

106

This is Horizons, instantly identifiable by the inferior condition of the i, without which any issue of Horizons is a clever forgery. It is whole number 106, FAPA number 100, volume 27, number 3, dated May, 1966. Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., writes most of it. Mimeography is by Buck Coulson or Juanita Coulson or some unknown combination of the two.

In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: If FAPA placed an advertisement in the worldcon program booklet, I would not object, provided one condition were met. This condition would consist of a donation by the worldcon committee to FAPA of similar proportions to those obtained by various other organizations out of worldcon profits. "The return to the old style of egoboo polling is wonderful. I'm getting too old to juggle around a quantity of points but I can still cope with the problems involved in listing things in order of preference. F.O.: There is complete agreement here on the stupidity of the present method of handling the waiting list. Years ago, someone or other faced the problem of more applicants than places on the roster, for the first time in apa history (mundane apas are unlimited in membership), and obviously he came up with the solution to admit them in order of application after only six seconds' thought. If he'd thought about it for at least ten seconds he would have come up with a sensible plan. It's a good thing the same guy didn't decide how TAFF candidates should be chosen. Kteic Magazine: There is a lesson in this issue, showing the difference between Rotlser and me. At 38, he has long known he doesn't like to work for anyone else and has built a happy life on that principle. At 43, I've just realized that I've felt the same way and now I'm scurrying around, trying to arrange things so I can salvage the remaining years in accordance with my preference. "The Quotebook gets little help from me because it takes so much space for me to say anything. My only inspiration was more like a slogan than a quote and someone else got credit for it, when I suggested as a watchword in an anti-litter drive, Keep Maryland Visible. Quotebook: How many of us have resisted the enormous temptation to let some of these wonderful lines slip into our conversations with mundanes, casually as if we'd just thought them up? The insult section has received particularly wide circulation around Hagerstown. But just think of how much work faces literary specialists of the future, if this publication attains the fame of a first folio and the researchers must try to determine the conditions under which each line was spoken or thought by WR, the length of time covered by their creation, whether they emerge into the world in this complete form or are refined and purified from inferior conceptions. The Bugle of Dingy Dell: I still can't get it through my hard head that the conditions reported on the surface of Mars are particularly inimical for life. Life exists at the poles of earth, despite the ability for it to migrate to more comfortable regions toward the equator. Besides, wasn't it wintertime where the Mariner probe did its investigating? I saw Dr. Richardson on television fuming because this season had been picked for the experiment; he hinted that the anti-canal scientists had done it purposely, so no canals

would be traced by the growing season's vegetation. '' In the youngun's contribution, I sense some literary influences from an early short story by Tucker pere, Gentlemen, the Queen!, but it's dark and cold on the attic and I don't intend to go rummaging to make sure if I detect correctly. Deadwood: First of all came the immense relief provided from my discovery that George isn't going to try to glide all the way to this country. Then came the let-down feeling, when I thought for a while and could hardly think of anyone in fandom who would be in a position to give European fans extended visits in the United States by providing some kind of appropriate and pleasant temporary employment. Is it accident or significant that so few of us are in a position to be an employer by virtue of our job status or trade? '' I suppose the most impressive example of a fan who edited a school magazine was W. Lawrence Hamling. He was in charge of the Lane Tech publication. It was and maybe still is one of the biggest, most famous high schools in the nation, and its professionally printed magazine was superior in appearance and entertainment value to anything Hamling later edited. '' Wonder what would happen to the teacher over here who tossed a piece of chalk at a student even in jest? One poor football coach at a West Virginia high school got slapped with a big slander suit, just because he told the truth when his star quarterback showed up drunk on the night of a big game. Helen's Fantasia: It's hard to believe that the little story is just as it came from a ten-year-old's hand. It took Bradbury ten years of his adulthood to write that smoothly and economically. TAFF Ballot: This is the second time someone has honored me with the request to nominate someone for TAFF. I hope that Tom Schlück fares as well as my other nominee, Ethel Lindsay, did. I've corresponded with him for several years, and have found him remarkably wise for his years, interested in an enormous variety of things, and possessing a fine command of English. I probably have as close contact with German fandom as anyone in the United States, and have yet to hear anything bad about him from any other German fans. Of course, the voting deadline is past by the time this FAPA mailing goes out, but I want to explain what we're getting if Tom is chosen for the trip. The Vorpall Dragon: Score another for hick towns. It is quite unlikely that a mistake in a street number would prevent mail from reaching anyone who has lived in Hagerstown for a number of years. In fact, the postal clerks occasionally drop into the newspaper box mail addressed to my home that looks too important to wait for delivery the next day. This will undoubtedly cause a disaster some time when someone at the office opens my mail on my day off to determine if there's any news of time value inside. But it's still convenient. '' Phil should have named the manufacturer of his big and unsatisfactory tape recorder. I'm on the verge of buying a new deck and would like to know any makes that have a tendency to cause trouble, because repairs are a particularly big problem in a city like this one, so you might as well take back that score you just gave Hagerstown. '' Twenty years from now, people will be nostalgic as all get out over the television programs of the early 1960's, no matter how hard it is to imagine today. This will be a particularly nostalgic era, because it is one of the last years before everyone has a home video tape recorder on which to capture samples of favorite programs. ''

"He has a way with words that makes them fit on a page as if they had been created to be used just there"--exactly what I'd like to have said if I could have verbalized my own reaction to Donaho's remarkable gift for informal prose. Horizons: The February issue marked the end of five plus years of magnificent service by Dick Eney as duplicator, collater, stapler, and-get-to-Pelz-on-timer. I'd like to supplement the personal and private thanks I've already given him with public gratitude for doing the task so long and so irreproachably. This string of consecutive FAPA appearances would have definitely ended during my first hospital incarceration without his help, and there were times in the succeeding years when I probably would have dropped FAPA participation if he'd suddenly decided to stop bothering with the chore. Fortunately, the Coulson fanzine factory has decided that it can take on another product at this time. I don't think I'll have to be a burden on Hartford City as long as on Alexandria, because if plans work out, I'll have lots of time to do my own duplicating, in the not-too distant future.

Stupefying Stories: Is there an effective difference between the Soviet awards to mothers of large families and the United States' tax exemptions to fathers of large families? I still believe that the best way to lick this nation's birth rate is by reversing policy and increasing the tax rate for each additional child. "Another reason for gratitude toward Eney is his reprinting of this article about music. I'd been horribly disappointed when it was originally published in a barely legible CULT publication seen by only a handful, because it's one of the very few fannish writings on which I'd actually spent some time and trouble. Of course, the Hallelujah starts with tonic-subdominant progressions, not the tonic-dominant that either I wrote or the original publisher typed absent-mindedly. "A few years back, I would have worried about sending this long article through the mails. But so much on the same subject is appearing these days that it's obvious the postal authorities no longer hold strictly to the ban on use of the mails to provide even the most general and indirect information on contraceptives. The mystery of the Grafenberg Ring was the high spot for me, but didn't anyone think of asking Mr. Grafenberg what made him sufficiently sure of the device's success to cause him to go to the trouble of inventing it? The Rambling Fap: I didn't trust my books to the moving men on the change from Bryan Place to Summit Avenue. It took several hundred trips but I hauled them all in my own car. On the other hand, the public library bought vast quantities of special cartons and packed up tightly every book when it moved its stuff the block-and-half from the old to new building. I suggested saving the empty boxes for the new library building that will undoubtedly be erected around 2045, but the library bestowed them on the union rescue mission for reasons that escape me. "Gregg betrays here the fact that he isn't old yet. When you get old, you stop trying to get complete sets of things because you no longer sense enough time ahead of you to accomplish the feat. "Walking is infinitely superior to all other forms of exercise, I feel. I probably average four or five miles daily, except in bad weather, and credit this for freedom from really severe illness: I haven't missed a day's work because of illness as distinguished from accident in eight or nine years. BT: His Pages: Fame fleets; a fan with the superb memory for the past like Tucker forgets the

