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Merciful heavens, this would be the 29th annish of Horizons, if it had produced previous annishes. It's volume 30, number 1, FAPA number 110, and whole number 116. I hope. It will be the November, 1968, issue. Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., writes the otherwise uncredited material. The Coulsons do the publishing.

In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: Another parcel post rate increase is coming, I understand. There's more basis for my contention that we need constitutional authority for the secretary-treasurer to set whatever dues seem currently required by the size of mailings, mail rates, and whatever effect the official editor's geographical location may have on postage costs. Null-F: Let me hasten in the most breathless manner to assure Ted White and everyone else that Gloria Dahlhamer exists. She's woman's page editor of the newspaper for which I work, and the things I published in Horizons were slightly shortened reprints from a weekly column she writes for it. There's no hoax; I presented the items without explanation because I hoped to determine through mailing comments if her writing is as superior to small town journalism as it seems to me. ' ' This is typed before the worldcon so I can't know the outcome of the Hugo balloting. But I have no delusions about winning one, and I'm baffled by the number of votes I apparently got at the Nycon. I simply haven't written enough for fanzines in recent years to justify a Hugo. The locs are done carelessly in great haste and only their quantity could cause people to think of me; quality should be the real factor, and it's impossible to put it into improvised locs. I'm human enough to want the egoboo a Hugo would provide, and I'd begun to hope that the fan history might get me into strong contention if fan writing awards are given at the 1969 worldcon. But now it seems that the first volume of the history won't appear until early 1969. Two Shot: At last, I'm vindicated. One of the first things I ever submitted to a fanzine was a Dracula review. It went to Olon Wiggins of the Science Fiction Fan and he grumbled dreadfully, wondering why I chose such an old and familiar book. Now after thirty years, here's another review, and it proves what I've felt all along, that Stoker's book is a good one and worth an occasional discussion as it ages. ' ' If Tarzan was a language genius with a fine command of English, it only goes to show how different he was from Edgar Rice Burroughs. An Assortment: Isn't it curious, how reluctant cities are to keep bus service bearable, while they spend all sorts of money to subsidize air travel? I suppose it results from the fact that city officials have enough money to ride planes and drive their cars, so they don't care about the people who would be best served by buses. Hagerstown and Washington County have just finished spending an outlandish sum to enlarge the parking lot at the airport and improve the road leading to it. Yet they don't provide any parking space at all for patrons of the Greyhound terminal, nor is there any shelter from rain, snow, and splashes for people waiting to board intra-city buses. You'll notice there's never a parking meter at an airport parking lot, either. ' ' It's frightening, how fast the undisturbed land is vanishing. This county is developing much slower than most parts of the East, and yet the soil conservation people report that two per cent of its entire land area has been gobbled up by highways, buildings, and other development in just the past ten years. Where will the archaeologists work, in an-

other half-century? ' ' The lack of squabbles in print over the F-uncon baffles me. This sounded like the natural impetus to a tremendous feud. Did most fans guess that it wouldn't be a serious rival to the worldcon or didn't they care if there is an anticon, or have all the combatants agreed to do their fighting by correspondence and face-to-face shouting? Dynatron: Not to spoil life for Gordon Benson, but the days of us late-movie buffs may be numbered. Eight VHF channels give good reception in Hagerstown. The sissies at the only independent station on the dial go to bed too early to have late movies except over the weekend. All three NBC stations carry the network "variety" show. ("Variety" apparently means every minute is of the same variety as every other minute, every evening and every week and every year.) One of the ABC outlets used that net's "variety" program but the other ran movies until two weeks ago when it joined the trend. That leaves only the two CBS outlets, and CBS intends to monkeysee, monkeydo with a "variety" program starting in late 1969. I've got to convert to UHF reception, obviously. ' ' Almost all the health organizations are forbidden to join United Fund and related joint giving campaigns. In a few cities, the health agencies are loosely banded together in some kind of cooperative campaign solely for health. But the opposition to joining UF seems to involve the tendency for UF groups to insist on low administrative and publicity outlay by member agencies. Many health agencies spend from one-third to one-half of their total budget in money-raising. ' ' I can't understand how organized labor can support teacher strikes that occur in the midst of a school year. The teachers sign contracts to teach the coming scholastic year, before the year begins, in knowledge of the salary scale. This makes their strikes wildcat in nature to me, since I know of no school system that provides in those contracts a provision for renegotiation of wages before the contract runs out. A teachers' strike in the summer, combined with refusal to sign contracts for the coming year, I could understand. Pong Is a Four-Letter Word: I wonder if newspapers in Lincoln's day were more accurate than now? How much trust can we put in their reports on extemporaneous talks in general, not confining the question to the Bloomington situation? And did reporters a century ago touch up the worst blunders of the tongue in direct quotations, as they usually do today (unless they're quoting Negroes, Latin-American baseball stars, or other groups they're bigoted against)? I've never seen any studies on this matter, and it would be nice to know if reporting in the pre-radio, pre-television days was even more irresponsible because there was no evidence to prove errors. Kim Chi: This county got shook up by a recent funeral for a deceased who was quite different from Joe Hill. He was a country preacher, who'd never shown any deviation from normal ways of doing things. Just before he died he left instructions and they were carried out faithfully. As soon as he was dead, they wrapped the body in a sheet, put it in a low-priced coffin, took it to a cemetery a couple of hours later, had a brief graveside service, and put it into the earth itself, not into a vault. I've been meaning to drive out and see if the undertakers have set up a picket line. They could probably be prosperous without the embalming he disdained but not without the expensive procedures in the funeral home, vault, and all that. Horizons: I hate to let a repairman get his meddling hands on this typewriter again. But the lower case e's habit of creating a dash above itself is getting on my nerves, too. I'll try to get it fixed before the next mailing. Purple Haze: Why this devout trust

that Frank Reynolds has told everything about Hell's Angels? How in the world does this gang have anything to do with fandom? Bob intimates that it does, and if he can prove his point, I quit fandom, instantly, completely, and permanently. Pending such proof, I'm going to consider any tough motorcycle gang with secretive tendencies as a batch of young fascists running around in search of a Franco. ' ' What happens to the right to own guns, if some day all the people who own guns lose their tempers and kill one another and the meek inherit the earth? Moonshot: I don't guarantee my spelling of the Pittsburgh broadcaster's name. I did it from memory of a few long-ago references to him in The Sporting News. But the use of "case of Wheaties" as a synonym for home run was not peculiar to him. It was required for quite a few baseball announcers sponsored by General Mills. I understand that home runs really entitled players to the cases of Wheaties, but charity usually received the cereal. ' ' "If the w/l was very short or there weren't any at all--then we'd have a problem." But there was no problem in much of the 1940's when just those situations prevailed. One of FAPA's golden eras followed the occasion when it became hard to keep the membership roster at full strength. Laney and a couple of others recruited fans who seemed most likely to be active and congenial members, and fine mailings followed. ' ' Schubert's epitaph, from the poet Grillparzer: Die Tonkunst begrub hier einen reichen Besitz aber noch viel schoenere Hoffnungen. Music has buried here a rich treasure, but much fairer hopes. ' ' The only proposal for revising con site selection procedures that I haven't seen advocated seems to me to have some merit. Proxies. A fan who knew he wouldn't attend would give his proxy to a friend with whose thinking he sympathized. The friend would vote as the absent con member wished, unless some compelling events at the con seemed to justify a change. There would be more voting power for hard core fandom as opposed to walkins, but last-minute events like a sudden split in a bidding group could be coped with. In any event, if a change of some type does occur in selection procedures, that would be the proper time to introduce the second innovation, two-years-ahead selection. Omaha: At this point, I'd love to tell the entire Erwin Boyer story. But another five years must elapse before I'll feel it's safe. I wish there were some way to keep fanatic and mundania separate, but there isn't and we must resign ourselves to inconveniences like these that can prove occasionally catastrophic for a rare fan. I still have the sneaking suspicion that there should be a neofan warning sheet to remind the youngest newcomers to the field what they're getting into, an activity that could conceivably someday ruin a political or military career if the neofan has ambitions for some goal which can't be attained by anyone who hasn't been extremely careful about the company he keeps. Horib: The good humor of the Bangs story was a trifle sobered by one minor reference. Bangs refers lightly to picking up a daily lump of coal for eventual resale by the scuttelful. It is a mildly amusing concept if you haven't lived in a railroad town during the depression and watched small children swarming around the tracks after a freight had gone through, hoping to find a few pieces of coal that had fallen off one of the cars loaded in the mining regions west of here and carried by the Western Maryland Railway to Baltimore markets. The kids wouldn't be quite as warm later that day if they failed. Earlier, they'd risked some cuffs across the head by sneaking into the rest rooms at nearby service

