

It took Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, U.S.A., seven minutes to think up this May, 1980, volume 41, number 3, FAPA number 156, whole number 161, issue of Horizons. Some things can't be hurried. Production by the Coulsons.

In the Beginning

The Fantasy Amateur: Long ago when I served a term or two as FAPA secretary-treasurer, the account book was a looseleaf one. Someone had mimeographed a batch of forms on which membership data and financial facts could be entered. There were quite a few blank forms supplied for forthcoming new memberships but I don't remember having received any sheets covering those whose memberships had lapsed before I took office. It's awfully dim in memory but I seem to recall the forms having the appearance of having been stenciled and duplicated by the Slan Shacklers. 1980 FAPA Egoboo Poll: I didn't vote this time. It's my first miss in a long time, breaking a string of voting that dates back at least to the early 1960's when broken bones incapacitated me parts of two winters and may have forced non-voting, perhaps even longer. My excuses: There was no duplicated ballot in my mailing, so voting would have left my mailing incomplete. There is no provision on the poll sheet for voting for or against waiting listers, as the constitution requires. I don't have the faintest idea what the "Free-for-All" category means or what is the difference between "formal" and "personal narrative". And whatever slight value the egoboo poll usually has in showing the merits of members' creativity is destroyed by this 300-point system with no limit on voting for oneself, no limit on how many votes can go in one category, not even space for signing ballots. I hope enough other members feel as I do to produce a very low percentage of ballots returned. Of Members and 'Zines: But I appreciate this anyway. Gradually, Peggy Rae is building up something of more permanent value than memory-jogging for egoboo poll voting, a source of quick reference to determine when this or that member was active over the years, how an individual's productivity rose and fell, and so on. It would be greedy, I suppose, to wish that she or someone else would lavish the time needed to produce additional listings for the years before this series started. The Futurian Society of Sydney: Did Vol Molesworth write two histories of Australian fandom's first years? I didn't compare this "unpublished" narrative with the one which appeared in a printed booklet but the general style and areas covered seem similar. Science Fiction News: It isn't necessary to live in Australia for problems with subscriptions to United States publications. I've subscribed most of my life to The Sporting News, a weekly hybrid between magazine and newspaper. Last fall I mailed a check to renew my subscription about six weeks before it was due to expire. When the next two issues after expiration of the old subscription failed to arrive, I wrote to complain, and asked for the renewal to start with the two issues I'd missed, since I save copies. I got a note promising to extend my subscription for the issues I'd missed, The Sporting News resumed its regular appearance, but I still didn't have the two missed issues. I wrote again, this time asking for the two issues and suggesting that my extended subscription should be reduced by two copies to make up for them, or offering to pay for those two issues if they didn't want to change their records again. I received a note telling me that my subscription had been extended to make up for the missing issues. If I have

figured out correctly the subscription data that appears on the address label, my subscription to The Sporting News has now been extended by thirteen months beyond the date when the recent renewal should have caused it to expire and I still don't have those two issues I missed. If I try to be honest and advise them that they're giving me more than I paid for, I'd probably receive a notice that my subscription has expired and must be renewed, so I'm going to do nothing but hope I can find those two issues at a yard sale this summer. '' Even in FAPA there aren't many fans who can remember the fanzines I published in 1939. So I'd better explain: when I rejected an article meant for Spaceways "on political grounds" it didn't mean that I refused to print something whose politics I disagreed with. Instead, it meant that I had a policy of not publishing anything of a political nature in Spaceways. Sixty Pages for FAPA: The only thing that duluted the pleasure I found in reading all this Bangsundiana was the gradually increasing awareness as I went through it that it would be quite hard to find comment hooks. It doesn't seem right to give only a few lines to such a fat publication. '' The repeated rejections of Beloved Son before it found a publisher, followed by general acclaim for the novel by reviewers, doesn't seem to fit very well the Ellison theory that a good science fiction story will be instantly recognized as such by editors. '' Fandom may not disappear soon because of obsolescence of the written word. But I'm not so optimistic about other areas which depend on words. It's ominous to see highway signs in the United States changing to wordless symbols and pictures. '' If I go somewhere where people are smoking simply for a visit, I don't expect any of them to refrain from smoking on my account. My dissatisfaction involves people who blow smoke in my face in circumstances where I have a need to be in a particular place, like eating places in Hagerstown. Maryland's tobacco industry has lobbied successfully against proposed legislation that would require separate areas for smokers and non-smokers in restaurants, so I probably won't live long enough for the real nirvana, a total ban on smoking in restaurants, particularly if smokers continue to direct their smoke in my face at close range. Disinformation: I know Arthur D. Hlavaty had nothing to do with VISTA slogans. But he gives me a chance to wonder in print on a matter that has bothered me a long while. Would there be more success in efforts to reduce the incidence of poverty, cancer, and other evils, if organizations were less militaristic in their propaganda? It's always a war on poverty, fight cancer, battle for mental health: violence in a semantic sense. No matter where you look in history, you'll find that wars and battles and fights have brought more problems than the problems they've conquered. I wonder if all this shouting about fights and battles and wars for good causes could have a psychological bad effect on the entire efforts. Would there be more rational efforts if everyone tried to study, to learn, to understand, to communicate about those problems? '' I think there's some sort of relationship for most students between the amount of reading they do and how well they can spell. Certain individuals obviously possess a mental quirk which makes them poor spellers. But the majority of people, I think, who read voluminously will come to recognize a misspelling by the fact that the word "looks wrong". From Sunday to Saturday: I thought of dittoing collections of my fan writing because it's something I'd like to produce myself if there's time after retirement, rather than sending out to have done, and I just can't believe

I'll ever again have the patience and ability to cope with a mimeograph. Unknown evils are often less fearsome than familiar ones and I've never tried to use a ditto machine. Starfire: A six foot, eight inch fan? I can't remember any active fan who is taller than that, unless it could be Elliott Shorter. I seem to remember Mike Glycer as possessing a reputation for height but we haven't gone to the same convention yet, a rather inadequate way of expressing the fact that I don't go to enough cons to make it statistically probable. '' I'm not sure I can follow all of Dave Johnson's proofs for the validity of Christianity. In fact, the Bible seems to put much emphasis on the necessity for faith and if something can be proved, the need for faith vanishes. But I think there is a higher power which can be approached through Christianity for various other reasons which aren't provable: I can't believe in a universe which just popped into existence without an author, for one thing, and Christianity seems to work where it's practised, for another thing, making people more reasonable and less savage than where it isn't. '' The nation's space program leading up to the manned Moon landings failed to produce any important example of a situation which science hadn't foreseen and provided against out in space. With that good record, along with the added scientific knowledge acquired in space, isn't it probable that there would be no big blunder in a space colony's preparations? '' I feel more than ever out of things after reading the data on these coming cons. I've never heard of Hasbrouk, N.J., where this year's Luncheon was scheduled, or of Shelby Bush, III, one of the fan guests of honors at Okon, or of Octavia Butler, apparently a pro guest of honor at the recent Wiscon. '' Is it reasonable to suppose that legalizing marijuana would prevent small children from smoking it? Alcohol is legal and kids are becoming addicted to it at a frightfully early age. Science Fantasy and Law: A guilt complex comes in handy sometimes. Mine is powerful enough to guarantee me against worries if my income tax return is audited. I just can't imagine myself cheating and then living with fear of being caught, the way many taxpayers cheerfully do. Interjection: Jack Chalker is risking an awful fate for him, for me, and for FAPA in general. Maybe someone once asked Speer for clarification of a remark about his grammar and thus started the barrage of nitpicking that has been rattling through FAPA down through the decades. Suppose Jack's query to Terry Carr turns that mild-mannered FAPAN into another Speer, pouncing on every page in every mailing for an impacted gerund or a failure to put a noun in the ablative case? Or to bring up the ultimate horror, suppose this happened and then Carr and Speer began arguing with one another in print over the propriety of using in a fanzine a neologism that didn't appear in Webster's until the 1887 edition? Detours: The review of Five Fates reinforces my belief that science fiction stories written to order are rarely good ones or representative of the writers' full abilities, no matter whether the stories come from beginning authors at a Clarion workshop or are produced by established pros for a theme anthology. And remember all the dreary prozine stories that were written to go with a cover some artist had dreamed up out of the whole cloth? '' I admire Russell's ability to get his thoughts in order so thoroughly in the instant before a traffic accident. I had the opposite experience a couple of years ago. I was driving downhill on a one-way street near my home, approaching the spot where it becomes two-way and where another street intersects at a V angle. I had the right of way. An oncoming vehicle which was required to turn into