third fanzine that I published in the era of Spaceways and pre-TAPA issues of Horizons. "The theoretical economics of non-silver coins don't worry me. But I have the strangest guilt sensations when I give someone a counterfeit-looking quarter." The Bloomington newspaper has pretty good precedent for using "from whence" even if Speer doesn't approve of it. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," for instance. I suppose that the nitpickers make the same response to such citations as Beckmesser does in Meistersinger, when the hero cites as a literary influence Walther von der Vogelweide: "Yep, he was a good poet, but he's been dead too long to know our rules." Did that last place entry in the alphabetical Swisher listing really get published? Remember, he included every title anyone had ever mentioned, including fanzines that never got off the drawing boards and those that were dreamed up as jokes with no intention of publication. Horib: Good, another follower of the heresy that the credit procedures for married couples is foolish. It is unenforceable and conducive to mixups and perflage. I'd like to see this, the chronological basis for accepting waiting lists, and the activity within six months for new members destroyed simultaneously. The biographical details came perilously close to unleashing on TAPA an even more extensive set of my own early recollections. I find it hard to imagine myself growing up in the 1940's and it's particularly impossible to think of Uncle Don singing such a song. When I listened to WOR at 6 p.m. every weekday, his big production number was The Green Grass Grew All Around, which he actually sang only about once a month but started to talk about and promising to sing days and days ahead of the climactic occasion. We have a round house in Hagerstown. A retired railroader built it in pious memory of the building where he'd earned his living so many years. Sercon's Bane: I get a leftout feeling from all this talk about weight problems. I eat as little or as much as I please, confident in the certainty that at the year's end I'll weigh just one pound less than I did the year previously. When I shrivel as men usually do in old age, I really should be spectacularly thin. My second broken hip taught me the magical effect of exercise. That time, I did faithfully the muscle-building exercises while bedridden that I'd thought foolish and hadn't done during my first invalidhood. When I finally took my first steps after six weeks on my back, I was almost as strong afoot as usual, far different from the feeble condition of the previous convalescence. Goliard: The story is just fine except for one personal problem. Anything about politics and successions to the throne and life among the rulers of a land becomes increasingly distasteful to me in fiction. I haven't even watched the new BBC television series on Shakespeare's chronicle plays, much as I like Shakespeare, because I just can't bear to look at all those magnificent actors and hear that superb poetry wasted on imitating a batch of tyrants who were equally nasty and completely unfitted for the things they should have done. Elmurmurings: Maybe Elmer can tell me the answer to a question nobody else has been able to answer. Why do police departments use only partial and mostly transparent code for their broadcasts? Around here,

drag racing in the early morning is a dreadful highway danger. The idiots who indulge in it almost never get caught, because they equip their cars with shortwave or FM receivers equipped to catch the state police and sheriff's department frequencies, and get alerted as soon as a police car is dispatched toward a drag racing complaint area. Null-F: Here's another example of how greatly people differ. Ted White thinks of that 49th Street address as still the same and I regard it as just the latest in a dizzying series of address changes which became effective practically yesterday. " Let us hope that the conreport continues in equal detail. I don't quite understand why I am so fascinated about fanish descriptions of trips to distant points, when I never read travelogs by mundane writers. It can't be familiarity with the writers, because I don't know lots of the fans who write about their trips. Maybe the answer lies in the scarcity of such informal trip description; the big name writers who describe their adventures in exotic places in conversational style sound stilted and seem to be trying too hard. " But I've had experience with left-handed driving, not more than a mile from my home. Street construction once made it necessary to put two-way traffic on a local one-way street for a few days, and traffic flow patterns made it advisable to make the temporary oncoming traffic flow in the wrong lane. It wasn't much worse than the occasional situations when it is necessary to drive in the wrong half of a divided interstate highway when the road isn't completed. " -It's hard to believe that modern presses could start and stop quickly enough to produce only three copies of a magazine. Maybe they just destroyed the copies they didn't need after those first three. Synapse: I hope that Famous Funnies is as valuable as other pioneer comic books, because I own quite a few early issues, although probably not the very first. But isn't the current comic book inflation concerned mainly with the non-reprint comic books? FF just ran reduced reprints of Sunday comic sections. " There are shrewd guesses in the comments on that fan novel chapter, and one completely wrong one. Just in case anyone else is interested: The remainder of the novel would have described the pursuit by Frontley of Betty's virtue and her gradual unmasking of him as a basically insecure, unsure-of-himself person who has built up the facade of the estate and eccentricities to hide his ordinariness. The hunting episode on which Juffus pounced was to be a key one, indeed: when a boy, Frontley had thrown up and run away when faced with the need to cut the throat of the first deer he'd shot, and this shameful memory had motivated his elaborate front. The novel would have climaxed with Frontley finally losing control, beating and raping the girl, then mixing her up with the deer as he prepared to kill her, and disappearing completely from the scene. My confusion about the kids' housing can be blamed on my writing that first chapter directly on stencil without any kind of written notes. I hope, incidentally, that Frontley wasn't completely a self-portrait; at least, I think I took some of his personality and particularly his residence setup from a real writer, George Alfred Townsend, who was a popular novelist and Civil War correspondent, and built a stupendous set of mansions for himself and family atop a mountain not far from Hagerstown. " Deepfreezing sick people for later

cure could mean prosecution for murder? Now Speer really does sound like a lawyer. 'I have no scientific basis for the belief, but I've always assumed that the non-directional microphones that come with most tape recorders cause the prominence of background noise. The speaker's voice comes from a point source in one direction and the background noise that generally emanates from various directions can impinge on all sides of the mike, building up its volume that way. 'What's so improbable about raises of less than .25 a year? If I got no raise in 1964 and was given a .5 per week raise last December, that would qualify and I'd lose money from the raise. Or if I had 53 paydays in '64, got no raise that year, and received the .5 raise early in the autumn of a 52-payday 1965, the year's raise would be under .25, if my original salary were within a certain range. 'It shouldn't be hard to find that ideal climate, because even Hagerstown meets most of your requirements. Annual maximum for each year in the 1950s: 95, 95, 98, 101, 105, 101, 96, 100, 91, 99; annual low for the same period, 1 below, 8 below, 8 above, 13 above, 1 below, 2 above, 6 above, 6 below, 1 above, 3 below; average precipitation in a year, 37 inches; I forgot to bring home the sky statistics but I believe it's something like 100 clear, 80 cloudy, and the rest partly cloudy; no hurricanes or tornadoes ever recorded. I lack humidity figures. 'I wonder if Speer says as well as writes VW. It's the only example I know of an abbreviation that is longer than the full word when spoken. Damballa: Pills affect me strongly, too. I was dazed for three or four days after taking just one little cold tablet made by the Vicks people, designed to be swallowed six daily. One aspirin works so completely for most of my ailments that I've thought of switching to children's aspirin, just in case an entire adult tablet is too much for me. Aliquot: The only thing Rusty fails to point out in this thorough survey of FAPA longevity is: the turnover decline has occurred during years of fusses when psychological factors might have encouraged dropouts. We might stagnate altogether if nothing occurs to disgust lots of members. Cat Fur: We probably have different concepts of culture, because I can think of a critical cultural advantage that Detroit has and Ann Arbor lacks: Tigers. I'm prepared to defend at any length the thesis that a baseball game is at least as cultural as a dance concert. There is also a certain cultural value in living near people of widely different habits and natures; I imagine a metropolitan city would be better than a college city in this respect, too. 'The remarks on the importance of seasons are perfect. Mildness all through the year would be as terrible as a midnight sun to me. Ankus: The wide diversity of Ireland is something else that sounds like Maryland. We have tobacco farming in one end and October snowstorms in the other end of the state; tidewater country with seashore pleasures not far from coal mines and pulpwood industry; vast areas of undeveloped farmland just over the horizon from one of the most rapidly mushroomed urban complexes anywhere. It's even possible to detect differences in accent among people who grew up in Hagerstown and those native to the south of this county. The Large Flying Bird: Until further notice, all references to Batman are lost on me. This is one TV attraction which my working hours keep out of bounds.

