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obligatory Apanage Trip Report:

THE 23RD OF JUNE, 23 YEARS LATER, THRU THE LOOKING GLASS

It was Sunday, three in the afternoon, a high school graduation exercise taking place after all-night and all-morning partying on an island in the middle of Blue Mountain Lake. Parents and teachers and relatives and friends sat in the Indian Lake Central School auditorium (the gym) wishing they were less well-dressed and going about the business of doing something else. They sat facing a stage which supported 18 teenagers wearing black gowns and caps, and they prepared to see a rite of passage which, if past experience could be used to judge, would be as formally and traditionally boring as humanly possible. Preparation consisted of settling themselves onto bleachers or folding chairs and sustaining life by fidgeting or frequently shifting about.

That was 23 years ago. I was one of the 18 dressed in a funny hat with a tassel, and when this was about over the tassel would be flipped to hang down above the other cheek, and as we came on stage all tassels hung to the same side (mine by 50-50 chance, since I had absolutely no knowledge of this tassel trick until elbowed and told after the time for the seminal moment had passed...). The seats looked at the stage, and the stage looked at the seats, and things got underway.

But, they went awry.

That was 1962, and I described the occasion in 1971, and actually the story starts even earlier than graduation. It ends 23 years later on the 23rd of June at the same school on the same day of the week and with the same 3:00 pm starting time (in the same gym and with what looked to be the same score on the same old board), and this time I'm in the audience and the begowned adolescents on stage include my 17-almost-18-year-old son.

And inbetween is the position which I currently occupy, which is the Saturday night before graduation. I sit here in a cabin in the middle of the Adirondack Park, rum and cola at hand (roughing it: the soda is cold, but there's no ice...), reflecting upon my own graduation and the trip from Cincinnati to get to this one. Brian's graduation is 'tomorrow', even though it's past midnight, because I haven't gone to bed yet. 'Tonight', as I wind down the day with pencil and ruled tablet paper, there's two stories to tell. Tomorrow will bring another.

The first is one I've already told. From part of "Difugalty", my column in YANDRO, issue #211 of December, 1971:

I have a problem about writing serious material for genzines, which centers around the fact that I write a

lot of serious material for a living. At one time I used to have a problem writing humorous material, and no doubt at this particular moment there are skulls harboring the ill thought that this problem is not strictly of an erstwhile nature. But I recall in particular the time when I had to write the opening speech for my high school graduation. This sounds a bit more impressive than it really was, because although graduating salutatorian I had only sixteen people to triumph over in order to obtain the honor. But I had a hell of a time writing the speech.

My English teacher set up one law governing my speech. "No humor". I presume she did so because she knew of my tendencies to write in this manner and felt the solemnity of the graduation could be better maintained with a serious opening address. Either that, or she felt my humor stunk and that I would be better off sticking to a more traditional format. In either case, I found this a challenge of the first water and submitted draft after draft containing the sly and treacherous seeds of humor which needed only a silver tongued approach to bring them into the open. She spotted everything I was trying to do, of course, and bounced it all back with red pencil and no comment. Finally, after a half dozen attempts and a faded ribbon, I threw in the towel and did it straight. As I handed it to her, I grinned evilly.

For years afterwards I would feel guilty about that grin. Whereas all previous drafts had winged their way back to me in 24 hours or less, she held onto this one for four days. She would pour over it during study halls and whenever a free minute was available, and she would place it in her brief to take home at night. Occasionally, I would spot her lips moving as she read it, or her left hand moving in a slightly oratorical manner. She stopped visiting the teachers' lounge during lunch break and started spending her noon hour in the English room with the door closed, behind which we could hear a muffled voice rising and falling.

Finally she gave it back to me, with trembling hands, and in a voice that quavered she told me that it was probably good enough or at least as good as could be expected. Then her voice cracked, and she went to the women's room and missed three classes.