the intersecting street stopped at the proper point, where the sign stood. I turned my head to the right long enough to make sure no vehicle was ignoring the yield sign where the intersecting street merged into mine. When I looked ahead again, the auto that had been halted in front of me was in motion again, directly in my path, and I was heading directly toward it, only a few dozen feet away. I was probably going a bit less than the 25 miles per hour speed limit at that point, because I know it's dangerous, I doubt if anyone would have died in a collision, but as I tromped on the brake pedal some sort of escape mechanism took over and everything went blank. I didn't remember anything from that instant until I found myself halted on the right shoulder of that intersecting street, virtually at the merger point. Other traffic was moving very slowly and staring in my general direction but I couldn't see any sign of the vehicle that had for some reason made that late dash through the boulevard stop sign. I didn't feel any pain anywhere and when I cautiously got out of my car I couldn't find a scratch on it. To this day I don't know how I got to that spot where I stopped, which seemed to have involved skidding almost directly rightward across half of my street and all of the intersecting one, meanwhile going forward only a few feet. '' A Richter scale for blasphemies and obscenities would encounter a major problem: bad words in any language have different energy depending on who uses them. There are people in Hagerstown who use in almost every sentence words I wouldn't think of using under extreme stress, and to those people the words are as meaningless as you know, really, and like. The Dead Past: I read somewhere that the lute was very hard to play, with the difficulty increased by the complexity of the notation system. '' Fanzines on microfiche? That's about the only fannish innovation in recent years which I fully approve of. Synapse: I watched all the first instalment of the televised Martian Chronicles, part of the second evening's section, and none of the third. It was a terrible choice for dramatization because almost all the merit of Bradbury's fiction lies in how the story is told, not the story that is told. There's no way to translate Bradbury's effects in these short stories to a long consecutive drama. '' I wouldn't have spent all that money on a Havahart product for live trapping if I wanted to kill squirrels. '' The wheat-for-petroleum idea was put i to the news by Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey credited the Hagerstown man with the idea. If others had the same idea, I'm not aware that they got national publicity for it.'' It's not too recent a movie, but I think The Children's Hour is a much superior film to These Three, the first movie version of the original play. Horizons: I'm baffled by the fact that my stencils for this issue were cut so much better than I've been accomplishing in recent years. The stencils were one of four quires that I'd bought in the same order, same brand, same type, stored under identical conditions, cut on the same typewriter with the same combination of a film and carbon sheet. Maybe the mild fall and winter which reduced the furnace's operation and so kept humidity higher than usual in the house had something to do with the difference. Mini-Sambo: Sorry, my computer allergy deterred me from the egoboo in highly specialized form t at would have come from finding my name in the maze. Grandfather Stories: G. M. Carr has resurfaced as a member of NFFF. '' I hope my past will spare me from much jury duty, if I should ever come up in the selection lottery. I intend to be frank and announce that I spent six or seven years covering court which made me aware of all the

symptoms which betray perjury on the witness stand, and I'll also emphasize how often I followed acquitted defendants out of the courtroom and listened to them brag to their friends about how many times this made that they'd evaded punishment for something they did.

Mumble Gutter: I meant to look up the year in which the FAPA Forever events occurred. I suppose it was the late 1940's or early 50's, a long while ago, certainly long enough for the statute of limitations to have expired on Elmer's lateness with the mailing. '' The temperature differences between much of Colorado and New York City aren't too enormous in the winter. But I do believe the Denver area is attacked by winter a couple of weeks earlier and it lingers somewhat longer. But comparing temperatures in those newspaper lists of the maximum and minimum in major cities can reveal lots of days when it's colder in New York City. '' Bad words are "an ingrained part of our culture"? I prefer to think of them as evidence of lack of culture, when used without a satisfactory reason.

Damballa: I too would like to know more about the type of art which Chuck achieves so well on his covers. I assume that there are some sort of rules about the elements and the techniques, since it produces such a distinctively different appearance. This latest cover seems a bit more complex but it's very effective again.

The Devil's Work: There might be some basis for Norm's suggestion that Tom Sawyer Abroad was meant to be a spoof of Jules Verne. Mark Twain may have retained some unhappiness over the fact that he'd begun a novel about a long balloon trip, only to discover Five Weeks in a Balloon and abandon his idea because it would have seemed too similar. '' Ray van Houten's pro-science movement was in progress when I was becoming active in fanzine fandom, in the late 1930's, so there must have been lots of prozine stories that cast technology in unfairly villainous role even then.

520 07 0328: I've never achieved a good television picture by turning on a light. But my radios behave differently when certain lights in various parts of the house are turned on, sometimes resulting in an increase in the level of the program, sometimes reducing background interference. '' It's conceivable that gold could be found not far from my home. Maryland produced quite a few pounds of gold annually during the late 19th century and a geologic map seems to show similar conditions a short distance east of Hagerstown to those where the mines were operated further southeast, mostly in Montgomery County. Civil service proved more profitable than gold nuggets when the 20th century advanced in that area. '' It sounds as if the southern California edition of TV Guide no longer carries a movie listing column. The Washington-Baltimore edition which we use around here discontinued the column for several years, then resumed publication of it. Something that was dropped and never revived was the page devoted to news about purely local, non-network offerings of the stations covered by this edition.

Phantasy Press: My Julie Andrews obsession is quite severe. When I saw this cover, I didn't even notice for a while the hairy creatures. All I could think of was the pavillion on The Sound of Music outside the captain's house. '' I doubt if the size of the United States' armed forces affected the handling of the Iranian hostage situation. Modern communications seem to prevent a rescue effort, no matter how large the available forces, before the hostages could be killed. I hope events between tonight and the distribution of this mailing prove me wrong again, as a result of a successful rescue project.

Fosh: I was thinking of facsimile reproduction of entire fanzine issues rather than anthologies. Offset techniques should make it

easy to obtain an almost exact replica of mimeographed fanzines. I believe hektographed and dittoed fanzines could be reproduced by first running them through an office copying machine, then offsetting the copies, if the originals weren't too faint or blurred. '' The assumption of using up one quire of stencils for an issue of Horizons is right. The only problem is, I recently found 25 stencils in one box and now life is complicated again, with one stencil left over each issue. Cognate: Deepest sympathy for the situation David has fallen into. I know so tragically many similar situations involving young persons around Hagerstown and it's frightening to think of the national statistics and the effect all this may have on the way the future is for a substantial portion of a generation. Tekeli-Li: I don't know if it's good or bad, but only the first of those four needs, food and shelter, seems important to me now. I care less and less about social adjustment, my ego doesn't respond very well to gratification, and I achieved such self-realization as I'm capable of a quarter-century ago. I'm not sure where going to yard sales and flea markets fits into all this, but that's about the only activity that gives me a genuine pleasure nowadays. Ornithopter: The front page illustration will probably pass without notice nowadays. But the flying objects are somewhat similar in shape and intent to those in an illustration that caused all sorts of commotion in FAPA long ago. I think Les Crutch started it, but that memory is frail and not guaranteed. '' This suggestion is undoubtedly too late to be considered. But I couldn't help wondering why Leigh instead of boxing up his model tanks didn't rig up some sort of little battery-operated motors for them, line them all up in the highway, and start them on the road from Brunswick to Canberra. It would have been the fannish thing to do, and if authorities complained, this event could have been justified as an educational demonstration of the vital role armaments continue to play in national security. '' I've felt for a long while as Rob Gerand does: it isn't fair to eat vegetables since they don't eat living things except for a few non-conforming things like the Venus flytraps. '' Up to now, my definition of a fan has been that the science fiction reader just reads while the fan isn't satisfied just to read but must collect or talk about the stories or write about them or commit other forms of fanaticism. But the definition seems to need changing or a third class needs to be designated, in the light of the influx of conventiongoers, fantasy film freaks, and the like. Maybe we should change the rules so it's necessary to do something consistently and repeatedly to be considered a fan, thus setting up a distinction between the fan and the reader who goes to a con if it happens to be held in or near his home town. '' Something else occurred to me after I wrote all that about how hard it is to know if old music is being performed as it was when new. I wonder if we may be hearing even the most faithful reproduction of old music differently today because of a decline in the average person's hearing ability. Experts warn what damage can be created to an individual's hearing by listening too long to extremely loud rock music, and protective devices are being used more and more by employees who work around excessively loud machinery. But isn't it possible that the great increase in the noise level in the average home or street today has a cumulative effect on hearing? Those tables showing the number of decibels in various situations put the background level in the normal house startlingly high, and even a ride for an hour in a quiet auto must represent a strain on hearing.