The Worst of Martin

(Conclusion of The Spirits Were..., which began in Horizons three issues ago and was continued in Horizons two issues ago)

"Yes," said Helen, terminating the conversation on a note of sanity.

Tom led the way along the twisting path with uncanny accuracy. He prided himself on his ability to see clearly in the dark.

A quarter of a mile further the path widened sufficiently for Helen to walk beside Tom. She put her arm around his waist. Tom was about to take her arm away when she spoke up: "Now certainly this isn't going to hurt you."

Tom was noncommittal. "It won't hurt me, but you know we shouldn't do it. It's quite familiar for unmarried souls."

"Make believe we are married."

"Helen!" Tom was shocked. "I've asked you before not to make suggestions like that."

"I hadn't really suggested anything as yet. But the idea gives me ideas."

"I know it does."

"Then you think of such things." Helen was triumphant.

"Only in an academic manner." Tom tried to hedge out. "I have to keep up with you--anticipate you--or goodness knows to what depths you'd lead us."

"Of all the backward messes I've ever been in," said Helen to no one in particular. "Why couldn't I fall for someone of the aggressive type."

"You could always look for someone else." Tom said it but Helen knew he did not mean the way it sounded.

It was more of a joke between them. It was impossible for her to look for anyone else.

She giggled. "Wouldn't I look cute traipsing around with one of our neighbors? Every one of them could be my grandfather."

They turned out of the wood onto another dirt road. A large rabbit commandeered the center of the road. In the moonlight he perked up and watched the couple. His eyes followed them as they passed him close by.

A dog began to howl a short ways off. The rabbit watched them turn off the road into an aged and long-closed cemetery.

The old cemetery was well-kept in an insincere manner. A few of the stones had fallen over and whoever mowed the grass during past summers had continually gone around them. Long tufts of unclipped grass grew close to each stone.

They were simple slabs of stone and the passing of many rough New England seasons had smoothed their inscriptions. A canopy formed by large trees made the cemetery darker than the road.

They strolled down between the stones. Helen kept her arm around Tom.

She was pleased when Tom put his arm around her. Helen stopped him beside a stone.

"Kiss me," said Helen. It was a definite command.

"Someone might see us."

"At this hour?" Helen drew close. "I want to be kissed."

As though the trees had parted to let the moonlight in, Tom could see Helen's beautiful white face framed with long lustrous black hair.

Her eyes were partly closed but he could see sparks of light flashing in them. Her lips were parted and raised.

She was certainly a devil. She could break a man's pet inhibitions and dogmas down to inconsistent tolerances. Besides, the days and nights were so long without love.

Tom thought he could break away and put her in her place until their lips met. Then he knew she had him trapped again, but he cared even less than he had other times.

It was many minutes later before either spoke.

"You'll use up your whole supply," said Helen.

"I don't care," said Tom. "Kiss me again!"

"Not here," said Helen.

Then she whispered in his ear: "Let me stay with you again."

Normally Tom would have put on an exhibition of outraged mankind at her suggestion. This night his arm merely tightened around her waist.

"If you'll promise to leave before we get into trouble," he said.

"Of course, darling," said Helen, knowing full well that she would stay the night.

If any innocent passerby had been watching the scene in the cemetery at that moment he would have thought Tom was talking to himself.

Helen and her piquant face were not in sight and she whispered again: "Don't waste your supply, darling."

She said it in a rather suggestive manner but Tom was open to suggestion. He disappeared also.

Luckily there was no innocent passerby to view the disappearance.

Such phenomena in a cemetery, although anticipated by many, would have been cause for more expression than the usual involuntary whistling. At least, if he had stopped and listened, he would have seen and heard nothing more.

Helen and Tom were quite conscious of each other. There was only one place for them to go, where they could be alone.

There were really two places, but at the moment they were right over Tom's grave.

And Helen was not the girl to waste time when there was so little ectoplasm left between them....

Finis

(Reprinted from the fourth issue of Grotesque, dated winter, 1954, and published by Ed Martin, Webster Heights, Berlin, Connecticut. Originally part of the autumn, 1953, FAPA mailing. I remain open for nominations for Martin material particularly suited for this feature. Mundane aka Martiniana would also be heartily welcomed for reprinting purposes.)

What I Did During the War

It wasn't anything that brought me closer to the fighting - than a trip to the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore for a physical examination that exempted me from military service after a brief period of agonizing uncertainty. But one thing that I did do during the war was to file away things. Not long after VJ-Day I realized that natural laws and manmade restrictions impose so many checks on the freedom of a person that he is foolish to put additional rules and regulations on the ungoverned areas of his conduct, like the compulsion to file away things that he'll probably never need again. But while it lasted, my systematic era produced quite a few brown boxes with neatly sorted correspondence, small fanzines, and other mail small enough to fit. Maybe the hours I squandered on this foolish regimen might be partially justified if I root through some of these files and type out some of the interesting findings onto stencil.

This particular box contains detritus from the latter stages of World War Two; I was already burned out as a fan, having discontinued Spaceways in 1942, so the mail wasn't as heavy in this late stage of my fanhood as it had been when I was young. But I still corresponded with a lot of fans, was active in the NFFF, and was a veteran member of FAPA. Things were different then for a lot of other people, too. For instance, here's a letter from Larry Shaw, dated November 19, 1944, in which we find our hero in New York, prepared to move in with Michel as soon as he got one vital necessity: his bed, which was still in Schenectady.

"And so, after all, it's not college," Larry wrote. "It's business school, with a nine-month journalism course. And even the nine months looks like too much; the place is really a frightfully crummy organization. I'm working nights, besides, and altogether it's going to be too much for me pretty soon. Then I will get a good job and spend the rest of my time writing, trying to crack the pros (which, of course, I should have done ages ago). All the gang here confidently expects a boom in the magazine business here very soon, and then maybe I can get an editorial position of some sort.

"I still don't know exactly what I want, but I'm pretty sure I prefer the magazine business to newspapers. (And so it happened that as they pounded the last nail into the coffin, Leontidas Tanglefoot Shaw, the new occupant thereof, leaped up--hitting his head against the top as he did so--shouting 'Eureka!' A rather bored-looking coffin worm opened one eye and asked, 'U'r a what?' 'I know now what I want to be,' declared Shaw happily. 'I want to be an undertaker!')

"Sad but true."

