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Horizons, also known as The Whole Hagerstown Catalog, begins at this point its May, 1977, issue. This is volume 38, number 3, FAPA number 144 if you'll forgive the grossness of that information, and whole number 150. It's mostly thunk and wrote by Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A. Mimeography by the Coulsons, who are otherwise blameless.

### In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: It's particularly unpleasant to see John Bangsund lose his membership, if that has really happened. Indirectly, I've heard that the problem was partly caused by the slowness of travel for bundles to Australia, which kept the FA's information from reaching him in time for proper action. Bundles take up to a month to reach members in the United States, three months or more to go to the most distant overseas members. Maybe it's time to think about mailing the FA separately to all members, air mail in the case of overseas members. It would give all of us weeks or months of extra time to do something about a dues or activity need we'd forgotten about. Grandfather Stories: I hope someone writes as fine an obituary as this one for me after I die. It is realistic without being either sugary or vicious, the sort of biographing that H. P. Lovecraft needed and didn't get from L. Sprague de Camp. I never met Martin Alger and it's strange in a way that he didn't become embodied as a three-dimensional, living fan until I read Howard DeVore's account of his life after his death. I doubt if many fans knew about his death for many weeks. I got word from Bill Danner, who had received a copy of the leaflet from the funeral, and I notified Linda Bushyager for Karass. He was a very good fan and I wish someone would get together an anthology of the best of his writing. A Cranial Harp: Walton's Mountain is apparently in the Blue Ridge, halfway down the state, since Charlottesville is the real city most often used as a locale for various trips. I think the Blue Ridge in that part of Virginia runs between three and two thousand feet in height, an awkward way of putting it but it'll save the use of correction fluid. So there should have been considerably worse winter weather around the Waltons' home than down in the valley. Big Mac 100: I used to be more frank in Horizons than I am today. Candidness never got me into trouble, in any way I could trace. But I started to restrain myself to some extent when fandom came more into the attention of the mundane world, and fanzines started to be collected by libraries and Hagerstown started to acquire some other fans and semi-fans. There were things I don't mind fans knowing about which I wouldn't want spread around this neighborhood, and there are mundanes in Hagerstown who wouldn't understand the fannish habit of indulging in hyperbole. I suspect that this sort of feeling is what causes so much material in apas to take the form of what Norm Hollyn calls "overblown simple incidents". The Great White Also: I suspect that many library books are taken by people who claim to have lost them and pay whatever the library asks as compensation. It's an easy way to build up a collection of hard-to-find books, particularly if the person at the library isn't aware of the replacement cost of out-of-print items. A fellow journalist used to do this all the time at the Hagerstown library where he had the reputation of being the most careless reader in town. The Rambling Fap: Don't they manufacture snow when nature gets contrary in California? Machinery is the only way many



small ski resorts in this general area's climate can get enough skiing days to operate profitably. '' Don't you remember what I've been reiterating about how far Hagerstown is behind the times? It held true during this past winter. While so many parts of the nation were suffering from extra-heavy snows, Hagerstown had only about half the winter's normal amount of snowfall. It will probably be the early 1980's before the winter snows of 1976-77 finally get to this backward area. There weren't even the excessively cold temperatures here that much of the Midwest and East experienced. It was quite cold for an unusually lengthy spell without intervening mild days, but none of the far-below-zero weather that will come when the hard winter weather arrives. The last really rough winter here came in 1960-61, when there were 68 inches of snow from December through February and temperatures as cold as 11 below zero.

Of Members and 'Zines: As useful and accurate as ever, and this time a special source of egoboo for me. I believe I achieved a rare feat for me by contributing more than anyone else to FAPA mailings in 1977. Even though I've been plopping a quire of pages into each mailing for many years, there has usually been someone else whose one-year output topped mine. Ramsbottom: The directory for Los Angeles fandom is almost as disquieting as standing in the corridor at a worldcon: in both instances, there are too many people I've never heard of. I'd guess that I find about half of the names in this listing totally unheard of and I'm sure some of them are prominent in this or that aspect of fandom. Of the remainder, I might have trouble saying anything accurate and specific on the history and activities of maybe half. Celephais: It seems sort of presumptuous to offer the information, since I got it from the Fanzine Index which Bill co-edited, but the first Celephais was dated March, 1944. I feel no hesitancy at all in expressing my envy of Bill's decision to retire. Maybe he'll inadvertently serve as an example for me if I get up the courage to do it early. Cognate: I share Rosemary's respect for the penny. But actually, I've been finding the other three smallest coins just as essential to my way of life. There was a time when I didn't care if I had quarters or didn't have them. Now it's necessary to keep a few in my pocket because the bus drivers in Hagerstown no longer make change and because it's a reasonable tip to leave for a small-scale meal in the cheap restaurants I patronize. Dimes are even more vital because vandals have been so active in public restrooms in this area. Many of them are now openable only by putting a coin in the slot and in most cases, nothing but a dime will serve. The nickel has become essential for parking purposes in this area's towns, where many parking meters no longer accept pennies. So far, I haven't found any real purpose in life for half-dollars. When I was thinner, a few of them helped me to keep my balance in windstorms, but I have gained twenty pounds or so since then. '' Channel Five is picked on by this neighborhood's CB neanderthal. I found that the interference can be minimized part of the time (presumably when he's occupying certain channels) by turning up the color control the whole way, then fine tuning until the picture has just the normal amount of color. Gritbin: Agreed, that it's a relief to overcome the completist collecting habit. I no longer even feel any particular urge to own the first few FAPA mailings, which would give me one of the few complete sets in one place: they were no great shucks as far as quality of publications was concerned. The second stage in this ascension over base desire consists, presumably, of losing the urge to accumulate. Humble



Opinions: Maybe the real flaw in utopian novels is the way they remain silent about the nasty thing which is needed to create and maintain a utopia. It requires rigid, all-encompassing controls on the entire population of an all-outness far in excess of anything imposed in the most totalitarian nations today. Without such dictation over every person, the utopia will be smashed up in short order by the criminal types, the rebellious members of the population, the ambitious element, and many other individuals. Crumbly Cowboy: I've learned since watching those first pictures taken from the surface of Mars that they wouldn't have shown Martians, in all probability. The scanning system which created the pictures was so slow that any moving object wouldn't have been recorded, much in the same way that you can walk in front of the camera while taking a long time exposure in extremely dim light and leave no image on the negative. I don't really think the planet has animal-sized life but I'm still hopeful of insects on the surface and maybe slightly larger creatures in caverns where temperatures are not so fluctuating and sand doesn't get into your eyes. Inside Viewpoint: Stan's encounter with a policeman is an excellent illustration of how much harm criminals have done to the innocent. In normal times, you could walk without being questioned on suspicion. Burblings: As I remember my reaction, I wondered about Coat-Tails because it wasn't listed in the Fantasy Amateur and because I had seen nothing to indicate that Socorro had met the constitutional requirement for becoming a joint member of FAPA. I didn't know if both the fanzine and herself had been franked into FAPA. Fandom Goes to College: By now I'm starting to wonder if I ever will go to another con. Every conreport I read indicates that their programs are devoted largely to discussions of women's role in science fiction or fandom, a topic I've grown as tired of as I was weary of reading in 1938 of Michelism. This Is Interjection: So far, I've not heard about any little black box that will improve the most serious flaw that I find in recordings of serious music today. They need to be de-engineered. What good does it do to take out the clicks, to increase the ratio between soft and loud parts, and to increase the frequency response by another thousand cycles at the inaudible high end, when dial-twiddlers have turned the performances into grotesque travesties of how music sounds? A flute suddenly becomes louder than all the strings combined, accompaniment figures which the composers meant to murmur and rustle smoothly are heard in every-note clarity, you hear the action of the keys of a woodwind or the noise a cellist's fingers make against the strings in strenuous passages. '' One way to discourage crime might consist of making jails less pleasant. I'd like to see tests made with restoration of jail conditions around the start of this century. Take away the television and the radio, convert the gymnasium and playgrounds into more cells, prepare the most monotonous meals that an unimaginative cook can contrive, scrap the work release programs and college courses, and get rid of the other conveniences. If a prisoner spent his day in his cell except for brief trips to mess hall and an hour of walking around an unimproved courtyard, he might make efforts to stay out of trouble. 520 07 0328: I wonder if even Elmer remembers how when he lived in Casper, Wyoming, he used an exclamation point to climax his address every time he put it onto a letter or postcard. But I do doubt if his high school had 1,200 enrolled and 300 graduates. Back in the 1930's, there was even more attrition through dropouts during the high school years than today so the senior class in a four-year school might end up with only ten