stations. They liked the plumbing that their homes didn't possess. ' ' Just guessing, I'd say that Andre Norton sells well because she is so absolutely and totally predictable as a writer. There is never anything good enough to perplex the boobs. Every story is like all the others that appeared under her name. All the incidents, props and attitudes are already tested by use in several-thousand stories by other science fiction writers. It's the same thing that caused Perry Mason novels to be much more widely read than much superior murder novels, the same reasons why Doris Day movies have been so numerous and profitable. ' ' Did anyone ever figure out why the 1 was doubled in Illya's name in the Uncle series? I've never seen it done that way in transliterations from the Russian. Did someone goof when the credits were set up for the television series? Was it sheer ignorance on the part of script writers? Or a peculiarly appropriate sick joke? ' ' I wonder how long the Hugo design will continue without producing widespread discontent. Another four or five years should produce some landings on the moon. If the space ships look like the Hugo, the award may seem too prosaic. If the real ships have an entirely different design, maybe the traditional Hugo will be retained eternally out of nostalgia for the old dreams of the future. Day Tripper: I do believe that this is the first large FAPA publication mimeographed on second sheets since Horizons won its personal war against poverty. It's touching to see how Andy has just the same trouble with creases that I experienced, so many years ago. ' ' Does anyone know the origin of that "work like a dog" expression? The only possibility that occurs to me is that it might have originated as a polite way of saying that somebody worked like a son of a bitch. ' ' I thought about a lot of comments on this issue that I'm not going to make because they would be too personal, too much an invasion of privacy which I'm not entitled to commit. Just for the record, Andy, I hope you are going the way you are fitted to go by your makeup and personality and wishes. But I'm honestly, deeply, worried and concerned. Sambo: What ever happened to Robert Lee? I remember vaguely a plan to go overseas for further studies or for service in international friendship. ' ' I had read very little JDM until the Bibliophile began. Since I've been doing a modest amount of catching up and my enthusiasm for the writer has sharpened markedly. But I might as well come right out with it. I don't like the Travis series. Maybe someone would like to send me a new one with the bragging about physical and sexual prowess blacked out. I'd like to read one thus censored, and see if that's the element which spoils them for me. Loki: As one who broke away from the peppermint patty habit with enormous difficulty, I can't find it in my heart to censure Mrs. Locke. Not even after four consecutive luncheons during which a woman has blown smoke in my face with every mouthful of food and waved her cigarette in my ear during chews. ' ' Maybe a traveling worldcon would be a valuable means to recruit new fans, if our numbers ever thin out too badly. Stage the con every weekend during warm weather in a different large city, and sign up for the NFFF all the youngsters who are given their first exposure to fandom that way. ' ' The narrative about Fred Fred shows much of the flavor and skill of vintage Burbee. Is California Secure: I filled it out, suspecting that I didn't know what I was doing. Does "arbitrarily tyrannical behavior by public officials" cover one who makes a secretary give a halfhour of unpaid overtime retyping a letter she fouled up, or does it require the destruction of a person's reputa-

tion? What kind of "support" is meant, in the question about help and local support for police by officials? Financial, or determination to prosecute arrested people or compliments? Does "relief" mean just public welfare, or does it also include unemployment compensation or the old folks who receive lots of free medical services under a state plan entirely different from medicare? Different people who fill out these sheets are bound to have different understanding of the meanings of these words. It's this situation that makes me distrust the results of almost any questionnaire or poll, except those that seek to determine unambiguous facts: What was the last year you purchased an automobile? Whom would you vote for if you were at the polls this minute? Esdacyos: Other Fandoms caused me to blink and then to hunt Joe Gibson's byline. Then I wondered all over again what caused him to cease and desist so suddenly from fanac. I assume there's some specific cause which is known by word of mouth, because there's been no discussion of the matter in fanzines. But rumors don't trickle back to this valley until they've become ancient history. ' ' Another individual whom I wonder about is M. Doreal. I had some trouble with Advent over the cryptic quality of my mention of him in the first volume of the fan history. But I've been unable to get trustworthy information on whether he still lives, about the nature of that organization he is associated with, and the real extent of his collection. ' ' Ed might be consoled to know that the flying coffins, which were built in Hagerstown, may have killed not only many occupants but eventually and indirectly their manufacturer. Fairchild has fallen upon increasingly evil days through inability to sell any other model airplane in vast quantities since the boxcars, about a thousand employees have been laid off in the past year alone, and there are all manner of reports about the possibility that the local factory will be closed completely, with the firm retreating to a modern research factory constructed some years ago near Washington. ' ' I wonder how many FAPA collections are more nearly complete than Ed's and mine? I have all bundles since the ninth, although I haven't been careful to put all postmailings into the proper envelopes. Speer probably has all the mailings, Pelz presumably has most of them, Moskowitz may be right up there, and that might be it. The Rambling Fan: There's implicit constitutional evidence for requiring the real identity of a waiting lister to be known to the membership. The "blackball" provision implies the right for any member to decide if he wants a waiting lister on that list, and deliberate concealment of a waiting lister's identity behind a false name contradicts that right. By that statement, I don't mean to condone the "blackball" clause, which I have never liked, nor do I object to Lord Triffid III. I'm merely citing a way in which other episodes of the same type might be prevented without arbitrary rulings or constitutional changes. ' ' It's a good thing that Grennell put into this very mailing that essay on the horrors of moving. Without that in mind, I might trade in this house instantly on that cozy home on the Russian River. ' ' Most new fans seem to be coming by personal contact: they drop in on one of the cons or go to the same school as another fan. I hate to think how big fandom might have grown if the letter columns were still a recruitment grounds in the prozines. A Propos de Rien: I'm not sure that governmental support is usually the best thing even for welfare clients who are not in a situation where they can work. Welfare payments are just enough to live on, if spent wisely. In most cases, I suspect that the

recipients would eat and live more comfortably if all welfare aid were abolished, and these people got along as they did before the welfare empires began to grow: through the support of relatives or neighbors or churches. " WABC was headquarters station for CBS before there was an ABC network. It was at 860 kc. NBC had two networks: WJZ at 760 kc headed the blue network and WTAJ at 660 kc led the red network. NBC was forced to get rid of one network by federal orders, something to do with monopoly, and now WJZ are the call letters for a stupid television station in Baltimore and most of the radio stations have had their frequency shifted by a score or so kilocycles. I wish I could remember my telephone number as readily as these trivial matters. " Horizons' first page bears an even number because the publication began so long ago that odd and even numbers had not yet been segregated. " Soggy Dag Stories: Too wonderful to be passed over in silence, even though no particular comments come to mind. Why stop here? Why not keep writing until a booklength manuscript results and goes between covers? Helen's Fantasia: Many fans will miss Anthony Boucher, and this makes me all the more unhappy because I'll miss him too in a special manner shared by few. I never met him and now I'll never have the opportunity to do so. It might be worse to have no memories of a good person than to think regretfully about memories of him. Naströnd: A girl I know spent six months in Turkey. She liked the people immensely after living in three or four different sections of the nation under some sort of international friendship project. Sercon's Bane: Pelz stopped sending FAPA mailings under the library rate because it was illegal and someone threatened to tattle. I don't know which states require a "Legal Officer" for a corporation, but it would be easy to incorporate in one that didn't, if that's all that discourages filing the proper papers. " Have the nitpickers been a problem in fanish matters where results are made known, like the voting for FAPA officers and worldcon sites? There hasn't been the epidemic of rumors and charges about those results as there has about Hugo races. Apparently the secrecy about Hugo votes began to prevent people from knowing what a scrawny handful of people cast ballots during the first years of the awards. Rubber Frog: I'll tell you a secret, Gordon. After three decades in FAPA, I can't follow its official arguments or blackball a waiting lister, either. Warhoon: These last few publications could strike for unfair treatment, but I'm running out of space. I'll try to write a loc direct to Bergeron and confine myself here to some comments on 2001 which are unjustified because I haven't seen the movie. But I can't believe that they went to all that trouble to imitate LSD reactions. I'd love to figure out a way to get Merritt novels into the hands of some young acid enthusiasts who would assume they're new writing; I suspect that lots of the Merritt pages would be interpreted as psychedelic just as eagerly as the later stages of the Clarke-Kubrick movie. Isn't it possible that the enigmatic ending means simply that, just as the first monolith helped man to transcend the physical limitations of his body, and just as the second persuaded him to break free from the bonds of the earth-moon system, so the third monolith had the obvious function of showing man how to break free from the fetters of time. Nevertheless, it's a continuing fascination to see how many different and contradictory things have been found in the film by different reviewers for fanzines, and there's also the possibility that this is the whole point of the movie: that there is no neat message, just the ambiguity of the universe itself.