In the same envelope is a precious four-page document by Larry and Suddsy Schwartz, containing their memories of Claude Degler, written before fading memories could allow exaggerations to creep in. I think that I may have published extracts from this in Horizons, and I want to withhold the longest anecdote, about how Claude had a date, for some more special occasion. So I'll quote only this important glance into a great moment in fan

history:

"It should be told, since Degler has printed distorted versions, exactly how Clod came to be a resident of Little Jarnevon. Briefly, we wuz duped! One afternoon at the Unger Emporium, just before Li'l J came into existence, Clod got Larry aside and, in whispers, asked, 'Larry, would it be okay with you if I came along when you and Suddsy went to look for your room? Suddsy says it's all right with him, and I've had experience at that sort of thing.' Shaw, poor jerk, said it would be okay. And then Clod rambled on and on, and it finally became evident that he expected to look for a room big enough for three, which he would share at such times as his travels brought him to New York City, but which would be all ours (including the trio-sized rent, of course) at all other times. Well, we didn't take him when we went to get the room, and we got a room for two. But when Mrs. Unger came home and found that in her nice apartment, there was a loud explosion. We were softhearted, we didn't know Clod then as well as we did later, and--well, there he was on our formerly spotless floor. Ah, us!"

It's hard to know how much to annotate this stuff. For the sake of those who do not faithfully read 2,500 words about fandom's past, before going to bed each night, maybe I'd better say that Little Jarnevon was one of the cooperative apartments then popular with New York City fans, Unger ran a grocery store, and Suddsy was the fan who became famous for accusing Claude of dishonesty, just before FAPA lost track of its treasury when Suddsy himself vanished. FAPA got its money back and nobody ever proved anything against Claude, so it was a standoff. Now, I'm going to the other extreme, and won't even give the name of the girl who wrote the next letter. She was a LASFS member around this same time, she was not one of the famous feminine fans like Morojo or Pogo, Rick Sneary mentions encountering some old-time female members recently, and I wouldn't want to cause trouble if she should suddenly reappear in fandom. I just want to prove that there were lots of vivid fans in Los Angeles whom Laney didn't make famous:

"I make no apologies for being a woman because I am a rare article, a completely emancipated woman. I get along with a room full of men and they say what they please and never realize that I am not a man. If I can't keep up with them, I leave, but for the most part, I do all right. You see, I don't go about batting my eyelashes at them and make them conscious that I am a woman.

"I have always had the happy faculty of settling the sex problem immediately with a loud no! and still remaining the man's friend, afterwards. It is not that I am a prude, far from it. I know some of the cutest blue stories you ever heard of, and can put someone on the fire and burn him down with my tongue. As for sex, I am one of the few fortunates that have met and married the perfect mate. There is no unhappiness in my marriage, sexually, and now that my husband is overseas, I am perfectly content to wait, for frankly, knowing what I know, I am sure that any sex I might experience would be highly unsatisfactory. I am lying when I say that I am content to wait, for I bitch like hell about it.

I hate it, but the reason I gave is why I wait. In other words, there just isn't any other man that appeals to me. I am also a rare avis in that I am normal. Just four points on the neurotic side, and that is because ***** has been away a year.... I sat and searched my mind for two hours, one evening, and could find but one inhibition. I have an unholy desire to wink at a sailor, but am at loss to know what to do after I do it, so woe is me, I have an inhibition, I am stifled, or something.

"By now, I suppose you are wondering what the hell kind of a woman I am, to be so frank. That's me, pal. I say what I please, and to tell the truth, no matter whom it hurts. I say the same things about myself that I would about anyone else. In other words, to quote my old professor, I am a woman with all of the qualities of a man. It is a wonder I am like I am and still manage to fool the people about me into believing that I am a normal person. I am not normal. I have all the physical normality but mentally, I wonder. I'm either an Al screwball or a slant and I'm pretty sure that I'm not a slant. Hell, I'm me, and that's that."

Sometimes I think that I've done the fan history manuscript all wrong. It might have been better if I'd included nothing but quotes from my correspondence, letting events come to life as they were described by contemporaries. I think there's something genuine and striking about this form of history that can't be duplicated when someone tries his hardest years later to describe these people and events in print. Let's allow Andy Anderson, a Pismo Beach, Calif., fan, make the summer of 1944 reenact itself:

"Had a swell trip, not allowing for the frightful railway service these days. Met Ashley, Robinson, Saari and the rest of the Slant Shack Regulars, though I just didn't get a chance to get down and see the great him (the master, the number one, pong, robert a. tucker). Stayed a couple days over at Battle Creek; and a couple more down at Chicago with Frank, but important family affairs kept me tied up except over the weekends. Had a swell time howsoever, and was treated fine in all quarters (even at Ziff-Davis, where I had coffee and gabbed for the greater part of an afternoon with Palmer, Browne, Berkeley Livingston and a new fellow writing for Rap named Ray Chan).

"One of the most interesting phases, and one of the most enlightening, of my entire expedition was on the train heading east. In the one chair car I was on (seating about 50, I would say) there were two copies of Thorne Smith (Night Life of the Gods, The Glorious Fool--the latter one mine), one copy of the Lovecraft pocketbook, two copies of Astounding (one mine), a Planet and an Amazing. I also saw somebody down the line a few cars with a Startling. I'm not sure what this all adds up to, but it certainly seems as if the military services of the nation, who comprised about 90% of the passengers of the car, were certainly stfantasy conscious...

"Hard to say about Wright. I've only met him once--at the Staplecon--and then only had a chance to get him alone for some twenty minutes or so, and that was on a noisy streetcar. Even then he didn't say much; he was polite and let me ramble on at length. About all he said of note was that he was so sorry for missing the deadline for number one with his cover--which was to have appeared on my first--and saying it was the first deadline

he had yet missed. I know that he hasn't done anything with his collection, as several of us made bids for it, and I suppose that he is still buying the mags. I believe his biggest reason for getting out of the fan field was to give his art a real-commercial workout as he figured the highest he could attain therein is the low-paying pulps. He has done quite well with his drawing since, I hear; Shangri-La rumors have it that a nude that Tom did in color, and then rejected himself, for a time was adorning Red Skelton's dressing room in a prominent position."

Only the last paragraph requires explanation, I suppose. Andy published a fanzine called Centauri and the artist who failed to keep his promise to do a cover for the first issue, Tom Wright, was yet another Californian who disappeared suddenly from fandom about this time. I don't believe that anyone has heard about him during the past two decades.

One of my favorite fans of the 1940's was Milton A. Rothman. His letters probably won't have the effect on the contemporary readership that they produce on me, because I remember this wise, wry, multi-interest individual and you don't. He went to college for about 57 years after leaving fandom and because of this became a very learned person in scientific matters. But I saw him at a recent Philcon, looking smaller and balder, wandering about among the young fans and looking as if he were hunting something that he'd lost in his youth. He was in the service when letters were going into this box:

"The place is a madhouse: combination grand central station, telephone booth, and information bureau, never a boring moment in the whole insane day. No wonder first sergeants have such a temper. They sure have to put up with a lot of stupidity. I find myself eating out people towards the end of the day.

"I got involved with the chaplain here as soon as I started looking for a place to practice piano. So before I knew it I found myself official choir accompanist. Not only on the piano, mind you, but on the organ, which I don't play worth a damn, although I've been practicing every night the past week....