rarely encountered for any length of time in the 18th century. All the high fidelity magazines refer frequently to the gradual loss of hearing that comes with increasing age. Could it be that this represents cumulative effects of a noisy environment in modern times, rather than a built-in consequence of how the human body ages? (I'm not talking here about people who become deaf through specific hearing problems, but the tendency for almost everyone to lose gradually ability to hear high frequency tones that are generally audible to the younger person.) If all this really happens because of the commotion most of us spend our lives around, it explains some things that puzzle me. I look at sketches or read descriptions of political speeches more than a century ago, and it seems impossible that an unamplified voice outdoors or in a structure with poor acoustics could have been heard by such a large crowd. The Battle of Antietam was audible in Hagerstown, about a dozen miles from the nearest part of the fighting, and people in a nearby Pennsylvania town, Waynesboro, first learned of the Battle of Gettysburg by hearing it over an even greater distance with a mountain in the way. Could most persons accomplish such hearing feats today? If not, maybe music in the old days sounded quite differently through the ability of most listeners to hear overtones and nuances that we miss today. Maybe the clavichord which is famous today for such a faint tone sounded quite loud enough when it was a contemporary instrument. Maybe the small orchestras and choruses that predominated in the 18th century should be replaced by big ones when the music is performed today because people heard the small ones at the same volume as we hear the big ones. SF Teacher: Yet another item that is hard to comment on. I don't dare risk comments on books I haven't seen. What the Dormouse Said: I know Grace Slick is one of our deepest thinkers but she must have uttered that guess about Lewis Carroll in a rare moment of poor judgment. Nobody addicted to drugs could have created the Alice stories. I hope Grace turns her attention soon to the question of whether nuclear scientists were inspired by drugs because atomic bombs produce a mushroom cloud. Shadow-FAPA: I hope my good intention to send Horizons to those who contributed to this combozine survives long enough for the copies to get to the post office. But the pleasure at the revival of the shadow group is spoiled by the news that Andy is cutting back so drastically on fanac. Maybe I would react differently if I myself hadn't reached my fifties: after squandering a lot of time and trouble to achieve that feat, I realize now that it was hardly worth the effort. In any event, if FAPA named a member of the decade, Andy wouldn't have any real competition for the 1970s. Goodness knows how close FAPA would be to extinction today, if he hadn't stepped in, recruiting a lot of promising waiting listers, and getting the mailings out on time after the knack had been almost forgotten. I'm not yet convinced that FAPA can survive indefinitely, as long as its membership is so conservative about changing certain phases of its operation that worked better when fandom was smaller and younger. But the Andruschak impetus should keep things going a few more years, at least. Meanwhile, I see by the FA that the dues symbol he prophesied opposite his name on the roster isn't there. I hope this means he will retain his membership for the four more mailings to which he appears entitled, and maybe by next February he will have decided that his health can withstand the strain of at least minimal FAPA activity. I would propose an honorary membership as a reward for achievement, but fan politics and innovation phobia make such an idea pointless.

Whither Wollheim?

Two or three years ago, I proclaimed my intention to stop putting into Horizons the kind of searing personal revelations and the sensational revelations about Hagerstown which I'd been running regularly. Now I'm anxious not to fall a victim to creeping consistency. Besides, for a fanzine confined to FAPA, Horizons seems to be read by an amazing quantity of people throughout fandom. So maybe I can make an exception to policy and simultaneously spread the explanations that I want to make about my fannish behavior, all at the same time.

Even though I've been repeating myself dreadfully in apologies for failure to respond to fanzines, failure to go to cons, failure to comply with requests for articles, and other transgressions during the past few years, my conduct took a serious turn for the worse last year. During the last half of 1979, I was as close to inactivity for an extended period of time as I'd been since the long periods of confinement to the hospital and a nursing home had kept me out of action in the fannish sense on two occasions nearly twenty years ago. Late last year, there were months when I wrote only two or three letters involving fandom. I was surprised at the ease with which I remembered to write 1980 on the date after the first of the year, until I realized that I hadn't written 1979 on enough letters to get into that habit. I didn't reply to letters that were really important to the persons who wrote them in search of information. I failed to carry out some promises I'd made. I'm afraid I angered several fans by being bluntly honest and telling them it didn't suit when they telephoned to say they were in the area and would like to come visiting.

There are reasons why this was so which seem valid to me but aren't very well known to other fans. I'd like to explain some of them, in the hope that some mitigation of the disgust fans must be feeling with me will come from understanding. Fandom must take on trust the fact that there are other circumstances involved which I don't want to publicize this way.

One problem, maybe the most serious although competition was keen, involved the job. The newspapers for which I work began in July, 1977, to construct a new building which would not only provide much more space but would convert the publishing operation to different techniques. Almost everything except complaints about misspelled names would be computerized. Electricity would replace paper for most employees. Occupancy and conversion to the new methods were supposed to happen in mid-1979. I made up my mind to give the new way of doing things a fair trial for a few months, and to retire at the end of 1979 if I was unable to adapt my ancient self to the differences or disliked the new structure even more than the old one. Then one thing and another like a construction accident that cost a life and delays in the arrival of some equipment pushed the date of the move back further and further. During the late summer and autumn of 1979, I realized with increasing horror that my timetable wasn't going to work. To take retirement, I would need to give several months' notice and I wouldn't have several months to test the new circumstances before December, the month in which I must retire because that's when my birthday occurs. As it turned out, the staff didn't establish a beachhead in the new building until November when they started to put out a few pages daily while most of the work still was done in the old structure, and it was

early December when control of the new building was fully established.

This put me in the deepest sort of depression and indecision all through the final months of last year. I didn't see how I could endure spending all of 1980 under the new conditions if I found them unbearable. It didn't help when so many people assured me that older employees would be the ones who would have the trouble getting used to the changes. Time and again, I thought I'd worked up the gumption to arrange for retirement at the end of 1979 and each time I didn't because of the faint chance that the new situation wouldn't be so bad after all, together with the income advantages that will come in retirement if I can stick out the job until I'm 60 at the end of 1982. Midway through the year, I'd scheduled the bulk of my vacation for late November and the first half of December. As luck would have it, the vacation turned out to coincide with moving day, so I missed the confusion and crises which came when the old building was completely abandoned. But the vacation was ruined by worry about how things would be when I reported back for work.

Now, late in March, I think I made the right decision in continuing to aim for December, 1982, as retirement time. I've adapted to the new building without a nervous breakdown, I haven't disgraced myself by inability to cope with new ways of doing things, but the job still has its effects on my fanac and is to blame for the fact that I haven't yet snapped out completely of the autism which afflicted me late last year. I feared computers at a distance and I hate them now that I'm right on top of them.

Instead of typewriters, desks for the journalists in Hagerstown contain computer terminals now. This is in line with the trend in the newspaper industry and in many other phases of the publishing business. Some people in the publishing industry seem to consider this changeover a bigger thing than the Second Coming of Christ. I recently received a publisher's press release for a new book on the "newspaper revolution" which begins: "Not since the invention of moveable type has there been an innovation with so great a potential to revolutionize communications as computerization". The book is supposed to reveal "the changed relationship between the reporter and his story, new elements in the definition of objective journalism".

After using the terminals for four months, I feel differently. I don't think they're as marvelous as the linotype was. The biggest benefit I've gained from this advance into the world of the future is a better understanding of why typography has grown so sloppy in many publications which have made the switch to computer typesetting.

There are various brands and models of newspaper-oriented computer systems. I don't imagine that the faults I find in the equipment I use is common to all the others. But I'm pretty sure that common to all of them are certain inherent difficulties.

