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Horizons begins at this point its vital share in the nation's bi-centennial observance. I would do more in this connection, if I weren't depressed by the realization that Horizons has been in existence for more than one-sixth of the entire life of this nation. Wearily, then, I calculate that this is volume 37, number 2, FAPA number 139, and whole number 145. Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., does most of the writing and the Coulsons do all the publishing. It's the February, 1976, issue that has caused all the foregoing.

### In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: I didn't vote on the ballot included in the August mailing, the first time I can remember failing to exercise my franchise. For one thing, I didn't consider the election valid, because I don't think we've had a 1974 election as yet. For another, I saw no reason to believe that the teller's report would be accepted, since the teller's report was ignored in 1974. Moreover, the 1975 ballot is defective, carrying two sections which don't belong there but on the egoboo poll. Besides, it is an unfair ballot for the lack of any place to cast write-in votes for vice president or official editor. Finally, the address on the other side of the ballot is wrong, increasing my suspicion that the entire thing is some kind of a joke. Maybe: If anyone should compile a volume of fannish bloopers, the misprint in the fifth line of the second column on page seven should qualify without even trying hard. Elsewhere in Marion's article, it runs in my mind that Ed Hamilton was also referred to as the universe wrecker, because he seldom stopped with just one planet or two in the climaxes of his early fiction. ' ' I haven't read any of the Harlequin fantasies so I don't know how accurate Irvin's estimate of their quality may be. But wouldn't "about half looked like the same miserable hackwork by otherwise known 'names' of sf writing" be a statement applicable to almost any paperback firm's fantasy output, a rare special series or two excluded? ' ' I really must start cutting these mailing comments soon after reading the publications, because my marginal notes are giving me trouble, two or three months later. Atop the last column of the last page of Barry Eysman's article on Swann I scribbled "Why not say it?" On the last page of the Bradley article, I wrote "Daily" and drew a line which goes to the first word of the first sentence which begins in the second column. Maybe someone else out there can figure out what I meant. It's beyond my declining powers. The Hog on Ice: I wonder how many things Heller said about his intentions really represent a deliberate planning, and how many are merely his analysis after the fact of why he did such things. I suspect that most literary creativity results from intuition and inspiration which is mostly out of control of the rational, thinking part of the mind. Otherwise, why wouldn't every good author manage to write one masterpiece after another, instead of falling so often into an alternation between good stories and duds? Sambo: I ran across a reference somewhere to an apparent competitor of the Tulsa production of The Drunkard for longevity. Apparently there's an Agatha Christie play which has been performed continuously for something like 21 years somewhere in London. ' ' Richard Shaver might like to hear about the 18th Street house's plumbing mysteries. Someone long ago seems to have accidentally tapped a dero soda fountain or



something. I Watched &c: The Declaration of Independence says two things about the overthrow of government, only one of which is mentioned here. That document does indeed recommend withdrawing from the existing government when it is trying to create "absolute despotism" but it also warns against doing it "for light and transient causes". The reasons currently being advanced for revolution impress me as coming closer to the latter category than to the former. "People who take themselves too seriously in essentially a hobby are worthy of a long study to see why they are so aberrant." Isn't that basically a recommendation to take a serious attitude toward the people who you don't think should be taking a serious attitude in fandom? What harm does it do any of us if some fans write and talk in a stodgy style, prefer to discuss science fiction rather than fandom, and refrain from shooting down the more faanish fans? "Policemen I've known are much more intelligent than the robbers I've known. Police fail to catch robbers so often because there aren't enough police compared with the quantity of robbers, because the Supreme Court has made it ten times more difficult to bring a suspect to trial than it used to be, because so many members of the public won't inform authorities when they see or hear something that might lead to apprehension of robbers in this anti-authority age, because police are bogged down with so many trivial and red tape-type obligations that there isn't much manpower to spare for stakeouts or the thorough kind of investigation of a robbery that a sensation murder would get. Ultimate South: I suspect that many title changes occur because there are too many people working for publishers and some of them try to justify their employment by doing things like changing titles and meddling with the writer's sentences, just to be doing something. Of course, in the particular instance of the Sheckley book, the belated change of title might have been the publisher's effort to sell copies to people who already owned the book, under the theory that a new title might deceive them into purchasing it without examining the titles of the stories inside. Gemini: Ingenuity in support of a rural mailbox is an old game around here. Offhand, I can think of such examples as a box atop a batch of large links welded together in zigzag manner so it looks as if it could never remain upright, a service station's imitation of an advertising figure with the mailbox as its head, and an enormous milkcan-type creation serving as the post. "It's hard to believe that there is still so much research into HPL uncompleted, much less unpublished. How much longer will it be until the well finally dries up? "For every example of a person unjustly imprisoned, there are numerous cases of the opposite situation. Two cases that have turned up in recent months at the Maryland Correctional Training Center, three or four miles from Hagerstown, might serve as samples. This is supposed to be a place where prisoners nearing their parole can be prepared for the transition back to freedom. A few weeks back, Thomas F. Dorman, who was on the FBI's list of the ten most-wanted criminals a while back, then was convicted in 1968 of armed robbery and kidnapping, vanished while engaging in a work release program. He had been sentenced to 45 years, and apparently was to be released after only seven or eight years in prison. A bit later, Thomas Hadder, who had been convicted of the first degree murder of a policeman, also walked away from a work detail there. I don't have his length of sentence or how long he had been imprisoned, but he's only 34 so he couldn't have been there



decade after decade. The escapes aren't as important as the fact that men convicted of the most serious types of crimes are being paroled soon enough to return to their old gangs, armed with additional contacts and techniques which they'd acquired from other inmates while serving time. I'm not in the least anxious to find myself in prison for a crime I didn't commit. But mistakes are inevitable in administering justice, just as they occur in every other phase of life. It doesn't help the fellow who was the victim of mistaken identity when the prison system dumps back onto the streets the worst sort of genuine criminals while they're still in the prime of life. The Rambling Fap: It's not just the private press books of the 1940's and 1950's with their small editions that are bringing big prices. A lot of paperbacks from the same period which had enormous editions aren't far behind them, financially. I've seen some first editions of the earliest Ballantine science fiction paperbacks offered for \$8 and \$10 apiece. For the first time in my life, I've been buying some duplicate paperbacks at flea markets and garage sales, where they normally cost no more than a dime or two apiece. This happy situation will end the day someone publishes a generally circulated price list of science fiction and fantasy books and magazines like the guides to comic books. I'm not selling now, feeling I might want to use the duplicates someday for trading material or I might encounter circumstances which will make the money they'd bring vital to me. '' Goofs in newspapers seem to be increasing everywhere. The local dailies went so far one day as to publish a coupon on which readers were invited to jot down the corrections they felt were needed in the day's news stories and mail it to the editor. '' Gregg's long term as official editor almost created a major goof of my own. It has been so long since the official editor retired that I'd forgotten when the change takes place. I'd written to Buck Coulson, telling him to send the November Horizons to Gregg as usual, and I was within three feet of the box where I intended to mail that letter before I started to wonder if I was right. I carried the letter back home, looked up the constitution and discovered that the official editor doesn't put out one more mailing after the voting, after all. Three-Five-Zero-Zero: Isn't it necessary to find someone with pull in order to start halfway up the ladder or higher in any profession? '' And I wonder how many other female leads Jerry has seen in professional productions of Pygmalion, against whom he can compare Wendy Hiller. Philistine Quarterly: "Persondatory" still sounds sexually biased to me. I would feel much safer if I heard the feminist call it "perchildatortory". '' I wouldn't mind being forced to tip my hat to policemen if that requirement somehow produced an improvement in the crime situation. Matter of fact, the requirement might even make Don feel safer around policemen. I was always taught to tip my hat to ladies, and after doing it all these years, I keep reading about how oppressed and downtrodden those same ladies are. I also take off my hat when I go into church buildings, and from all appearances, religion's hold on the people of this nation is weakening in spite of my subservience to this custom. '' The ERB centennial dominated the only wire service story I saw on the NASFIC. In fact, the average reader might have had difficulty learning from that news story that it was a science fiction convention of a general sort. Star Dreamer Gazette: These old recipes demonstrate the area where the metric system will have its most difficult times in the years to come. When cooks finally become aware of the fact