The Worst of Martin

Meet Aloysius Quibble D. Twerp
He is an expert hectographer
Of scienti-fan papers -
For the ignorant rabble
Who don't understand
His modern art, and stuff
Like no punctuation and capitals--
Or nude purple half-tones of women with typewriter heads--
They think he's silly--slap-happy.
But A. Quibble D. Twerp is a genius.
He's sure of it.
He's not of this age.
A hundred years from now
People will exclaim over his work:
"He was ahead of his time."
"Genius--"
"Misunderstood."
A. Quibble D. Twerp hectographs
And hectographs
Safe in his knowledge of things to come
While the genius pours out of him
Like the dripping of gilijex from a cracked Plutonian
Aardferks egg
Which he is, no doubt....

Since it isn't practical to attempt a printed paper for such a limited circulation, where quantity is oftentimes rated above quality --where artistic methods of duplication are desired anyhow (like hectographing)--the Martin literary props have attempted to mimeograph a paper solely for the FAPA. After daubing the bedroom from divers and devious explosive methods of duplication sans spending a nickle for proper equipment, we have been struck with a ritual utilizing the printing press for a mimeograph. Until the process approximates readability we are battered from mimeograph to mimeograph to produce this Satyric .1.

Our favorite journal in our last two years of "reading membership" has been Sweetness and Light. Months ago we sent articles and bits to SaL for publication (with enclosed stamped envelope) and have received no reply. Even SaL has disappeared.

The Reader and Collector has furnished us with merry anecdotes with every issue. His subtle and caustic humour is a high spot in every bundle.

The only other paper we can remember that sustained interest was the Phantagraph in its old printed days. Other papers show the so-called "pro" worth only occasionally. Every bundle has a few excellent papers. The editors seem to take turns. It's fun to hunt for them.

A year or so ago I enjoyed a weekend visit from Louis Kuslan. We talked of producing a joint format on Ye Olde Lycanthrophy Presse, but that was the last I saw of him although we are only 20 miles apart--Manchester to Storrs College. At the time I was busily engaged in producing a series of plays and courtin' a girl. The plays are now produced, Martin is fired, and to salve my dismal condition the girl accepted me.

(from Satyric, March, 1942, published by Edgar Allan Martin)

An Immo v able Feast

Christmas Day in 1967 was much like the December 25ths that had immediately preceded it. In these latter years, I face the necessity of eating on Christmas Day in much the same manner as Charlie Brown encounters the importance of getting a hit with the bases loaded in the last half of the ninth and his All-Stars two runs behind. Each yuletide, I am invited to dine with the smattering of relatives I still possess in Hagerstown. I make some excuse, knowing quite well that my failure to break the holiday bread will cause resentment. But the talk at family meals on Christmas Day turns to the past and its dead, and this is the one day of the year when I cannot bear to think or talk about those topics. Whatever excuse I create automatically excludes me from accepting invitations to eat Christmas dinner with neighborhood families or friends elsewhere. In this overgrown sevagram, my social life would inevitably reach the relatives and the consequences wouldn't subside until Labor Day. Hagerstown does not have an imposing quantity of eating places under the best of the calendar's circumstances. Part of these establishments close down on Sundays and all holidays. Virtually all of them shut up shop in the tightest manner on Christmas Day. People's Service Drug Stores, whose waitresses seethe and speak mutinously when they must work on New Year's Day and Thanksgiving Day, are dark and silent on Christmas Day. So is The Wharf, a sort of last resort for me during other hunger pangs because I don't like to eat around the odor of alcohol. Hagerstown has only one hotel with a dining room, and not only the dining room but the whole hotel was hermetically sealed on 1967's Christmas Day, in one of an endless succession of financial crises.

That left Chatkin's, the corner drugstore which serves only two kinds of sandwiches, three kinds of milk drinks, and coffee; the bus terminal restaurant, which sometimes is and sometimes isn't safe to sit in, depending on which members of the poor white trash are patronizing it at a given time; and Fisher's. Fisher's was a pleasant surprise last Christmas, because this catchall store in a suburban area three miles from my home usually closed on past Christmases. I saw the back page advertisement which assured everyone it would remain open this Christmas, and decided to find nourishment there. The drive was somber, under a dishwater sky that occasionally emitted a soggy snowflake. But a happy throng milled around the entrance to Fisher's, and I felt in the spirit of Christmas at last as I watched opportunity to slip through the door. I didn't even worry about the long wait for service that was foretold by the crush toward the rear where the lunch counter stands. I gradually worked my way through the aisles of cheap toys and expensive pills. So many people were milling around the surviving gift wrappings and Christmas cards that it was some time before I could see the sign on the lunch counter. "No food service because of Christmas." I drove slowly back to Hagerstown, now lacking even the company of those scattered snowflakes, and got home just as Chatkin's was closing for the day. There was a slice of cheese in the refrigerator and a can of soup under the sink which, added to the fruit cake that a neighbor left on the doorstep Christmas Eve and instant coffee, provided me with a yuletide meal of precarious nutritional balance but blessed holiday freedom from the social life at the bus terminal restaurant. After nightfall, I decided to salvage something of the day by taking color pictures of Christmas lights with my newly acquired 135 mm lens. I started with

the municipal tree in the center of the City Park lake, which I'd looked at longingly in previous years, knowing it was too distant for the tree and reflection to fill properly a frame of 35 mm film with a normal lens. Just as I'd begun to bracket exposures, rain started to pelt down. I scuttled back to the car and drove around town a while, thinking it might be a brief or localized shower. It wasn't. I came home by way of the downtown People's. Standing out front in that driving downpour, hatless and motionless, was one of the young punks who normally inhabit the bus terminal lunchroom. Nobody else was in sight and there wasn't any action for a block in any direction. It occurred to me that he might be unhappy because Christ hadn't come again and might be hoping against hope that something would happen before midnight. I probably gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Sometimes Christmas Day is a day off for me, and sometimes it is a working day. Whichever it happens to be, there is no doubt that Christmas changes have been most evident in recent years at the newspaper office. The hot summer day when the change of ownership was announced for the publishing company, the one and only change of policy announced was: "We don't give Christmas bonuses." The old management's bonus policy was complex beyond all description. Basically, it consisted of two bucks for each year you'd worked for the company. However, it was an open secret that this bonus was supplemented by a week's salary for employees who struck the management as conscientious and likely to make their vocational careers in Hagerstown journalism. I'd been a reporter for more than a decade when on the last working day before Christmas I was called into the general manager's office and received under the strictest security conditions a substantial sum in paper currency. I'd already received the check for the normal and abnormal bonuses, and it took a lot of cautious probing to disclose that at last I'd qualified for a third-order bonus list whose existence wasn't even suspected by many who received the .2 per year and week's salary.

The bonus abolition had disastrous consequences on yuletide manifestations in general at the office. The Morning Herald Christmas tree is now one with Nineveh and Tyre. For many years, this was a medium-size artificial tree. It had become an office tradition, always bearing exactly the same group of decorations, trimmed in precisely the same manner. The adherence to custom wasn't attained by a perfect memory of the trimmers or by reference to photographs, as admiring visitors assumed. We had a very large box, into which we would pop the entire tree, fully trimmed, each Twelfth Night, and in mid-December, we would cautiously retrieve the box from the unoccupied third floor, lift out the tree, and Christmas would again have arrived at the Morning Herald office. The artificial tree held up so well, by thus avoiding the strain of being dissected and reassembled, that it didn't get shaky until the year before the company changed hands. We all chipped in to purchase a replacement and entrusted the shopping job to the assistant social editor. The first Christmas of the bonus drought, we tried to keep up a pretense of yuletide spirit by getting out the Morning Herald Christmas tree. It emerged from the box and reporters either turned away quickly or rushed to the rest room, depending upon their strength of stomach. It was the culminating disaster of that bonusless season. The previous year, the assistant social editor had been had. She'd paid for an artificial tree and had been sold a real one.