"I must tell you about Sunday, when the choir and the chaplain's gospel team put on a combination concert and revival meeting in a tiny town nearby. I imagine that we introduced an unusually high standard of art into the wilds of Missouri when I played the Moonlight Sonata as a prelude (the only ecclesiastical sounding number I know), and later accompanied a fellow who sang Bizet's Agnus Dei, which is a lovely song, religious or not. But the thing as a whole was a riot. Me--I don't know one hymn from the other. It was all sight reading. It's a good thing they all go at the same speed."

There's just room for part of a letter from Eric Frank Russell: "I'm writing you from a sodden field in Holland with the land of Heines not so far away. Round and about are one or two dumps which look like they've experienced an Irish wedding, or as if the mice have been at them--this being the result of some people doing things and other people taking umbrage. The entire collection of your Spaceways, complete in every copy, went to the BFA for their library, just before I got deported. For some weird reason, they didn't believe that anyone in this country had a complete set and, of course, they were glad to get this one."

Board of Education

Rusty Hevelin should write this article. He has been a member of a board of education, one of the tiny group of fans who are known to have committed service on public bodies. We've had two fans in state legislatures, I got named to the governing body for the almshouse ten years after the institution had been dismantled, and I can't think of any other fans who have occupied offices more imposing than civil defense duties.

But Rusty has been silent about his school board duties, and it has occurred to me that there has been almost nothing in fan-zines about education from the standpoint of the people who run the school systems. We've had more than enough theorizing about the value of new educational methods and a considerable amount of griping over the troubles of the teacher, but silence about the important function of the real bosses. The semi-petrified areas on my buttocks owe that condition in large part to the extended sessions that I've endured at the county school board's meetings. This is the only tribe of school executives I've known and I have no knowledge of whether their activities are typical of school boards nationally. But I imagine that the situations faced by the local board are quite similar to those in most parts of the republic. Conceivably, the things I've seen and heard could give FAPAns some glimpses at the corner of the educational edifice that is most dimly illuminated and most infrequently inspected.

First, the background. Washington County, where Hagerstown lives, contains about 100,000 residents, about 35,000 of whom live within the city limits of Hagerstown and perhaps 15,000 of the remainder have their homes in suburbs not separated by open countryside. Slightly more than one-fifth of this population consists of children of school age. Schools are a function of county government here, in the sense that the incorporated towns levy no taxes for their operation and have no control over them except for the unofficial pressure type of influence. The county finances school expenses as part of its general tax procedures, rather than setting up a special school tax. The county commissioners, elective officials, must approve the school budget, school board recommendations on new buildings, and certain other major matters.

The school board consists of six persons who serve six-year terms that are staggered, so that a new appointment is needed each spring. The governor makes the appointments, theoretically choosing one person from several names submitted by the state senator, who in turn gets advice from the PTA. In practice the appointments are semi-political in nature. If the governor is a Democrat, Democrats will be appointed each year unless an appointment would make the lineup six Democrats and no Republicans, in which case the party line will be crossed to keep representation by the minority party. Appointees are people who have not fallen into political disgrace but not necessarily individuals who are owed favors by the party leaders. For one thing, service on the school board provides too many headaches and too little egoboo for the all-out politician to seek the office, and there is no pay for the service except ten bucks or so per month as travel compensation. For another thing, even the most ardently old-fashioned political people seem to realize that the school

system is too expensive and complicated a gadget to trust in the hands of board members who might want to take it apart and put it together in another way. The schools cost more to run than all the other costs of city and county government put together. So the rarest thing in political life, commonsense, has some effect on the choice of board members. They are rarely the best available people but rarely undesirables. In general, the person who gets the nod for the board vacancy will be a native of the county or at least a resident of it from early manhood. He will have had some association with education other than his own studies: this may take the form of a wife who teaches school or children who are enrolled in school or his own previous service on the education committee of the chamber of commerce. He will be neither completely obscure nor one of the busiest persons in the county. At any given time, the board will normally include at least one member who is involved in banking or holds a key role in the finances of a major local firm, someone who has had lots of practical experience with engineering or construction, at least one woman (and preferably two, to simplify hotel accommodations when the board goes to conventions), someone who is well known to farmers or a farmer himself, and there will be fairly good representation of all the major geographical divisions of the county. Every so often, there's a great determination around here to make the school board elective. Then people stop and look at the kind of people who get elected as city councilmen and county commissioners, and they decide that the appointive system is the lesser of the two evils. Current reform measures are less radical, designed principally to guarantee more complete geographical representation of all parts of the county and to prevent second terms for appointees.

When I first began to attend board of education meetings, the first surprise was the complete absence of educationese in the discussions. Instead of "areas of instruction" the board members spoke of "subjects" and instead of saying "imperfectly motivated groups" they came right out and said every time "lazy kids". This may mean that the dreadful way teachers and college professors talk is the result of an effort to prevent the public from knowing what they're really saying or it may mean that the people in education who aren't the bosses try to talk big in an effort to convince themselves that they really are the important people. This plain style of talk is shared by the county school superintendent, another appointive official. In theory he is appointed for a specific short term, but in practice once a man gets the job he holds it until a felony, death, or the offer of \$3,000 more per year by another school system gets him out of there.

In theory, the school board meetings here are public, and by law they are also open meetings. However, in reality they are held in almost perfect privacy. For many years, in fact, not even the newspapers were represented at the school board meetings. If I've done nothing else in my journalistic career, I console myself with the knowledge that I was the one who broke up this tradition. Nobody knew exactly how it had begun, because for so many years the assistant superintendent had telephoned the newspaper office after board meetings to summarize the actions that seemed safe to let people know about. Some digging in old newspapers showed that newspaper coverage had ended around World War One. By circumstan-

tial evidence, I've been able to reconstruct tentatively what happened. Nobody began to slip a reporter a few dollars for staying away from the meetings and there was no unofficial barring of the press. The school board simply began to meet on Tuesdays. This is the same day that the county commissioners have traditionally chosen for meetings. In those early days, there was only one reporter available for duty outside the office. He chose the commissioners as the more newsworthy meeting to cover. It took some wire-pulling and a small amount of yelling to win the right to begin attending board meetings, but I did it, and immediately began to understand how difficult it would be to stage public meetings in an all-out sense. The board has no real meeting room. It usually congregates in the superintendent's office, and it's more cluttered up with souvenirs of trips to Africa, overflow of books from other offices, filing cabinets, photographic equipment, maps, and similar household-gods than my attic. There's not room for even the major supervisors to sit in on the meetings. When the board decides to combine a meeting with an inspection of a school that is giving trouble, the situation grows even worse: usually it is necessary to chase glaring teachers out of the broom closet that has been converted into a faculty room and there space is even scarcer. And finally, there are a lot of business matters that just aren't fit for the public's ears at school board meetings. I realize that a lot of other business never reaches my ears, because like every other batch of officials in the nation, the education board manages through various strategies to get some of the more delicate matters handled when there's no reporter within earshot. But there is a lot of dynamite in some of the things that I do hear. It is hard enough for the school system to get a site for a new school at a sane price, when people in that area merely suspect that this is where the new school is planned; it would be downright impossible to afford the prices that property owners would charge if they'd been on hand for the decision to build in one of these three prospective locations. I feel that the school people are quite within their rights when they ask my silence--both in the public prints and in conversation--about the sum budgeted to construct the new school, once the land has been bought. If the estimate is kept within a small circle, there's a chance that some naive contractor will make a bid far under that figure. Sad experience has taught that when the estimate is publicized, every bid is slightly higher than the sum calculated.