or fifteen per cent of the total enrollment. '' A local radio station used as the name for one of its disc jockey programs Segue Session for many years. I doubt if many listeners knew the meaning, but maybe that was the purpose: to attract attention with a strange word. Cacoethes: It was strange to find FAPA, so sluggish in recent years, serving as the medium by which I got the first word of Ed Hamilton's death. I wish I'd been able to talk with him for a few minutes at some con or other. I would have liked to tell him how much I admired his honesty in his relations with fans, neither claiming to be a greater author than he was nor pretending that he really wasn't trying in those space operas. He was one of the few known living links between the authors who were writing for prozines when I started to read them and today. '' Genealogy is a big thing around Hagerstown just now. There's a club devoted to it, the library is encouraging people to bring in family Bibles so the lists of births and deaths can be copied and filed for public use, and I keep getting mistaken as a grand-nephew of someone who flourished in the late 18th century. The only real investigation I've done was for Rick Sneary who had an ancestor who was, of all things, a Hagerstown journalist. I know next to nothing about my own family tree beyond my grandparents. The Yew Tree Inn: Frank Denton is one of those fortunate people who can hold my interest endlessly even though he uses subject matter which is a considerable distance from my own fields of knowledge: the more obscure crannies of the United Kingdom, for instance, an Irish band from Newfoundland, and little-known mundane authors. The only thing wrong with such writing is the way it causes me to want to find time to investigate such things for myself, followed promptly by realization that there's not time enough for everything I'd like to do. Foolscap: I recently read through a fat collection of historical novels by Walter Edmonds, which John might enjoy. I'd read Drums Along the Mohawk long ago, but enjoyed it much more the second time through, perhaps because I now know a bit more about the background. Edmonds has the knack of causing characters to do and say things that don't strike the reader as important until he's on the next page and then he suddenly finds the previous page having its full effect on his reactions. Gnomen's Island: This is my first intimation that another fan watches One Day at a Time. I've deviated quite often from my rigid approach to TV to watch this, after someone who knows of my dislike for automobiles advised me that it's completely free of the things. Sure enough, it is; even one episode which involved the girls' efforts to pester their parents into getting their own cars never showed one. But I like it for a couple of other reasons. There's some originality in some of the writing. One episode in particular sticks in memory: no real plot, just the two girls wondering why their mother hadn't called them as she'd promised during her trip to a distant city, gradually getting more concerned about her, alternating bickering and making up, then a quiet sort of non-surprise ending. There is also a welcome flavor of a stage production, since so much of the action happens on the same set of the apartment without fancy camera work. Huitloxpetyl Presents: It's no wonder Meade's room is leaning. I hope he has adequate insurance on all that stuff and an understanding insurance agent. Come to think of it, this publication might have much usefulness in case some mishap should force a claim to be filed. Horizons: I glanced at a few lines there and here, and didn't feel like any more skimming when I saw how many goofs I'd missed in the proofreading. These eyes must be



even worse than I keep telling people they are. Le Moindre: It was strange to read these pages about the Quebec City carnival, just a short time after watching the Dorothy Hamill special based there. Now I'm confused about what she did and what Boyd did. '' I've been having the same urge to go beddybed as midnight approaches that Boyd describes. In my case, I thought it was just part of my general revulsion toward anything connected with journalism: for so many years I never finished work until midnight, often much later, and it seemed logical that I might want to go to bed early now to defy the newspaper company. But maybe it really is a change in bodily processes resulting from advancing years. '' My recording of L'Enfant et les Sortilèges, made in the late 1940's, definitely sounds the e at the end of marmalade as a separate syllable. Once I read something on this matter but I've been unable to find it in the three biographies of Ravel that I own so it must have been in a magazine which so far I've been unable to dig out. '' Those video tape recorders have tempted me dreadfully. So far I've held off for a combination of reasons which seem logical to me but might not be enough if disc-type pre-recorded movies and TV offerings are delayed much longer reaching the stores. One problem is the defects that would be built into most video taping off the air. Movies are usually abridged, thunderstorms and passing autos cause visible static, there's the CB adulteration, and many channels available in Hagerstown have built-in degradation of picture because Hagerstown is 75 miles or more from their transmitters. Then there are the inherent shortcomings in home video tape recorders. You can't edit their tapes by cutting and splicing as you can with audio tape; you either keep what you got off the air or you find someone else with the same kind of vtr and edit through dubbing. None of the non-professional vtr equipment seems capable of recording with fidelity indistinguishable from the original. The cost of the raw tape is quite high. I'm not sure about another point but I've heard repeatedly that video tape doesn't survive any number of playings as audio tape does; apparently there's deterioration after a dozen or so passes. Finally, there's the danger that the audio industry will suddenly turn to some other form of video tape recording incompatible with what's now available. There's the consolation that a fair quantity of people are now taping TV programs here and there, and if I eventually decide to go for a vtr, I should be able to obtain quite a bit of stuff through trade or purchase, just as golden age radio tapes are available. Bobolings: Old two-track tape recorders left a fairly wide track, and it might be possible to play their tapes on four-track equipment which doesn't have provision for a two-track position of the heads. If you try it, you might hear both tracks simultaneously, one backwards, but the balance control or removing the lead from one channel to the pre-amp would silence the backlash. If nothing works, I'd be glad to dub those tapes onto cassette tapes for Bob, if he isn't too concerned about the modest capabilities of my cheap monaural cassette machine. '' I remember that flu's date because it was the only time I've ever had the flu, it was the intestinal type which caused fainting, awful stomach agony and long bed rest, and I'd been on the newspaper job for only a few months. '' The memories of World War Two action sound extraordinarily fresh and detailed. I got queasy at the stomach just from reading about the storms at sea and the impending action. The Speed of Dark: I second the praise for the Noreascon Proceedings, even though there's a picture of me with my hands too close to the camera, whose perspective and position make me resemble



the only genuine Boston Strangler. '' The FAAN award ideas are useful but I hope they aren't confined to FAPA where perhaps half of the membership is too remotely attached to fanzine fandom to be apt to nominate and vote. Goliard: I know little about how those electric typewriters with round spheres for the typefaces operate. But I suspect they could be adapted to stencil-correcting purposes by speeding up the spin of the globe enough to exceed the speed of light, throwing it far enough back in time to insert the correction before the stencil had been cut at the point of the error. Synapse: Locally the election ballot is long only every fourth year when county offices must be filled. I think voters would be willing to vote a long ballot every other year for the sake of some choice in important boards. Or it could be done separately, as farmers choose soil conservation committees and Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Program groups. '' The ISL is having difficulty finding a permanent place for its present holdings. '' I have a listed telephone but I don't consider an unlisted number as evidence of where a snob lives. I'll join the unlisteds as soon as I retire; the only advantage of being in the book is the occasional tip from a stranger about column material. Half the calls I get are advertising or kids trying to play pranks or morons wanting to let off steam. It doesn't take a snob to want to get away from them. '' The Sermon on the Mount tells us near the start to let our good deeds shine forth, then soon launches into a list of praiseworthy activities which should be done in private. The \$12,000,000 Man: It sounds as if uninformed cutting caused some of the weaknesses in Logan's Run. Unexplained matters like these abound in movies after they've been trimmed to fit television time slots. Helen's Fantasia: I wonder how many years more Helen must publish this before they'll start listing it by its title in the Fantasy Amateur? '' I enjoyed the reprinted article, wishing only that Helen had expanded it for FAPA. For some reason, the drawing of the real Dracula reminded me of ATom's portraits of Goon Berry. From Sunday to Saturday: More good reading, although the things described are so far from my orbit that it's hard to comment specifically. Relatives who owned autos used to blow goodby horns here in Hagerstown, too, in my boyhood. I thought it was nice then and now I get annoyed at non-emergency horn blowing. Like the noise of rats in the walls, it's proof of how much more a young person can tolerate. Allerlei: From what we know of Lewis Carroll, I think it highly improbable that he would have meant anything in his Alice stories to be an intimation that drugs can be enlightening or amusing. The 19th century looked on drugs less romantically than we do today. Anyway, if everything was reversed behind the mirror, and everything was topsyturvy in wonderland, mushrooms would have nothing to do with drugs and ordinary tobacco rather than drugs would have made the caterpillar languid. Quantum Sufficit: I thought entrance into FAPA had caused John Foyster to behave oddly, until I realized what he had done in that speech. Even now, I feel a bit shaken, the way I do every time I encounter in a fanzine anything dealing with certain topics like the political philosophy of Heinlein or how rarely sex entered fiction in Gernsback's magazines or, worst of all, how to define science fiction. The 1977 FAPA Egoboo Poll: It was difficult, but I finally managed to fill out all the blanks except those for poets, who seem remarkably scarce in FAPA mailings nowadays. I'm not sure if I broke a rule by voting for SF5Yearly when I had something in that publication and I may not have understood completely the distinction between formal writing and personal narrative writing.