Another office tradition died around this same time: the annual

flurry over a Christmas gift for the editor. The editor always bought his staff a tremendous box of candy. We tried to sort out from his early December remarks the one that he meant as a hint to what he'd like as his gift this year. One year, it was some Gilbert & Sullivan records which I'd forgotten about completely until he gave them to me early in 1968, explaining that he no longer had enough room at home for all his Christmas gifts. There was the awful Advent when it became obvious that we had to find him a copy of Ross of the New Yorker, and none of the Hagerstown stores selling books would acknowledge its existence, much less offer to try to order a copy in time for Christmas giving. The social editor and I spent an afternoon when we should have been working, scouring nearby Pennsylvania towns vainly for a copy. Eventually, I made a frantic trip to Washington on a day when a blizzard was forecast, and purchased a copy there. (Marboro Books remaindered this volume two months later.) This crisis became less critical when the editor developed an interest in golf and the sports editor talked a country club pro into giving us a discount on items to go with the hobby. The annual turmoil disappeared altogether when the change in ownership brought a change in editor. The new one wasn't the kind for whom a staff buys a Christmas gift.

I usually got stuck with another semi-task, that of getting a front page picture or two suitable to the season. We tried to set up at least two of them, one at the start of the main shopping season at the start of nighttime hours for downtown stores, and another for the Christmas Eve edition. Sometimes it was easy, like the year when a remarkably pretty girl in high school came to my attention: her name, Carol Noel. Other times, it was hectic, such as the year when we set up arrangements for a small girl to be hanging up her stocking at a fireplace, and ended up with enough relatives, advisors, and props to reshoot the burning of Atlanta in Gone with the Wind. I was rather proud of the year I double exposed a dime store sleigh and Santa and a daytime shot of downtown Hagerstown taken with a deep red filter, to fake a picture of Santa soaring through the nighttime sky on Christmas Eve. There was only one rule for these pictures: they must be non-commercial. One year, I posed a blonde girl with overdeveloped breasts against a multitude of tree balls in a store. Neither I, nor the editor, nor the man who made the engraving, nor the people in the composing room when the page was being made up, noticed the sign that appeared as plain as day as soon as the picture was published: "McCrory's", it said, accurately but disastrously.

Somewhere along the line, we stopped thinking up Christmas pictures and contented ourselves with the dreary photographic cliches of pictures of shoppers walking down the street. We also got rid of the office drinking, a change that made me happy. We used to have a few heavy drinkers on the staff, and as Christmas came closer, it became increasingly difficult to make sense of their news stories and headlines. One of these men invariably took a week's vacation between Christmas and New Year's, so it didn't matter to him how sodden he had become by the time of the Christmas Eve edition. The company tried to solve things by paying for a Christmas party in the city's best hotel, but it never repeated the experiment, upon the hotel's urgent instructions. Then came an effort to confine the overt display of bottles to the photographic department, but invariably, an absent-minded clergyman who had forgotten to submit the photograph of his soloists for the Christmas music would decide to rush his picture direct to the photographic department, hopeful of

absolution for his deadline transgressions, and his appearance had much the same effect that the ghost of Christmas Past had on Scrooge.

Last year, I became desperate to find a topic for a newspaper column. As usual during such emergencies, I rewrote from memory a fanzine article. This time, it was the contribution to a Shaggy Christmas supplement six or eight years ago, in which was recounted the rise and fall of Harry Feigley's Christmas display. The newspaper version was somewhat less morbid in tone than the fanzine article and was tailored for local consumption in such ways as a concluding lament that such an elaborate exhibition should be so irretrievably vanished that not even a picture remained. The day after the column appeared, I got a telephone call directly from the dead past. It was Harry Feigley's widow. I'd assumed her to be a goner, for he'd been an old man when he died perhaps fifteen years ago. But she was alive, living alone in a little house, almost blind, poverty-stricken, and indigent. I'd failed to give her credit for owning a picture of the underground. Naturally, I grabbed a camera and scooted up to her home to copy that picture for the good of my own nostalgia. Mrs. Feigley had not one but two pictures. One showed the Christmas display in a somewhat more primitive form than I remembered it. She estimated that it had been taken about 1920, when it was still possible to find room for a camera in the vicinity of the all-engulfing assemblage of miniature trains, tiny villages, illuminated churches with sound effects, real trees, and boxes for financial contributions. The other picture showed Harry at a complex electrical control board. I tried to convince myself that this was where he contrived the son-et-lumiere portion of his underground, but my id stubbornly insisted that it was really the way things were in the Maryland Theater, where he was electrician and handled stage lights when there was vaudeville. Mrs. Feigley revealed to me just how the Christmas exhibition had ended its days. Someone had purchased his little doll hospital in the best residential section of Hagerstown, to raze and construct there an apartment house more in keeping with the glories of the surrounding estates. "He wouldn't go and he wouldn't go, and finally they started to tear down the house around him," the widow reminisced. Harry was beginning his fatal illness around this time. "I couldn't keep those things," she told me, with an apologetic look at the underground photograph. "I had to help finish this house when I finally got him to move into it. A son by my first marriage bought one train set, I remember. He gave me fifty dollars more than I asked for it." Mrs. Feigley corrected another flaw in my journalism. I had told about the time when Harry got too busy in the course of the year's alterations to his display to take out the old trees and put in new ones, simply reducing the amount of light in the corners where they stood the next Christmas. "They weren't just a year old," she told me. "They got to be five years old." Mrs. Feigley had a couple of pieces of mail to show me. One was a letter that she'd written to a son at a hotel in the midwest where he'd been staying. It had been returned. He wasn't there any longer and he'd left no forwarding address. She was pretty sure he was either too sick to see to his mail, or dead. The other letter was a getwell card for Harry, postmarked 1950. The card ran to about twenty-four pages and I knew before I looked for a signature who had sent it. My father was the only person in Hagerstown who knew the source of those complicated cards for cheering up the sick. I

left with the latent images of the pictures copied on the film in my camera, convinced that all the good things and fine people of the world were either dead or dying this Christmas.

Christmas comes gradually to Hagerstown. If I happen to play during the summer my recording of Massenet's Werther, that's the real start of it, because the opera begins with a July rehearsal of a Christmas carol, the best possible answer to the people who think that it's just in recent years we'd been getting ready for yule too soon. But things don't really get hectic in the Christmas sense in Hagerstown until the start of August. The first Christmas cards that really count go on display in the window of the gift store in Long Meadow Shopping Center the first week in August. The previous week, Christmas cards have been among the offerings at the annual summertime bargain sale weekend, but everyone considers them the final Christmas merchandise of the previous December, rather than a forerunner of the Advent to come. Newberry's puts tree ornaments out in the open toward the end of the month, but doesn't offer for sale the new model trees until September. Normally, it's rather late in August when I start to worry about gift buying. The first person to worry about is Vic Arnold, a non-fan British tape correspondent with whom I've struck up a pretty good friendship. He cheats a little by subscribing each year to a magazine in my name, but he doesn't like to read so I must try to think of something new that would please a middle-aged man I've never met. It is also near the end of August when I decide that this year I'm definitely going to get to Washington and buy my cards at the National Gallery. Everyone seemed to like them when I did it a dozen years ago, and I still haven't succeeded in making the trip in any succeeding year. The Miles Kimball Christmas card catalog always arrives on August 15 and makes me feel like the last single man on earth, because almost all the designs are tied in with a listing of the names of an entire family that is sending them.

Last year, the Miles Kimball emotion was neatly counterbalanced by the arrival of a toy catalog from Creative Playthings, Inc., of Princeton, New Jersey. I'm not sure how I got on their mailing list, unless it's now generally known that I'm entering my second childhood. (It probably won't be as successful as my first childhood, but we won't go into that now.) I could always remind myself that maybe someone still thinks I'm destined to help perpetuate the race and sent me this as a gentle hint that it's getting late if I'm to show myself worthy of that confidence. Whatever the cause of its coming, the catalog was quite useful in the sense that it allowed me to stare as long as I wished at toys, something I feel conspicuous doing in stores. The toy catalog also made me realize how hard it must be for a parent to purchase a doll with the right intention nowadays. The pages devoted to dolls have such headings as "dolls for acting out inner feelings", "doll play, a household to manage", and "doll house play for exploring kinship". I'm not quite sure which category best fits Petit Frere. He's pictured in full cover but wearing a diaper on the back page. On an inside page, he's pictured in black and white, bottomless. He's described as a baby doll "with anatomically correct sex features.... The surprising fact is not that there is such a doll now, but rather that one has never been made before. The innate naturalness of small children, and their acceptance of body differences, is refreshing and healthy, and should be fostered, not inhibited, as a step toward development of healthy adult attitudes toward sex. We welcome Petit Frere; he

is sure to make a real contribution to furthering this end. Wears a cotton shirt, diapers, snap-on rubber pants." Petit Frere is listed as a 21-inch doll--I assume that this refers to his height--and costs 19.95. I hope that my failure to purchase from this firm doesn't cost my place on the mailing list. I want to see if this year, Creative Playthings offers a Petite Soeur to parents who are convinced that their small daughters won't grow up with the traditional types of impulses.