If the public did attend school board meetings regularly, there would be more surprises than the minor one involving the plain language. For instance, it isn't always the major decisions that cause all the trouble. Quite often a meeting gets stuck on something in the agenda that looked like a 30-second project. An example occurred a year or so ago, when a parent asked the right for her children to attend a school outside the school district in which they resided, and insisted on board consideration when the pupil personnel people rejected the request. Some of Hagerstown's elementary schools have only the first three grades, others teach grades one through six. The family had recently moved from a district feeding the latter type to a district where the younger children attended the former-type of elementary school. The youngest child in the family was in poor physical condition, almost a

cripple, but managed to attend school regularly because his older siblings had helped him on the stairways and in other situations involving physical problems. If this youngest child had to go to a different school, he couldn't make it. The school board faced the dilemma: was it better to add to the burden of a visiting teacher and maybe hire a new visiting teacher so the child could get home instruction, or should the boundary be violated and thereby open the floodgates for a wave of requests from other parents involving entirely different situations? They opted for the visiting teacher, eventually. Another non-crucial trouble consists of long trips by big groups of students. The school system has adopted the policy of requiring submission to the board offices of any projects that will take groups of students out of town for one or more nights. Unfortunately, the local high schools have pretty good bands and there are many projects like Christmas parades, football bowl games, and resort city pageants that are always searching for good school bands. If the band boosters associations had their way, the high school bands would have a travel schedule resembling that of the Don Cossacks and if the school board had its way the bands would play only within hearing distance of the principal's office. An uneasy truce has been worked out permitting each of the good bands to make one long trip each year, plus regular alternation for invitations to closer festivities like the Winchester, Va., apple blossom festival and the Washington, D.C., safety patrol parade each year. This whole situation is one in which the school board can't possibly win. If they refuse permission to take trips, they're accused of attempting to regulate the kids' activities outside school hours; if they give permission, parents by the dozen instantly prey upon innocent homes with their demands to buy candy or to make outright contributions to pay for the buses and hotel bills and the victims of this panhandling scream in anguish to the board offices. There is also the soul-searching that board members must endure involving the non-musical activities of the band members on these junkets. The most perfect chaperonage that man can devise fails to prevent at least one or two female clarinet players from returning in a pregnant condition and it's quite a fine point of responsibility, whether part of the blame rests on the persons who give the final okay for the trips.

But maybe the problems like these seem difficult only because the local school board has not suffered from many disastrous problems in recent years. I give most of the credit for a pretty good school system to the superintendent. Dr. Brish is a man of stupendous energy in an insignificant physical container. He is the only person in Hagerstown who is in the custom of driving to New York City in the morning and early afternoon, attending a meeting or transacting business there in the late afternoon, driving back to Hagerstown in the evening, then going to the office and catching up there on the day's work before returning home for two hours of sleep before the start of his next day of work. He could have gone on to much bigger things in education but didn't, apparently because for a few years he wanted his children to be able to finish high school among familiar surroundings, then because he got involved in the five-year Ford

Foundation educational television project, and when that was done, he was starting to get too old to make big changes. He has a superb way with people. Once I saw him in danger of real physical violence at the hands of enormous mountaineers, when a meeting called to discuss the consolidation of Indian Springs school got out of hand. He didn't back down and he didn't get hurt, and I still don't know how he did it. He can calm down an upset school board member with different tactics. Someone complained recently about the interior colors for a new school, and Dr. Brish simply explained that this architect happened to be going through his blue period, somewhat as Picasso had done a while ago, and after two or three more school commissions the architect would have worked his way out of the obsession with blue and meanwhile it wouldn't do to disturb him. (Colors are an educational topic on which I could devote the rest of this article. The board once decided to do the color scheme itself for a new senior high school and accomplished nothing else for the next 18 months without coming to a decision. The superintendent sometimes points out that what the adults prefer doesn't really count very much, anyway, because the kids will be the most numerous occupants of the buildings. Conococheague school dazzles Route 40 motorists, because of its marked resemblance to Times Square on a rainy night, but the kids love the colors and it has a fine attendance average.) He has virtually no time of his own and is always hovering on the edge of a nervous breakdown or some physical type of disintegration, yet he has hobbies to which he manages to give some attention: he's a photography bug and does quite good work that has won salon prizes, and he's a circus fan. In fact, the last time the circus came to town in elaborate enough guise to stage a parade, Dr. Brish arranged for the parade to go past the television studios and for the TV teacher of elementary school French to climb up onto the elephant's back, in an effort to fix more firmly in the minds of eight-year-olds how to converse with an elephant in French.

Publicity-hungry county commissioners are the school board's oldest, most rugged cross. A decade back, we had the worst of all specimens of this breed. His major gimmick was to bellow in rage at frills in school construction. A frill was something he did not like, and frequently it turned out to be a non-existent matter that he had imagined because of his inability to read school plans or understand spoken English. The newspapers were filled for a few days with his blasts against the intent to put stages into every classroom in one new school, until the contractor pointed out that what he saw as stages were actually small areas six inches higher than the remainder of the floor level at the front of some rooms, big enough to allow a student speaker to stand while delivering an oration or to allow a teacher to reach something high up on a wall. The whole county was in a tumult for weeks over a little jutting wall section that the architect had designed near the main entrance to a new high school, to conceal the public telephone. The commissioner insisted that it would bankrupt the county. The school people held firm in their determination not to let a standard pay telephone booth be erected in such a prominent spot and the famous battle of the bulge ended with the commissioner's defeat. The idiocy of this sort of politician became obvious a

little later when he attended his first football game at the same new school. When he hunted bathroom facilities between halves, he was outraged to find them quite modest and some distance from his seat and demanded an immediate explanation. No amount of explaining would make him understand that eight or ten football games per year, lasting not quite two hours, put only a modest strain on the kidneys of the youngsters who made up most of the audience, and enough toilet facilities to process 500 persons simultaneously might constitute an honest-to-goodness frill.

Still, this whole question of "frills" is one that constantly recurs at school board meetings in a more civilized way. One lady member of the board once horrified the remainder by announcing that she would favor a policy of settling on five per cent as the cost of each new building that should go into non-essentials. It was a harsh way of saying something that must be settled but usually isn't settled so badly. It's hard to find any building put up for any purpose and furnished with even the cheapest facilities, which doesn't possess some things that could qualify as frills. Less elaborate lighting could be provided in almost every inhabited building without resulting in immediate blindness or frequent falls. Houses get painted a little more frequently than necessary to prevent them from rotting away. The stockholders who are happy because the board of directors decided to put eight-foot ceilings in a new factory must realize that a slight saving could have been accomplished by cutting another three inches from those ceilings. Even in the old days when Washington County spent less per child on education than any other part of Maryland, they put frills on schools: names engraved in stone over the main entrance or fluting on the columns at the corners, a concrete sidewalk across the playground even though a janitor was being paid to clean up the building at the end of each day. Now the question becomes somewhat more serious because decisions can amount to extra-spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Do you build auditoriums in each new high school? Do you give each new high school its own football field with adequate seating, or do you build one good stadium and force all schools to play there? How much land do you blacktop for student parking at the high schools? Do you buy the expensive playground equipment for the elementary schools that the PTA wants as a matter of prestige, or do you make the kids happy by giving them the sections of concrete pipe to crawl through and the big section of log balanced on a couple of round stones, which they really enjoy?