that they are expected to throw away all their spoons, cups and other measuring devices, then apply a conversion table to the written or remembered quantities in all the recipes in existence, a lot of unwatched pots will boil over while they are howling. Descant: I'm an all-out coward but I never mind the New York City subway system. Maybe I'd go back into character if I ever did some riding on it at advanced hours of the night; somehow I never seem to get on except in the midst of the rush hours. ' ' It's amazing, how Discon reports continue to arrive, so long after that event. It must have been the best-chronicled worldcon of the 1970's so far and there really wasn't anything about it that seems destined to have inspired this outpouring of conreports, other than the exceptional attendance which was just what has been happening at worldcons and was only a little more so. ' ' Obviously I was in bad luck in one respect. Here is a description of first-rate piano playing in the hotel. The only time I heard a piano in action at the Discon, the fellow was punching out the first two or three sections of Hanon's Virtuoso Pianist, the kind of five-finger exercises that Saint-Saens parodied so nicely. Horizons: There was a sequel to the situation which prevented sheriff's deputies from being hired to provide protection during their off-duty hours. The annual county fair, deprived of this source of officers, arranged with the Hagerstown police department to provide men on the same basis. Then the mayor told the fair board that the city needs some land owned by the fair corporation for sewer extensions, and the fair board agreed to turn two lots over to the city instead of paying the salaries of the policemen. When the time came to complete legal formalities, the mayor said he'd changed his mind and he wanted three lots instead of two. The fair board president lost his temper completely at this point, the mayor ordered the policemen withdrawn from the fair grounds, and there were thousands of people wandering around a big fair without a smidgin of control. So back came the sheriff's deputies, the county having agreed to furnish their services to non-profit events like the fair as part of their regular working day. ' ' And I should have pointed out earlier that these comments involve the August mailing, in case I've temporally disoriented anyone. Four weeks after the deadline for the November mailing, it still hasn't arrived in Hagerstown. Erg: Research into cover artists on paperbacks strikes me as the most urgently needed sercon project. The only way to get this information on hundreds of books is by querying publishers, editors, and artists. If the job is put off too long, some of those people will be dead and others will be impossible to find, and some bibliographic information will be inaccessible for evermore. ' ' "Franking" in the mundane sense means mostly sending something through the mails without postage legally. Congressmen can do it and servicemen were permitted to do the same thing in World War Two. In FAPA, someone started to use the term when official editors developed the habit of including things in FAPA mailings which the constitution prevented them from including because they weren't the work of members. Such items were listed as "franked" by one member or another who had sent them in or who knew the writer or the publisher. ' ' I don't use illustrations in Horizons because I want the magazine to be as much a personalzine as possible and I can't draw. ' ' I still don't see how Asimov's Life Bailey stories fit into the three laws of robotics. The robot who helps to find a murderer is bringing harm to a human being, the



punishment which the murderer may incur. Unless the robot is psychic enough to foresee that the murderer will kill again if he isn't brought to justice, it's against robot nature to be a detective. In any event, all these opinions on Asimov are interesting and instructive in the sense that they show an undercurrent of revolt against Asimov's writings. It looks as if they are beginning to go out of fashion, as the space operas of Dr. E. E. Smith did. Then there will be an interlude of thirty years or so before the Asimov stories become old enough to be considered without suffering from this old-fashionedness, having become sufficiently ancient to escape via the literary statute of limitations. Cacoe-thes: The religious bumper sticker that angers me the most is one which is epidemic around here: "Honk if you love Jesus." Theologically, this is as lazy a way of attending to religious obligations as the water-powered prayer wheels in Asia. From the secular standpoint, I think unnecessary use of the auto horn is a genuine safety danger, because every such meaningless honk makes the driving and walking public a bit less attentive to the horn noises which could represent a genuine emergency for someone. Seeds and Stems: Actually, there's a good chance that I'll never be forced to watch someone top my record of hitting every FAPA mailing with a substantial-sized, non-stopgap fanzine. Even if FAPA survives long enough for someone to beat it, it'll occur far enough in the future almost to guarantee that I'll be dead or too senile to be aware of such complicated events. " Terry will probably change his opinion about the importance of response to FAPA publications after he publishes a few more good-sized ones and finds perhaps a dozen lines devoted to each in mailing comments. This ties in with the late mailing problem. Mailing comments have been the lifeblood of FAPA ever since the organization became perhaps four or five years old. Never from then until the past couple of years has it suffered from consistently late mailings, quarter after quarter. I feel sure that the late mailings have been a major cause for the recent decline in mailing comments, aggravated by the constantly worsening delays created by the postal system. On the average, thirteen weeks intervene between FAPA deadlines. Unless a member lives close enough to the official editor to operate by personal visits, or wants to pauperize himself by paying first class postage costs on his bundles and contributions, the member will probably encounter, on the average, a delay of ten days or two weeks between mailing and arrival of a bundle or a package of his contribution. That leaves the member with nine or ten weeks between the day his FAPA mailing arrives and the day when he has his last good chance to get his fanzine mailed in time for the next mailing, assuming that mailings go out on time. Every day of delay in sending out the mailing reduces by perhaps two per cent the time in which the member can do mailing comments in time for the next bundle, after you make another subtraction for the time it will take him to read the newly arrived mailing. If FAPA is to survive, I think it's essential to elect in the future as official editors only members who live in the immediate vicinity of other members, so someone else can step in promptly and take over when a delay is threatened. I feel that an official editor is justified if personal circumstances seem likely to keep him busy around the time the next mailing is due and he announces in advance a delay in the deadline for the next mailing. What causes trouble is publicly proclaiming the constitutional deadline for the next mailing and



then not obeying it, quarter after quarter. '' Years ago, a German fan had a novel warning in each issue of his fanzine. It consisted of an announcement that this copy remained his property, that he had not sold it or given it away. Instead, he said, it was on indefinite loan to the person to whom he had sent it, and could not be sold or given to anyone else without the owner's permission. I don't know if this had any legal validity in Germany but I'd love to know if such a policy could be enforced under the laws in this nation. It might break up the profiteering in fanzines which are totally a labor of love with no copies for sale, if the purchaser of a fanzine containing such a notice could be charged with receiving stolen property and if the person who sold him the fanzine could be prosecuted for larceny after trust. A Canticle for P. Schuyler Miller: Another example of fandom's willingness to go to all sorts of trouble to pay honor to someone the minute he is too dead to appreciate the efforts. I don't blame Sam as much as I do some other people, because Moskowitz has done a great deal of this kind of work about still living authors in his books and articles on science fiction writers. It's the fandom-wide tendency that bothers me and prevents me from plunging into Howard fandom or Lovecraft fandom. Right now, I'd like to participate in an E. Hoffman Price fandom. He wrote as well as Burroughs or Howard, he's still alive, and he's convinced that he will never be the subject of a subfandom. He will be, after he dies; why not now, when he can help researchers, enjoy adulation, and maybe be inspired to write some more fantasy in response to the interest shown in him? Oh Yeah: One thing I don't understand, although this isn't a matter specifically brought up by Jack Chalker's fanzine. If fandom must choose worldcon sites two years ahead and is under pressure to lengthen the span because of the difficulty of finding hotels, how can the Republicans and Democrats wait until less than a year before their conventions to choose the host city? '' I think it was the St. Louis con committee that gave Hugos to the astronauts and I don't think our worldcons are unique for emphasizing entertainment. I've attended national conventions of cave fans and circus fans and found both remarkably similar in spirit to worldcons. '' As one who has both won and lost Hugos after being nominated, I disagree about non-publicity of the final order of finish for nominees. I'd also like to see worldcon committees reveal the identity of those who came closest to being nominated and just failed. One year, I finished sixth, learned that fact from someone on the con committee, was proud of it, but didn't want to appear as egotistical as I really was by publicizing the fact myself. If an individual can't bear to have it known that he finished last among the nominees or just missed getting nominated, how can he survive rejection of something he writes or draws for a fanzine or prozine? The Best Lines &: I still think the best way to cut worldcons down to a sane size would consist of eliminating the huckster room and forbidding open hawking of the art show's contents. This wouldn't prevent people from working out private deals for pictures they like or dealers from doing business in their own rooms. It would discourage the swarms of people who attend worldcons largely because they want to add to their collections or to snap up lots of merchandise for investment purposes. '' This increasing worry over the probable permanent loss of odd bits of information leads me to wonder about the red line just under the black line on the fifth page from the end of an otherwise monochrome fanzine. Is there a deep signifi-