First, there are the stupidities in the design of the equipment I'm using which even an ignorant person like me can recognize as not the fault of the basic concept of computer journalism. It would have been so easy to make certain changes in the terminals. For instance, the shift lock key is adjacent to the a key and the keyboard has a hair-trigger touch. The slightest brush of that shift lock key by extending the little finger just a trifle too far west while touch typing can result in many lines of wasted typing, if you don't happen to look at the screen and notice that you're getting all capital letters. The shift lock is so seldom used in news writing that it

belongs somewhere at the edge of the keyboard where there's no danger of caressing it unnoticed. The terminal keyboard has three different models of parentheses but, incredibly, no double quote keys. A double quote is painted on one key but when you press it you get a single opening quotation mark, and you must depress it twice to introduce a direct quotation. The apostrophe key doubles to close quotations, needing to be pressed twice for that purpose. Quotations are the very meat of journalism and one model parentheses could have been sacrificed in favor of double quotation keys needing only one push. For reasons which I'll explain in a moment, it's very important to recognize when you're on the last line of the screen. The terminal beeps for about one second when you start the last line. If a nearby telephone is ringing or someone is yelling a few feet away, that beep may go unnoticed. So your attention wanders from what you're doing as you approach that last line, because you want to make sure you hear that inconspicuous beep. (The last line appears far enough from the physical bottom of the screen to make it hard to recognize it simply by looking at the screen.) There should be at least the option of activating a repeated beeping or one uninterrupted tone signal when the last line starts, to make sure of noticing it or, failing that, automatic locking of the keyboard when the last line is filled. There is a little ledge beside the screen to hold notes or anything else you want to refer to while typing. But the slope above the ledge is so precipitous that only really stiff paper which has never been creased will stand upright there. The ledge should be wider and there should be a clip which could be put over floppy paper.

Besides these and other simple cases of bad judgment in designing the terminals, there are troubles which I'm not capable of separating into curable and incurable ones. Maybe by the very nature of the beasts, things have ~~mm~~ to be this way. I mentioned the importance of the last line. The terminals are big, bulky, and it seems absurd to me that they're capable of storing only 24 lines of typing in all that space. A cassette tape recorder costing perhaps one-twentieth as much and occupying one-fiftieth the space can store several millions of cycles on one puny little reel of tape. The need to send what you've typed to the computer after only 24 lines seems weird to me. Worse yet, if you type past that 24th line, you don't lose any additional typing. Instead you start to destroy lines starting from the beginning, the first line with the 25th line you type, the second line when you type a 26th line and so on. It's much harder to replace lost stuff at the beginning of an article than the last things you've written. Moreover, if you're using the terminal to take notes on information being telephoned to you, as we're supposed to do in this new paperless journalism, there's the possibility of a real mess. The individual who takes an obituary over the telephone on the computer terminal and doesn't notice that it has run to 26 lines will discover after hanging up that the most important thing in the obituary, the information that the undertaker naturally starts off with, has irretrievably vanished: the name of the deceased. The computer and terminal are ingenious in other ways; is it impossible to set up things so that any loss due to going beyond the terminal's capacity will wipe out the stuff beyond the 24th line? Or couldn't the electronics be rigged to trigger automatically the procedure of sending the terminal's stuff to the computer when the screen is full? It requires the operator to press only two keys, so it can't be too complicated an electronic or mechanical activity.

Then there's the work of the devil, the blinking spot of light

which shows where on the screen anything you type will go. When you proofread what you've written and must make corrections, there are two principal ways to move this blinker. You can tap in staccato manner the keys which cause it to go sideways or up and down, and it will shift by one character or one line per tap. Or you can hold those keys down and it will scamper along at a dizzying pace. The former method is intolerably slow. The latter is almost as bad because it isn't within human powers to release the key at precisely the right moment; almost always, you must then jockey the miserable little thing to the exact point one tap at a time after you've under-shot or gone too far in the fast mode. I think the operation of the terminal could be speeded if there were an intermediate speed or if the fast pace were slowed enough to permit stopping at the right spot.

Over and beyond specific design and function problems, there are serious difficulties inherent in journalism with terminals. For me, the worst is the fact that I write mostly rather long columns, usually running to between seventy and eighty lines of typing. Ever since I've worked for the Hagerstown newspapers, we've been supplied with abnormally long copy paper cut from newsprint. It could hold about 100 lines of double spaced typing, enough for all but the most extended columns or stories. So I've always been used to having my entire work in progress in front of me as I type for quick inspection to determine what I've forgotten to insert or the order in which I've introduced topics. It takes four "pages" on the terminal for one of my columns, four screensful. Even though the screen contains 24 lines, in practice you don't get as much on any but the first "page" because the terminal automatically repeats at the top of your second "page" the last lines of the previous "page" and you dassn't type beyond the first word or two of the last line lest you overstep the gateway into oblivion. It requires pressing only one key to leaf in the electronic sense back and forth among the "pages" of a column to see what has gone before or come later. But this isn't the same as having everything before your eyes simultaneously.

Then there are the insert problems. After I've finished a column, I often realize I've forgotten an important sentence or two. I've typed them out and pasted them in when using paper so often that I can perform the insert operation without thinking about it. It's much more complicated and time-consuming to insert something in the middle of a completed story on the terminal.

Then there are a whole slab of computer terminal difficulties that didn't exist in the typewriter days. A journalist can often correct himself any slight typewriter malfunction, or take his paper out of the lamed typer and finish the story in another. If a computer terminal suddenly acts up, there's nothing to do but inform the computer staff about it and hope they can fix it before too long. Usually you can't do anything more on what you were putting on the terminal without starting from the beginning again on another one. Every so often, a computer problem will cause the computer department to shut down the whole system for an hour or so and all terminals are inoperative during that period, a situation unknown in typewriter days. There is always the lurking possibility that a lot of your work will be destroyed because someone makes a slight blunder. One day, everything that had been written and placed on queue in readiness for conversion into type was wiped out simply because a member of the computer department pressed a wrong combination of keys while meaning to do something else. And the completeness of annihilation

requires entirely different decision-making. If you or an editor cut something or changed something in the paper days, then underwent a change of mind later, the original copy could still be found in a wastebasket or retrieved by erasing the pencil line across it. If something in a computer story is deleted, it's gone beyond all hope of resurrection. A simple example of how much embarrassment this can create: Someone is cutting a story about a public meeting that is too long. He finds the third paragraph devoted to a statment by Bertram Buttram which doesn't seem particularly important so he kills it. Four paragraphs further along, there is another statement by the same individual which is really important. This time he's referred to simply as Buttram. The editor can't remember his first name from the paragraph which has vanished into the infinite.

My spirits attained their absolute pits one week in October. Around 6 p.m. Sunday, I received a telephone call from someone in management, informing me that I was supposed to spend the week ahead learning to use the terminal and to report at 8 a.m. Monday. It was up to me to get out as best I could of the mess created by all the column-writing appointments and plans I'd made for the week ahead. I hadn't begun work regularly at 8 a.m. since I ended my railroading career in 1943 and wasn't sure I could adjust to this particular form of time lag. The desks and terminals weren't in their destined places yet, everyone in the class was jammed close together, and one old biddy blew smoke in my face constantly the entire week. The first day or two, I couldn't believe I could ever adjust to the feather-weight touch required on the terminal keyboard, after a lifetime of pounding hard on non-electric typewriter keyboards. At least ninety per cent of the instruction involved procedures I knew I would never use in my particular work: esoteric things like transferring stuff from one terminal to another, embedding in stories messages which appear on the editor's screen but don't go into print, and forty different ways of cleaning out the "directory", each person's file of stuff already placed on the terminal. My head and my stomach hurt, and at the end of the week when I typed up in simple, non-computer terms all the facts I would need to know to use the terminal for my particular work, I found it covered only about thirty lines. I could have learned those things in an hour if someone had sat beside me, answering questions. Then I didn't go near a terminal again for almost two months and lost all the slight skill I'd acquired on that keyboard by the time I returned from vacation to the new building. (Certain punctuation marks appear in different spots from those on most typewriter keyboards, you can't use the letters l and o as numerals, you must remember to space only once after a sentence, and there are various other slight but bothersome differences in the keyboard arrangement.)