Right now, the county is wrestling with an even more expensive decision. Should definite steps be taken now toward converting schools to 12-month operation in the near future? It's becoming more obvious all the time that something radical must be done soon to stop the increase in education costs. This county isn't rich enough to pay constantly increasing bills and still provide an adequate amount of fire protection, public library maintenance, and road repairs. But it's inconceivable that education could be accomplished around here in July without air conditioning for the buildings that were designed for cool and cold weather use. Those big expanses of glass so popular in modern school construction are more valuable than most persons realize, for the amount of warmth they provide as a supplement to furnace heat during much of the

sunshiny spring and fall weather. But they're disastrous if the school is to be used during the hot season. With unspoken forebodings of complete disaster ahead, the school and county authorities are now proceeding on the assumption that 12-month use of buildings will definitely occur in a few more years, to save the county from the additional debt that more new buildings would impose. (Already we're paying more than a million dollars each year in debt service, and some of the bonds won't be retired until just before the turn of the century; new bond issues might affect the county's credit rating and force the payment of ruinous interest rates.) But it's easy to foresee what problems year-around school use will create. Parents who praise the authorities for such vision today will be the first to explode five years from now, the first summer that schools are in use and the parents awake to the horrid realization that the three children will have classes during the months in which the father gets his vacation at work so there won't be that annual three-week cross country jaunt that has become a family tradition. The authorities talk confidently about telling the teachers the next time they demand a raise that they'll get the raise but will be required to stay on duty throughout the year. It sounds logical but I know teachers too well to believe for a minute that they'll work more than 40 weeks for any normal-size raise. It will be hard for the farmers to get along without their sons during the peak of the growing season; the scouts and YMCA will find their happiness blighted by inability to obtain enough kids to hold traditional camps, and all sorts of other difficulties will arise.

But some other problems that looked just as insurmountable have been conquered by the school board in recent years. Integration, for instance, has occurred in this semi-southern county with such a complete lack of friction that nobody is still quite sure that it's actually an accomplished fact. Hagerstown and surroundings have never been as segregated as even the southern part of Maryland: most stores, the public library, graveyards, and the hospital have been integrated here as long as anyone can remember. But strict segregation had applied in the schools, even unto refusal to play basketball against Pennsylvania teams that had long been integrated. Soon after the supreme court made up its mind on the question, the local board acted. They integrated the high schools first, an action which affected mainly the two in Hagerstown, because few Negroes live elsewhere in the county. Two or three years later, they did the same for the elementary schools, except for retaining all-Negro enrollment in the elementary school in the very middle of the section where almost all Hagerstown's Negroes reside. Two years ago, they finally figured out a way to integrate this school, too, by turning it over to the mentally retarded and cerebral palsy classes. The Negroes themselves protested at this action because their children must now go much farther and must study in older, dingier buildings. But during the entire integration period, we had only one incident big enough to merit a news story: a Negro high school girl was pelted with rocks on her way home from classes. Nobody got hurt, no arrests were made, it wasn't repeated and I like to think that the newspapers deserve some credit for the smooth transition. We deliberately underplayed news stories on the topic, giving them slightly smaller headlines than they should have

had, leaving out some details that really should have seen print, and publishing advance stories on coming integration events several days ahead of the events rather than on the very day or eve. I suspect that a great many integration incidents further south were the direct result of news stories made as sensational as possible and arousing to action persons who might have merely grumbled if they'd read more subdued news stories.

Television is the other big problem. The county became internationally famous for that Ford Foundation experiment, and then decided after the five-year of free etv to continue it at local expense. The school board can quote statistics endlessly to prove that the closed-circuit etv is really economical, because it permits the use of only one teacher in specialized fields, instead of enough art, music, advanced math, and similar instructors to give personal instruction throughout the county. Normally, the school board sits through a sample lesson several times a year, to keep touch with techniques. It also hears an occasional informal talk by a television teacher or a supervisor to keep up to date on how video in the classroom is working out. Maryland's state legislators are currently fumbling around with the question of a statewide etv network, in which this county would be a focal point at first because of its knowhow and facilities. This county, meanwhile, is hopeful of finding federal money in this or that agency to finance conversion of its etv network to an uhf etv station. This would eliminate the ruinous charges that the telephone company imposes for the cables required in the closed-circuit system, and would permit a great deal of adult instruction that isn't practical now. The drawback would be a reduction in the programming for the schools; as many as six tv lessons are now televised simultaneously and each child gets at least one or two 45-minute-lessons on tv each school day. You can't imagine what the television-center is like until you've been there: a few dozen college-age kids accomplish production miracles involving quite complicated camera work and combinations of live and taped programming to keep everything moving on schedule and going to the right classrooms. I'm afraid that my admiration for the progressive thinking and willingness to use modern methods of instruction is diluted with considerable skepticism about the ability of a person to learn anything as easily via television as he can with a live teacher and printed materials. I can't help feeling that the same sums that are spent on etv would give more instruction if spent on producing and duplicating 8 mm movies which students could repeat and turn back at will when attention had wandered at some crucial point in the exposition.

The local board of education, as the above might indicate, does not spend a great deal of time with actual techniques of instruction or curriculum development. Board members seem content to let the superintendent and his staff work out such things with some suggestions from teachers, blowing a whistle only if too many complaints start to reach the ears of board members. It's the more practical, less intellectual, matters that cause board meetings to last for hours and hours. If a small town in the county decides to put in a sewer system at last, and asks the school system to help out with a cash contribution that will be amortized by free sewerage service for years to come, how much money should

be advanced? Should it be the same sum for each community where this happens, or a percentage of the total cost of the project? What do you do about transportation within the city of Hagerstown now that its limits are extending so far that it is unreasonable to expect high school students to walk to and from classes, a distance that may be more than two miles across a lot of dangerous intersections and areas without sidewalks? If the school system simply puts on enough additional school buses, it will drive out of existence the city bus system, a major share of whose total revenue comes from hauling school kids, and when an agreement is worked out with the bus lines to haul kids without charge upon suitable reimbursement from the school system, what do you do after most of those city buses fail to pass the safety tests required by state regulations?

Worse yet, school board members are in much the same position as scientists. They can't possibly be completely competent in all the technical matters involved in education, and yet they aren't able to specialize by reason of their particular type of duty. So some actions of the school board are either blind obedience to the advice given by other people who should know, or wild guesses. As an example, a change order on one school construction job came up for board decision in this form: "Furnish labor and materials for placing caissons to greater or lesser depth in accordance with the plans and specifications and unit prices stated in the contract. To excavate to the additional depth and place dry fill under mechanical equipment room due to soil conditions encountered." One board member might have known if this was worth the \$3,120.77 in county money that its approval cost, simply by going out there and investigating. Another board member probably would have understood the former's findings, if explained to him carefully in laymen's language. I'm confident that the other four members could not have voted on this matter without being told what to do. Even when a change order is easier to understand, it poses hidden dangers for the board: "To furnish and install thirteen #964 Scott Toilet Paper Holders and twenty-three #842 Marathon Paper Towel Holders (as per quotation from The Blake Co.)" Getting specimens from the site to the board meeting would have held up things for an hour, assuming that they weren't all fastened down too securely to be moved, and so the danger existed that this might prove to involve something as controversial as the celebrated telephone niche.