cance which everyone but me understands, or is it a code or just a ploy intended to create queries like this? The truth may be lost through fallibility of memories if someone doesn't explain. I can't imagine someone drawing in this extra line or running the page through the mimeograph twice for no purpose at all. ' ' I suspect that Donn Brazier rates at or near the top in the ranking of jazz enthusiasts in fandom. He has a stupendous collection of records, and an impressive knowledge of the subject, although I don't think he's much interested in the kind of jazz that has been most prominent in the past decade or two. Scientifriction: I once rambled on and on in Horizons about baseball play by play men, and it's with the utmost willpower that I refrain from doing it again in response to Mike Glycer's remarks. He wouldn't grumble about partisanship from the Reds' announcing crew if he listened very often to Orioles' broadcasts. The Baltimore announcers have achieved the near-impossible, turning me against Brooks Robinson's very real abilities, because of involuntary revulsion against their habit of screaming and gurgling over the most routine stops of ground balls or fifteen-foot excursions to reach pop flies. My ideal of a play by play crew in recent years has been the Philadelphia group, which caters to the home team fans without losing perspective, getting enthused at good plays and victories but criticizing when the Phillies' behavior justifies it. But By Saam, one-third of the crew, retired at the end of last season, I'm not familiar with his replacement, and I'm even starting to worry about my ability to get reception on the games next season because they've changed flagship stations and I haven't been able to determine if this will cause changes in the other stations on the chain. I don't think I can get reliable reception of the new originating station. ' ' I don't see much hope for all fans agreeing on beer, in view of the fact that it makes me think of urine to see or taste it. ' ' Ah, memories. John Bangsund uses SPQR in a story, and I actually demonstrated my ignorance by asking a fan once what those letters stood for when he used them in a poem. The Celebrated Word Eater of FAPA: Even if John Carl really was kidding about the \$100 price on a set of Void and not just inventing that intention as an excuse, the sum isn't grotesquely out of line, the way things are going. One issue of one fanzine brought that sum at the worldcon in 1975. Ted White isn't as much of a collecting boom as Ray Bradbury at this moment, but fanzine prices are going out of sight in many ways. I encountered one dealer's advertisement which asked prices averaging around \$3 per fanzine for a batch of fanzines whose only distinction was age. They were late 1930's and early 1940's in date of origin but they had nothing else to make them particularly valuable like editors who later became famous fans or pros or contents by topics of subfandoms or lots of pages per issue. If publications just one step above the level of crudzine bring that price, what is the worth of other fanzines from the same period which aren't in great demand just now but are attractive? Examples might be Julie Unger's Nycon I memory book, with lots of photographs and scads of fine details on that event (I don't own a complete copy myself) or Jim Blish's VAPA publications or Michael Rosenblum's New Futurian from which I quoted so extensively last time or the Swisher fanzine which contained a remarkable typed conversation between John W. Campbell, Jr., and a deaf fan? I strongly suspect that fanzines will be the next big mania for collectors, now that the rarer comic books are too expensive for most people.



## Still Alive in '75

I had decided not to continue this December the custom of stenciling for Horizons an expurgated review of my year's experiences. As I've done that year after year I've felt annually an increasing suspicion that I'm writing all this for my own future reference convenience rather than because anyone else in fandom might be interested. So it would make better sense to type these pages with a ribbon on ordinary paper and put them in a desk drawer, avoiding the ordeal of making corrections. Besides, there is an ever-increasing sense of being exposed when I write about personal matters in Horizons. I gather that perhaps one-third to one-half of all FAPA mailings are sold or given to someone else soon after reaching FAPA members. I'm not ashamed of what I put into Horizons but I like to know who is reading it. I'm sure that the fans who go skinnydipping without embarrassment at a con would feel self-conscious if they did the same thing among a bunch of total strangers. I feel much the same way.

But I changed my mind, for a variety of reasons. The most important factor in the switch of intentions was my inability to think of any other way to produce about 10,000 words of Horizons material without involving myself in some thinking or planning of other material. Besides, I've always suffered from a reluctance to abandon anything which I've done regularly. My palms still moisten themselves when I think back to the withdrawal problem when I finally forced myself to stop buying every issue of every prozine. And I still play just before Christmas every year my old Urania recording of Massenet's Werther, even though I've long since rid myself of the romantic melancholia which used to luxuriate in this special sort of Christmas opera.

Of course, if I'd skipped the annual summary this year, I would have lost a chance to talk about my health, which you all must realize by now ranks with Julie Andrews and Natalie Wood among my favorite topics. As you might also have guessed, it has been bothering me. In September I acquired a mysterious malady which I still haven't shaken. It's the sense of something very small stuck at the top of my throat. It comes and goes, it's painless, and it makes itself felt most prominently after I've been swallowing liquids. My doctor diagnosed it at various times as a chronic infection, an allergy, and a non-existent problem created by nerves. Finally he got tired of worrying over it and sent me to a throat specialist. In the middle of the specialist's examination, I passed out in spectacular manner and he refused to try to finish, but diagnosed it as probably the outcome of dental problems. So I still don't know for sure what is wrong and I haven't accepted any of the proposals the doctors advanced about radical treatment, although I feel from time to time as if only amputation would settle the matter. The most exasperating thing about the situation is my conviction that whatever is causing the trouble should be visible if I look in a mirror with my mouth open and certainly to doctors with their bright light and better angle. I can't even take comfort in the fact that the sensation has been less noticeable in recent weeks, because I keep thinking that it only seems that way due to getting accustomed to it. So I've decided to wait until the first of the year to see if the apparent improvement continues. If it doesn't, maybe I can persuade myself to undergo the general anesthesia which the specialist wants as a condition for finishing or



abandon myself to major dental surgery or something.

This intimation of mortality made major contributions to the general mood of gloom that hovered around me during much of the year. Worse, it contributed to some actions that made me feel even worse. One small example will suffice. A couple of weeks after I began to worry full time, I chanced at a flea market across a large quantity of old music. The dealer was asking only a small price per item, but offered to sell me all three boxes of music for five bucks. This was an improbable bargain, since less than half of the contents of those boxes was the useless stuff which normally predominates, like old instruction books for beginning pianists and collections of scales and arpeggios for the violinist and modern editions of the best-known Strauss waltzes. Most of the stuff was first-rate: sheet music for both popular and classical music dating back more than a half-century, some collections of hard-to-find recital pieces for voice, a very old piano score of Die Walküre, and so on. I didn't believe what I heard as my worries took command of my vocal cords and struck a bargain for one box which seemed most promising for two dollars. I began to steam as I drove home and had a furious argument with myself when I got to the house, realizing I'd deprived myself of a lot of old music I wanted at a price that just isn't found nowadays. My commonsense pointed out that it was senseless to pass up the bargain because if I had only a short time left, I could enjoy the whole batch of music in the meanwhile and my heirs would never know I'd wasted a bit of what was coming to them. No matter; my preoccupation with my health forced me to commit this sacrificing heresy. This behavior preyed on my mind for weeks and it wasn't totally banished when a month later I found another dealer at another flea market with an almost equally good price on another large box of old music which I snatched up before interior hostilities had a chance to inhibit me.

One reason the doctor suspected an allergy involved what happened in my bedroom just about the time the physical problem became evident. I woke one late summer morning to find a bee buzzing around me. The next morning's waking found me in the company of two more bees. In another day or two, there were almost as many bees as fanzines in my bedroom. They hung around the window nearest to my bed. I hunted endlessly without finding any possible way in which bees could be getting into my sleeping chamber. The other windows were closed tightly, and the one by the bed which I keep open in all but the most frigid weather has a permanently installed screen in the best of condition. I sprayed all the Flit I had in the house in the bedroom during the next few days, thereby learning a couple of things. The ecologists aren't entirely accurate in their assessment of bees' vulnerability to insecticides, and capitalism is determined that the non-commercial spraying against insects must be done with pressurized cans which cost perhaps ten times as much per puff as liquid spray purchased in an ordinary can and used in my small pump spraying gun. I must have visited every possible source in Hagerstown before I finally found a small can of unpressurized liquid spray in an obscure corner of a hardware store.

