

Kenning #17

KENNING #17 -- still produced by Jackie Causmove, who is currently (as of 6/22/82, at least...) residing at 2109 Harrison Ave., #9, Cincinnati, OH 45214, and whose phone number is (Hi, Becky!) 513/661-4047. Aimed toward the August 6th deadline of FLAP, it is to be hoped that this issue actually gets completed (a woefully deficient inventory of stencils prompts that remark), much less printed (ditto my store of mimeo ink). As Bowers reminded me just the other day... "after all Jackie, you did say "These are Interesting Times." (and yes, he does speak in caps...as well as ellipses...). I guess I'm just experiencing what I expected all along. *Sigh*

Ghod it feels good to get out of that colophon! Hope it doesn't look as lame to you as it does to me, but if so you'll just have to put up with it as I can't afford to scrap an entire stencil and start over again. (All you supporters of the Draft-Your-Comments-In-Longhand-First contingent can keep your wiseass remarks to yourself!) Perhaps I should have listened to whatever it was that kept prompting me to put this off for yet another day.

Howsoever, page the oneth is begun (nay, half-finished), so it behooves us to carry on, bravely. And if not bravely, then at least with fortitude.

What puts me in such a disrupted/chaotic frame of mind -- did I hear someone Out There ask that? -- well, as the saying goes; It's a long story, Charlie. Maybe it'll help me a bit to put it all down in some sort of chronological order. Y'know, gain some perspective and all that...

In mid-summer of 1980 (July or August, I disremember which), during Rivercon, and also during the period DaveLo and I were residing in Louisville -- out of work and getting hungrier by the minute -- I started experiencing a sharp pain in my right side. It did not seem to respond to aspirin, manipulation, or plain ignoring; it just *hurt*. In describing it to DaveLo, it reminded him of the time he twisted a rib and had to go to a doctor to get it put back in place (okay, he had his bones jumped, but it's his story, let him tell it...in fact, he has). He suggested I do likewise. So on the recommendation of a neighbor, I went to an Orthopaedic Surgeon in Louisville, explained my problem, had X-rays taken, and was called in for consultation with the M.D. To put it bluntly, he was shocked by my X-rays. "Do you realize the sort of condition you have?!" is how I recollect his opening comment. Yes, I told him, I knew my spine was twisted, that I'd had scoliosis since childhood, and what about my twisted rib? Could he fix it?

No, the man he say, nothing can be done for you. *Nothing?*, I exclaimed, but I had gone to him in the hopeful expectation of gaining some relief from the pain in my side. A "Taylor" back brace was the best he could offer, so DaveLo and I sank \$160 of our non-existent dollars (thank ghod for MasterCard!) into a steel/leather/canvas contraption that sits, plaintively, accusingly, on our closet floor.

On my next appointment, some ~~two~~ weeks later, the doctor burred about how improved I seemed to be -- "You're standing so much straighter!". I tried to point out that was because my side wasn't hurting any more, not because of his damned brace --which I'd only worn three or four times anyway because it was so blasted uncomfortable -- but he wasn't really paying any attention. Now in the meantime, I'd applied for Unemployment Compensation from California, on a long shot that they'd come through since it was obvious that Manpower wasn't brim-full of temporary assignments for me. I'd noted on my application that I had back trouble, and they sent a form to be filled out by my doctor,

and I duly passed ^{it} on to him. A couple of weeks after that, I received a batch of papers in the mail from California: disability insurance claim forms. I called the M.D.'s office and spoke to the nurse, asking her if she had a record of his response to the initial medical form. She had a photocopy in my file, and it stated that I was "medically unfit" for employment, as an office worker or anything else.

This is not the way most people learn of a disabling condition. Yeah, I had back pain. Yes, it did hurt more when I worked at an office job. But *unfit*? That had such a nasty ring to it...

I sent the forms to his office to have them filled out and forwarded to California, and then sat down with Dave to assess the situation. The Doctor had told me during that last visit that I was not to reach, stoop, or lift anything, and it must have been on that basis he had made the verdict he did to California. It puzzled us, but we did need some income coming in, so we decided to wait and see what California did in response. (The woman at the Kentucky Bureau of Unemployment -- or whatever that department is called in that State -- told me that California was extremely nit-picky about disability claims. I should expect to be referred to at least one more doctor before they would honor the claim, if they did at all.) Two weeks later, I received my first disability check in the mail. California didn't argue the point; they seemed to be agreeing that I was as messed up as the doctor said I was.