But I got a grim satisfaction out of the fact that I didn't do anything particularly destructive or stupid while some of those young journalists with the ability to adapt readily to change suffered various adventures. One of them ruined a screen by leaving the brilliance turned up all the way for an entire weekend, causing the characters on the screen to burn permanently into the screen. Another one decided to get a printout of an exceptionally long story running to a couple of hundred lines, pressed this button when another button should have been pressed, and then stood helplessly by as the printout emerged in the form of one line of type followed by 29 blank lines, another line of type and 29 blank lines, and so on through an entire box of extremely expensive printout paper. My

one gross booboo was an inverse sort of mistake. One afternoon I experienced difficulties getting what I was putting on the terminal to move into the computer for storage. Assuming that I'd forgotten to do something or had failed to do something, I tried everything I could think of to no effect and gave up in disgust after about an hour of wasted work. The next day, I resumed typing at a different terminal and the same difficulties turned up. Obscure messages with no apparent significance kept appearing on my screen. By now I was getting disgusted with myself and stubborn about getting myself out of the scrape I'd put myself into, reasoning that my blunder was a simple one which would shame me if I called for help. Finally I ran out of ideas about what to try next, and confessed to something in the computer department that I'd somehow fouled up. He worked the keyboard for a moment or two and discovered the real trouble: during maintenance or whatever it is the computer people do after the terminals close down for the day, one of these computer experts had inadvertently done something in one of the computers (there are two, because a backup is needed) involving my disc. I didn't know until that moment that I had a disc. The remedy couldn't be made at the terminal and I could have experimented there until judgment day without making progress.

By now, I am able to put columns on the terminal and correct them at rates varying between 2,500 and 3,000 words an hour depending on how many minor interruptions I suffer, when I'm typing from something already written down. And that's what I do most of the time. I haven't joined the abstention from paper. I'm still writing my columns at home, then taking that first draft to the terminal and making minor revisions as I convert the ink to electronics. I'm sure I could hit or top 3,000 words per hour regularly if I had the practice that comes from using the terminal daily and stopped using this acoustic typewriter with its different touch and slightly different keyboard. About ninety per cent of the mistakes I must correct are the result of a finger brushing an adjacent key while it presses the desired key, and that sort of mistake would dwindle if it weren't for the fact that I can get away with that sort of carelessness on an old-fashioned typewriter's keyboard where muscle instead of electricity provides the action. But I find myself afflicted with a nasty headache the day after I spend a couple of hours putting that week's columns on a terminal, and the eyestrain seems to worsen the specks in my eyes that have given me trouble off and on for many years. I doubt if my vision could hold up under long hours with those white letters on a green screen five days a week.

Writing the stuff first at home on the typewriter is a nuisance because it takes time and energy that could go into fanac. But it provides benefits. I'm not distracted at the house by loud conversations, the police monitor's squawks, and sixth grades touring the new building. It's easier to arrange several pages of notes and a reference pamphlet or book or two around a typewriter than at a terminal which is bigger and gets in the way of the eyes. And I don't have a terminal at the office on my own desk. Like most newspapers that switch to computer typesetting, the ones in Hagerstown have more newsroom writers than terminals. When I discovered I was among those who would have to use a vacant desk not currently in use when operating a terminal, I almost emitted a tremendous howl of outrage. By seniority and by the amount of wordage I get into print, I could have claimed injustice. A good old Korzybskian thalamic pause saved me from obeying that first impulse. Just in time I realized that if

I complained impressively enough to have a terminal moved to my desk, I would be among those who would frequently come to work and find someone else occupying his desk and without the terminal, there would be much more room to do other things on my desk. For the same reason I declined the company's offer of a typewriter when the management learned of my intention to first draft my stuff the old fashioned way.

I suppose there's not much any given newspaper company can do to buck the national trend for converting journalism to electronics. But I dislike the computer method of creating newspaper columns, now that I've given it a fair trial. I can't comprehend the almost metaphysical school of journalistic thought which contends that reporters who virtually put their own writings into type are somehow entering a new dimension of creativity, something like the housewives who bake their own bread instead of buying it at the supermarket. This has been widely hailed as a desirable innovation of the new system. But it's nothing different in principle from the situation that prevailed for many decades in hundreds of small newspaper plants, at many weeklies and even a few small-scale dailies, where editors or reporters also were linotypers and put their stories into type as they wrote on the linotype keyboard.

About two decades ago, I was considered a heretic and old fogey when I claimed that the system then being installed at the local newspapers wouldn't work out properly. That was the great tape innovation, in which automatic linotypes operated on the basis of perforated tape fed into them. The tape had been cut by long distance in the case of wire copy and by local employees for local news and columns. The new breed of linotypes undeniably spewed out type several times faster than the old kind, anyone could learn to operate the tape-punching devices in a tiny fraction of the time needed to become an expert linotyper, but I was right when I guessed that all the additional complications would overbalance those benefits: there was still a need for men to feed tape into the linotypes and make sure they didn't jam, someone had to spend lots of time tediously finding the breaks between stories from wire copy tape and tearing them apart and marking an identifying number on each and rolling it up and hanging it up on the right peg on a big board for future use, and the people employed to punch tape for local copy were careless and inaccurate to go along with their lack of long training. Now anyone who said a good word for perforated tape would be an old fuddy duddy. I think the every-writer-his-own-typesetter method has an equal number of built in flaws. It depends on the very failing possessed by so many newspaper employees, clumsiness at a keyboard. I don't think more than two or three of the dozens of individuals using the terminals here could hold jobs as typists in even an undemanding office. Most of them are terribly slow and some are terrible at spelling or punctuation. Eventually, I think, most newspapers will decide to have a few individuals with no news sense and no writing ability put the reporters' typed stories onto terminals, for most efficient use of this type of publishing mechanics. Four good typists with nothing to do but put onto terminals what is handed them, without interruptions to answer telephones or the slowdowns created by editing as you go along, should be able to put 100,000 words into type daily, as much as the average medium-sized daily uses for non-wire stories. A medium-sized daily could cut four members from its news staff if all its reporters didn't need to spend so much time messing with terminals.

And I hate computers now more than I did when I didn't have any closeup knowledge of them.

Now I suppose I made the right decision to remain on the job. Working conditions are slightly better in the new building: I'm not squeezed in among the packed masses of journalists as I was in the old one, I'm no longer expected to get up and move my chair out of the way every time someone is walking to or from the advertising department, and quite often when I go to my desk I find my chair is there instead of at the other end of the office. But one old woman whose desk is near mine engages in deafening telephone conversations every six or seven minutes. The new telephone system is something out of a science fiction story but my own telephone is temperamental on long distance calls, refusing to complete them for no apparent reason on certain occasions. And worst of all, even though retirement is approaching in the mathematical and chronological sense, I can't find any concrete evidence of this fact. I can understand intellectually that as I cut this stencil, there are just 145 weeks and one day remaining until the end of 1982 when I plan to retire, and that vacation time will spare me from working twelve of those weeks and that I have nine weeks' sick leave accumulated which might provide additional absolution. But if I were drifting on an ocean in a lifeboat, I would see land in the distance some time before actually going aground to the safety of a beach, and if I were dying people would treat me more kindly in my last portion of life, but there is no such change to provide reassurance that retirement really and truly does lie in the future. The old nagging fear that I'll run out of ideas for the subject matter of columns continues to bother me, even though I have always thought of something in the eight years of full-time column writing. Of course, there's the additional worry about the whole question of whether it's any use to continue on the job almost three more years for the sake of more financial comfort. I know perfectly well that inflation might be so severe in the next few years that several thousand dollars' more annual income will not provide any substantial benefit and will simply delay for a while my eligibility for poverty benefits until the maximum income level for participating in them climbs to meet my income.

One curious thing about the change to the new building: not once did I absentmindedly go to the old one out of force of habit. I'd thought beforehand that this would happen, since the two structures are only a half-block apart and I'd been going into the old one several times every working day for more than 36 years. And back in 1957, the last time I moved from one part of town to another, I turned in the wrong direction when walking out of the building to go home regularly for weeks, until I got used to the new direction. But not once did I take my course toward the old building, so my hatred for it must have been triumphant over ingrained habits.

Something else happened while I was most concentrating on worry over the job. Kathy Nixon got killed. I'm not sure I know how to describe convincingly on these stencils why her death shook me up so severely and threw me into such despondency.

Kathy was a waitress. She was in her early thirties, not exactly pretty but rather handsome in the face. She was quite short, her voice was gentle and everyone loved her. She had had a difficult time with the men in her life. I don't have the heart to relate here the partial knowledge I have of her problems with the men in her life but some of them had been big ones. She had had four children, starting in her early teens, but none of them was with her in 1979.