By now, the bees were worrying me almost as much as my throat and I was wondering if inhaling those fumes might be causing the trouble. Finally, an exterminator discovered what was happening. The bees had found a minute gap between bricks and windowframe in the outer wall of my house, a queen bee had set up light housekeep-



ing within the walls, she had attracted every honeybee for miles around to swarm within the walls, and the less intelligent of her acolytes were making wrong turns once within the walls and instead of running errands to nearby flowers, they were violating the sanctity of my bedroom via an opening I'd overlooked, the spot in the old-fashioned windowframe where the rope for the window-raising mechanism emerges. He tried to gas out the swarm by introducing a jet stream through this opening, but this served only to bring more bees into my bedroom, apparently investigating the source of noxious fumes. Finally I found a couple of men who undertook to seal up the opening in the wall from the outside. I was at work during the early stages of their efforts and therefore missed some spectacular action, but what I saw when I finally got home was quite exciting. Somehow they succeeded without falling even once from the twenty-foot ladder where they and the bees were staging aerial dogfights. After that, all I had to do was endure for the next three or four weeks the gradually diminishing daily visitations of the bees that had been trapped within the walls by this particular form of entombment. When this house is finally razed or falls apart, I suspect that someone will find within its walls not a half-finished honeycomb but a quantity of pure, aged amontillado.

If the throat trouble did nothing more for me, it helped to keep me on the job for yet another year. I couldn't get hospitalization insurance if I quit the job with this problem unresolved, a circumstance which persuaded me to keep my temper repeatedly under circumstances at the office when I felt sure it was a goner. As a result, I was able to observe the intriguing developments in the local newspapers' newest scientific marvel. Like daily newspapers in most parts of the nation, the local journals have been getting increased amounts of their advertising in the form of pre-printed tabloid multi-page advertisements for a local outlet of a large chain of stores. These are published elsewhere, shipped to the newspapers by truck, and up to now, they've been inserted into each copy of the newspaper on the day scheduled for distribution by hand. This is a tedious task, since it involves putting more than 40,000 copies of thin advertisement supplements into more than 40,000 copies of the morning and afternoon newspapers on such days. Teen-agers and women are hired on a part-time basis to do this work and it's a curious thing that grown men find it impossible, as a rule, to accomplish the task fast enough to be much use in this respect. So the company bought this year a machine to accomplish the task in automated manner. It is a direct copy of the bridge of the starship Enterprise in some respects. Lights flash impressively, robot arms flail around wildly, mysterious noises emerge, and so far, the machine has been impressive in every way except its inability to insert advertising supplements into Hagerstown newspapers. Months later, it is still whirring and jumping and flashing every day there are advertising tabloids to be distributed while the kids and women keep their distance from it and do the work which so far it hasn't been able to do. I hope to hang on long enough to view the denouement. Tentatively, I've decided that it is really a superslipsheet, a mutation in the factory where such machines are made, which is balky because it really wants to help some fan somewhere to publish the greatest fanzine of all time. If any trekkies should come to town, I hope to show them the machine, just in case it should be part of the Star Trek set which



was being shipped somewhere and got mixed up with the machine the company had ordered. After all, about a century ago the good people of Beirut were quite perplexed by the arrival of a giant dragon of unknown purpose in their city while Wagner was losing his temper in Bayreuth, wondering what had happened to one key character for the first performance anywhere of "Siegfried".

So I'm still writing columns for the newspapers. Nearly 300 of them will have emerged by the time this year ends, mostly editorial page columns which average perhaps a thousand words apiece. I still can't get used to the strange natural balance which exists in the supply of ideas for subject matter for these columns. I keep imagining that I am going to run out of things to write about. Sometimes I nearly do, on other occasions I encounter a happy brief freshet from the springs of inspiration for topics. But those brief dry and wet spells balance out through some arcane circumstances whose origin and nature I don't dare to speculate about. I always find myself possessed of my week's quota of columns, even in the weeks which saw me near the deadline with almost nothing prepared, and yet I can't pull ahead and establish the modest reserve of extra columns which I'd like to have on hand for the sake of my anxiety complex. This mysterious equivalent of a tape recorder's automatic gain control seems impervious to accident. Back in the summer, for instance, someone called me off column-writing one week because a shortage of reporters would force me to handle coverage for the county fair. A day and a half later, after I'd canceled appointments involved in column-writing and had arranged for contacts at the fairgrounds, I learned that it was all a mistake, there were some reporters whose existence had been forgotten with the capability of handling the fair, so I should turn in columns as usual that week. I felt sure that the time lost to this snafu would force me to come up short and to claim clemency on the grounds that it wasn't my fault. But when the time came to turn in columns, I counted and found I had the right quantity on hand after all. By the very nature of me, I can't accept this situation. Instead I keep worrying that my particular journalistic ecology will be irreparably upset some day leaving me unable to keep up the pace.

There's a slight possibility that I might get temporary relief once or twice. If the newspapers in Hagerstown put out a special bicentennial edition, maybe I'll get the task of writing it, as I did for the alleged 100th anniversary of the morning newspaper special edition. The afternoon newspaper really will be 150 years old in 1978, and if I hang on that long, there is another possible interlude from the grind of column-writing.

Meanwhile, I continue to think almost as much about retirement as about my health. I would never have imagined, years ago, how many variations a person can devise for the game of trying to find ways to make the retirement date seem nearer than it really is. As I type this, I am nine years and a few days away from the 62nd birthday which is normally the minimum retirement age at the newspaper factory. So during this December of 1975, I await anxiously the first days of 1976 because when they are here, I'll be able to tell myself that there are only seven complete years between me and retirement. The fact that there will be almost all of 1976 and all but a couple weeks of 1984 to work in addition to those seven intact calendar years interferes somewhat with my full enjoyment of this way of pretending that I'm closer to retirement than I really



am. Or I can gnaw contentedly at the concept that I now face fewer weeks of work before retirement than I once faced months of work before retirement in my first years on the job. Of course, this works both ways. One odd countereffect is that I'm unwilling to take vacation time because doing so makes retirement seem more distant. Early in 1975, for example, I knew that ten of the months which remain before minimum retirement age don't really count as working months because I get a month's vacation each year. Now I am using the final days of my vacation for 1975, and when they are gone, I will feel oppressed by the notion that I've forced myself to work one additional month before retirement, because at the end of 1975 there will be only nine workless months remaining through vacation time.

As I've hinted frequently in other contexts, I'm a chronic coward. This characteristic has prevented me from hunting down some other facts about retirement. I haven't queried the management on the question of whether I could take early retirement; the employee benefit poop sheet is ambiguous on how this may be achieved. I haven't looked up the full text of the legislation congress passed a while back about retirements and pensions, either. I just haven't had the courage it would require to determine whether I could retire before 1984 with a company pension if I requested it or whether federal law would force the company to permit early retirement. I might learn that I must wait until 1984 or do without a monthly retirement check from the company, and that would be like informing the men on death row that the governor couldn't find the forms which he needed to write commutations of executions. I could get along retired without company benefits but they would be both the difference between a few luxuries and no luxuries and a hedge against continued inflation between early retirement and the time social security checks started to come.

Fannishly, this was a rather hectic year. I hesitate to say much just now about the history of fandom in the 1950's because the situation should be resolved somehow before this issue of Horizons is distributed. Basically, someone at Advent decided, three months after receiving the manuscript, that he wanted several additions from me for it. I have refused to write them because they would throw unfair emphasis on certain matters unless I then proceeded to expand many other sections in the manuscript. I've asked for return of the manuscript if Advent doesn't want to publish it without major alterations and more than a month after making that request, I haven't heard of Advent's decision. If it comes back, I'll either find another publisher or produce it myself in mimeographed form. I devoted six months' spare time to the various drafts of that manuscript and frightening quantities of hours to preliminary note-taking, and I am not going to waste any more time on making changes in it other than those needed to correct whatever inaccuracies have slipped through.