## Hagerstown Journal

January 1--My anxiety to start the new year off right was severely tried the New Year's Day several years ago when a blizzard collapsed with a cold wave to cause the city's water main to bust several blocks from my home, leaving me without water for the first fifteen or so hours of the spanking new twelvemonth. So the first thing I did this morning upon arising was to discover that there was definitely running water in the house, despite the continued cold weather. The commode was purring quietly, and didn't stop even when I lifted the lid off the tank and glared down into that awesome array of mechanical devices. I'll get a plumber tomorrow, I decided, knowing I could always turn it off between flushes at the valve if the first hours of 1977 should find me as pennypinching as in 1976. Just to make sure everything was all right elsewhere in the house, I checked the remainder of the second floor, looked all over the first floor, and was so encouraged to find everything so splendidly operative that I decided to top things off by glancing into the cellar. It was worse than in Dr. Keller's celebrated short story. Scaldingly hot water was spurting from the glass tube which shows the water level in the furnace's boiler. The water level had seemed to be rather high in recent days, but I had attributed this to the extra exertion which the furnace was providing to cope with the cold weather. I also had noticed an occasional thin wisp of steam arising from the top of the tube a few times, but blamed that too on hard work. Obviously, I wouldn't be able to find a plumber on this holiday, and because I didn't know quite what to do, I stood there and stared at the mess for a while. If I threw the emergency switch for the oil burner, steam would quickly subside but I didn't know if the broken tube would continue to drip water until the boiler was empty. It was far below freezing outdoors, so I would need to cut off the water at the point where it enters the house, to avoid frozen pipes indoors, and this would cause water to stagnate between that valve and the main, quite possibly ending in a freezeup under my lawn or sidewalk. Meanwhile, the cellar was getting wet again. Instead of taking some affirmative action, I went through the useless gesture of running to the telephone and calling the firm that had been doing my plumbing work. Dazedly, I welcomed the plumber to my home ten minutes later. Condescendingly, he informed me that all I needed to do was twist this and pull that, then drain something else, be careful not to do four other things, and I would have bypassed that broken gauge without the need for an emergency call. But he put in a new glass tube anyway, drew off a lot more water to bring the boiler level down to where it should be, and told me it was just my imagination that the level had been running too high, because I don't have an automatic water level maintaining device which could fill up the boiler by malfunctioning. I returned his best wishes for a happy new year and tried to be philosophical after he'd left over the short duration of my new year's resolutions involving calmness and nonchalance during crises in 1977. It was colder the next morning, there was no more leak in the cellar, but the new gauge indicated that the boiler was filling up again alarmingly. I called the plumbers again and received fresh assurance that the broken gauge couldn't have been the result of too much water in the boiler, and was informed that extra-cold weather causes the gauge to give



abnormally high readings. I heard myself complaining just like a stubborn old man that I'd been checking the level in that gauge for seventeen consecutive winters and it had never behaved quite the same in the past. The plumber clucked at my ignorant refusal to admit my incompetence in such matters and said goodbye. Just to be on the safe side, I drained a couple of buckets of water from the boiler. On the morning of January 3, the level was almost to the top of the gauge. I felt like the man at the climax of *The Shining* as I grabbed for the bucket and the runoff valve, wondering if I could relieve pressure before something busted loose. Again I got enough water out of the boiler to provide a few hours' leeway, but it came spurting out so frantically that it splashed onto the gloves I was wearing in sufficient quantity to give me a bad burn on the left index finger, and there's still a red spot there three months later. Once again I called the plumbers and I found them in a truthful mood this time. There really must be something wrong, I was told, but all the plumbers employed by this firm except one had quit and it might be spring before the sole survivor on their work force could get around to me again, in view of the large supply of plumbing disasters which the cold wave had encouraged. I'd better call another firm with a more stable working force, I was advised. I did, and was told that extreme cold weather causes the apparent level of water as shown in the glass tube to be higher than normal, but someone would come around to explain this phenomenon to me in person, since I sounded a bit skeptical. After I applied some pressure, the new arrival admitted that there might be a leak in the valve which you turn when you need to let more water enter the boiler. He fixed it and did such a good job that I feel as if the whole thing had been something out of Lovecraft, complete with that telltale mark on my finger to make me realize that something awful really did happen.

January 29--I saw Kenny Frey for the first time in many weeks at the mall today. He had bad news for me. Ray Mueller had died over in eastern Maryland, he told me, and there hadn't been a word about it in the local newspapers. It ruined my day: not the fact that Hagerstown's journalism had been proved fallible, but because Ray was such a nice person. I hadn't seen him for many years, because I have no reason to go into that part of the state and he rarely visited this area. But for about five years, my job had thrown me into frequent contact with him, while he was 4-H club agent for this county. Now, I know that 4-H clubs are a standard theme for comedians, and 4-H members are grouped in the same genera as bakers, school board members, and Nelson Eddy by those who march to a different beat. But during the years when 4-H activities were concentrated on rural boys and girls, I considered the program far superior to scouting, boys' clubs, and most of the other organized programs for young persons. There was a rule of thumb among this area's farmers which told anyone who would listen that no 4-H member ever got into trouble with the law after he grew up. I don't think anyone has ever made a scientific study on this matter, but it has held good in my observations, then and since. Ray really believed in his work. He was one of those rare individuals who could communicate both with the farm families that fit the stereotype of the primitive American farmer and with the farmers who had become sophisticated and up-to-date. He got along wonderfully with young persons, and I suspect that his physical attributes helped him when he needed to persuade parents to give their time or facilities



to 4-H purposes. He looked vaguely Bogartish, although he weighed perhaps fifty pounds more than Humphrey. Once, early in my incubation as a reporter, Ray took me to a 4-H meeting, just so I would have some idea of what I was writing about when I did news stories about the local program. That evening was a revelation to me, my first real acquaintance with a meeting of young people that was neither chaos nor rigidly controlled by adults, in a setting very much like The Waltons' farmhouse. Ray was also obliging when I needed someone to practice on while I was learning how to use the newspaper company's Speed Graphic. He never laughed at me when I asked questions like the reasons why dairy herd production records showed how much butterfat cows produced but contained no statistics on their buttermilk output. After Ray had been on the job in this county for several years, the extension service hired a second fouragent, a lively and pretty woman named Margaret Watson. Ray hauled her all over the county so she could get acquainted with the hundreds of farm families they would be working with. Pretty soon he was taking her around on dates. When they decided to get married, the entire structure of extension service work trembled, because this was the first time in Washington County's history that a female agent had decided to leave a non-married status. There were conferences and investigations into the ethics of such an unprecedented situation, but the authorities finally decided that she might as well get married if she wanted to. Not long afterwards, Ray got a job as county agent in the eastern part of the state. I didn't see much of him or Margaret after that, but I heard from time to time that he was making friends and accomplishing good things in his new duties over there. Maybe he didn't miss 4-H work too much, because that program has changed so much in recent years; farm population has dropped so much that the 4-H program is being aimed more toward suburban and city young persons and I don't think it's working as well with them as it did on the farm. When Kenny told me that Ray had had a slight heart attack oneday and a fatal heart attack two days later, it was too late even for me to write a note to Margaret. I felt depressed for days because I'd wanted them to live happily ever after.