She had been living in a room at a downtown residential hotel, working at various restaurants and lunch counters. Last autumn, she was in her second spell of employment at the restaurant where I normally eat my early evening meal.

Kathy hadn't emerged from her problems unscathed. For a while, she had needed psychiatric help as an out-patient at a clinic near Hagerstown. That helped, but she still did something that worried her and a lot of other people very much. Once or twice a month, she spent a night drinking entirely too much. She was disgusted with herself every time it happened, talked freely about her effort not to let it happen again, and she didn't drink often. On the evening of December 7, she had too much to drink. An auto which she would have dodged under other circumstances struck her as she was walking across the street.

It was hit-run and it was sheer murder. Kathy was crossing at 10:30 that night in a very well-lighted area. The hotel stands on one corner of the intersection, and directly opposite it is the courthouse. There are three street lights outside one building, four on the other side of the street, and other sources of light help to make the general level of illumination almost as bright as a very cloudy daylight. The street is four lanes wide. One lane is used for parking cars at the curb on the courthouse side, while traffic moves in the other three. There were no parked cars on the hotel side of the street which might have concealed her as she stepped from the curb. There are no obstructions like a hill that might have made visibility poor. She had gotten across two of the lanes for moving vehicles and was struck as she stepped toward the third traffic lane, only ten feet or so from safety.

The only witnesses who offered to help police were two young men who had been loafing in front of the courthouse. They said the auto was moving faster than the legal speed of 25 miles per hour. Rumors ran through town that they had told police the car had run a red light but if they did, the authorities didn't release that fact. The auto carried Kathy on its hood for about fifty feet, then when she rolled off, it ran over her body and kept going without even slowing. Somehow, she lived an hour after that.

Several motorists stopped to see if they could help. They'd been following the death car and had seen what happened. Not one of them stayed on the scene until police arrived or left their names.

Then Kathy was given a far finer tribute than a fancy funeral or big tombstone would have provided. The tribute came in the way police and the community plunged into the effort to find the guilty driver. Both of the loafers had been too shaken by what they'd witnessed to be able to provide any information about the hit-run car except that it was light colored with some kind of stripe and it was driven by a white man. So police hunted around until they found living not too far from this area a man who had experience using hypnotism in criminology. For the first time in local history, hypnotism was utilized to try to solve a crime. Questioned separately, both witnesses managed under hypnotism to produce the same series of three numerals on the license and tentative identification of the make of auto. Unfortunately, the state license files didn't turn up a foolproof lead. The most promising combination of the license-body combination involved one plate which had been reported stolen. The quest didn't stop there. The tragedy resulted in formation of a formal "crime solvers" operation by Hagerstown police: reward money was collected, the media agreed to cooperate, and a special tele-

phone number for tips and leads was arranged. Each week one unsolved serious crime is given a massive blast of publicity. Kathy's was the first.

I possess an unusually well developed guilt complex. So I found it springing into frenzied activity as soon as I heard the awful news. My main problem was one noonday a couple of weeks before she died. It was Kathy's day off. We ran into each other on the sidewalk. "I'm looking for someone to have lunch with," she said. "But I guess you're working?" I was indeed working, I was on my way to do something in connection with my job, but I'm sufficiently master of my working time that I could have postponed the job duty and eaten with Kathy. What worries me, what I'll never know for sure, is whether that aborted meal could have saved her life. Now, I'm not by any wild stretch of imagination a persuasive sort of person and I wasn't important enough in Kathy's life to be listened to obediently. But I know she was chronically worried about her drinking, other people had been warning her about it, and if we'd eaten together that day, it's quite possible that we'd have talked about the problem. Is it possible that just one more warning lecture on that noon would have been the straw on the camel's back, not in the sense that it would have caused her to swear off, but in the sense that it might have changed ever so slightly her actions on December 7? If she'd hesitated just four or five seconds before reaching for a bottle at any time in the hours before 10:30, it would have been enough delay to have caused her to be in one of the other lanes when that auto sped through that intersection. I also found myself blaming myself with less reason for the fact that I was sitting on my duff at home when the accident happened, watching "My Old Man" on television because I like to see Kristy McNichol smile. If I'd gone out that night, I might somehow have found myself driving down West Washington Street at 10:30, by my presence causing that vehicle to use another lane or slowing it enough to change the course of events.

I can't remember any other death that has shaken me as much as Kathy's did, except for the loss of members of my own family. It was on my mind even while I was worrying about the job during those final weeks before Christmas and New Year's. People would start to talk about it with me and I'd feel panicky, fearing I'd start to bawl out in public and start false rumors about how well we'd known each other. I couldn't go to that restaurant for several days, and when I finally returned, I almost passed out. I thought I saw Kathy coming out of the kitchen with a dinner, just as I'd seen her hundreds of times before. They'd hired to take her place a woman of almost the same size and shape. A couple of times each day I learned something new and good about Kathy. There was the discovery that she'd spent her last day on the job in a relentless grilling of every customer, demanding to know if he had or had ever had a Pringle's Potato Chips can. Another waitress' small son needed such a container for some esoteric educational project and Kathy was determined to get him one.

After a month or so, I shook off much of the awful depression that Kathy's death had created. In its place I've acquired a chronic anger against motorists. I haven't been driving much in 1980, to protest the price of gas and because I don't like to drive anyway. But when I'm behind the wheel I identify as Kathy's killer the drivers of most of the other vehicles I see: the majority of autos in motion in Washington County at any given time are moving faster than the legal speed, many of them violate the most fundamental rules of the road like halting fully at a boulevard stop sign and staying to the right

of center, and following too close is epidemic. The killing of Kathy coalesced in my mind the fragmentary morsels of dislike I'd had for bad driving, illegal driving, and foolhardy driving. I'm so tired of listening to people complain about the Iranian hostage situation, the Three Mile Island situation, the revelations that politicians are human, and then watch them drive away in a law-breaking manner. And almost all of this murdering-type driving is unnecessary. Most people who drive five or ten miles faster than the speed limit waste the time they've saved on arrival, standing around in idle chatter or sprawled in a chair half-looking at the TV. Yesterday I was driving back from nearby Pennsylvania and in one two-mile stretch, three autos passed me on hills, crossing double yellow lines to do so, two of whom turned into driveways and stopped before they were more than a couple thousand feet ahead of me. Each time, I looked at my speedometer and it was smack on 50 miles per hour, the maximum legal speed on that two-lane highway. That sort of driving is no different from carelessness in a nuclear energy plant but nobody except me seems to see anything particularly wrong with it as long as it doesn't result in running over someone's pet dog. The death of a pet on a street or highway always produces letters to the editor.

If this nation and world contained an appreciable number of sane people, the reign of terror on streets and highways would end as a result of a concerted effort to stretch out the scanty petroleum reserves for a couple of decades longer than they will otherwise last. There should be a forty mile per hour speed limit, enforced by radar hooked up to cameras capable of resolving license plates: one violation and the vehicle's plates are recalled. There should be strict gasoline rationing in effect immediately, allotting just enough for business and other essential driving for the first year, and progressive reductions should be made after that to force people to move close to their jobs, to spend vacations near home, to walk a lot and to stay home the rest of the time. All this would upset the whole national economy. But if it isn't done, the national economy will suffer complete destruction the day the world supply suddenly runs out.

A third source of my bad behavior in recent months is a worsening of the squirrel problem. Here is another situation which is difficult to explain. It's bottled up inside me too much because I can't discuss it properly with local persons. Everyone thinks it's funny. People also laugh when someone gets the gout, which can be an extraordinarily painful and incapacitating ailment. The squirrels have been ruining my nerves, taking up too much of my time, and costing me a lot of money. They may force some sort of major change in my life, if they don't create a nervous breakdown before I can plan to move away or sell everything or otherwise take radical action.

The worst of the squirrel problem is that it seems to be unsolvable. This is another reason I don't like to talk about it. Most people are obsessed by their belief that they have a simple, fool-proof solution for my problem and they think I'm lying when I explain I've already tried it and it doesn't work.