As Christmas approaches, I always line up an impressive array of intentions to do for sure this year the photographic things I have never gotten around to in the past. I've mentioned before in Horizons how impressed I am by Christmas colors. Even if they're intended for the most sordid commercial purposes, they're strong, intense, and free from the gray tinge that seems to have taken over the colors of home furnishings, garments, and houses. This year, without fail, I tell myself, I am positively going to take the biggest Christmas tree ball I can find into Public Square after the first snowstorm of winter, and shoot the business section of Hagerstown as reflected in it. I'm going to assemble a whole batch of color prints of Hagerstown and surroundings to send in a nice album to my old aunt in California, whose health makes it impossible ever again to see her native stamping grounds. I'm going to dust off my little movie camera, which can't expose automatically or use super-eight film cartridges or expose film by means of battery power or do anything else except take good movies, and I'm going to try some animation experiments with the new crop of Christmas cards. I'm going to shoot at least three rolls of 35 mm film on store windows in Washington, and this year for sure I'll get to New York City and see the Rockefeller Center display for myself. (A girl from Brooklyn came to work in my office in mid-1967, was so impressed by my enthusiasm over it that she made a special trip home just for the sake of going across to Manhattan and looking at it. She'd never seen it in the 22 years of her life in and around Brooklyn. I didn't get there.) And each year, most important of all, I'm going to keep my Christmas card list within reach all during the year, so I can enter into it the changes of address that can never be found when card-addressing comes. Life in fandom makes this a particularly awful thing to fail to do; the November Fantasy Amateur helps, but is useless for the superannuated old friends who have lost even the energy to stay in the organization or its waiting list.

Christmas card decisions are always difficult, aside from the address problem. Since I never manage to reach the National Gallery in time, I must buy them somewhere. Miles Kimball is in a rut, and in recent years I've usually purchased through the Montgomery Ward catalog, which offers quite nice cards unless you're allergic to large ones. I should explain that I am a firm believer in UNICEF cards. But I have a most unchristmassy procedure involving them. I give priority for UNICEF cards to all the people on my list who are opposed to foreign aid, tolerance, and abolition. The ardent bigots, Legionnaires, Wallacites, and capitalists get the UNICEF cards. Good people like most of those in fandom receive only what cards happen to be left over.

Fanac presents particularly severe Christmas card decisions. It's obviously impractical to send a card to everyone with whom I have some form of fanish contact during the year. How in the world should I decide whom to include and whom to skip on the card-mailing list? I hope that nobody in fandom thinks my decisions

result from some logical factor. I'm sure that I send cards to some fanish people who don't believe in sending cards, and I imagine that I offend some other fans by my failure to send them cards. Like many other aspects of Christmas, the card list grows without coherent reasons. This fan receives a card because he always sends one, the next guy is on the list because I put him there for unknown reasons a decade ago and it's unsafe to remove him after forgetting the reason for his presence; this fan must receive a card because he is one of my best friends in fandom, and that one must also receive a card because we've been in an armed truce that might shatter into hostilities over a simple thing like failure to exchange cards. A bunch of fans receive cards because they feel strongly about Christmas and another batch are still on the list because I've known them too long to omit this sole annual contact. But for every card I mail, I feel the pangs of conscience over five unsent cards and I wonder if it might not be better after all to splurge at the end of each year by remembering with a card each fan who has sent me a fanzine, written me a letter, spoken to me at a convention, asked when the fan history will be finished, or mentioned me in a fanzine item. I'd feel much better and I'm sure that hundreds of fans would acquire instantly the sense of guilt I'd just lost, worrying over the fact that they hadn't sent me a card.

I hope that Christmas cards will not be forgotten in that splendid future day when the presses begin to roll out the collected works of the finest fan writers of the middle 1900's. It would be terrible, if the Christmas cards in the form of personally created little booklets or mimeographed letters were overlooked, in the volumes devoted to Walter Willis, Archie Mercer, Dean Grennell, and a few other specialists in this particular form of fanac. It's fortunate that I'm not the tidy-minded, filing type of fan, because I'm sure that those rare creatures have terrible problems deciding where to put away these cards, among the Christmas cards or with the fanzines. Of course, a filthy pro did the most expensive card-creating. I acquired only three or four of Hugo Gernsback's yuletide spectaculars. He sent them to daily newspaper editors and copies fell into my hands only if I happened to be present when the mail was sorted or noticed one lying out in the open while nobody else was watching. I've never seen them advertised for sale, but a complete set of them must be a tremendous rarity.

Fans seem strangely uninterested in photographic Christmas cards, other than the standard subject matter, the whole family posed together looking at the camera. An official for the local power company has fans beat all hollow in this respect. One year he got a movie theater manager to spell out a yuletide message and the name of the sender in big letters on the marquee, photographed it, and created a sensation among everyone on his mailing list. He has more recently become bourgeois enough to resort to dressing up his son in outlandish costumes and using this as the photograph. My opinion of politicians isn't high, but I do admire Maryland's sixth district congressman for the taste with which he designs his Christmas cards. He usually finds some rare sketch by an early Maryland artist and adds to it a surpassingly brief message, one that may be the most succinct ever composed by a member of the House of Representatives. An old friend who lives on a farm a dozen miles from Hagerstown writes each year a lengthy letter to her friends and runs it off on the church mimeograph, and through this means, her friends get one precious annual peek into the unconven-

tional opinions and heretical thoughts of a middleaged woman who is the epitome of middle-class normality all the rest of the year.

When I was a small boy, I liked the Christmas hurryscurry so much that I deliberately delayed most of my obligations until Christmas Eve. This made it perfectly legal for me to dash madly about and encounter crises which I somehow felt were essential for proper enjoyment of the holiday. In more recent years, I've undergone a complete reversal of habits, and have sought to finish preparations several days in advance. It never works out that way, but the intent has succeeded in nourishing a healthy anxiety complex in this respect. The ultimate horror would be to have an issue of Horizons unstenciled on December 24. I try to start cutting stencils as soon as the November FAPA bundle has arrived, and every blessed year, I encounter the same surprise ending: mighty labors have enabled me to complete the stencils, wrap them, and take them to the post office, and as I walk up the building's steps, it occurs to me as it has occurred in the same situation at the same time ever since I've been farming out the mimeography: merciful heavens, here I've gone and sent off a batch of stencils right at the minute the mails are most jammed up with Christmas presents and everything is getting lost or damaged. I try to start addressing Christmas cards soon after the November Fantasy Amateur has arrived as a source of current addresses, but this task always bogs down because the business office at the newspaper is always late getting out the employe roster it publishes for help with card exchanging. I try to do my gift-buying early, but this frequently runs afoul of one relative who is in the habit of dropping hints about desires and doesn't let them fall until it's almost too late. The only thing that is deliberately put off until Christmas Eve itself is decorating the house. I don't believe in doing it early. My production is not of Bill Donahoe proportions. It consists mainly of finding somewhere to hang a batch of large balls that Corning Glass deals out, one per year, to a favorite reporter or two on each newspaper near its Greencastle and Martinsburg factories. Four years ago I bought a little illuminated village to place on the marble top stand in the parlor, and two years ago I purchased the cotton that will symbolize the snowy landscape where the village lies, but I haven't yet succeeded in getting it on exhibition.

Except when there's a severe blizzard, Christmas Eve always brings a visit from my grandmother. She is now 95, and in recent years, she has been using Christmas Eve to tell me some facts of life about the family. Apparently she thinks that I am now mature enough to know the things from which she kept me sheltered when I was in my twenties and thirties. Two years ago, she confided in me that she wasn't my grandfather's first wife. She hastened to explain that that wife had died before she met him, and she was happy to discover that this news didn't cause me to feel like a member of a broken family. Three years ago, she had admitted in the presence of not only me but also of two of her daughters that she had deliberately faked a crying jag on a celebrated occasion when she bought a pair of shoes for \$10 and then decided that she hadn't wanted to spend that much. Her tantrum had had its intended effect, that of inspiring a son to give her \$10. Last year, I was allowed to know that there had been a dramatic episode in her family life before my birth. My grandfather had come home drunk one night. I didn't know whether to laugh or bawl or simply go into equivocal hysterics as she related at length the manner in which several

friends had lured him into a lunch room to assist them with some songs. He was, honest to goodness, a barber and sang in amateur quartets long before barber shop quartet singing was commercialized. He rarely drank but the music apparently put him into a state of raptus. Meanwhile times were hard and most of his children were sick in bed with the flu, which apparently dated the episode late in the 1910's, and my teen-age mother sat herself down at the window to watch for his belated arrival and went into action as soon as she saw the situation. "She gave him a good shaking, and said, 'Don't you ever do that again,' and he didn't. He forgot to bring home the medicine, too." If some even more sensational scandal is unmasked this December 24th, I'll put out an extra for Horizons readers.