February 7--A Washington channel has been televising reruns of The Odd Couple at 11 p.m. daily. I've never seen the movie which inspired the television series and I didn't watch any episodes of the series while it was on the network. But this winter, I've caught myself tuning it in once or twice a week and enjoying it immensely. One obvious attraction is Jack Klugman, as superb and resourceful an actor as you'll find anywhere today. Normally, anything on television that involves news or newspapers repels me, but the sports editor activities which Oscar pursues are so wildly different from those in the real world that I don't mind this aspect of the series at all. I also like the way the series managed to work so many celebrities portraying themselves into the episodes without the hamminess which this gimmick usually produces. But I have begun to wonder if my interest in the series might have a deeper, more personal cause. I suspect that I'm really fascinated mainly because I'm watching myself. I feel that I have both a sloppy Oscar and an obsessively neat Felix inside me, alternately holding control of my activities. There's hardly any other way to explain some of the aspects of my behavior. Consider my record collection. About half of it is arranged in orderly, systematic



manner, alphabetically by composer for the sets and individual discs which are amenable to this classification, and by category or by compositions' age or by name of performer in discs which have a mixture of composers represented. The rest of my records are in a hopeless jumble which often prevents me from playing something I have a sudden impulse to hear. Obviously, my personal Odd Couple motivation have both had their turns, influencing the way I shelve my records. At the office, my desk is usually filled to the drawers' capacity with newspapers, books, reports, notes, reference materials, and so on, reposing there in no particular order, but I do manage to keep a very efficient four-folder arrangement which segregates in ideal manner the materials for unwritten columns, those for columns which are written but unpublished, and stuff that will be used for the non-column aspect of my journalism. I keep the top of my desk at the office completely clear of stuff, except for items which I'm actually using at any given moment; my desk at home is almost always cluttered with ornaments, fanzines, correspondence, reference books, and so on. I do business with several banks and other investment places. The documents involved in these are evenly distributed among a safe deposit box, my bedroom closet, and a cabinet in another part of my house, causing a ridiculous amount of extra effort when I need several items at the same time. Yet I manage to keep everything related to income tax matters in one central place, never forget to put anything relevant with the rest of the stuff, and I have less trouble than the average person when it's time to prepare returns as a result of this phase of my financial empire. Every year, I grow more unreliable as a writer of locs on fanzines but I have the most consistent record in FAPA's history for activity and during the four or five years I was active in TAPS, I was represented in every month's publication except during a couple of organizational crises when someone lost my contribution or I didn't know in time the identity and deadline of the next publisher. I could go on and on detailing these inconsistencies in my alternation between order and disarray, like the systematic way I rotate shirt-wearing and the frantic hunts I must make when it's time to put on a clean pair of slacks. But I think the moral is clear. The Odd Couple seems to have embodied a very human duality which I suspect also is possessed by many other persons of my acquaintance. I like baseball, like Oscar, and opera, like Felix, and if anyone thinks I'm reading too deep a meaning into a trivial comedy series, my only rejoinder would involve the possibility that some people just don't want to admit this conflict between their various selves.

December 24--It was a strange Christmas Eve. It possessed one rare virtue: it was a day when I didn't need to work, so it wouldn't be spoiled for me by the necessity of seeing and hearing my fellow workers demonstrate their inability to hold their liquor at the office. I spent most of the morning in public, mainly in downtown Hagerstown, attending to various Advent-concluding errands. At the bank, I ran into Jim Rice, who startled me into revising my previous belief that nobody now remained whom I knew in the neighborhood where I grew up. I lived most of my first fourteen years on North Prospect Street. Mrs. Miller, who lived five doors up the street, had continued to reside there all through the years and I thought the last link was snapped when she died a year or two ago. But Jim told me today that he was just



then celebrating his golden anniversary as a resident of The Hill, the customary way of referring to that area, although heaven knows Hagerstown has enough hills to make such a name almost useless. Jim lived about a block up the street from me, so I didn't see too much of him in boyhood, when I was even less apt to feel globe-trotting impulses than I do today. I felt better after seeing him because a continuity seemed somehow preserved with the past. My doctor didn't take Christmas Eve off, so I stopped by to get another of the vitamin injections which theoretically at least have kept me alive during the winter months. He was reminiscing about the factories that he has visited on previous Christmas Eves in his capacity as a physician on call for sudden emergencies. He found the day's work completed around 11 a.m. at one of these factories, because the employees wanted to get home early for Christmas Eve. I remembered the remarkable way in which the composing room at the newspaper always seems to finish its work three or four hours sooner than usual, when a holiday is imminent. We wondered just how many hours a day the average resident of the United States would be required to work, if all workers and their employers got honest with one another and admitted to themselves that there really is no point in continuing the slowdowning and goofing off which make it possible for the average employe to look busy for six or seven hours a day. I suspect that the nation's work could be accomplished just as well if everyone were working a four-hour day and really devoted himself to the work. I stopped at a downtown restaurant to eat, and found one of the waitresses in tears. She showed me why. She had received a Christmas card from another waitress on the staff, who had written "Always a friend" above her name. It made me feel better to find that other people can be drastically moved by small gestures, too. There was a semi-yuletide gift waiting for me when I got home. He hadn't really meant it that way, but the fan from down under who had sent me quite unexpectedly a fascinating book about a pioneer photographer of his land had posted it at just the time in August or September that would cause it to arrive on Christmas Eve. It was another fortunate opportunity to feel a bit more cheered than I normally do on a day which has so many associations with the irretrievably departed good things of the past. I was less happy over certain other aspects of Christmas Eve in Hagerstown. The garbage trucks would not be making their rounds until a couple of days later, but some people had dumped on the sidewalks plastic bags and pasteboard cartons filled with garbage, which was sure to be nibbled and scattered by hungry dogs and rats during the next couple of nights. Hagerstown is one of the few cities that looks all the time like New York City during one of the metropolis' celebrated garbagemen's strikes. Traffic was unbelievable around town and tempers seemed to be inconsistent with the date. I saw only one accident and that wasn't as hard on the occupants as it was on the machinery. I also felt unhappy over the necessity to turn down an invitation to go out in the evening. It wouldn't have been a very exciting night on the town, because it would have been principally devoted to inspecting the church that a friend had just purchased. But I expected a cousin to stop by the house and didn't want her to make a wasted trip. So soon after nightfall I decided to listen to Christmas arrive in the United Kingdom, by listening to the BBC on short wave. But the BBC seems to be accelerating its progress toward becoming indistinguishable from the worst aspects of United States radio. All I heard was alternating news "analyses" and popular records. Disgustedly, I fiddled with



the dial just in time to hear another European short wave station express to all listeners all best wishes for a merry Christmas. This quite possibly caused me to become the first and only person in Hagerstown who heard his first official good wishes for the yuletide from Radio Moscow. My cousin stood me up, so after a while I switched to a public radio station in the Washington area on the FM band. It was offering mostly golden age radio programs that night. Somehow, I'd never heard an Archie's Tavern broadcast until this evening. It was curious to find the beginning sounding almost precisely as I'd imagined it would from the descriptions of the-ritual beginning which I'd read here and there. Later, there was a program featuring records from the 78 rpm era. This created a minor crisis for me. One of my records which I've never been able to play since my parents' deaths is the Schumann-Heink disc of Humperdinck's "Weihnachten". It has always been linked too intimately in memory with family Christmases. The announcer on the broadcast deceived me by stating incorrectly that here was an excerpt from "Hansel und Gretel" and it had started to play before I realized what was happening. I listened to it since this ice was broken and found myself not experiencing the emotional storm that I had feared. Maybe next December I'll get up the gumption to dig out my own copy. The only Christmas offering on television that I felt like watching was a musical version of "The Cricket on the Hearth". It did less violence to Dickens than I feared. But it seemed amateurish in a lot of ways, such as the frequency with which the blind girl kept pushing her hair away from her eyes. By the time midnight approached, I realized that once again I was not going to get the house decorated in time for Christmas. I put on the refrigerator door a little felt Christmas tree with magnets on its hindside which a girl I know had made and decided to let it go at that. There would be more Christmases and maybe I'll even buy an artificial tree next year, to go with the decorations which I bought cheap on impulse at a garage sale on the hottest day of last summer.