The unhappiness which the fan history manuscript caused me was compensated by the pleasure I got from the Fanzine Activity Achievement Award project during 1975, both on the giving and on the receiving end. I realize that this project has amused some fans and has angered others. But I'm positive that these awards, if they can be kept alive for another year or two, will become more important to active fans than the Hugos. Under present circumstances, I think it's absolutely essential to have some kind of recognition for activity in fanzine fandom which won't be distorted by the fact



that most voters have minimal knowledge of fanzine fandom. I would have felt better about winning those two fan writing Hugos if I hadn't known that they probably came to me because I write columns for Locus and Riverside Quarterly, fanzines which the people just barely on the fringe of fanzine fandom are likely to read. I did some of the planning for the new fanzine awards, I felt a certain responsibility for the whole matter because I'm pretty sure that I was the first person to propose in print establishment of awards on which only people active in fanzine fandom could vote, and I offered before the first year's voting to remove myself as a candidate in any category. It still looked like a deliberate attempt to contrive egoboo when I won one for letterhacking. But the physical award itself is such a beautiful thing that I didn't worry much about what damage had been done to my image. I had, incidentally, argued in the planning stage that the awards should be kept very simple, perhaps a small pin or an embroidered patch, and I'm glad now that I was overruled. Now my principal concern is that nobody will display in 1976 the leadership and willingness to work that Moshe Feder provided in 1975, in order to guarantee the continuance of these awards. They will survive forever if they can get through another year or two, I'm sure.

I went to no cons in 1975, but saw a fair quantity of fans just the same, and one genuinely active fan turned up in Hagerstown. He is a young man named Jerry Forrest who moved to Hagerstown recently to become a sanitarian for the local Health Department. He learned somehow of my existence from someone else at the Health Department, and paid me a visit when he was just becoming fully aware of fandom's ramifications. On that first visit, he was as serene as they come, but he underwent an accelerated transformation into a fannish type fan within a few months, has been rushing around madly to all cons within easy reach, and I don't doubt that he'll be Hagerstown's best-known fan by this time next year. He even has a fan as a girl friend, a York, Pa., resident who is an excellent artist and a collector of old prozines. It would be easy enough to get a local fan club going here for the first time, since there are two other local men who have enough fannish instincts to join such a group, and I'm sure that a public announcement would recruit some of those mysterious people who keep visiting the local library and reading All Our Yesterdays without identifying themselves, according to my spies at that institution. Moreover, Jerry talked the local junior college into offering a science fiction course this winter and will be teaching it, an obvious way to propagandize a LASFS East. If the club is born, I don't know quite how to behave. It would be dreadful to complete a career in fandom which contained no activity at all in a local fan group and yet I keep suspecting that my longevity as a fan has been assisted by this very isolation and that involvement in a local fan club might drive me out of fandom in disgust with the feuding that usually bobs up, just as so many other good fans have been lost to local, face-to-face squabbling and its consequences.

I fell a little further behind in loc obligations during 1975 because I took so much time off to finish the fan history manuscript and because I goofed off letterwriting quite a few days when I was most deeply concerned over the throat. With the premonition that it's a useless project, I'm currently planning one last, supernal effort to get locs written on all fanzines on hand which aren't impossibly old. If I could reach that goal, perhaps by mid-1976, I



would consider all accounts squared that can be rectified (since I don't even know how to reach many of the editors of unlocced fanzines which have been awaiting action for two or three years) and I would feel myself free to change my behavior completely. This would take the form of publishing a personalzine, trading it for such fanzines as are available for trades, and retiring from the loc business except for a rare response to something in a fanzine that agitates me inordinately. I would probably convert Horizons into this new tradezine. I still enjoy writing locs but for a decade now there has hardly been a year when something hasn't come up to interrupt loc-writing for an extended period. It isn't fair to all the fans who have received nothing in return for the fanzines they've sent, and the situation preys on my mind, causing me to feel guilty about almost any nonessential thing I do because I know I could be using that time to write locs instead of the activity I am indulging in. I've found that I always manage to cut fanzine stencils in a three-month period; where the trouble comes is my inability to find time to write eight or ten locs each and every week. One darkhorse possibility would be a revival of Spaceways instead of a personalzine. I'm not seriously considering it, but I do feel the urge to see if I could still produce a fanzine with the same balance between sercon and faanish material in a small package like the old Spaceways. There isn't anything in fandom exactly like it nowadays, for some reason: today's fanzines that offer much the same sort of material are either extremely large or very small or aimed at fandom's inmost circle or seek to circulate among the fringe-fans. I think there should be a fanzine which avoids extremes of lengthiness or scholarship but still provides material on serious topics, pays the proper attention to fanac without being incomprehensible to the newcomer to fandom.

I'm not violating any confidences when I reveal that I'm still living in Hagerstown, after all those annual threats to dig a tunnel and escape some dark night to civilization. Since I haven't carried out by now my old dream of emigrating to central Europe, I am now trying to convince myself that I should be investigating other parts of this nation for residency purposes whenever some catastrophe or a combination of small problems forces me to beat feet. Hagerstown is hardly improving as a place in which to live. In 1975 there has been one brutal, senseless murder after another. Two suburban developments are just now undergoing reigns of terror of the type you'd normally associate with a large metropolis: in one of them, there are nightly stoning outbreaks against people, pets, buildings, and automobiles, and the other has been having two or three cases of arson every week. I've abandoned all efforts to walk across streets at corners. Red light running and wild careening around corners have become so prevalent that the only semi-safe crossing point is midway in a block with lots of cars parked on both sides where I can hide until the way appears clear. Even this isn't positive protection; the other night people in one part of town woke to find dozens of vehicles damaged in a three or four block area by someone who had obviously driven deliberately zigzag, sideswiping as many vehicles as possible. I haven't suffered serious trouble from the reign of terror. Three windowpanes shot out, the antenna broken from my car, and one fender badly dented are the only intentional violence I've experienced. But it's a nervous way to live. There's a public campaign in one nearby area to buy bullet proof vests for state policemen, in the hope of keeping enough of



them alive to provide a measure of protection to decent people. There was a time when I didn't hesitate to walk in any block of any street in Hagerstown at any hour; then came the time when I was reluctant to venture into certain areas during the densest part of the night; now I don't feel safe on any street in Hagerstown more than an hour after sundown. Muggings and armed robberies are beginning as early as 6 and 7 p.m. during the current season, within a half-block of the center of town and the police station.

But where to go? I doubt if my general personality will alter unrecognizably in the next few years. So I should avoid all really big cities, because they would be like Hagerstown only more so. I should also stay away from extremely small towns, because I would want to be within walking or local bus distance of such amenities as a choice of restaurants, a library, and a moonpitcher show. I would never be fitted to life in a lonely farmhouse far from everyone, despite my hermit reputation. I don't think I could ever be happy in an ever-warm climate like Florida or southern California, but I would be better off if I lived in an area where winters are less severe than in Hagerstown, because of my history of busting personal things in falls on ice. One important factor is where the interstates run. I'm convinced that they bring nothing but misery to all land within a half-dozen miles of their course and I would like to settle down an appreciable distance from the nearest of them. Right now, I'm most interested in certain parts of the Carolinas, far enough inland to be away from the resort crowds and prices, but not in the mountains where the weather might be more severe than in Hagerstown. Maybe I'll acquire enough getup and go to look around the areas I've been thinking about during vacation time in 1976. Circumstances could get me interested in a spot only a few miles from Hagerstown, though. If world conditions or politics should cause the army to close down or minimize its activities at Fort Ritchie, there would be all sorts of good buys in property at Blue Ridge Summit where military personnel now live. I spent a happy summer up there when small and it would be just as nice again if the soldiers who have overcrowded it should go away. It's big enough to have most advantages of town life and even though it's purportedly atop a mountain, its peak is only a few hundred feet high, hardly more than a bump in the road in comparison with real mountains. One particular advantage of Blue Ridge Summit is its nearness to some vital federal installations that are certain to be a prime target in the event of nuclear war. Living there, I would be in no danger of finding myself engaged in a dismal struggle for existence after the bombs had decimated parts of the nation.

