But at Alumni House I found a lecture going on under the sponsorship of the history department: Eric Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian, speaking on "Social Banditry Reconsidered." The meeting soon broke up, but evidently there had been some confusion, and Kennedy and his companions did not appear. A big, bald, cheerful-looking man with a small ruddy beard came in and surveyed the throng. He looked at me and asked, "Where's Kennedy?" I explained that I had heard the poetry reading but had found this Hobsbawm lecture going on where Kennedy was supposed to be drinking coffee and conversing informally. "Did he read the one about the goose that laid the golden egg?" the man asked. He had. The man and I regarded the crowd ruefully. "I guess we must have missed him," the man said. "Yes," I said, "and it will probably be another 20 years before I have another chance to meet good old JoKe again."

"Christ is the answer." Err, yes, but what was the question?

Science Fact in Science Fiction department

(from Danger Planet, Popular Library, 1968, p 65)

"Otho, do you think he [a Venusian] could pass himself off as an Earthman?" Captain Future asked thoughtfully.

"Sure, it would be easy," said Otho. "Venusians and Earthmen are both white-skinned races...."

Better yet, ask the Plaster Casters about Ted White.

The Softness on the Other Side of the Skull

In Null-F #44 in the spring 1968 mailing, Ted White reports, "It is quite true that my automobile carried a 'Support Your Local Police' sticker on each of its two cross-country jaunts (1965 and 1966); additionally, I put a sticker on the rented Rambler which accompanied it in 1966. I am a pragmatic man, and I am well aware of the midwestern reaction to a car full of bearded individuals.... The Old, the Real Redd Boggs would've understood all this without requiring an explanation. It

saddens me that the new 'Redd Boggs' could so plonkingly demand the details of my 'sellout'."

This "explanation" refers to a brief item in "Figs and Thistles" in Bete Noire #18, in the autumn 1967 mailing, which I quote in full: "Disquieting report: That the New York fans who traveled to California for last year's Westercon and such events were festooned with 'Win in Vietnam' (!) buttons and their car -- the rented one, I wonder? -- had a 'Support Your Local Police' (!!) bumper sticker. Various fans who saw them (I didn't see them) were incredulous and amused. Are the New Yorkers these days so naive?"

The Old, the Real Ted White would hardly have considered my wistful query, "Are the New Yorkers these days so naive?," a demand for the details of his "sellout" (not my term, please note), let alone a "plonking" one. I wonder why Ted didn't explain away the "Win in Vietnam" buttons? Will he consider this query a plonking demand for an explanation?

"A red-bearded man was never any good." -- German proverb.

Food for Thought for the Baker Street Irregulars

(from "The Sign of Four," by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

"I was still pondering over the matter, when, looking up, I saw my servant, Lal Chowdar, in the doorway. He stole in and bolted the door behind him. "Do not fear, Sahib," he said; "no one need know that you have killed him. Let us hide him away, and who is the wiser?" "I did not kill him," said I. Lal Chowdar shook his head and smiled. "I heard it all, Sahib," said he; "I heard you quarrel, and I heard the blow. But my lips are sealed...." "

Just call him "Clam" Chowdar.

"There never was a saint with red hair." -- Russian proverb.

Deep in the...?

Here is a funny coincidence. On the very same day (26 March 1970) I received and glanced through Dallascon Bulletin #5 and perused in the Oakland Tribune a fascinating newsitem about Dallas. The Dallascon Bulletin (P. O. Box 523, Richardson, Texas, 75080) contains, among other things, a nostalgic photo of Marion Zimmer Bradley and Forry Ackerman at the Southwestercon, 1958 (that far time) but its most delightful feature is the front cover photo which shows a woman with her throat slit and blood streaming down onto her slip.