March 20--In fact, garage sales and their cousins like yard and porch sales have become a surer intimation of spring than the robins around here. You know it's the first of March when you find one or two of them advertised each week, and you know it's the middle of the month when two or three of them are being staged each Saturday. By the first week in April, there will be too many to cover over the weekend unless I make the rounds into a full-time occupation. But already this season, something alarming is happening to me while I visit these earliest events. I find myself experiencing the urge to buy things other than printed matter and records. In past years, I'd always been scrupulous about keeping my eyes where they belonged, on those items, so that I should not be led down the primrose path whose destination is already overly crowded with antique collectors, home redecorators, and the like. I know men often lose control over certain functions as they grow older but I didn't realize that I was fated to suffer this particular form of incontinency. At the very first yard sale I attended this year, I let my eyes wander to a globe imprinted with what must have been a world map drawn in the 16th century or thereabouts. Old maps don't really interest me, there's no place in the house which seems to be in severe need of a medium-sized globe to provide proper balance and aplomb to the decor, and yet I had a terrible time preventing myself from paying the piddling price the



globe would have cost. At another sale, it was a chair that took me by surprise. It looked rather old, it was decorated in a manner that looked attractive to me, but I have lots of chairs, I couldn't pretend that I could buy it as an investment because I was rather late getting to this sale and it would have been snapped up early if it had been a big bargain. It's the first time in memory that I have ever felt the urge to own a particular chair, although I've often been tired enough to wish I could sit down on any chair immediately. Even more alarming, I seem to be threatened with loss of my standards. I've always refused to pay more than a quarter for a used 78 rpm record and I almost deviated at a yard sale where three or four hundred of them were available in good condition at twice my price limit. The only thing that saved me was the fact that they were mostly famous singers in semi-classic or warhorse classic compositions, and I have altogether too many 78 rpm records of that type already. I even was on the verge of paying two dollars for a book at a flea market. It was one of those complete omnibus volumes which contain all the Sherlock Holmes fiction. I'd always wanted to own one and here I was, almost making the purchase, even though commonsense told me that if I wait longer, the same thing is bound to turn up at a yard sale for a small fraction of that price. I'm not sure what all this portends. Maybe it's softening of the brain or maybe the old devil has enough spare time to spend some of it plaguing me. The worst aspect of all this is the ease with which I can find reasons why I should help to drive up prices and do my share toward lessening the supply of collectibles. I find myself thinking: well, I can always sell it to someone else at the same price so I really won't be spending anything for it; or, here I am, close to retirement, and maybe after I quit my job I'll want to open a little collectors' store to keep me busy and this would be a good chance to pick up some stock for it. Moshe Feder has saved me, in a sense, so far. He has asked me to keep my eyes open for Coca-Cola artifacts, which he collects, and in the past I've always been so conscientious about not exposing myself to temptations in most yard sale offerings that I've never found anything he could use. So just before my hand goes to the pocket in these emergencies, I've been able to think of Moshe and how unfair it would be for me to backslide when he asked first and hasn't been attended to yet. Fandom can help one's daily course through life in many surprising ways.

December 28--The restaurant where I normally eat my noon meal had closed down from Christmas to New Year's Day, to provide a vacation for its staff. In this emergency, I decided to act recklessly and patronize the restaurant which the county commissioners are always kidding about as the local greasy spoon. (Actually, it isn't as sloppy as the term indicates. I don't think the language has a name for a restaurant which has just plain dull fare.) I hadn't eaten there in years and years and I thought it would be a nice change, to find myself among a bunch of regular patrons who would not know me. The first person I saw when I went in was a local photographer who has become quite an entrepreneur of local postcards in recent years. He was telling me about his hassle with someone who wanted him to handle a new postcard depicting the Carters, in quantities too large to be safe to accept until the new president's popularity was better established. He was also grumbling over the fact that he must pay the publisher \$25 to insert clouds in the sky whenever the photographer decides to publish a postcard made from a



picture showing a completely blue sky. He seemed a trifle irritated that I had recently given publicity to a local postcard collector while overlooking a prominent publisher of the things, then revised his emotions when he suddenly remembered that this collector had once supplied him with a piece of lantern glass he needed to restore an antique railroad relic. Another friend walked down the counter just then. He stopped beside me and I thought he wanted to talk. Instead, he just grabbed a napkin, lifted my cup of coffee, and spread the napkin over the saucer into which four or five drops of coffee had been spilled. "I never could stand to pass by anything like that," he said. Further down the counter was yet another acquaintance. I was particularly glad to see him, because his daughter had recently been the subject of a newspaper story about her success as a budding actress. The news item had been strangely vague about the precise details of her success, and I wanted to ask him about it. I learned that the reticence was deliberate. His daughter had been cast as the ingenue in a deodorant commercial for national television. She had hopes of getting a voice-over assignment on a fabric softener but it was too soon to be sure if her fortunes really are destined to improve in this manner. Meanwhile, things were happening in the restaurant. The waitress who had taken my order for the least objectionable thing on the menu hung on the wall the sign she had been carrying with its lettering concealed: it announced the existence of slippery potpie, which I dearly love, as the day's special, just too late for my purposes. A small child was dashing between a table and the bathroom on a two-minute schedule and making considerable noise about it, in the process. Something crashed against my back, threatening to deposit me on the other side of the counter. It was a perennial candidate for local political office, using this way to announce that he had just decided to run again for a city post in 1977. Eventually, I finished eating, and inadvertently angered my waitress, who gave me no check and refused to admit that she had served me anything. I insisted on paying the cost of what I'd eaten and as I left I thought I saw her going for the manager, to alert him about this suspicious new customer. I decided to confine myself to familiar haunts in the future. I'm sure my digestion would be even worse if I went to this establishment more often.

February 20--I felt as if some sort of era had ended when I got the Dear John letter from my milkman. The local dairy I'd patronized for nearly twenty years is going out of business. The primary reaction was to wonder if I could be happy with the dairy which had offered to take over the Superior Dairy customer list. But then I began to suspect something else. A quick check of the yellow pages confirmed my suspicions. This was the last of the independent purely local dairies remaining in Hagerstown. From now on, all local milk would come from one of the big dairies with headquarters elsewhere and branches in various cities including Hagerstown. Superior Dairy was closing up shop partly because of problems like too much paperwork under the government bureaucracy, partly because its owner is getting up in years and the son whom everyone had expected to take over its operation had died last year of a heart attack. I didn't grow up in time to know the real heyday of local dairies, the years when about forty of them were in existence simultaneously in Hagerstown and vicinity. But I can remember when those that remained during the Depression and World War Two fought for business with one another. Most of them had been small family affairs. Lou-



is Pasteur inadvertently caused the first wave of decimation in the local dairy picture. Back in the 1920's, Maryland passed a law requiring all milk to be pasteurized before sale to customers, and some dairies simply shut up shop, either because they didn't want to invest in the needed equipment or because they refused to knuckle down to an interfering government. I don't know the precise reasons why the surviving dairies folded in the years that followed but I'm sure many of them were family businesses that encountered the same lack of a youthful new generation that afflicted Superior while others must have been intimidated by modern methods of collecting and storing milk. I can't remember Ray Bradbury saying much about dairies when he put American nostalgia into his fiction, but there must be a lot of people of my generation with all sorts of small memories which younger persons can't possibly have: the ominous-looking cylinders standing on railroad platforms, less menacing than they looked because they were cream containers awaiting shipment; the milk horse clopping down the street in the early morning as late as my boyhood, because dairies were the last local firms to switch over to motor vehicles, on account of the frequent stopping involved in deliveries; and the glass milk bottles which have become one of the most hotly sought collectibles in the Hagerstown area. One lamentable aspect of the whole unhappy situation is the probability that now I shall never know my milkman. All during those two decades, the milk invariably arrived before I got up in the morning. The driver never called with the bill, just put a milk carton atop it at the end of each month. His name on the bill was Leonard and I never knew if that is his first or last name. For all I know, the milkman may have been an android, because he was suspiciously efficient and error-free. I can remember only two occasions when he forgot to leave milk or left less than scheduled on a delivery day, and someone might have been pilfering from my porch on those two occasions. A side effect of the closing down of Superior Dairy will be still more pollution from motor vehicles in Hagerstown. The firm operated a little store beside its plant, selling dairy products and other simple refreshments. It was within easy walking distance for a heavily populated neighborhood and did much walkin business, particularly in warm weather. Now the thousand or so individuals who strolled over to it when they felt hungry or thirsty will jump in the family car and drive miles to a Seven-Eleven or some such store. My sadness over this end of an era has been mixed with a mild eruption of my guilt complex. The Superior Dairy products had always been left in a metal box stamped with the firm's name on my back porch, until a few months ago when the milkman began leaving milk on my front porch, apparently knowing the end was near and deciding to save himself some steps in the final months. The first delivery from the dairy that took over the Superior customers was also on the front porch. If I adhered to the strictest ethics, I would try to find the lawful owner of this metal box. But since nobody has asked about it and nobody seems interested in using it, I think I'll bring it into the house, clean it up, place inside the empty carton which contained my last quart of Superior Dairy milk, and place it in a safe place in the cellar. Maybe a century from now, someone will finally discover it in its dark corner down there, and it will create a real sensation on a 21st century flea market.