Of course, all such plans might change if the nation's leaders should astonish us all by demonstrating ability to use common sense about petroleum. From the way things have gone in the past year or two, I'm assuming that the people in power have decided to let life go on as usual until all the oil is used up around the turn of the century, instead of imposing the rigid controls that would stretch out the supply for another decade or two and increase the chances that a major breakthrough in new energy sources will occur before the last gallon of gasoline is pumped. So it looks as if there will be enough fuel oil to keep houses warm for the remainder of my life and I won't need to hunt property in Ecuador in order to be comfortable all the year through. I've given up on my old belief



that solar power would come into general use in time to eke out the petroleum reserves. It seems clear that the establishment will have nothing to do with it because it's too efficient a way to provide part of the heat needed for the nation's buildings and therefore would do as much harm to the economy as a radical power-saving action like a ban on automatic-defrosting refrigerators. I've grown perverse enough in old age to do something unecological this autumn. I've turned the thermostat in my home up to 70 degrees, after keeping it at 66 and 68 degrees the past two winters. I wouldn't have hastened in this manner the planet's energy exhaustion if it hadn't been for a little news item in the local papers, which stated that the management of the municipal housing projects had decided to turn thermostats down to 72 degrees this fall. Inhabitants of these projects are basically the people who are being supported by tax money in one way or another, welfare checks, food stamps, and so on. I didn't enjoy the discovery that they'd been luxuriating in above-72 warmth during the winters when I was trying to do my part by lowering the thermostat.

I disengaged myself in the course of the year from one community activity and got sucked into the vortex of another. I'd been working with the bicentennial commemoration committee for this city and county, principally in the area of a large-scale history and guidebook which was to be published for 1976. But I stopped going to those meetings when it became obvious that the whole bicentennial observance here was being concentrated on a pageant to be produced by professional promoters. This will leave this area with nothing to show for all the work and money that will go in a 200th birthday party. I consider myself lucky that I got out without having made one potentially awful mistake. At one stage in the planning, I was offered the task of writing this new county history and I almost felt like saying yes. I might have thrown hundreds of hours into research for a book which was never to be published. So now instead of going to bicentennial meetings, I'm attending sessions of the county's historical advisory committee. This is the second time I've been a county official. It's not as impressive as the first time, because when I was appointed a commissioner for the poor I was required to swear to a prodigious oath which ran to a page and a half of fine type and left me rather shaken at the things I'd promised. On the other hand, the commission for the poor's basic task was to administer the functions of the county poorhouse, and this was hardly a taxing duty in view of the fact that the poorhouse had been torn down ten years before I was appointed. All I was required to do in that office was to allow myself to be sued from time to time in disputes over the administration of funds left over from poorhouse days. The county attorney obligingly never informed me or the other commission members about these lawsuits, handling all the work himself, so I could enjoy my high office. Come to think of it, I might still be a member of that commission, since nobody could find at the time of swearing in how long appointments ran and I never heard of any successors being appointed. The new assignment takes somewhat more time and promises to be a bit more interesting. The historical advisory committee has no real power, as its name indicates, but in the past its advice has been listened to quite frequently and it probably deserves much of the credit for certain things which were accomplished in line with its recommendations. These were mainly in the line of government action to prevent destruction or blatant commercialization of some



unusual site or structure. For example, some FAPA members have been to Harpers Ferry and have expressed satisfaction with the way the lower town has been handled by the National Park Service. Some of those old buildings never changed much since John Brown days and others have been restored to something resembling their former appearance. But the casual Harpers Ferry visitor is unaware of the Maryland Heights situation. This is the rugged land on the other side of the Potomac, overlooking Harpers Ferry. It's not mostly similar to the way it was th the 19th century. It's exactly as it was then, thanks to the fact that there's no road up to that area which motor vehicles can navigate and no land suitable for farming or factory purposes. But it has been touch and go for that unspoiled wilderness and the ruins of Civil War fortifications. Once there was pressure to build a road to the top of the cliff because there's a wonderful view from its edge and the footpath is a bit too rugged for a person in bad health or extremely old folks. Again there was a proposal to build summer homes whose promotion would be keyed to owning part of a Civil War battlefield. The committee got wind of these proposals, issued a report, got copies of it to the right politicians at the correct time, and the area was brought within the boundaries of the C & O Canal National Park, protecting future Harpers Ferry visitors from looking across the river and seeing suburbia and traffic jams above the tunnel through which John Brown came marching that famous night. Now I might be in on the excitement if the committee gets into a fighting mood over another area feature, the Devil's Racecourse. This is an odd strip of mountainside northeast of here. It is covered with numerous, round rocks which people generally believed to have been deposited by the last Ice Age. That belief has been shaken by the fact that someone took the trouble to look the matter up and found that the glaciers stopped sixty miles north of the area. One local geology fan now thinks the rocks were squeezed out of the hilltop by severe frosts and thaws that alternated around here during that long cold spell, then rolled down to their present location. Whatever their origin, there's nothing quite like these rocks for a long way in any direction, although in its remoter regions, Pennsylvania has a small park devoted to a similar phenomenon. The racecourse used to run both north and south of the Mason & Dixon Line, but Pennsylvania's section vanished when a contractor was building a road not far away and pulverized those convenient boulders. Local people are nervous over the chance that it might happen south of the border, too.

The old year still has a couple of weeks to run. They might contain something unduly repulsive which I haven't learned about as yet. But tentatively, I'll assign to the ranking of my most miserable hour in 1975 the time Fred Waring came to Hagerstown. I wasn't happy about the necessity to attend in my journalistic capacity, because his group gave a Sunday afternoon concert here, on what was supposed to be my day off. But my gloom in advance of the concert became as nothing, in comparison to how I felt when the music started. I had a headache, to begin with, probably caused by my bad temper. The high school auditorium where the program was given was crowded beyond endurance, and even though I'd managed to get a seat on the aisle I felt as if one of those population explosion novels had come true, with even the aisles cluttered with small kids lying on their bellies, just as if a giant television screen were in the stage's locale. But the worst came when the music began. Fred is apparently either trying to interest the younger generation or



imagining that he's still a young feller himself. He programs the same kind of middle of the road melodies that he always did but he has drums going inexorably and prominently behind all his arrangements. The result is usually unbearable, such as the absolutely straightforward, vocal-line-as-written, singing of a Puccini aria by a girl against what Waring seems to think is the solution to the generation gap. He had his amplifiers turned up unmercifully high, louder than any rock concerts I've attended. The visual aspect was just as bad: his soloists and dancers and chorus are all white, all the males have short hair, and they twitch and writhe and stomp constantly, apparently trying to imitate what they remember from that night they tried to watch the Midnight Special while they were half-asleep. Most disgraceful of all was what Fred has done with the only other member of his original Pennsylvanians who is still active. I can't remember the old gentleman's name, but he must be about 95 years old, he was playing the drums, and all the while he was making funny faces, putting on funny hats, and swinging his sticks in funny directions. The first half of the concert alone lasted for ninety minutes, and from the way they were carrying on at the intermission break, I suspected that everyone in the audience except me had been having a glorious time. I came home and wrote some nonsense or other to prove I'd been there without being specific about my reactions. Better Alice Cooper than this travesty of the real Fred Waring.

In fact, it wasn't a very good year for live music in Hagerstown. The local museum got daring one day and turned a recital over to a pianist who programmed nothing but the two full-length sonatas by Charles Ives. Exactly nineteen persons sat through both of them, including me; a few others who were there at the start apparently had that afternoon their equivalent of my Fred Waring reaction. The local symphony orchestra underwent a palace revolution, got a new conductor, showed amazing improvement immediately thereafter, then backslid until it's worse now than I've ever heard it. Only three cellists showed up for its most recent concert, and by the worst of possible luck, the Unfinished Symphony was programmed on the no-show day. I suspect that the whole venture is doomed because it is neither fish nor fowl. It pays some members, expects the others to volunteer services, gives concerts in several area cities, holds a scholarship contest for high school instrumentalists, combines forces with a large choral group occasionally, and does many other things without achieving the basic task of playing in tune. I suspect that the public would be more understanding of an all-volunteer group or more appreciative of a small, all-paid orchestra and turn out in greater quantities than the two or three hundred who attend a typical concert. There are also the same programming compromises that helped to kill the old symphony orchestra here three decades ago: Broadway show medleys interspersed with symphonic compositions, for instance. It's a shame. There are more capable young instrumentalists than ever, because area high schools now provide stringed instruments and maintain orchestras, which sound remarkably good. Maybe it will occur to someone that a less ambitious project might succeed, attracting musicians who can't give up as many hours for rehearsals and performances as the present scope demands.