Even though Rick Sneary insists that nothing ever happens to me, quite a few past Christmases have failed to follow their placid traditional pattern. Two stand out in memory for reasons of personal physical problems. Christmas of 1943 saw me in bed with intestinal flu. It had caused me to faint for the first time in my life, it had caused me to miss a FAPA mailing for the last time in my life up to now, and it had given me stomach miseries that have not been duplicated since, thank goodness. Some of the gorier details of this Christmas will be found in an issue of Horizons a few years back when I told how the apparent failure of the holiday was transformed into glorious happiness at the last possible moment, when I got word that my boss had just dropped dead. Christmas of 1960 also saw me flat on my back, because at 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve I'd broken my hip. It was the first time I'd been a hospital patient, unless you count my arrival in this world, and between shots of morphine I was nauseated, frightened, resigned to being a cripple or pneumonia victim, and experiencing my first Christmas dinner that I'd received through a tube and a vein rather than through my mouth. A little later came the snowbound Christmas, which brought along a tremendous snowstorm, and I didn't see a familiar face all day except Miss Annie Chatkin, who somehow opened up the corner drugstore and gave me a calendar. There was a long-ago Christmas when my father almost went into orbit, because the landlord insisted on going into the cellar and repairing the furnace that morning. There was nothing exactly immoral or illegal about that procedure, but it was awfully hard to enjoy Christmas with an old man banging around in the cellar and pausing to listen to choice bits of conversation through the flimsy wooden floorboards. It must have been 1961 when Christmas morning saw me in such a secular state of mind. Someone on the previous evening had dropped a large bottle of mix on my sidewalk, in the middle of a cold wave. I rose the next morning to find the sidewalk, which I'd laboriously cleared of ice and snow the previous day, wearing a glacier of very slippery and tightly frozen mix, embedded in which were jagged fragments of the bottle. I had visions of someone slipping on it and slashing his jugular vein as he fell, hardly the best way to start a Christmas day.

But it's strange, the sort of things you remember about yuletides, incidents which hardly seemed worthy of notice as they occurred, but rooted themselves firmly in memory and have grown there into symbols of something or other. There was the late afternoon last December, two or three weeks before Christmas. I was having my evening meal at a drug store lunch counter, direct from the hands of a person who is not only my favorite waitress but also one

of the half-dozen completely unflawed persons I've ever encountered. At the nearby jewelry counter rose the whirring of the engraving tool used by the man who bobs up every holiday season to personalize bracelets and other trinkets purchased there. Goodness only knows what he does and where he stays the remainder of the year, but as Mae West once remarked in vaguely similar circumstances, goodness is hardly a part of this situation. "They ought to watch him with those high school kids," the dishwasher said. "He was talking to me," my waitress said. "I walk out of here for good if I have to put up with that." As it turned out, the dishwasher was the one who quit; he lives with his mother, spent no money except for two beers every Saturday night and his annual membership dues in a fire company, and is able to retire for months at a time after working a few weeks, living off his savings. My waitress continued to watch the jewelry man and the results he was obtaining with the high school girls and she was somehow reminded of her children's tree-trimming activities, previously that day. They'd spent hours putting on the ornaments, then had found it necessary to remove all the trimmings upon the discovery that they'd forgotten the lights, and after the lights were in place and the other ornaments went back on, they'd plugged the tree in, stretching the cord a little too tautly and the whole shebang had toppled and created a mess. I didn't worry too much about the danger that the engraver would be too successful, after that.

Or the small things that one encounters on television during the holidays. I don't watch too many programs that have been particularly designed for Christmas. But I did find enormous added delight in the Charlie Brown Christmas episode when I saw it for the second time with the special added quality of color which I couldn't view the first time around. The most enthralling three minutes of television designed for the holidays last year was ridiculously simple in nature. While the Nutcracker Suite overture was playing, cameras shot very close views of toys. Dolls' eyes that blinked, soldiers that strutted, the fuzzy animal that beat a drum, a train that came around a curve, and a dozen other commonplace toy actions were somehow transformed into absolute marvels of grace and rhythm. I suspect that producers should make more use of extreme closeups in all sorts of television programs: when something appears on the screen in life size or larger than life, there's an immediacy and a sense of reality that the finest, most imaginative composition and camera angles can't achieve when you have heads four inches high before your eyes.

Shown before Christmas but technically part of that season was the first depressing event of the holidays. Bess Myerson narrated one of the Thanksgiving Day parades, she appeared on the screen between bands and floats, and one of her buttons was open. Female acquaintances insisted that this was the way her suit was supposed to be worn, but I remained unconvinced. It meant for me the sinister first evidence of the eventual decline and fall of a previously impeccable personality. The Christmas season has a habit of inducing depression through such matters that seem, on the surface, to be minor. For instance, I get gloomy about ten days before Christmas, when the first evidence appears in a store of the eventual dismantling of decorations and gay yuletide colors. I can understand why the festive decorations must start to vanish before Christmas Day: it takes quite a while to remove them, most of the shopping which they are intended to promote is finished, windows must be prepared for January white sale merchandise, and so forth. But it's still unsettling to

watch a trivial initial activity, like removal of poinsettia from a barely visible light fixture, mushroom as the days pass into wholesale demolition of hangings, trimmings, signs, and all manner of other holiday evidences, until on Christmas Eve, windows are only half-decorated and some counters inside the store are already bare of all merchandise, awaiting the post-Christmas bargain junk that is being excavated from the basement storerooms. When this stage has been reached, I know the awful countdown that lies just ahead for me: After the New Year's Eve holiday, I face 150 days without a single break for a holiday in my working week, eighty or ninety of those days will have the opportunity to bring me down again with another fall on the ice, half of the awful chasm between the end of the World Series and the start of the exhibition games still remains, and my theoretic ability to take some time off for vacation in the January-through-May wasteland is rendered impotent by the fact that I invariably horde and nurse those three vacation weeks until late summer or autumn out of sheer miserliness and because of unwillingness to face year-ending months in which all vacation time has been used up. Worst of all, I know that around January 10, two or three stripped Christmas trees will be dumped into the small enclosed area at the end of my back yard, and I'll have to creep over the ice and snow, somehow persuade the gate to open amid the white obstacle, and risk a dislocation of my shaky hip as I haul those trees around to the front of the house where I can have someone pick them up.

There was a time, some years back, when I did some annual reading rituals just before Christmas. It was mostly Dickens: A Christmas Carol, the yuletide chapters from The Pickwick Papers, sometimes other short stories associated with the holidays. I've fallen out of that habit, but in its place has come a fetish involving records which must be played before December 25. Bach's Christmas Oratorio is one of the musts. I am not enormously fond of Bach's music, because most of the keyboard music seems much more fun to play than to hear and so much of the vocal music is overly long and entirely too inclined to whine and wail. But the first two-thirds of the Christmas Oratorio and some of the music that follows strike me as Bach as he should be: healthy, unneurotic religious music which seems to exist from the sheer joy of music-making, not as a demonstration of how many minor variants can be squeezed from a handful of unremarkable basic musical ideas. Since Amahl and the Night Visitors is no longer televised each and every Christmas, I feel it my duty to play the record, lest this nice little boy be forced to walk on crutches for the entire year to come. Somewhat more off the beaten track is a Musical Heritage Society disc entitled "A French Baroque Christmas". It contains music previously unrecorded by composers virtually unknown before the coming of lp records, but it's marvelously refreshing for its freedom from climaxes and complexity and Great Moments. I'm also nervous until I've found a chance to play a little Decca ten-incher which contains a cycle of Christmas songs by Peter Cornelius. I usually end on a jarring note, Werther. If I save it until just before Christmas, the unsatisfactory Christmas Eve activities of its hero seem quite in accord with the way I'm beginning to feel about this time. I didn't get to hear the last act until Easter during the interruption imposed by my first broken hip. Sometimes, when there's plenty of record-listening time, I add to this list Messiah; but normally, the music from it has been too prevalent on the radio to make me really anxious to hear it again on discs.