For the past dozen years, I've been upset by squirrels getting into the attic in the fall and early winter. But this winter, for the first time, the squirrels continued to plague me after the worst of cold weather had passed and near springlike conditions had come. Moreover, for the first time they've been damaging my ability to watch television. In one two-week period, squirrels twice chewed

through the leadin wire to the antenna and once they broke the wire carrying current to the antenna rotator. As a result, the enjoyment I find in watching baseball on television every summer will be partially ruined. The antenna service people could offer no suggestion on how to stop the damage, and knew of no source of squirrel-proof antenna wire. I couldn't afford to pay them to climb up there and replace all that wire every week or two, and Hagerstown is too far from the Washington and Baltimore stations for an indoor antenna to give satisfactory reception. The only thing I could do was switch to cable, and I wasn't sure if that would be worthwhile. The cable technician insisted that the metal shielding around the wire carrying cable service is too tough for squirrels to break and so far, three weeks later, he is correct.

In most cities, cable provides residents with more channels and better pictures than a rooftop antenna provides. It doesn't work out that way in Hagerstown. With a rotating antenna, I could get fairly good reception of several channels which aren't included in cable service, most notably one VHF station and another UHF station which between them telecast fifty or so Philadelphia Phillies' games every season. I think I might be able to get a dim picture from the VHF station by disconnecting the cable wires and hooking up an old rabbitears antenna on the Sunday afternoons when the Phillies are playing, but the UHF station which shows their night games is impossible to pick up without a good rooftop antenna. Cable also deprives me of the public television station in Washington which has far superior programming to the Maryland PBS station which the cable carries, and several other UHF stations which occasionally offer something to interest me. The only real advantages the cable offers is somewhat superior pictures on two UHF stations in Baltimore and Washington that offer quite a few old movies. Additionally, I didn't subscribe to the Home Boxoffice channel which costs extra but I find myself able to get a fairly good black and white picture on it anyway. There's no sound but that doesn't matter in certain offerings.

This squirrel situation is hard on me in many ways. My nerves are affected, mainly resulting in loss of appetite and an upset stomach every time the trouble recurs. The expenses caused by this problem pile up ominously: just in the first three months of this year, for instance, I paid a hefty bill to have three holes which squirrels had opened under the eaves closed up, paid the monthly exterminator's bill, and paid for installation of the cable service along with the first month's bill. Up to now, the contents of the attic haven't suffered severe damage but there's the constant worry that some irreplaceable things may be ruined, together with the possibility that squirrels may burn down the house by gnawing on its wiring and creating a short circuit.

Barring an act of God like some sort of fatal epidemic among Hagerstown's squirrels, there doesn't seem to be any hope. This house is only one block from the big town park, which is heavily wooded and polluted with vast quantities of squirrels. So there is an inexhaustible source of more squirrels to wander over here if anything happens to those that roam around this neighborhood. A family of nature lovers two doors down the street put out nuts every day to feed the squirrels, another reason why there are so many in this area. A group of people who live about a block away petitioned the city to thin out the squirrels because of the nuisance and damage they were creating a couple of years ago, and the city paid no attention to them, so it would be useless for me to take a similar

approach to the problem; my newspaper connection would doom such a request, anyway. It's illegal to use an air rifle or a slingshot in Hagerstown, so I can't try to frighten squirrels away from the house that way. I asked one home improvement firm about the possibility of putting metal sheathing all around the house under the eaves where the vermin have been breaking through and was advised against it on the grounds that the squirrels would simply start chewing through the roof and I'd have a flood in addition to squirrels on the attic. The first exterminating firm I employed put on the attic walnuts into which poison had been injected. The nuts didn't work particularly well. I suspect that most of them were carried out of the attic and buried and those that remained may have attracted more squirrels by the odor they gave off. I thought of finding a dog with bigoted opinions of squirrels and putting him on the attic, then decided that wouldn't work: I couldn't expect a dog to live up there all the time and there is enough space for a squirrel to get out of reach by climbing away from a dog up there. There are enough dogs roaming the neighborhood for squirrels to get used to. The Havahart trap has worked several times but it has also been tripped at times without catching the squirrel. I'm not sure if the squirrels are too quick for the falling gates or if they jump on top of it and trip it by the vibration. Every other person who knows about my problem suggests mothballs, but they are useless. I recently saw listed in a catalog a device which emits ultrasonic tones which are supposed to provide freedom from all sorts of vermin including squirrels because the extremely high-pitched sound hurts their ears. But it's terribly expensive and I'm reluctant to spend all that money for something that might not work; the attic might be too large for its carrying range to cover, I've nothing but the advertisement's statement to convince me that it really discourages rodents, I don't know how I could know if it was in proper operating condition since it's inaudible to humans, and worst of all, it uses line current and if it malfunctioned and overheated it might start a disastrous fire. GE puts out a burglar alarm which operates off a nine-volt battery and produces a very loud howl when tripped by motion. Even the lower-pitched sound might frighten away squirrels, but I'm not sure if something so small would set it off and there's the additional problem that the squirrels are most likely to break in during cold weather and most batteries fail to function properly when it's that cold.

I could approach the problem from the opposite direction, taking out of the attic anything of any value. But there just isn't enough space on the living floors of this house for everything I have stored up there. Quite a bit of space is available in the cellar, but a broken waterpipe down there could create as much damage as squirrels threaten. Moving most of the attic's contents to a storage firm would be another constant expense and probably wouldn't guarantee against potential loss from fire or rodents. Last fall, I managed to get a good many stacks of stuff that had been lying loose on the attic into cardboard boxes but being boxed doesn't guarantee an item safety from squirrels.

So I don't know what to do except try to endure the strain until I can come to some sort of decision about moving or getting rid of some of the stuff I'm trying to protect. If I should suffer some accident or illness that would take me away from the house for any extended period of time, I just don't know how I'd endure the worry over what might be happening on the attic. And even when I'm able to occupy the house, the squirrel worry combines with the job trouble

in a particularly nasty fashion. It used to be that a particularly ugly time at the office could be endurable through the thought that soon I'd be in the sanctuary of the house where I could relax and forget my problems. Now no matter how bad the job gets, I know if I go home I may hear noises on the attic that will leave me even more upset. I have pills my doctor gave me to soothe the nerves but I've been very reluctant to take them for fear of becoming dependent on medicine to cope with life. Since the first of the year, I've taken only one, which is probably overdoing this abstinence. I've explained all this at such length in the hope of getting across the truthfulness of the excuse I keep making for not commenting on so many fanzines: I'm too distracted and bothered by problems to do the lochacking as well as I once did.

The national and international news hasn't helped during recent months. But in this area, there is one tiny morsel of consolation for me. I worried and fretted and feared for the better part of twenty years over the danger that I would be drafted. All those years, I couldn't help an occasional suspicion that my anti-war belief might have been solely selfish in nature. I kept wondering if I would think differently about war if I were confined to a wheelchair or otherwise guaranteed exemption from active duty in the armed forces. Now I'm 57, which seems to be venerable enough to minimize the possibility that I'll ever be a soldier, sailor or marine, involuntarily or otherwise. And at this advanced age, I feel at least a bit of satisfaction to discover that I'm as violently opposed to war, to the draft, to militarism, and to all the other nasty things as I was when it seemed as if I might find myself conscripted because of them.

In fact, the recent talk about reviving the draft in the United States seems not only utterly wrong but also mad. Drafting men into the armed forces in this nation under the conditions that exist in 1980 must signify one of several things, all of them unacceptable: authorities in Washington may have the fantastic notion that we can plunge into a World War Two-type of conflict in which nuclear weapons wouldn't be employed by either side, or they think world conditions would support ground battles and dogfights among airplanes after the nuclear missiles had done their job which is just as wild an idea, or the draft has been proposed as just another aspect of bureaucracy run wild, perhaps the most logical explanation since the people in Washington seem to be running short of ideas of how to continue expanding spending and government employment in certain other fields. If the draft should be resumed, I hope that every fellow of draft age will flee across the Rio Grande and let the Mexican government support him, which would be a satisfactory protest against the draft and an excellent way of getting compensation for all the Mexicans we're now supporting in the United States.

I've been depressed over the presidential prospects. There is no candidate in either party under whom I can imagine living as president. Fandom really ought to suggest to Congress including on the ballot each November a space like the one on the TAFF ballots, permitting voters to vote against all candidates. I'd like to see the next four-year presidential term be filled by nobody, as a test to see if the nation and the world would be better off with an empty White House. Without a President, we couldn't be inflicted with anything as preposterous as this plan to punish Russia's Afghanistan venture by refusing to send athletes to the summer olympics. If anyone had written a science fiction story a few years ago in

which my inability to watch the winter and summer olympics resulted from squirrels and a farmer who produces duplicates of his intellect, I would have praised the author's ingenuity and imagination.