During 1975, I continued to sense an internal trend which had been noticeable in recent years. It's the urge to be passive instead of active. I rarely kept score while watching a baseball



game, a form of inactivity that was foreign to me only a few years ago. I couldn't bestir myself to get out the tape recorder or the camera often, even when there were sounds or scenes which I knew I might want some future day to hear and 'see again. The only urge I felt most of the time was one that suggested doing as little as possible under the circumstances. Worst of all, two or three times a month I caught myself doing something which I never thought I would ever come to: turning on the television set and switching channels until I found something that half-interested me, then watching it even though it didn't strike my fancy strongly. Usually, that happened when I'd been thinking about all the things I really should be doing and couldn't find the inner strength to decide to do at least one of them. Occasionally a lucky accident occurred in this way. In all honesty, I must confess that the most delightful three or four minutes I encountered on television all year long came through a chance viewing of Karen Valentine on the syndicated Bobby Vinton series, singing "Please, Mister, Please". Some FAPA members are undoubtedly too sheltered from the common herd to know about this semi-hillbilly song. Karen sang it in even more of a little girlish voice than the Olivia Newton-John record which made the song famous, and in the meantime, the screen showed what happened in that bar when the man went right ahead and tried to play that tune on the jukebox which the girl didn't want to hear. I've also relaxed to some extent my old rule which restrained me to watching one regular series on television. During the latter part of this old year, I've been snitching half-hours with Laurel & Hardy, because one channel has been showing them four nights weekly. It doesn't use up as much time as it sounds, because for some reason this station runs The Chimp two out of those four nights in a typical week and I know it by heart by now, permitting me to skip those nights. Some of the other offerings aren't essential for the Laurel & Hardy fan, either, because they consist of clumsy rearrangements of sections of the pair's feature-length movies into two-reelers. Most of the resulting half-hours are incoherent if you don't know the full-length movies and unsatisfying if you do. However, at this writing I don't know if I'll ever feel the same toward my television set after Friday. For the first time, there is a Julie Andrews program in TV Guide which I'll miss because it's on the one channel listed in the Baltimore-Washington edition which doesn't get even a wisp of an audio or video signal to Hagerstown. For several days, I've had wild thoughts about making the 250-mile round trip to the area of that transmitter, renting a motel room nearby, and enjoying it in that way. Maybe the possibility that the same show will turn up soon on another channel will prevent me from doing such a ridiculous thing.

Possessions continued to cause me worries in 1975. There was the mystery of the garage electricity, for instance. A row of three garages stand at the end of my backyard. They are useless to me because they face an alley too narrow to permit any but the shortest autos to pull in and out. But I let one fellow use one of them with no charge for rent in return for his keeping the weeds down around the structure and repairing any deterioration that occurs. He informed me not long ago that there was no longer electricity into the garages because the wire from the power line to the building has vanished. I don't know how long ago it happened, because he rarely uses the garage after dark and hadn't needed the interior light for a long while until recently. I suppose the ob-



vious starting point would consist of a call to the electrical department of the city, asking if they'd disconnected the garage because of a mistake or because they'd found a break in the exterior wire or something. But I don't even know whether that missing wire ran from the house or from the alley's power line, I hate to risk a whole afternoon trying to get my inquiry to the right person, and there's always the slight danger that some previous owner of the property had been bootlegging an occasional kilowatt hour without a meter for the garage light. The house itself is suffering from vascular plumbing or something similar. Pressure from the hot water taps is approaching zero, and it was never too good in this neighborhood to begin with, there's a slow leak from the water level gauge of the furnace boiler, the bathroom commode terrifies me on occasions by whistling, popping and belching for no apparent reason, and someone working in the cellar managed to stuff the drain of the sinks down there with rusty metal fragments. It would be nice if science could provide solid state technology to replace the pipes in houses, now that it has eliminated the tubes in radios, but my only experience with a plumber during the year, to open the kitchen sink's drain, was traumatic enough to be inhibited from getting the general plumbing renovation started. Amazingly, the auto continues to give me next to no trouble. I bought it used three years and three months ago, and still there have been next to no expenses other than those for maintenance and operation. In almost forty months, it has needed only a new muffler, a new fan belt, and one motor tuneup. Even the battery that was in it on acquisition still seems to be in good condition. Like the majority of Oldsmobiles, it consumes gasoline in greedier manner than the small cars which get so many praises nowadays for patriotic economizing. But I don't feel that I'm wasting natural resources unduly. My impression is that the smaller an auto an individual owns, the more likely he is to specialize in jackrabbit starts, to drive ten or fifteen miles faster than the speed limit, to fill that small car to the bursting point with occupants, and to use enormous quantities of gasoline because of putting 20,000 miles or so on the odometer each year. By the end of this year, I'll have driven less than 4,000 miles since January 1, I'd estimate that two-thirds of those miles were essential in the sense that they were driven in connection with my work or to go for meals on days when it was too nasty to walk to a restaurant or for other non-pleasure purposes, I obey the speed limit and don't gun the motor at red lights, and I suspect that my miles per gallon figure isn't as far below that of the average small car driver as the advertisements would make you think.

Again this year, the record collection grew principally via flea market and garage sale buying. I purchased only an occasional album from record dealers, mostly a few previously unrecorded operas which I wanted badly. It seems as if I'm not doing my part to sustain the record industry. But I don't feel too guilty on this score, either. The record industry hasn't been doing much to retain me as a steady customer: American-made classical recordings are so carelessly produced that the customer can either wear himself out fighting dealers for replacements for defective discs or put up with the distortion from warped records and scratchy surfaces for the sake of good digestion. Prices of records continue to rise, even on reissues of old records which involve no new production expenses. The artist and repertoire people in the classical record industry



are pursuing a suicidal course by continuing to turn out too many new classical lp releases which have no real reason for existence except the vanity of a conductor or performer who feels able to do a better job than the other musicians who have produced recent recordings of that very same warhorse. Most of the previously unrecorded works that are now appearing on discs are inconsequential modern works which were recorded only because the composers got a subsidy from a foundation or a university music department or some other source. Meanwhile, I continue to participate in a race against time in my desire to own something as fundamental as all the Verdi operas on first-rate recordings. Back in the 1950's, when lp records were novelties and I was in my thirties, it looked like a certainty because Verdi operas were making their debuts on commercial records at the rate of two or three a year. Then the industry was suckered into the worst disaster that ever struck it, the stereo gimmick, and during the 1960's when I was in my forties I virtually abandoned hope of reaching my goal. All the mono recordings, with occasional exceptions, were deleted from active catalogs and musicians were kept busy for years making stereo versions as replacements, leaving little room for exploring important new musical territory. I didn't keep score, but I can remember adding only two more Verdi operas to my bag in that decade, not counting some low-quality tapes I made from FM broadcasts. Midway through the 1970's, I'm in my fifties and thanks to the glorious debacle which the effort to stuff quad down the throats of a public already choking on the stereo nonsense they'd swallowed, I'm again acquiring one or more previously unavailable Verdi operas each year. There are still about ten to go, counting a couple of operas which I own only in inferior performances, but I dassn't count yet on finding myself able to hear any of Verdi's operatic music any time I feel like it. Madison Avenue might come up with an even wilder scheme for peddling more hardware to record buyers or the gradual deterioration of hearing in my left ear might become contagious.

One less acute problem involving records bothered me repeatedly during the year. It's the question of Nazi recordings. In the early years of the lp era, I bought them *faute de mieux*. Urania and occasionally other labels offered unavailable music by great artists through tapes which they'd dredged out of the wreckage of postwar Germany. I felt somewhat guilty but it's a different situation now. Again there is a lot of Nazi-era music available, mostly on imported discs, some very cheap and others very expensive. I own other versions of most of the records involved, but there are some magnificent artists performing on these alternate versions and I find it hard not to buy. I don't suppose there's any question of fattening the purses of all-out Nazi musicians after all these years: even if royalties are being paid on the current releases, most of the important artists involved are dead by now. There are several full-length opera recordings by almost the same cast that produced that miraculous third act of *Meistersinger* which was in the Victor catalog for so many years, albums featuring such singers as George Hann and Mathieu Ahlersmeyer who may have been unsympathetic to the Nazi regime but sang right through it, and even a complete *Tannhäuser* with my dearly beloved Maria Müller as Elisabeth. Nobody seems inclined to protest recordings of the compositions of Carl Orff, who accepted the task of writing new incidental music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* after his compatriots had solemnly burned Mendelssohn's work, so I shouldn't worry too much over



singers whose politics I'm not sure about.