Inside, Tom Reamy (who writes interestingly enough) chatters gayly about the movie he is making: "It's a heartwarming story in which Oliver

Sometimes the Weirdest Characters
on the Ave are Too Fucking
Straight

Twelve of us boys
were holding a Gay Liberation meeting
in a large upper room of the Free Church

when this brother waltzes in
wearing a freaky robe and sandals
smoking a joint that damn near
 singed his whiskers
and sporting a green feather
in a snake band around his wild blond hair

Oh we knew him all right all right
four flusher fanatic foot fetishist
Hare Krishna I think was his thing then
(but all this happened a long time ago)

"Judas -- Judie baby" he says to me
"I need a woman bad, you dig me?
Where can I find a virgin in this damn town?
I need to get my rocks off but there's
 not a virgin on the Ave"

I rap a while about the Sexual
 Freedom League
and sex ads in the underground papers
and ask him "Jesus Christ, why a chick?
and why a virgin especially of all
 dumb things?"

"O wow" he says, blowing a puff of pot
till it forms a hazy oval around his head
(this was one of his proudest accomplishments
but what a waste of precious weed)

"O wow, I'm a genius, that's why,
and I don't want my genes lost
up the asshole of the world.
I've decided" -- he tells us solemnly --
"to pass along my Immortality to mankind"

I try to explain to him about the gene pool
and how your genes will pass along anyway
since people are screwing all the time
but he grows impatient and cuts me off:
"Go get me a virgin, you fucking ape,
what was good enough for my Father
is good enough for me."

is badly beaten by Mike, Joe Bob and Richard are killed by Mike, Doug is killed by Joe Bob, and Mike goes merrily insane." All is crazy mixed-up FUN down in Dallas, evidently, and the spirit of lighthearted slaughter, which we all fondly remember from November 1963, has not disappeared.

And the newsitem datelined Dallas? Here it is, in part: "Larry Joe Knox, 23, convicted of raping a telephone operator in his first brush with the law, today faced a 1,001-year prison term -- the longest in Texas history. It was the third huge sentence handed down in the neighbor cities of Dallas and Fort Worth within a month by juries angered over a rise in crime.

"'People are aroused and intend to rid the city of robbers and murderers,' said Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade. 'The term will discourage would-be rapists who plan to come to Dallas and commit crimes.'

"Samuel Hemphill, 19, convicted of raping an 18-year-old high school coed, was sentenced March 18 to 800 years in prison by a Fort Worth jury.

"Joseph Franklin Sills, 50, was sentenced to 1,000 years in prison by another Dallas jury Feb. 26 for robbery.

"Texas law provides that such crimes can be punished by any term of years not less than five. During the first three months of 1970, Dallas has had its biggest outbreak of assaults in city history. Five women clerks have been killed in the Dallas-Fort Worth area by robbers...."

Not to minimize the grimness of crimes like murder and rape, we are led to wonder at the ferocity of the sentences given Knox, Hemphill, and Sills. Is this really the way to "discourage" crime? What is going on down there in the land of Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, and Lyndon B. Johnson? It begins to sound as if people have gone off their nuts in Dallas where, if Tom Reamy & Co. have their way, science fiction fandom will hold its convention in 1973.

Texas, as you hurry to put Abilene, Sweetwater, and such burgs behind you, rapidly improves as you travel westward. Soon things begin to look and feel western instead of southern. Even the segregated rest-rooms for White and Colored (prevalent in Dallas when I last visited the city) disappear in towns like Pecos and Van Horn, and the oppressive air that shuts down over Dallas and parts east begins to dissipate. The east part of Texas is part of the "south," a nice place to stay away from.

The three victims of Texas justice mentioned in the newsitem are probably, some or all of them, Blacks. I don't suppose most fans, even though they go to conventions largely for sex, will descend on Dallas intent upon raping telephone operators. But most fans are n----- in the eyes of Texas cops. Despite the increasing conservatism among fans in recent years, there are only a few certified 100 percent redblooded American patriots among us. (Many of these live, interestingly enough, in and around Washington D. C.) Many fans look like Connecticut fandom (pictured on a recent fanzine cover) or like the new "Ted White": i.e., pretty ordinary by the standards of the more civilized parts of this country, such as Los Angeles or the Bay area, but not so ordinary by the

standards of barbarous areas like Dallas-Fort Worth, even when disguised by weighing themselves down with tons of "Win in Vietnam" buttons.