March 2--I don't know how much my writing may reek of the local idioms, and how much of its eccentricities are my own invention. But today I lugged home a couple of heavy copies of the innumerable



revised editions and supplements the local library owns of H. L. Mencken's "The American Language". I wanted to see what he had to say about the words and usages which I have learned to be less often utilized on a national scale than in Hagerstown. For instance, newcomers to this city are frequently confused when they hear someone refer to the "pavement" when the object under scrutiny is the sidewalk. I was old enough to know better before anyone broke to me the news that this just isn't done in most cities. Mencken, sure enough, deals with it. He claims that the thing pedestrians walk on is called the pavement in England. It's hard to understand how that usage got established and survived here, because this part of Maryland was pioneered mostly by German-speaking people, Scots and Irishmen, with a minority of English settlers. You don't hear people say "coal oil" very often in Hagerstown nowadays. But there was a time when you saw those words on many advertising signs outside grocery stores, because that's what a lot of homes cooked with. If I've understood correctly Mencken's rather complicated explanation, coal oil is the name given in most of the United States to what the English call paraffin, and paraffin is used in this nation for the stuff that the British call white wax, while coal oil is utilized normally in Canada for the kerosene which it meant in Hagerstown. There was no infusion of Canadians into this area at any time in its history, to the best of my knowledge. Mencken refers to Hagerstown specifically only in a few places in the copies of his books that I thumbed through. He used this city as an exception to one of the nine general rules he found for determining how a town's name is altered to refer to its inhabitants. This rule would cause people here to be Hagerstownites. But when Mencken published this edition, he said, local people were known as either Hagerstownners or Hagerstonians. By now, the latter term is the only one I ever hear anyone use. I think I've mentioned previously in Horizons the snallygaster, the legendary local monster bird invented by the editor of a weekly newspaper one day when he had a particularly dull front page taking shape. I may also have told how the Federal Writers Project back in Depression days learnedly traced the word to the German "schnelle geister". Now I'm surprised to find a reference in Mencken to "snollygoster" as a word which was used in the middle of the 19th century in the South. It meant a person who tried to get a job through a politician's patronage. So now I wonder if that journalist accidentally invented a name so close to the old derogatory term, or if he'd seen the word in his reading or heard it in conversation and subconsciously corrupted it a trifle when he needed an outlandish-sounding name. Mencken is no help at all in my efforts to figure out why the predominantly black blocks of Hagerstown have been known as the Bowery as long back as I can remember. He derives the name of the New York City sector from the Dutch name for a farmstead, bouwerij. But the Dutch had no settlers in the Hagerstown area, as far as I know. Maybe the German name of a peasant, bauer, somehow got corrupted if that was always the poor white trash part of Hagerstown before the slaves were freed and the blacks found it the most economical living quarters available. If so, it could have picked up its spelling because of the popularity of the old song. I did find another word of Dutch origin in frequent use here. Smearcase is highly regarded by the area's residents who preserve the old Pennsylvania Dutch ways of cooking. But it turns out that the word consists of another spelling of a genuine Dutch term, not the Germanic language of the misnamed Pennsylvania Dutch. Either I



didn't look at enough editions of Mencken's books or he didn't get around to writing much about Pennsylvania Dutch influences in English. They aren't as often heard now as when I was younger, but I still hear fairly often "all" used in the sense of used up, like the sugar is all. However, I've never heard anyone here use the word to mean deceased, as it did in the title of a once popular drama, "Papa Is All," set in Pennsylvania Dutch country. "Once" continues to bob up in places here that it wouldn't in many other parts of the nation, most often in commands like: "Come here once." It's simply an intensifying word in such a sentence, not orders to limit oneself to just one appearance. I've never found even in Pennsylvania Dutch language studies one construction which remains in use here: "back back" in place of a simple "back", most often heard when someone is trying to direct a driver how to maneuver an auto into a tight parking space or a large truck into a narrow alley. "The American Language" lists "onery" as a way of pronouncing "ordinary". I've heard it often in Hagerstown but here it always means an obstinate or non-conformist person. Maybe I hear it more often than most people do. My father used to play as a boy a game called sockdolager. He taught it to me, and I introduced it in my circle when I was small. I always thought it was a nonsense word invented just for the game. But Mencken mentions "sockdolager" which seems to have been a deliberately invented word meaning an exceptional or decisive thing, derived from "doxologer". Fortunately, my pronunciation vagaries don't show up in Horizons. I'm not sure how often I say "oncet" instead of "once" but it's prevalent here. Mencken says it has an Irish origin along with "ketch" for "catch" which is rare here and "drownded" which I hear often. One thing I haven't determined is whether one word I heard often as a child is really peculiar to Hagerstown, or represented a term in wider use which Mencken just didn't go into. It's slopjar. Since central plumbing became customary, dignified local people reminisce about the era when every bedroom had a chamber pot. I consider that word a French euphemism. I would have been laughed out of the house when I was a little boy and spent the night at my grandmother's house if I'd asked for a chamber pot.

January 28--I was attending a recital by an obscure ensemble called the Arioso Woodwind Quintet. Just before one selection was about to start, the bassoonist rose abruptly and strode offstage. The horn player announced in ringing terms: "He forgot to call his mother." The audience hadn't stopped tittering when the man with the bassoon returned, clutching in one hand his part of the score for the imminent selection. The small episode emphasized how much things have changed since I started concertgoing. Nowadays, musicians seem to talk as much as they play or sing while they're giving concerts here. The George Shearing Quintet was in Hagerstown this winter. The pianist rambled on and on like the host on a television talk show. He identified at length the identity of the composition he had just performed and the one that the group would offer next. He talked about his musicians, described how things are back in England, and he told jokes. (Sample: Soon after take-off, passengers on a transcontinental flight were advised that they would reach their destination slightly late because there was trouble with an engine. Later, they were told that the delay would be as much as thirty minutes, because a second engine had gone bad. About midway in the trip, the passengers were told that they might arrive two hours late, since the third engine had just gone out. "Mercy," one passenger said. "If that fourth engine stops, we'll be



up here forever.") One woman gave an all-Hugo Wolf recital at the local museum. The audience received quite comprehensive footnotes in the program on the various compositions she would sing, and you would think that a composer who wrote his best music almost a century ago wouldn't need too much explaining today. But the singer proceeded to give before each song a discussion which lasted two or three times as long as the work it concerned. Then she proceeded to sing in such a loud and piercing soprano voice that it took all my restraint to avoid starting my review with the epithet that here was one singer who cried Wolf. There may have been more justification for the pianist who offered an all-Ives recital here offering some spoken warning to the audience about what was to come. But I did think she carried it a little too far when she went backstage and put on a 19th century-looking gown and did up her hair before telling the audience about the Concord Sonata. It's possible that Bennett Lerner avoided real embarrassment by chattering away before he performed one group of compositions in a recital here. Hagerstown isn't exactly oversupplied with persons aware of piano compositions written since the start of the 20th century. One of them might have slipped out of the auditorium and telephoned for an ambulance, if Lerner hadn't told what he was doing, as he prepared the piano for his John Cage group. I think one possible explanation for this trend to talk by musicians could be the fact that more and more of them are North American artists. It used to be that foreign artists were most often hired to perform here and many of them had the greatest difficulty making themselves understood if they tried to announce the identity of an encore. This language problem had a particularly awkward consequence in a non-musical circumstance on one occasion when a Hungarian-derived ballet group performed here. Some of the members went shopping and didn't engage in the formality of paying for the things they selected. The police had an exciting day, trying to find someone in Hagerstown who could speak Hungarian to establish communication that would preserve the city from having the larger part of a ballet ensemble in the pokey. The oddest announcement I've ever heard from a musician came from the lips of a quite well known tenor. He prefaced his recital with the announcement that an accident, not otherwise defined, had left him deaf and he hoped the good people of Hagerstown wouldn't mind his having recourse to the only expedient that would permit him to concertize with this affliction. For the entire evening, just before each selection, he stuck his head into the very intestines of the concert grand and his accompanist thundered out a chord so loud that you expected Gabriel's trumpet to reply. The pitch established to his satisfaction in this way, the tenor proceeded to sing and the accompanist did his best to keep pace with him. No wonder soprano Frances Alda entitled her autobiography "Men, Women and Tenors".