Last year, Advent was particularly trying. Most of it was spent

amid the nuisance, pain, and forebodings of a headache cycle. Headaches have been a nuisance all my life, but a special form of headaches is restricted to these cycles. Between cycles, headaches are the result of tension or fatigue or minor physical problems. They usually go away without complaining, upon application of sleep or Excedrin. But the cycles are different. The pain is concentrated, on one side of the head and behind one eye. It begins almost audibly, quite suddenly, increases in severity to a peak within twenty minutes or so, and doesn't begin to subside for a couple of hours. It takes two or three hours to break up completely. During the time of a headache cycle, the attacks come at the rate of one or two per day, indiscriminately as far as time is concerned, sometimes striking while I'm asleep and waking me only after the pain has become quite severe. My ability to do the simplest physical actions is badly impaired while one of these cycle headaches is proceeding, and any serious thinking is out of the question. Worst of all, the pain is totally unbearable when I lie down; it's necessary to sit or stand to avoid howling like an animal. I've had four of these cycles in the past ten years. Each cycle has lasted two or three months, beginning abruptly and ending as fast, without any decrease in frequency of attacks or lessening in their severity. I don't think I've done a very good job of convincing people how these things affect me, mainly because I continue my normal activities through severe non-cycle headaches, and people seem unable to understand that these knock me out. What causes them? My doctor isn't sure. They fit quite well most ingredients in classic severe migraine, but migraine doesn't normally come and go in this manner, failing to be active for a year or two at a time. Sinus is a possibility, but the cycles pay no attention to humidity, temperature, or my sleeping-waking cycles. I'm not afraid to think that they might be psychosomatic, but I've been unable to find any correlation between personal problems and their coming and going. The first cycle convinced me that I had a brain tumor, and I've thought about that again with each successive cycle. During this last cycle, I made a great discovery. If at the very beginning of an attack I could press hard with my right thumb on the point where my upper nose ridge meets the right eye socket, I sometimes could lessen considerably the pain and duration of that attack. But my doctor decided that I was simply paralyzing a nerve, not getting to the cause of the trouble. He muttered for a while about surgery to cut the nerve. I survived with the help of small green pills which I could get only on his prescription. I don't know what's in them, but they worked where all other painkillers failed. But they were useless if I couldn't take them within three minutes of an attack's onset, which meant that I had to suffer through the headaches which began in my sleep. (Once they seemed to do no good and I couldn't understand why until about an hour later, I realized one had stuck in my throat and hadn't been wholly swallowed yet; I was so miserable that I just hadn't realized it was sticking there.) You can easily guess how a cycle can smash up my normal habits. I manage to continue working without taking sick leave, but I can be hors de combat for a couple hours at unknown intervals, then must rush like mad to catch up when I'm just starting to feel better. An attack in early morning can destroy a night's rest; by the time it's subsided, it's time to get up. I don't dare drive anywhere on interstate highways, since parking on their shoulders is frowned upon, and it's impossible to drive safely when one of these headaches strikes. Eating out, as I do, is another big

trouble, for an attack that arrives just when I'm served will make the food nauseate me before I'm finished. There's no point in trying to go to the movies, or using public transportation for a long journey while a cycle is in progress. Besides inhibiting thought processes, these attacks create a mood of mental despondency that lasts longer than the actual pain. Last year, I plunged into one of these cycles in November, and it didn't go away until my last week of vacation was ended in early December. Most memories of that time involve Christmas cards--starting to address some as an attack was subsiding, or interrupting the process at the first twinges behind that eye. Up to now, there have been about two years between cycles, give or take six months. Maybe pain center transplants will be obtainable by the time the next one comes along.

Fortunately, I was well again in time for my birthday. A person born just before Christmas involuntarily makes a lot of relatives ashamed of themselves. Even as a little boy, I remember uncles and aunts telling me, as they gave me a birthday gift, that it also represented my Christmas gift, because of course a birthday so close to Christmas should mean just one combined big gift, ha ha. It was a pious fraud through which all the relatives and I saw with equal ease, but in my considerable maturity, I find the same thing continuing to occur. Fortunately, a few relatives realize that it is against the old school spirit and all that. One cousin was particularly ingenious last year, giving me two books, one for birthday and the other for Christmas. They were from the collection of Kenneth Stottlemeyer, which involved one of the rare instances in which I deliberately suppressed a news story. Kenneth was an elderly local man of modest means who had an unusual hobby: first editions signed by the authors. I'm too ignorant about mundane book collecting to know exactly how advanced and valuable his collection may have been. But he kept quite silent about it, living in partial seclusion and doing his bookhunting in big, distant cities. Repeatedly, this or that acquaintance would urge me to interview this hobbyist and write him up for the newspaper. I never even approached Stottlemeyer about it. I sensed that he was no more anxious to publicize his hobby among this city's boobs than I am to have people know that I publish fanzines and once belonged to the Futurian Federation of the World. I hope the collector was content with my failure to bring him into local prominence, because he died before I'd mentioned the topic to him. His sister, fortunately, decided against a public auction of his effects. She advertised a private sale one weekend, then disposed of the unsold volumes to a local book dealer. That's where my cousin bought my Christmas and birthday gifts, one of which was Christopher Morley's John Mistletoe. It was ideal for the season and my general state of mind. I doubt that many people read Christopher Morley these days. There hasn't been any mention of him in fanzines, I suppose, since I made feeble efforts to interest people in Thunder on the Left, a fantasy or fable or something in which children inhabit adult bodies. His books are terribly deficient in overt social significance, verbal pyrotechnics, and the tension that forces you to read some books to the end before you go to bed. But he was supremely civilized as a writer, and behind his books there always is a half-visible something peering cautiously around the binding, as if it really weren't anxious to be seen because it doesn't really want you to hunt out

the more obscure living qualities back of the mild superficial structure. John Mistletoe is a badly disguised autobiographical work which nobody could possibly catalog once and for all as either a set of memoirs or a book of short stories or a journal or any other precise type of work. I've been leafing through it for the past quarter-hour, trying to find a paragraph that will convey the whole flavor and sentiment, and it's useless. At least I can violate the copyright law long enough to give a sample of the style:

"I have looked back over some of Mistletoe's notebooks, and I find that he has learned very little in twenty years, about literature anyhow, that they didn't tell him then, or try to tell him. I get a twinge of wistful amusement in some of the old memoranda: as for instance when the poor young scholiast, alongside the purplest stanza of the Eve of Saint Agnes, set innocently down the notation that 'shielded scutcheon' was an example of 'pleonasm'. That, entered probably by dictation, was a mere childishness of pedantry, but every child is properly a pedant. The only danger is in his remaining so. You must start him off hunting for rhetorical oddities, which may be just as much fun as parlor games; perhaps eventually among pleonasms or metonymies he may become aware of what lies behind rhetoric, the burning human mind. It would be wrong to suppose that because he jotted down such naivetes on the margin he did not feel the thrill of Keats. In fact a 75-cent Keats bought from John Wanamaker--not from Leary, because he wanted one utterly his own, with no reminiscence of any previous reader--has been one of the most important things that ever happened to him. To this day he remains one of the few who can tell you offhand what day of the year is Saint Agnes' Eve. The very pages of that poem are loose in the book because he used to read it in bed and fall asleep on it. We were lucky at Haverford in having in the Roberts Autograph Collection one of the most beautiful and terrible of Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne. I doubt if many of the boys were enough interested to go and look at it, but I know one who did. He can still call to mind the actual handwriting of those words at the bottom of the sheet, describing his love. 'Tis richer than an Argosy of Pearles.'"