Then followed a rocky period. Dave was hired to work at Standex in Cincinnati. We moved with short notice, had out-of-town company our first night in town, I went right into a roller-coaster ride of euphoric Ups and miserable Downs that equaled some of what I'd experienced earlier in the year, before we moved from California. It was a rough time for both of us, and I'm thankful that Dave had the patience to put up with me.

I'm still somewhat in that stage, which doesn't help me deal with the current situation in the least. We muddled along for months, paying extra amounts on the charge cards that had carried us through seven months of no income, closing off some overdue medical bills, and frittering away what was left of Dave's comfortable salary. Then, while my daughter was staying with us -- four months into a six-to-eight week stay -- Standex let Dave go. The crunch came back in earnest.

Ohio pays generous unemployment, much higher than California, so -- even though my disability checks from California's employee-paid insurance had run out--we weren't really hurting, the pressure was mostly emotional. We'd just gone through all this the year before. Psychically, we weren't prepared for another lengthy period of unemployment. When a decent-sounding ad appeared in the paper, Dave applied for it, and wound up getting a job, instead, as an "account executive" at Management Recruiters...at minimum wage, some 96 bucks less than his unemployment check. (We had read the manual and it seemed to be saying that the State would pick up the difference, but it turned out that they wouldn't...) Sandy moved out, that helped. We moved to a smaller place ("Cozy" © 1982 Bill Bowers). We stopped buying booze. We quit going to movies. We quit eating out. We quit...well, you get the idea. Our belts were pulled in as tightly as we could.

And still we fell behind. The "cushion" I keep in our checking account -- one-month's planned expenditures -- dwindled down ever-closer to the disappearing point. I suggested that I return to work. Dave suggested I get an okay from a local doctor. An appointment was made at Cincinnati General, and a visit made to the accounting department to arrange for the County to pick up some of the expense. They granted us an 80% discount.

That first visit should have warned me of the snafus that were to come. The wrong X-rays were taken at first, and I had to wait in line for another set. The M.D. who saw me, a pleasant oriental fellow, was alarmed by the X-rays. I would have to have surgery, he told me, and should have a Pulmonary Function Test first, to give them more info on my condition. He discussed the situation in the waiting room with Dave and I, and we left, a sense of foreboding weighing heavily on us both. All I had wanted was some sort of bracing, or something, so I could return to work. Instead, we were on a merry-go-round.

On the appointed day I appeared for my P.F. Test, a half-hour early "just-in-case" (I was beginning to get the hang of things at the hospital; always plan on anything to take at least twice as long as expected, and show up early if you want to receive attention somewhere within an hour or so of your appointment...). Ummm, the receptionist murmured, looking at my appointment slip. The test wasn't given in Ortho, but elsewhere. Just where? Well, she wasn't really sure. After querying other clerks in the department, she suggested I go upstairs to the Cardiac Clinic. They sent more patients to wherever it was for that test, perhaps they could direct me. *Sigh* The receptionist in Cardiology thankfully knew the location of the lab I was to go to, and gave detailed directions as well as a back-up phone number to call. Surprisingly, I reached the proper place about two minutes past my appointed hour. The test wasn't complicated -- breathe into a vacuum-cleaner-sized-hose at various rates and with various degrees of resistance while a pen squiggled out some lines on graph paper -- and I was on my way home 45 minutes later.

A few days later Dave (who had taken the morning off work) and I were back in Ortho, waiting to speak to the doctor. Almost an hour went by before I was called to wait in one of the little cubicles for a doctor to appear. Dave went with me. We waited in the examining room for another fifteen or twenty minutes, but finally a M.D. showed up. "And why are you here?" he asked. "To discuss options for surgery for my scoliosis," I answered. "What!?" he exclaimed. "Why on *Earth* would you want *drastic* surgery like *that* for?" Surprised by the intensity of his --well, outburst seems the closest term I can think of -- I stammered out "But we were told to come here for that!" He paused, looked at the sheet of paper in his hand, and frowned. "You've been here before?" I nodded. "Well, they haven't got your X-rays here. Go back to the waiting room, you'll be called." To make a too-long story shorter, after waiting nearly another hour, we were called back, to another cubicle, for another shorter wait until yet another M.D. showed up...who asked the identical question "And why are you here?" I wish I could say that I patiently explained again the reasons for my presence, but I didn't. Time has fogged the details, but I recall tears blurring my vision as I tried to retell all that had gone on before for what seemed to be the umpteenth time. Frayed nerves? Heck, mine were so ragged I don't think they showed signs of ever having been intact... At least that got results, of a sort. Dr. Bratman (for that was this one's name) called in the Sr. Resident, Dr. Detri-sec, (Cold Fish, Dave nicknamed him: Placater was Dr. Bratman's, Asshole was Dr. Weiseltier's -- the first one we had met that day), who at least gave us a deeper explanation of what sort of information was needed before surgery was decided on. For one thing, a set of X-rays older than six-months. I immediately thought of the ones the M.D. in KY had taken. Prescribing some pain pills and muscle relaxants for spasm, Dr. Bratman gave me an appointment for five weeks in the future -- long enough, he said, for the X-rays to be sent by mail from Louisville.