February 3--A good rule of thumb in fandom is: never throw away anything, because you're sure to want it some day when it's too late. That precept has some meaning in my job, too. There is no way I could have found storage space for all the notes, press releases, reports, copies of speeches and other documents that I've used in journalism down through all these years. But sometimes I get the instinctive feeling that something should be preserved because it's particularly apt to be useful again in the future. I have two large file cabinet drawers full of such things at the office and several boxes of them are on the attic, not to mention



a scattering in my desk at the office and in the darkroom compartment from which I've never been evicted, even though I've not been doing photography for the newspaper for four or five years. When I find myself in temporary embarrassment for something to write columns about, poking through those unsorted documents for five minutes will usually turn up something capable of being rehashed. If it had been feasible to save everything of any consequence, chances are I would have enough ammunition for the remaining five plus years of agony at the office. My most recent discovery is a rather elaborately got up booklet that's less than nine years of age. In the summer of 1968, the local school system was the target for a tug of war between the electricity people and the natural gas people over how new school buildings should be heated. The school authorities seemed perfectly satisfied with oil burners, but the fuel oil folks didn't put on pressure like the utility companies. The school board had finally decided to heat a new school by electricity, to see how it worked out. So the gas company decided that a gas-heated school was essential to preserve democracy and capitalism and various other ethereal matters. The state natural gas company got together a brochure to put its case into writing, illustrating it with pictures from magazines and attaching copies of various articles about experience with gas-heated schools in other areas. Something impelled me to save a copy of it, fortunately. It makes strange reading today, in comparison with the things the natural gas industry has been saying during recent months. The document quotes United States Geological Survey estimates of two quadrillion cubic feet of natural gas "that is economically recoverable in our nation under present technology." It continues: "That's enough for the next 100 years. What's more, the most expert estimates have time and again proved too modest. Natural gas actually discovered has repeatedly exceeded expectations. In fact, each year more natural gas is found in our nation than is used even though the demand for natural gas is constantly hitting new highs. So rather than a diminishing reserve, we have been experiencing an increasing reserve of natural gas." Ah, but you try to remind me that the natural gas industry's real problem is inability to develop sources of more gas without substantial price increases? The brochure relieved our minds on that matter in 1968, when inflation was hitting the nation hard: "Certainly no one can accurately predict what the future trend will be nor can we say there will be no rate increases. We did experience a period from 1952 to 1959 that was marked by a wave of gas rate increases brought about primarily by the cost of the expansion programs completed to meet an unprecedented demand for gas during the post war period from 1945 to 1951. Once this demand was met, our rates leveled off. Although we have had some rate increases since then, these have primarily been caused by higher prices we had to pay our pipe line suppliers for wholesale gas. We have also had rate decreases due to decreases in wholesale costs, and these have been passed along to our customers in the form of lower rates. In the case of the Hagerstown Gas Company their rates have been going down. Since 1949 they have dropped about 20 per cent and we are now reviewing the rates so that we might reduce them significantly further.... Recently the wholesale cost of gas has been greatly stabilized by a purchase negotiated by the Columbia Gas System for 6.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas from the Humble Oil and Refining Company to be delivered over the next 23-year period at a fixed well-head price. This will help to keep our rates steady." The presentation compared heating practices with electricity, charging



that it would be necessary to turn back the thermostat to 50 degrees after classes end to keep the fuel bill at a reasonable level. "With gas heat, you can hold your temperature at 75 degrees all day and evening." The school board was skeptical about some phases of gas heat. But a new vocational school was on the drawing boards, it would be using quite a bit of gas for some of its courses, federal funds were paying for much of the building under the Appalachia program, and the educators decided to go ahead and try natural gas. Within a year or two, the gas company had begun to curtail supplies to several local industries which have alternate sources of energy. By this winter, the vocational school was closed down during part of the cold wave because no gas was available, and it was operating on other days to the tune of a 55-degree thermostat setting with students permitted to skip classes if they felt unable to stay healthy under such circumstances. So one more line from the 1968 document seems relevant: "Gas is reliable--it is delivered through underground pipelines unaffected by weather."

December 25--I can't guarantee that I'll have a merry Christmas in any given year. But it must have been easier to have a merry Christmas when Richard J. Hamilton was writing for and editing Hagerstown's afternoon daily early in this century. All you needed to do was read the right items in the editions just before Christmas. Here are some samples, reprinted strictly sic except for an occasional tampering with the names, just in case a wild coincidence should cause some descendant to see this and feel offended: "Constable Stoddard got two young Waynesboro lads on the Bowery, both of them loaded and one armed with a marriage license and the other with a notice that he had been discharged from a brain factory. They were only tolerably noisy and so were fined only \$3.10 and gave such names as Newton Jones and John Smith and so the justice asked them: 'Do you think I was born in a barn with green cheese over my eye?'" "X.Y.Z., arrested by Officer Williams for being twisted, said his girl stumbled and he caught her by the arm. Admitted he was loaded. \$3. Then Deputy Long produced the girl, Z.Y.X., and said he never was greeted with such language as she got off. She said that the deputy as he took her back said he would break her d-d neck. 'And so I would have,' said the deputy. Her fine was \$5.10." "X.Z.Y. filed a long and only partly intelligible grievance with Justice Hoffman this morning. He said a compatriot owed him \$9 for merchandise and when he complained he threw a bucket of hot water in his eye. Nothing was done." "A citizen called a at police station to know if there was any law in slurring. He was told unfortunately there was none. The man said, 'I have rented part of a house and we use the one stove. This has caused trouble in the families and they throwed other men up to my wife and I objected and they said they were going to set me out on the sidewalk.' The justice told him to go home and not listen to the slanderers." "Leitersburg is rapidly becoming as famous as the dark and bloody ground of Bleeding Kansas. Shots ring forth at night, mysterious men grope about hen houses, pistol duellos proceed, and the night is perforated with the clatter of ammunition. The hardy farmers hole up on buck shot and Waynesboro border ruffians come and go in the stilly night jerking roosters from their downy perches and hens from their pens. It is hightimes someone got killed." "Willie Wilmer, the well known rattlesnake man, was in town with his boys and he brought along a couple of vipers and he will make a Christmas gift of them to someone who fancies a nice pet. His boy, John, makes a pet of them and has them all trained. He had three beauties



and says they would make nice Christmas tree ornaments as they are all tamed and hypnotized. He tried to get a local whiskey man to put them in his window and the man said 'No!' loudly and slammed the door." "Neighbors of the late Y.X.Z. inform the Mail that not only did Miss Z.X. see little Y. in his casket and take a farewell of him but she came twice once the lad not being in his casket and so she came again. It is fair to suppose her mother did not know it." (That's not abridged. It sounds like a correction to a previous item but I could find nothing else on the same topic.) "X.X. now arises, not from the dead, as an afternoon paper had him beheaded by a train at Cherry Run, and declares that he is very much alive and wants to know if there is a conspiracy against him." "A Honey Hill woman is noted for her skill in culinary art and had some company for dinner the other day. When dessert was passed one of the guests remarked on the beautiful appearance of the pie and inquired how she got such a pretty scallop on its edge. He nearly fell dead when she replied, 'Oh, that is easy; I use my false teeth.'" (The last item is too long to quote complete. It deals with how Christmas was observed in what were the old days for persons in the first decade of the 20th century. Following is its climax, which strikes me as a clear forerunner of an unproduced Monty Python sequence:) "The annual visitor would make appearance some hours after darkness came, thoroughly disguised, especially the face, which sometimes would be covered with a hideously ugly face, generally in female garb. He or she would be equipped with an ample sack about the shoulders, filled with cakes, nuts and fruits and a long hazel switch which was supposed to have some kind of charm as well as a sting. One hand would scatter the goodies on the floor and then would begin the scramble and the other hand would ply the switch on the backs of the excited youngsters."

February 27--Even though I will soon be above the maximum age for participation in senior citizens' events here, I went to a presentation of the organized activities offered these people in Hagerstown. Somehow, it seemed vaguely familiar as one expert after another told about the activities involved in the local program. There are free swimming lessons, field trips, a kitchen band, dancing, exercise sessions, craft work, and art instruction, for instance. After a while, the deja vu sensation was explained, without benefit of epilepsy or a time warp. Some time ago I'd been to a program describing what the county offers to pre-school and kindergarten youngsters. There isn't much difference between the two programs in this sense. I was already familiar with another aspect of the senior citizen program. Those deemed in financial straits who have no family or other source of regular meals are provided with free hot meals every day. I knew about it because the special meal program at the senior citizen center and other locations operates only five days a week, and on weekends the recipients are invited to eat at the lunch counter of a downtown store where I occasionally dine, although I pay for my meals and they don't. I'd been aware of all this because I'd gone hungry several weekend days as the overworked waitresses tried to cope with the new influx of freebie customers. I'd also noticed that most of the men and women around me who were benefiting from this program were discussing among themselves how much they had won or lost at the races the previous evening. But I did gain some useful new information, such as the fact that one senior citizen got so excited during a visit to the local planetarium that she lost her false teeth. There was also the edifying news that there is a special program for



retarded senior citizens. Apparently a person who has managed to live within his limitations all of his life will be bedeviled in his last years to conform. But the senior citizen authorities admit that many of their followers participate for one crass reason. A lot of local stores and other firms offer discounts to senior citizens and many of them require the oldster to flash a little card identifying himself as a participant in the senior citizen program, to become eligible. I don't know. I admire one 79-year-old lady described in the presentation because she is flexible enough to have fallen in love with the metric system and so thoroughly acquainted with it that she has been drafted to help school teachers explain it in their classes. I like the reassurance program which hooks up pairs of elderly persons who then proceed to call each other daily, not only to show that someone cares but also to check against possible incapacitating accidents or illnesses for those who live alone. And I admit I might change my mind about the rest of the program if I go the whole hog and grow even older than I am now. But at this distance beyond middle age, it looks to me as if these elderly persons are letting themselves be regimented, lured into activities which are below their intellectual capabilities, urged to do things which are not altogether advisable for persons who are in physical decline. I don't want to be segregated by age, either. I can always hope that the Supreme Court will rule that senior citizen groups violate civil rights, before I allow myself to be trapped by the lure of that magic identification card and the ten per cent discounts it creates.