When in doubt, give a shirt is a tested maxim of both birthday and Christmas gift buying. I wish I knew what element in my personality causes people to think of me as one whose knuckles get dusty as he walks along a dirt road. Both my grandmother and my aunt in California invariably purchase for me shirts with sleeves of awe-inspiring length. Floating just out of reach of my comprehension is a procedure by which I could convert these shirts into lightweight trousers with unusually generous cuffs, if only I could ascertain the proper way in which to twist or fold the armpit areas. The other possibility is to find a laundress who knows how to wash shirts so that only the sleeves will shrink, and tell her to scrub incessantly. Socks are another standby in the gift boxes I open on these festive occasions. I suffer from lack of flesh on my feet that is even more extreme than the scant layer of flesh supplied to the other parts of my body. This is quite hard on socks, because only the sturdiest will withstand the temptation to fall instantly into shreds, apparently intimidated by the knowledge that sharp-edged bones are lurking so intimately close under that deceptively smooth layer of skin. There is no apparent rhyme or reason in why some socks wear well and others don't. Nylon, rayon, wool, every manner of halfbreed and hybrid matings of various combinations of cloth are

all equal in the eye of the law which says that my feet shall destroy some socks and shall live in compatible happiness in the embrace of others. This coming Christmas, if I survive until it, should be kinder to socks in one respect. I've finally disposed of a callus that had afflicted the sole of my left foot since 1961. I created it soon after I resumed walking, upon recovery from the first broken hip. I went to New York to celebrate, and intoxicated by the restored ability to get around without wheelchairs and crutches, I walked one morning from Madison Square Garden to the Village. I experienced a sense of triumph and a sensation of a blister on the left foot. The muscles had recuperated faster than the flesh had resumed its normal toughness, and from that blister evolved a callus that had waxed and waned in the years that followed. This spring, it suddenly started to turn black and this frightened me. Dr. Scholl did a good business with me for a while, and three months' use of moleskin, salves, ring-like pads, and other simples produced the great day when it finally came out by the roots, leaving nothing worse than slightly roughened skin behind. I hope it doesn't take as long to get rid of the nagging backache that comes and goes ever since I fell down the Hagerstown Junior College campus a year ago, but the backache, at least, doesn't tempt socks to get holes the first time they're worn.

And what I am to buy people is a constant worry. If I'm faint of spirit and ready to take the coward's way out as Christmas approaches, I'm apt to do it the easy way and write an order to The Wisconsin Cheeseman for something or other to be sent to most of the people on my list. But this is cheating and if the gift is perishable, it creates storage problems for the recipients who will pick up their gifts at my home. The cleaning woman is the only easy person on the list: she likes money and gets it. One relative is very difficult, because circumstances frequently prevent me from giving her the gift until February or March; therefore, it can't be seasonal or something that might need to be exchanged. My grandmother is the most complicated buying problem. At 95, she's no longer capable of using some kinds of gifts. Worse yet, I dare not be too ingenious, because her daughters also have a buying problem and they get furious with me if I think of something different and practical that they've overlooked. I was in disgrace for months, the time I bought her a batch of unbreakable dinnerware. She'd been getting upset because she'd been breaking dishes and one of those inexplicable contagious stupidities had forced all of us to forget that not all types of plates and saucers crack when dropped. I came out of the fog first, and you'd think I'd committed treason on the high seas in the middle of a mutiny. One year, I decided to let people buy their own gifts and gave most of them gift certificates from a downtown department store. But I bought the certificates several weeks before Christmas, just before the store's financial condition became precarious. Christmas shoppers riddled its stocks of merchandise and the management didn't dare replenish stocks until they could be sure of staying in business. I sat out those final pre-Christmas days in growing certainty that the gift certificates would entitle my friends and relatives to nothing more practical than elevator cables, counters, and empty cash registers.

I used to keep a gift list, like the Christmas card list, to prevent all danger of missing someone. The list became too melancholy to be kept up. The number of names for whom I no longer purchased gifts because of death grew much faster than the names of

those recently added to the list. It's also necessary to face up to the probability that half of the remaining names would be gone from the list, if it still existed, within a few more years: the aunts and uncles have now climbed into their seventies and eighties, and even the neighbors are getting awfully old. Dropouts are all three cousins who were about my age and with whom I was frequently compared disdainfully by various aunts and uncles, for my failure to look as healthy or seek riches or plunge into the social whirl as they did. One of the cousins died young, another's whereabouts are unknown after a broken marriage and a history of mental troubles that kept her going in and out of institutions, and the third gave up efforts to earn a living and is letting his wife support both him and their five children.

When I was very young, Christmas was quite a big production in my family. It was a time when personalities changed temporarily, money somehow appeared out of nowhere, and the most ordinary things like a snowstorm took on a monumental significance. I recommend hard efforts to obtain this outlook on Christmas to anyone who wants a lift without the use of drugs. I can't help comparing my childhood with the kind of Christmases that today's tots experience. The difference in toys, for instance. It must be inhibiting for today's child to open a gift package on Christmas morning and find therein a toy so poorly manufactured of fragile plastic that he knows it will break the first time it is dropped or stepped on. Apparently, all the metal is being reserved today for beer cans, because they are the only objects that have the permanence and solidity that once belonged to such objects as automobiles and toys. When you received a Lionel train for Christmas in the 1930's, you grunted. It was almost as heavy as a solid lump of lead. A standard gauge locomotive must have weighed ten pounds or more, and the cars it pulled had to be equally sturdy to hold the tracks on the curves when drawn by such powerful engines. Guns were made of real metal which could be polished, and kids had to be careful about slugging other kids over the heads when reenacting cowboy movies, because those weapons were quite capable of splitting a skull open. Is it my imagination, or did the chemistry sets use tiny wooden containers to hold the chemicals? Once I received for Christmas an electricity experiment kit. It must have been assembled from surplus items. I could barely lift an electromagnet which developed voltage in accordance with the rapidity with which you turned the handle; I don't know how great its potential may have been, but everyone who tried to hang on got scared before the thing was rotating faster than a leisurely pace, and another portion of the kit, so help me, featured everything you needed for building an arclight.

But the sturdy toys are gone. So is the municipal tree that always stood in Hagerstown's center square. The State Roads Commission decided that it interfered with traffic, then proceeded to construct death traps at several highway intersections around Hagerstown in the form of dividers that appear out of nowhere in the middle of a road for cars to crash into. Gone are the all-night radio programs that sought contributions for the poor; such giving would interfere with organizational charities, I suppose. Only one of the once numerous Christmas parties for neighborhood youngsters is still held in Hagerstown; there was a time when every fire company gave one. The best toyland is extinct. It lived, surprisingly, in a hardware store where toys were only a sideline. The store went wholesale. Gone is the thrill of receiving a final stack of Christ-

mas cards at 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve, now that the Post Office Department tries to dramatize its finance problems by refusing to do much about holiday mail on December 24.

So much has changed that I wonder why I still pay attention to Christmas. I ignore Hallowe'en, once almost as climactic a holiday to me, to the extent of going to the movies on trick or treat night and staying home during the big parade. Easter is so meaningless to me that I find myself hating the task of buying flowers for several persons who would be hurt if I didn't do it. There's the obvious point that I can believe in birth, while I have my doubts about witches and am quite unconvinced of the necessity for a physical resurrection. There might be a clue in there somewhere. I'm not religious in the sense of holding the beliefs common to the members of any religious denominations. But I'm a believer in the probability of conditions elsewhere in the universe or transcending time that might possess most of the attributes which fundamentalists ascribe to their deities. Christmas is a good enough combination of the sacred and the secular to fit into such convictions as I have about some form of life-after death other than that promised from pulpits. It's also a tenacious holiday which changes endlessly in details but seems quite tough in the basics. Many other things that I love may quite possibly vanish within a decade or two as Madison Avenue and the tastes of the general public affect them, but I think it's safe to trust that there will be Christmas trees, the familiar carols, and a partial truce to human nastiness in late December for the rest of my lifetime. It's a convenient means for getting myself out of the rut in which my way of life keeps me most of the year. On the whole, most Christmases have cheered me up during the inevitable comparison between this one and the last one; as the most conspicuous time of change in general activities for everyone, it's impossible to resist the temptation to figure out if you're financially better off this Christmas than the last one, if you've come through another year without damage to your eyesight and hearing, if you've plodded through 365 days without wrecking another person's life, and there's a sense of triumph if the arrival of a new Christmas is accompanied by realization that by golly, here's another year gone and I can still walk down the street as long as I wish without ducking into a doorway to avoid someone, because I'm not sufficiently afraid of anyone or too great an enemy of anyone to want to avoid him.

I wish I could again look at Christmas as I did as a small Lutheran boy in the first grade of a Catholic parochial school, slightly scared and badly mixed up over the differences and similarities of religion until the day the first grade acquired its creche and I was chosen to explain to all the grownup visitors the role played in the scene by each of the humans, animals, and supernatural beings. I've been through too much to feel that kind of pride in myself again. But I'd like to think that the holiday still manages to tell me a somewhat similar lesson about the way people and things are different while they're the same, good as well as bad, material at the same time that they're spiritual, capable of showing themselves more human for at least a few days out of the year toward at least a handful of their friends and acquaintances. And just as I can't remember my first Christmas, I can be fairly sure that I won't be aware of the fact that one of these Christmases will be my last one. It's bad to know I'll never be 21 again; it would be unbearable to know these were my last yule gifts.