The school board is prevented by state or federal regulations from doing many things that it might like to do. The county authorities are also helpless with regard to many things that make education expensive. The public cannot or will not understand that construction of a school must be done quite differently from that of a house, because of standards that must be maintained by law to remove all danger that the building will fall down atop the scholars' ears. It means a much higher cost per square foot because of heavier materials and it also is one of the major reasons why so many one-story schools are built these days: it costs too much to put in such monumental stairwells and plump steel beams in the floors. The state governs the number of days during which a school system must offer classes in the academic year, the kind of

washing that dirty dishes must get in the cafeteria and the sort of drains that will carry away the dishwater. Besides the official regulations, the county board finds itself bound by de facto situations involving the state or adjoining counties. The state doesn't require any particular proportion of the pupil population to use school buses but it pays the entire cost of pupil transportation, so there is a powerful inclination to consolidate schools as much as possible to cut down on the number of principals, travel time for supervisors, and the number of front doors that must be painted throughout the county each summer. We're down now to about forty schools and a few more of them will probably vanish in my lifetime. But school boards have saved the toughest situations for last; Indian Springs almost caused bloodshed, and all board members turn green at the thought of trying to purge Dargan school, in the most isolationist part of the county where everyone still remembers the self-rule that obtained during the years when it was the bootlegging and moonshining cultural center of western Maryland. County commissioner interference occasionally takes the form of suspicions that the school people are using school system vehicles for pleasure driving, and many a commissioner has beaten a snarling retreat when he learned that it is against the state law for the truant officer to have his car painted with a sign proclaiming his profession.

However, the school board tries to codify the matters where it possesses jurisdiction into a written manual that comes in handy when someone charges that this or that policy is done because of tradition rather than official rulings. This policy manual is under constant revision, a few items per board meeting, to prevent obsolescence. I'll quote part of section 4156.01, as a sample and to illustrate what I said earlier about the sensible language that is used by the important people in the education system:

"Schools are in session for pupils from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Circumstances may require adjustment in this schedule, and a different opening and closing time may be needed. All such changes must be approved by the county administration. Teachers are required to be in their classrooms twenty minutes before the opening hour to have everything in readiness for the day's work, and to remain at least thirty minutes after school is dismissed to help pupils, to complete daily records, to confer with visiting parents and to make necessary preparation for the next day. Local situations, such as school bus schedules, may make it necessary for some teachers to arrive earlier or remain after dismissal for longer periods of time than specified above. In such cases, the principal will arrange a schedule to rotate responsibilities. Teachers are asked to remain at school during the noon lunch period and take turns in assuming any necessary duties."

The one aspect of board meetings that we know we don't cover on the newspaper is the scheming on how to get the budget for the coming scholastic year prepared. It's either done at meetings which are successfully hidden from the press, or by the supervisor's staff with subsequent approval by board members through individual visits to the offices. This makes it hard to say if the high cost of education could possibly be reduced to any consequential extent. If waste or padding exists anywhere in the budget, the camouflage job has been done perfectly as far as my poor wits

are concerned, by the time the statistics are made public. Take, for example, the budget for the last complete scholastic year, covering 1964-65. The county school system cost a trifle more than \$9,000,000 to operate, and the county was required to pay about \$5,000,000 of that total. Teachers' salaries amounted to \$6,550,440, and here is where the real savings should be made, if they are to be accomplished. But the enormously rich counties surrounding Baltimore and Washington are so close to Hagerstown that the local school board can't keep teachers' salaries down to the levels warranted by other occupations' pay scales around here. Even the current scale for Washington County of \$5,000 starting salary rising to \$8,000 after 13 years' experience for a teacher with a bachelor's degree isn't high enough to prevent considerable leakage to Maryland counties that pay more. Filling vacancies with teachers who are just starting in the profession would be a fine way of cutting costs if there were enough newly graduated people seeking teaching jobs here. And if the county tries to reduce the number of teachers, the whole budget collapses completely because state aid is based on a complicated formula through which a reduction in the teaching force would mean such a great loss of state funds that the county would pay more in the end. Almost everyone outside school boards grumbles about all those non-teaching supervisors who wallow in public money while they do nothing but snoop around the different schools and complain when they find something they don't like. But the supervisory salaries in this budget amounted to only \$160,000, a comparative pittance. Transportation costs a half-million but that doesn't affect the county contribution and I imagine that restoration of the 150 one-room schools that once dotted the county would cause the total cost of operating schools to go up by at least another million dollars. Nearly a half-million is needed to pay salaries of janitors, and their salaries are so low that the county has come close to seeing them unionize a couple of times in recent years. What can you do about the \$114,177-fuel oil bill for a school year, or the \$25,000 that must be paid in social security, or \$21,000 that goes to the state for workmen's compensation? You'd think that nothing could be done about insurance, either, but the school board fooled you there. The insurance bill is a piddling \$21,000 per year, because the board dropped years ago almost all its fire insurance and instead put aside each year for emergencies part of the money that would go for premiums. The reasoning is that there is little in the modern schools that could burn and the older buildings are being abandoned almost as regularly as if they were burning down, anyway.

Maybe secret meetings and private conferences smooth over the major emotional upsets in the school board as efficiently as they produce impregnable budgets. I wouldn't know about that, but the local board members seem to get along remarkably well. Harsh exchanges are usually either accompanied by or immediately followed by mitigating smiles and chuckles. The closest thing to a serious difference of opinion during the past year involved the award of a contract for a proposed new school. It was a difficult decision to begin with, because there were 17 alternates and the three low bidders were so close on the base bid that different combinations of accepted alternates could change the award of

the contract. The board decided one way at a secret meeting which I heard about by accident, then rescinded that action and awarded the contract to a different bidder, then when the originally awarded one threatened legal action and the county commissioners split in a tie vote on whether to approve the award, the school board reverted to the original decision. This situation was further complicated by two ancient bugaboos of school boards. Should a contract go to an in-county contractor when there's no major difference between his bid and one from an out-of-county contractor who offers to do the job for a few dollars less? And should dissatisfaction with the work a contractor did as he built a previous school color the decision on his bid for another contract?

As if they didn't have enough troubles with responsibilities involving most of the county's tax money, 95% of its kids, more than a thousand of its employes, and most of its bonded indebtedness, the board of education in this county is also the board of trustees for the local junior college. A tremendous fight, both political and educational, is building up in Maryland over control of all the state's junior colleges and over the way in which more four-year college facilities will be provided in this state: by adding the last two years to the junior colleges, or establishing entirely new institutions. It looks at present as if the people who seek state rather than local control of junior colleges will win. You who live in areas where major colleges and universities are scattered thick can't realize the pie in the sky status that a four-year college takes on to some people, back in these isolated hills. The industrial development people solemnly insist that Hagerstown will mushroom as Albuquerque did, just as soon as it gets a four-year college. The industries are confident that they can forget about apprenticeship for new employes if a full college is established here because the college would produce men and women capable of doing everything that ten-year employes now know. A city councilman will happen across statistics for College Park, where the University of Maryland reposes, and will immediately deduce that local supermarket checkers and milk truck drivers will earn \$7,500 per year in Hagerstown, as soon as it gets that college. Meanwhile, the school board transforms itself about once a month into a board of junior college trustees and tries to figure out how to get enough money to pay the kind of salaries that college professors expect, how to speed up the accreditation that has been awaited for twenty years, and prays that the student body at the local junior college won't decide that it wants to field a football team.

Maybe I should go on to describe how the school system has been plotting to grab vast sums for this county under the Economic Opportunity Act, the secret negotiations that may eventually lead to free kindergarten for all the kids in the county, the agony and the ecstasy of the educators and kids respectively when a blizzard forces cancellation of classes, the improbable foreigners who troop into the county by the busloads to look at the etv arrangements, the fanciful titles given to various officials like the director of operational services (he's the man you call if something breaks), and the turmoil that arose a while back when someone finally realized that nobody knew how much Dr. Brish was being paid. But such matters can wait for a postgraduate article.