March 24--Some time ago, I mentioned in Horizons the exciting events surrounding my discovery that I had been listed in Who's Who in the East. So far, that status has not caused me to become the subject of a series of articles by investigative reporters and nobody has tried to kidnap my wife and children. But the listing has increased my mail with items which, fortunately, don't need locs. Apparently some people use the book as a source of mailing lists. It's hard to be sure if certain missives resulted from the listing, but those that come with my middle initial or full middle name on the envelope probably did, because I rarely use the middle name in most respects. For instance, I have been receiving brochures from Kruse Auction Company. This firm does not cry the sale when an elderly Hagerstown couple must move into a rest home and has six rooms of furnishings to sell. Its clientele is more remarkable. One recent listing gave me a chance to purchase an item described this way: "The Beautiful French Castle is complete excluding the brick, with all of the intricately carved design of 16th Century French Gothic." The brochure assures me that shipment to the purchaser will be no problem since it's within ten feet of a railroad siding. The castle's pedigree seems faultless, since its prominent owners included William Randolph Hearst. Also available at this same auction were "Alfred Hitchcock's white trunk", "Grist mill", something mysteriously listed as "2 P.V.s" and, anticlimactically, "Fire hose nozzle". I didn't get to Santa Monica where these items were sold. Then there was the invitation from "Mr. Vaughn Rickard--Cunard Line, Ltd." to sail on the Queen Elizabeth 2 for a world cruise in 1977. The letter expressed exceptional confidence in my past record: "I'm sure that, over the years, you've visited some of the world's most festive cities and renowned resorts." But Mr. Rickard seemed to feel that his 81-day voyage might create some new experiences even for me. He mentioned in particular Kota Kinabalu in Borneo and Tamatave on Madagascar as possible novelties and by some remarkable



insight on his part or coincidence it's a fact I've never had a memorable adventure in either community. But I do detect some condescension in this letter, which must differ from the ones that go to the upper crust whose names are found in Who's Who in America. Quite candidly, he sizes me up this way: "Some of your fellow shipmates will be board for the full cruise. However, not everyone of us has the time to rest, relax, and be waited upon for 81 consecutive days, I'm sure." I can take a hint: he means I might not be able to afford the whole thing. He doesn't even list a price for the 81-day trip but quotes me fees more suited to my regional status like a 40-day segment from Cape Town to Hong Kong for \$5,615. That's the nice thing about the charity appeals that have come as an apparent result of my listing. Outstretched palms via the mail had usually, before I attained fame, listed sums for me to check in accordance with my donation, starting at \$1. Here's a pitch from the National Urban Coalition where the first figure is \$100. And a letter from none other than Lena Horne, for the Cynthia Sickle Cell Anemia Fund, tells me exactly what I'll get for the lowest rate offered me: for \$100, "only the name will appear" in a "souvenir journal" where I can get a full page for \$325 and they'll use gold ink on that page for \$500. Then there was the severe-looking envelope bearing as return address only the name of Ashley D. Deshazor and a Chicago address. I assumed that he was a neofan who wanted for his first fanzine an article on whether there's too much science in science fiction, and would you believe it, he was a Montgomery Ward vice-president offering me a charge account and promising me a free frying pan if I'll return the little slip of paper in a postage-free envelope. Some of the letters seem to assume intimate knowledge on my part of matters normally confined to the highest financial circles. A letter from Reynolds Securities in Washington advised me that a seat had been reserved in my name at "one of the most unique seminars available on money-making opportunities" involving the "fascinating field of listed options". All I needed to do was pay \$100 for the all-day event at "Marriott Key Bridge". It seemed to me that a bridge was a dubious locale for such an event, particularly since it was scheduled for a Saturday in November when the weather can be quite raw. But then I realized that this bridge, wherever it may be, could have a secret passageway known only to people who are important enough to invest in a seminar about such things as "the Rostenkowski bill recently signed into law". Presumably, there's also a trapdoor for the benefit of those who want to come back after encountering disappointment in their efforts to put their new knowledge to profit. I know women's lib has gone a long way, but I was startled by the freedom of thought shown in a letter from the ex-vice-chief of the Creek Nation, asking for a contribution to support a drama called "Dust on Her Petticoats", and beginning: "I am writing you today as one woman to another!" Out of all these soul-satisfying messages (which are always printed on paper almost as thick as that used in egg cartons) the only one which caused me to bite was one from the American Genealogical Research Institute. It came in November, when I was getting desperate for Christmas gift ideas, and when it announced "the publication of a Warner family history" I bought a copy for an old aunt out in California. She went bananas over it, even though it didn't mention me, as far as I could determine from a hasty leafing through before I rewrapped it and sent it to her. But maybe I should be content with the Who's Who in the East entry.



## The Worst of Martin

That's a fair question - let's see now - oh, yes, I never made a graven image. . . They laughed when I sat down at the piano - no wonder, there wasn't any seat there. . .

So a delegation arrived from the Egyptian Archaeological Society and initiated excavations in Woodlawn Cemetery. The never ending nerve of those New Yorkers objecting to having their relatives hauled East for scientific study. . .

I've seen better heads on a glass of bbeer. . . A yo-yo three stories long. . . I was so lazy this summer - the only person with a self-winding watch that ran down. . . Here we are, nearly income tax time again: deducting \$400 for church - my, how those nickels add up. . . She's getting married? I didn't even know she was pregnant. . . Banana production this year exceeds that of the corresponding period a year ago by approximately 12% and indicated earnings for the first quarter show an improvement - are you getting yours? No wonder she won the free-style - she used to be a street walker in Venice. . . The Spirit of '69. . . Honest, you're a brick. . .

Music -

Lights -

Dialogue -

Well, it's certainly grand to be here with you again. . . at this point I'm beginning to feel like one of you - I don't know just which one of you I feel like, but I feel like one of you. . . Probably the one with a hangover. . . You know how many discussions start off with the cliché: "a funny thing happened to me on the way over here this evening. . ." Well, nothing funny ever happened to me going anyplace - until tonight. . . I stopped off to see my girl when all of a sudden her mother came into the room. She said: "Well, I never - " But my girl spoke right up: "But Mother, you must have." . . And that reminds me of a night in Darjeeling. Two explorers landed with all their Abercrombie and Fitch equipment. After much inventory and discussion with the headman they decided they needed some nautical supplies. So they cabled A&F: "Please send two ponts and a canoe." Shortly after came the confirmation: "Girls on the way - what's a panoe?" . . . This may sound all very cosmopolitan but I'm a farm boy actually. . . Just a back-house philosopher. . . Remember many happy days on the farm - like the day paw hitched the bull to plow - "I'm going to teach this critter", he said, "that there's something else in life besides romance". . . And another time, paw sold the cow 'cause he gave no milk. . . I've traveled, however, as a violinist. . . I played in Austria, Frankfurt, Knockwurst, Rome, Paris - in Paris I think I fiddled around the most. . . Ah, those sidewalk cafes: there if you don't pay the cheque, they throw you inside. . .

I'm saving my money, someday it might be worth something. . . A tomahawk is what if you go to sleep suddenly and wake without hair there is an Indian with. . .

Got a communique on bourbon construction: the way to test bourbon is to pass 69 volts through a liter of the stuff. If the current causes a precipitation of lye, tin, arsenic, iron slag and alum, the bourbon is fair. If, however, the liquor chases the current back to the generator, you've got good bourbon. . .

It's a very rare calendar - features a girl wearing clothes. . .  
(from the second Grotesquette, by Ed Martin, 1954)