We phoned down to KY when we got home (a mere four hours after leaving) and the clerk said they'd be in the mail RealSoonNow. I had foolishly thought that five weeks seemed a bit extreme a wait for delivery, but it turned out to be barely enough.... Two weeks later, with no films in hand, I called again. They had been sent, the clerk said, she recalled sending them herself. Nothing to do but wait.

In the meantime my youngest son, Brian, was due to graduate from High School in Beecher, Illinois. As my usual wont, I drove up to Martha Beck's to spend a few days visiting while in the vicinity to attend graduation ceremonies at Beecher. When I related the tale of woe to date, Martha suggested that I contact the chiropractor I had gone to while I had stayed with Joni Stopa in 1977. I phoned, the clerk found the films (under my ex-married name), and -- again -- said they'd be in the mail RSM. She, at least, told the truth. The X-rays arrived six days later, ^{three} days before my appointment.

Armed with the proper data, I marched back into Ortho. This time I drew Dr. Weiseltier. He looked at the films, nodded, and commented that they didn't look too different from the newer ones (this was the first word we'd gotten that they'd been found--they had never shown up, nor had any of my other records, during the earlier visit). Dave asked if he would measure the degree of curvature to see just what difference there was, and Weiseltier disappeared for about ten minutes. He seemed more restrained on his return.

There had been significant change, he said (almost reluctantly; could it be that doctors don't like having their initial, top-of-the-head assessments proved in error?), the top, thoractic curvature had gone from 60° to 75°, the lower, lumbar curve from 45° to 55°. A 25% increase on top, 22% below. At that rate, he said, ^{WITHIN 3 YEARS} I'd be in a wheelchair, on oxygen therapy, from the effects of the curvature alone. Dave and I glanced at each other. That was rougher than either of us had expected. Stabilization surgery, spinal fusion, would be needed to prevent the condition from worsening. We already had been told by Dr. Detrisec that such surgery would not improve anything (except minimally), and that the degree of discomfort already present would not be relieved, but the procedure would stop the spine from curving even more, and at least keep me functioning. Dr. Weiseltier then told me to get a physical at the Internal Medicine Clinic, as they would need to know if I could was strong enough to tolerate the surgery, a lengthy procedure indeed.

Hassle time again. Briefly, after numerous phone calls, I finally managed to get an appointment at Internal Med. by showing up and pleading for one. Weiseltier had said I could be scheduled for surgery the last week of July or the first week of August--the I.M. Clinic was in the process of scheduling new patients for the month of September... I was hoping to talk them into a mid-August appointment, I was almost floored when they fit me in that very afternoon. The exam was thorough, and the results showed I had acquired borderline high blood pressure (140/100 in the right arm, 140/87 in the left) and first stage emphysema -- smoking was to be halted, the B.P. could be due to the stress I was under, but would have to be watched. *Sigh* Otherwise, I was in good shape for the surgery. I dutifully reported the results to Weiseltier the next week, and he went ahead and described the procedure that would be done: 21 vertebrae would be fused (tops and bottoms roughened with a file, after the spinal disks were removed, bone slivers, taken from the pelvis, inserted in between, and the whole spine stabilized with steel rods on each side, and cross-braced with rods which criss-crossed. Additional surgery would be needed to relocate muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves -- that being a tricky proposition all by itself. An anesthesiologist would keep bringing me up during surgery, check on the area served by whatever nerve they were working on, and then put me back into deep slumber. If the nerve ruptured, hopefully repairs could be done immediately. Then the fateful question was asked: "You do have insurance, don't you?" "No," I answered, "but the accounting Dept. had granted me a low-income discount of 80%." That, he told me, wouldn't suffice for this item, I would have to contact a social worker to apply for Medicaid.