I don't mean to say that worry and indignation over the national and world situations cause me to spend a specific number of hours weekly in exclusive contemplation of those matters. But they prey on my mind, distract me, leave me with a what's-the-use feeling when I know there are things I should do like loc-writing.

Then there are other personal worries. My old aunt, for example, is the only survivor of the large number of brothers and sisters who included my father. Her only child died more than a dozen years ago, her husband died about five years ago, then while living alone in San Diego she suffered two slight strokes. The second left her unable to fend for herself and her grandson took her to his home in a Texas city. For a couple of years she wrote me letters in which her unhappiness became more and more evident: she claimed she had been kidnaped, and wanted to come to Hagerstown to spend her last days. Her only immediate relatives here are my own self and my cousin who is a dozen or more years older than me. Quite a few years ago, my aunt had told ~~mm~~ us she wished she could move back East but her doctor had forbidden it on the grounds that she was physically unable to survive the local climate. Now that her health is much worse, the move would be even more unwise. Neither my cousin nor I could give proper care to an extremely old semi-invalid, in our homes, since both of us hold full-time jobs. A rest home in Hagerstown wouldn't have been the answer, climate matters aside, since my aunt had been in one for a couple of months after the second stroke and had insisted on leaving it. Still that guilt complex kept nagging at me. Then last year letters from my aunt stopped arriving. I wrote repeatedly to her without response, and gifts brought no sign of receipt. Finally I called the Texas residence and the grandson, who must be my second cousin or first cousin once removed (I can never keep such things straight) told me she had suffered several more slight strokes, had virtually withdrawn into herself, and probably isn't aware of much. I have no reason to doubt him, particularly in view of the fact that one of her sisters suffered exactly the same condition in her final years. Yet there's still the pricking of conscience: Is she being treated with proper kindness and attention? Is it any use to continue to write her letters and send her gifts if she doesn't realize that they exist? Should I risk the trip to Texas to try to ascertain the situation, when I'm in such a tizzy that the strain might have bad consequences for me? And if I found things unsatisfactory out there, what could I do about it without taking leave of absence from the job and devoting full time to a legal struggle? The grandson is her principal heir and has her power of attorney. During all my waking hours, I feel fairly certain that I shouldn't try to do anything, and around 2 or 3 a.m. my opinion changes.

Maybe all this won't seem like a very good excuse to others for my fannish behavior. But there isn't the time or space to chronicle a day-by-day account of how things evolve to persuade me or prevent me or otherwise cause me to let the fannish backlog grow ever larger. Maybe just one example will suffice as a sample. Last night I thought I'd have time to finish cutting stencils for this issue of Horizons. So just at dusk I took my suit coat upstairs to bring down another and realized my billfold wasn't in the coat I'd been wearing yesterday. I knew I'd had it in mid-afternoon when I bought

some stuff at a nearby supermarket. I looked around the house and could see no sign of the billfold. I thought I knew what had happened: we're in a late March cold wave, I'd been wearing gloves which make my hands clumsy, I'd probably put on the gloves before restoring the billfold to my pocket, and had just slid it against the outside of the pocket instead of putting it inside. I called the supermarket, but it hadn't turned up there. So I decided it was probably gone for good. It could have been worse: I hated to lose the money that was in it but I had enough cash on hand elsewhere in the house to get along until I could go to the bank; I don't own credit cards so anyone who found the wallet wouldn't have a credit splurge at my expense, and there was nothing else in the wallet that couldn't be replaced; best of all, the billfold itself had no sentimental value. The only thing in it I would need replaced with little delay was my driver's license. I seemed to remember having heard somewhere that the state won't issue a duplicate driver's license unless loss of the original has been reported to police. So I called city police, told them I'd mislaid or lost my billfold and would they please put it on record? The officer who answered the telephone wanted to know if it could have been lost to a pickpocket, I told him I hadn't been close enough to anyone for that to happen, and he told me to sit tight. I just had time to hang up, turn on the television set and sit down when the front door burst open and two of the biggest policemen I've ever seen dashed into the house. Instantly they stopped and got identical funny looks on their faces. "Gee, we've entered a dwelling unit without a warrant or probable cause," one said. "But I thought it was an apartment building and this was the lobby," the other one said. They seemed quite relieved when I didn't rush to the telephone to contact the American Civil Liberties Union. They asked my middle name, my date of birth, what hours I am in the office, and a lot of other matters relative to my vanished billfold but cheered me up immensely by informing me that the Hagerstown office of the state motor vehicles agency has the authority to issue duplicate licenses so I could use the car again soon without waiting for red tape to be unsnarled in Annapolis or Baltimore. By the time they'd left and I'd recovered my breath, I had the time and energy to cut only three stencils, forcing me to stretch that job over to today, thus putting back by another 24 hours all other forms of fanac.

Incidentally, after both the sun and I rose this morning, I was able to see the billfold around the house where darkness had concealed it the night before, its contents still intact. I felt sort of foolish at the need to call police again and tell them to cancel the case. And if I should have my billfold stolen or if I lose it irretrievably soon, it's going to be quite embarrassing for me.

I can't conscientiously predict if I'll ever return to dependability in the fannish sense. I've been trying to simplify by dropping some recurring fannish obligations. But that makes only a minor impact in the piling up of things that should be done. In my current spiritual and physical condition, I'm just plain scared to do the obvious, radical thing by announcing gafiation. Maybe the shock of finding myself out of fandom, even if gafiation lasted only a year or two, would be the blow that would knock me into some kind of serious collapse. The ideal procedure would consist of restricting my fanac to a modest number of incoming fanzines that I could still cope with. But there isn't any fannish mechanism for achieving this nirvana without mortally insulting a lot of fanzine publishers, even

if I could bring myself to deciding I no longer want to receive this or that fanzine.

I suppose I'll just have to blunder through the best I can for a while longer, knowing perfectly well how much I'll will I'm building up among those who fail to get response from me. If I can hang on to some reduced level of fanac for another three years, I'll be able to make a definite decision in retirement whether I've been an active fan long enough now that there's time to step up fanac or plunge deep into the waters of one or more other hobbies that interest me. Or maybe in another three years, fandom will be so fragmented that each fan will automatically be confined to just that segment which fits his interests, whether it's movies or huckstering or con-going or whatever. There would be advantages to a fandom in which each of us would simply add two or three code letters to his name which would advise everyone else what he's interested in.

The Worst of Martin

Sea Saga

At first he resisted catering to his normal male requirements but as the months passed by he succumbed with increasing periodicity.

The island was small and quite deserted. No matter how he tried to waste time varying his diet there were only so many tropical fruits available and only so many fish trapped in the shallows at low tide. And low tide being as infrequent as it normally is there were a great many hours for his idle hands.

Who has not dreamed of the delights of being shipwrecked? Warm breezes, beautiful maidens in the moonlight awaiting your most voyeuristic whim--he dreamed of it constantly! He had to--to keep sane! It was hot as blazes during the day, he shivered at night, and what clothes remained were a crummy mess.

But he continued to dream and that was fatal to his staunch resistance. At first he simply drifted with the tide of his needs but when he noted an occasional desultory reaction he began to worry. He was not that old! Perhaps it was the diet! And he began to emphasize what protein he could garner from the sea.

There came a time when even the most curious fantasies could not excite his jaded history. He slumped dejected and stared hollow-eyed out to sea.

"A ship!" he cried. He leaped and ran to the edge of the water. "They will save me! They will take me aboard, and feed me, and build up my strength. A few good nights' warm sleep and I'll be back in L.A. with all my old strengths and energies.

"I'll have plenty of money, collecting interest all this time, and the first thing I'll do is draw out a good wad. Then, I'll find me a woman--a nice big beautiful blonde--and I'll take her up to a hotel room. By the sheer weight of my needs, by the months of my pitiful abstinence, I'll convince her....

"Ah!" he finished. "Fooled you! There's no ship!"

The End

(Reprinted from the Winter, 1962, issue of Grotesque by Edgar Allan Martin. If memory serves, this is part of the final example of the writer's FAPA contributions, the publication which caused his loss of membership on the grounds that it didn't represent original writing. Somehow, it doesn't seem as if that fuss happened almost twenty years ago.)