I've already hinted about Hagerstown's continued slide into dystopian condition. My formerly enviable position within walking distance of the downtown section continued in 1975 to fade away as that area suffered further depletion of the things worth walking four blocks for. The last retail hardware store and the last music store in the downtown section shut down during the year, for instance, although just the other day the latter calamity was partly compensated by creation of a new discount record store. So far it has stocked little except pop items but I have hopes that it will expand the classical offerings which the last time I looked amounted to a dozen discs in one remote bin. The last movie show almost occurred in downtown Hagerstown during the year, but the theater's operator managed to talk the Elks into giving him a bargain price on the building which he occupies, after the Elks themselves pulled a fade into the boondocks and there was reason to believe the structure which had also contained their lodge rooms would go to someone who would convert the theater part into a store. Eating in the downtown section has been my worst problem. The most satisfactory food at sane prices is at a restaurant which also has a beer and wine license. It's ridiculous, but I can't rid myself of the feeling that I'm going to the dogs when I eat a meal beside someone who is drinking beer. I feel as if I were on the path to becoming a sodden inebriate in a gutter and I get maudlin over my fate if I don't watch my thoughts carefully. I don't like the odor of beer, either. I've compromised by patronizing this place mostly for my noon meal, getting there before the noon rush begins at a time when little drinking is in progress. It seems impossible that only a couple of decades ago, every downtown block in Hagerstown had at least a couple of lunch counters or full-fledged restaurants that were open all day and half the night. What remains now clusters into a small area around the square and most of those establishments close in mid-afternoon.

The square itself is a disaster area. The city spent more than a quarter-million on transforming what was for two centuries a large empty area. Merchants and businesses contributed some more money to the project. The outcome makes me half-sick, every time I walk through it. It's been cluttered up with pagodas, trees, benches, fat concrete posts of no known name or function, and telephone booths. There is no architectural consistency or apparent pattern to the design, and the whole square area looks something like the nursery in a home where the children haven't been taught to put away their toys neatly. The city spent unknown sums to get all the wiring out of sight in the square, then installed a preposterously ugly, Rube Goldbergian contraption for traffic lights which shoots menacing black pipes in all directions above the square. Just now, the tragedy is extra-visible, because the Christmas decorations are up in that area and their skimpiness brings back searing memories of how the city used to decorate at yuletide. Matter of fact, I'm sure you all remember George Senda. He used to come through Hagerstown often before becoming a fan. He told me later that he couldn't remember one solitary thing about Hagerstown except how gorgeous it was in the square in December. I wonder if the soul of older cities reposes in their squares and if the soul can die if the square is violated. It might be significant that Jerry Forrest, whom I mentioned previously, is a newcomer to Hagerstown and he feels the same dismay about what has been done in the square as I do. He was fas-



cinated by a photograph which hangs in my house, a wide angle shot of the square as it looked about sixty years ago. I have half a notion to try to pay tribute to the ghost of Hagerstown past by ordering a good-sized color print of how the square looked just before the end. I defied my acrophobia one Advent and took a batch of transparencies from the top of the highest downtown buildings. They show virtually the entire square and its immediate environs and look spectacular, if I do say so myself. There's room in the house for another picture or two on the walls, although there isn't much space left of other types.

I've shunned any thought of new year's resolutions for 1976, other than to strive mightily to avoid the sleazy variety of bicentennial promotions. As mentioned, I'd like to make one supernal effort to get back in the good graces of fans who produce fanzines and send them out for nothing more than locs. I have no real plans to do anything more about fan history than try to get the book about the 1950's published. If I did start writing again, I think it would be an attempt to write a history of fanzines, a combination of examination of trends and general practices as well as discussions of the most famous and most important individual fanzines. It's the sort of thing Dr. Wertham didn't do in his book. But I won't accomplish anything if I don't sort out a lot of old fanzines so I can find what I'm looking for. I would like to do more reading in the year ahead of the books and magazines I've been piling up via second hand stores, yard sales, and such sources. Maybe I can get back into picture-taking. One project I've thought about for a long while should be done soon, if at all: getting a record of this area's barns. They are wildly varied in design and appearance, some are really beautiful, most are picturesque, and with every passing year, their number becomes fewer because they keep burning down and falling into fragments. The trend to combine a lot of small farms into a few big ones and different ways of farming mean that hardly any new barns are constructed to replace those that vanish. I must disobey orders involving heavy lifting and buy some more steel shelving. There is still adequate space on existing sets of shelves for newly acquired records, but a couple sets of shelves are canting from the perpendicular and I'm afraid to impose any more weight on them. I can't remove their contents and figure out if the trouble is loose screws or the rather warped condition of the flooring until I have some place to put what I take off. The shelving with the bulk of my 78's seems in good condition but I'm not sure that lp's would survive the collapse of their shelving without considerable breakage, no matter if they're reputed to be unbreakable.

Meanwhile, if you should give an occasional thought to me during the year to come, just think of me as carrying out mechanically whatever I'm doing while my brain is preoccupied with different matters: only two more Olympics after this year's until retirement, only 36 more payments to make on disability insurance before leaving the job obviates the need for it, only three more payments to make before retirement on my insurance on the house and contents which is sold three years at a time, fixed holidays will proceed through the days of the week only one more complete cycle and part of another, the census taker will come only once more, the little girl down the street who is in the first grade won't even be a senior in high school yet. Sometimes I'll even dare hope that the nation will revise its minimum retirement age customs before long.



### The Worst of Martin

There is no good reason why coal that costs two dollars per ton at the mines should cost seven dollars to the Eastern consumer. The actual cost of transportation could be paid and a fair profit returned to the railroad companies, and yet the price of coal be reduced very much. But a fair profit is not to the taste of the monopolist. He must have an exorbitant return for his capital, or he is not satisfied. He cares nothing for the thousands of suffering poor who are unable to procure fuel at the prices at which he holds it. He is deaf to the voice of humanity; he thinks only of his gains. So the curse of the railroad monopolist hangs like a black pall over the Republic, growing darker and darker as the time wears on. His greed and heartlessness have made bread dear in a land capable of feeding the world, and the same accursed spirit of avarice has put the next great necessity of human life almost beyond the reach of the poor.

The cheapness of food and coal most concerns the comfort of the people; to lower their price must be the aim of every popular government. Yet both with us have become the subjects of monopolies, and are dealt out to the people by the great companies in such quantities as they think will aid them best in paying their dividends.

It is an ugly state of affairs, but there is no denying the facts in the case. The people of the New England and Middle States are utterly at the mercy of the great corporations controlling the Pennsylvania coal fields. They must pay for their fuel just what these companies choose to ask for it, and they have no means of escaping from their dilemma if the companies are left in their present condition. The companies have been steadily increasing their exactions, and unless something is done to check them, they will no doubt increase them to a point at which anthracite coal will become accessible only to the rich.

Doubtless these companies have rights, among which is the right to earn a fair return for the labor and capital invested in their business. But the people, the consumers, have a right in the matter, which they will yet be driven to assert. The Almighty did not create the coal beds of Pennsylvania for the sole benefit of the railroads and coal corporations that have secured the control of them. He placed this magnificent gift in a region easily accessible, for the benefit of the millions who people the vast region it is intended to supply. The people have a right to obtain it at moderate rates, and they have a right to compel the great monopoly that is bleeding them so unmercifully to respect this claim; and the day may come, and ought to come, if there is not a change for the better, when the coal monopolist will find that vested rights, and charters, and stocks and bonds, are powerless to restrain the wrath of a defrauded people bent upon supplying one of the chief necessities of their existence.

Let the duty be taken off foreign coal; let there be free trade in this great necessity of life, and a very different state of affairs will ensue. Let the people enjoy the benefit of a free market, and let them be rid of their slavery to an insolent and unscrupulous monopoly. Demand of your servants in Congress that justice shall be done you, and that you shall be able to buy your coal cheap in a land which is the richest of all lands in that mineral. (from History of the Grange Movement by Ed Martin)