Learning that doing what could be done by phone saved a lot of waiting in chilly rooms, I called the social workers' office and was told I'd have to apply for General Relief at the Hamilton County Welfare Department. Medicaid was only for persons receiving Disability or SSI Social Security payments. I phoned the welfare office and asked for instructions, and was told to come down and pick up the necessary forms and I would be given an appointment. I trotted on down, and 4½ hours later, was given a small booklet of questions, a short form for my landlord to fill out and someone who could verify our address, and an appointment three weeks later. I gulped. "But the doctor wanted to put me in the hospital before then," I protested. Okay, the clerk said, in that case all I need do would be to show up at 8:30 on any day and hope that someone didn't show up for their appointment, in which case I could get in earlier. I turned around and went back to the hospital to inform Weiseltier. Okay, he said, no rush. A few weeks one way or the other wouldn't make any difference. Go ahead and wait until the 29th of July, but call him immediately with the results.

Forms filled out, account book in hand, letters from my employers (Manpower and Mike Resnick for me, Management Recruiters for Dave) and from the M.D., bills, receipts and statements all rubberbanded together, I sat myself down on the appointed day and explained my situation. Unsurprisingly, to me, I was turned down -- because of the car we had bought from Lou Tabakow back in April of 81, which was registered in my name. I asked if selling it would change the results. No, because I would be assessed the \$2,265 difference between the Book value and the bank loan balance, at the rate of \$200 a month, and would be barred from reapplying until 11½ months had passed. *Sigh* I went back to Cincinnati General, to explain the story to Weiseltier.

On a hunch, I decided to stop off at the Out-Patient Accounting department first, to explain what had happened to my financial counselor, Ms. Grant. My mood was sliding rapidly downhill; expected or not, it's always been hard for me to accept rejection, even by so impersonal a body as a bureaucratic official with Book in hand. Ms. Grant's warm reassurances helped ~~boost~~ my spirits: no problem, she said. All that need be done was for the doctor to admit me, a *pro forma* application would be made in my behalf by the social workers, after they found out I had no insurance, and then when the welfare people turned me down again, the hospital could grant me the same 80% discount as an in-patient, the balance to be paid from the county's General Tax Fund. I hurried over to Ortho to tell Weiseltier.

I imagine everyone has experienced -- from both sides -- the time when you are explaining something extremely basic and simple to someone who behaves as if you're speaking Greek. It's frustrating, no matter how differently you try to express the concept, you know it will come out even more confusing to the other, and the listener's bafflement increases the frustration. I got frustrated, very frustrated, trying to explain the financial set-up to Dr. Weiseltier. He kept insisting that the surgery was Expensive, that I had to have assistance from some program or the other, that surely the caseworker at Welfare could be spoken to, and other expressions of concern that I believed were in areas that should not have bothered him. He asked to see Ms. Grant. I brought her over and let her tell him the same thing I did. He kept confusing the amount of discount -- a 10% discount was as nothing he insisted. No, we pointed out, it was 80%. The room rates had recently gone up. Yes, Ms. Grant admitted. They were now \$500 a day (*gulp*), but the office was very lenient at setting payment schedules for people who were receiving county discounts. All our statements fell on deaf ears. Finally, the doctor asked me to "let him think it over for a few days", told me to go home and call him back the next week. Discouraged, I left.

Recalling the conversation later to Dave, I remembered that Weiseltier had mentioned something about "scheduling problems" to Ms. Grant. She had suggested that it was the physician/surgeon's fees he might be worried about, and he had responded that, no, they would most likely donate their services in any case (but if that was the case, why on Earth was he so worried about the cost?), it was simply the huge amount that bothered him. I reasoned that, since he had seemed eager to admit me as an Insured Patient in quick order, the fact that no doctor could be expected to do too much "free" work in a short period might present certain problems in establishing an admission date when a number of doctors were involved. At any rate, there was nothing to do but wait until the next Tuesday, as he was in the Clinic only on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Naturally I couldn't reach him on Tuesday, but finally made it through on Thursday. He repeated basically the same protestations he had the week before (Dave had taken off from work and was listening in as we talked over the phone). The expense was horrendous, he kept saying, it would be difficult to handle. Yes, I pointed out, rather sarcastically I thought. The operation might cost as much as a new car. After a moment's silence he said that, yes, it could be looked at that way. But maybe our financial position would change in the near future, either I might be able to get insurance, or I might qualify for some welfare assistance. 20% of so huge a bill was mind-boggling to him. A gnawing suspicion began to assert itself. Even if I were insured, most policies cover only 80% of major medical costs, but in that case, the doctor's fees would be covered too. If I had insurance, I would, most likely, be required to pay even more, since the M.D.'s bills would also then be due. My opinion of Dr. Weiseltier, never particularly high in the first place, plummeted. Could it really be that all he could think of was the fact that he and the other doctors wouldn't be paid? I still have trouble accepting that viewpoint, but I also can't think of another one that would explain all his newly-found quibbles. Just a few short weeks earlier he was willing, if not anxious, to put me in the hospital and get to work: now that it was obvious I would be a "charity" patient, he had developed all sorts of concerns about the affordability of the expense. A sour taste filled my mouth and it's there still...