About A.D. 2971 -- the year that Mr Larry Joe Knox is scheduled to emerge from Texas state prison -- is the earliest we ought to trust ourselves to visit Texas of our own free will. Many of us fan----- would not be safe for a minute in Texas these days, but maybe in 1001 years Texas will have become almost civilized. We are science fiction fans; we can be optimistic; we can see the future unrolling as one vast scroll (or roll), and maybe we can even help along the eventual advent of civilization in Texas by spending our pennies elsewhere than in Dallas. Before 2971, bring it all down!

Buffaloes: Shere Khan's bane.

The Race of Fugghead department

(from an AP dispatch in the Oakland Tribune)

"PHOENIX (AP) -- A heart specialist criticizes golf, bowling, and injections of female hormones for men as ways to reduce the possibility of heart attacks. Dr David R. Long, speaking to the midtown Rotary club yesterday, said golf consists mainly of 'crawling in and out of a cart, and bowling is hardly exercise at all.'

"Long, president of the Arizona Heart association, said giving males injections of certain female hormones might eliminate a heart attack.

"'But the male would become feminized,' he added. 'Frankly, I'd just as soon have a heart attack.'"

Fuggheads are XYs.

Power to (shut up, pooch!) the (Junior, put that down!) People!

"It's a hard world," an ad for Calvert blended whiskey admits, showing us a photograph of a man chasing his hat down a windy street. Well, even in utopia there will be winds (but maybe men won't wear hats) and in such a picture there is no criticism implied of the real hard world most of us have to face. If losing your hat momentarily makes you grope for the bottle, what do you do on grimmer occasions? You stand in the long shabby line at the state employment office. You read the price tags on sirloin and hamburger at the Safeway. You choke in the pall of heavy, lethal smoke hanging over the oil refinery. Maybe such scenes take us clear away from the world Calvert can blur out: 86 proof whiskey can do only so much.

Indeed it is a hard world, and I am obliquely reminded of the fact when I glance over the comic page of the Tribune. There seem to be a number of comic strips these days devoted entirely to the task of making the nearly intolerable appear cute, pleasant, and above all, normal. In

"Rivets" by George Sixta there's this damn dog, and in "The Smith Family" by Mr and Mrs Smith there's all these howling kids. Great.

Well, of course, it's good for business for everybody to be convinced they ought to have dogs and kids. The more dogs and kids in the family, the more money spent for 89¢-a-pound hamburger at the Safeway. No wonder Americans are forced to absorb so much propaganda assuring them that life in a houseful of rampaging dogs and kids is just loads of fun and you're not with it unless you get yourself a passel.

But more than that, when you are saddled with the care and feeding of such omnipresent nuisances, you have less time and energy to think about improving your lot and the lot of others in this hard world. The more dogs and children in your family, and in the neighborhood, the more racket, the more turmoil, and the less chance your nerves will stop jumping long enough for you to sit down and plot a happier world. This makes things all the better for the few people at the top of the heap who can hire regiments of servants to care for their dogs and kids.

Bob Pavlat's two friends at work who "waded into a mob...to bring in our flag" (!) are loaded down at home with dogs and kids. The poor damn suckers.

"Don't say cunt to Mary Lindsay!"

Figs and Thistles

I keep reading about a TV comedy team (or ex-TV comedy team) called the Smothers Brothers. In the Eighth Air Force in 1944, one of the combat crews flying B-24 bombers at our air base at Rackheath, England, was headed by Captain Smothers (pilot) and Lieutenant Brothers (co-pilot). I made the ETO edition of Stars and Stripes by sending an item that alleged that the crew was known as Smothers, Brothers, and Others. # How is this for jargon? Charlie Palmer, ASUC president, told radio reporters before the Memorial day march in Berkeley, 1969, at the end of the People's park conflict, that the march was intended to be "non-physically confrontational." # Nota bene: The "microcosm-shaking announcement" scheduled for this issue has been temporarily postponed.

Oh, for Boggs' sake!

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