Anyway, he committed himself to one point at least. He would speak to the other M.D.s and let me know their decision on the 12th of August. So now I just sit and wait. With

8/7/82 -- 9:45

the sensation of being trapped in some Absurdist's nightmare. Hoping that George C. SCott doesn't show up on my doorstep announcing an even weirder change in script.

There's a strong feeling of being caught up in a Catch-22 situation: as long as we're broke, or in financial straits, there is help of some sort coming from the County. If Dave does manage to snag some commissions, the discounts would be taken away and then we definitely could not afford the surgery. But we're at the end of our ropes at the moment, only a hefty balance on the MasterCard's credit limit offers us hope of making it. And that, of course, means higher monthly expenses. *Sigh* Damned if we do, damned if we don't. Needless to say (I gather you people can read between the lines) my mental state is ragged. I cry a lot, my hands'll start shaking at odd moments, sleep patterns are disturbed, stomach aches almost continually -- and cutting down my smoking from 40+ unfiltered Pall Malls to 5 strongly filtered, mentholated Barclays each day isn't helping matters at all (except that it does make me feel in control of at least one tiny area of my life...). Breaking the typewriter -- or an element anyway -- midway through these stencils didn't boost my spirits at all. Hearing the news that Brian, in Basic at Lackland Air Force Base, had passed out on the parade ground and broken his jaw didn't help. Getting a loan from my mother (a totally unexpected source) did help, a bit. Hearing of personal hassles between Sandy, Greg, and their neighbors didn't. (Learning, from Steve and Denise, that they had moved to new quarters eased that particular worry, though irritation at having to hear it from someone else and not from them directly was a drawback...) A daily roller-coaster ride. I used to like roller-coasters...

Well, for what good it does, that's were things lie at the present time. I have some space left, maybe I can at least finish up commenting on Mailing 15.....

[illegible]

DAVID HULAN -- THE HIGH AESTHETIC LINE 24 -- While it's true that I would never call book reviews my favorite reading material, the ones that you do are very readable, and there's no call to apologize for leaning on them to fill your pages. The only problem I have with them is that there's nothing to say in response to them -- or very little, at the most. That, you see, is our problem, not yours. (Unless, of course, you really dote on lots of mc's. In that case, it is your problem...)

This is a terrible admission to make. But I have trouble ridding myself of the notion that you are MUCH older than myself, and I, of course, am Ancient. 45 in January? That's practically young... I turned 42 this past May, but it's Different for women. (*coff*)

I get the impression that you, Mar-cla (oops), and Rachel are growing closer as Rachel grows up. N'est pas? Perhaps it's simply that, as she matures, you have more to relate that would be of interest to non-related readers/listeners.

were such a thing as Reincarnation, and one could Choose one's form in the Next Life, I'd pick being a dolphin every time. Rachel's got Taste... If there

ROY TACKETT -- VOMBIS Number 9 -- (In a legible typeface, even...) You make the same erroneous assumption I did -- it's Leigh as in Lay, not as in Lee. (Try pronouncing Denise Parsley Leigh three times, quickly. More fun if you've swilled a few glasses of wine.)

There are times I would like to "celebrate" something at winter's mid-point (I know year's end is not technically the mid-point, but it has always felt that way to me), but the Anti-Traditionalist in me gets mulish at the thought of doing so simply because Everyone -- throughout the ages -- does it. A weak reason, to be sure, but there it is.

Resnick got an IBM Word Processor. Now I'm out of a job. Tell me about the advantages again, hey Roytak?

Some people have made "Science" into a God. Those are the types who yearn for a Bible, or something of that ilk. Reading the answers, rather than searching for them, is a heck of a lot easier than doing the work yourself, after all. I have no god, not even Science, though I have more respect for its "priests" than I do for the theological kind. Outta room, outta time. Bye....