Graduation day came, a fine and beautiful upstate New York morning. The two or three other couples who had been having an outstanding pre-graduation celebration thought perhaps it would be a groovy (or hip, or hep, or whatever it was in those days) idea if we split for home and got decked up in our Sunday duds and showed up for the graduation. So we did, and with much good

scotch under my belt and over my brain I grumbled out onto the stage and gave the opening address. But not before I had spent forty or fifty seconds scrounging around the lectern trying to sort my speech out from amongst all the others that were placed in there. I found it, looked up at all the tittering and smiling faces, grinned a bit broadly and tossed my speech on top of the lectern. My mouth slowly changed from a half moon to a very small oval as I watched the speech sail off the other side of the lectern and float down into the orchestra pit where it disappeared into the large end of the tuba.

The funny part about it, or so I thought at the time, was that the sheets of my speech were not stapled together and they winged their separate ways to the tuba as though they were a flock of doves (a pack of Larks?). The tuba player was more nervous about all this than I was, and tipped over his music stand in the process of fishing my speech out of his instrument.

I moved around the lectern to the edge of the stage, and played with my tassel while the audience hoo-hawed above the noise of my English teacher who was crying in the far left corner of the auditorium. I felt rather guilty about that, and in my rush to lean over and take the sheets of paper which the tuba player was waving at me I slipped off the edge of the stage and wiped out the drums and cymbals.

It was an awful noise.

I finally got to deliver my speech, because most everyone was unaware of the real cause behind my actions. They just thought I was having a bit of bad luck.

I delivered a very moving, forceful, serious speech. Even my English teacher had to admit that both the writing and the execution were well done. But somehow the effect was all wrong. People kept tittering and chuckling all the way through it. They tittered and chuckled all the way through the graduation exercises. It was a small town, and three quarters of the people in it tittered and chuckled for weeks.

I always looked at it philosophically. Since my entrance was such a hard act to follow, it's just as well that she wouldn't let me write a humorous speech.

But she still thinks I did it all on purpose.

I'm not certain.

The second story concerns the trip, which is memorable for an overnight stay at the home of our Alice and her Frank (actually, her Francis and our Frank), and which included the company of our Bruce and his Dodie for most of the first evening.

Jackie and I left Cincinnati at 7:08 on Friday morning, drove 406 miles to Angola which harbors a service stop on the NYok State Thruway, and called Alice at 2:10 to tell her we were 30 or so miles south of Buffalo and if the creek didn't rise would be arriving in 3-3½ hours. Did we get her map? Yes. Did she get our postcard? No (but the mailman would bring it about 2 hours before we got there).

Alice and Frank live just south of the University, hardly any distance at all from "Watson West 1" where in 1962 I roomed for two months as I went through

college'. As she described it on her map: *Dark red shingles, dark moss-green trim; only house on block w. garage right out on sidewalk at left (and planters hanging on porch).*

At 5:17 we parked out front, grabbed a small bag containing two identical absurdities purchased at a rest stop as goofy gifts, and climbed the steps to meet our hosts.

Both very nice people living in a very nice home with a fantastic mini arboretum for a back yard.

Alice looks a lot younger than I had envisioned her from all previous clues, has a voice which perfectly matches what I had envisioned (and even before talking with her twice on the phone), and presents an interesting study in conflicting interests and demeanors (most interesting people do...). Jackie described Frank as "an extremely handsome man". He's also a good listener, a good talker, and no mean bartender. The four of us sat around talking and filling up ashtrays and depleting the world's supply of icecubes.

Bruce came, stayed briefly, left to fetch Dodie, and then there were six of us.

Bruce told me that my voice was just right for what he had envisioned, and I told him this was good because it meant I wouldn't have to improve on it. We had a shameless public hugging within the Morigi's living room, both coming and going. Bruce is one of those instantly likeable people that there aren't enough of on this planet -- no doubt a mutant strain or an immigrant from some other planet.

Dodie, who instantly struck me as a cross between Tina Hensel Jones and Lyn Curry, which means absolutely nothing to most anyone reading this, is amusingly risqué and much of the time talks tough or talks humorous. To my personality type (G), this usually means likeable, and Dodie wasn't one of the few exceptions.

Together they made one of the more interesting new couples I've run across in some time, strictly for the verbal byplay between them. They're at the early stage of regularly exploring and testing each other, even in a social setting -- or at least in this one -- and they could bottle it for Saturday Night Live. There was a lot of chuckling and laughing going on that evening.

Before the evening wore on, we Ate Italian. I'd asked Alice not to knock herself out (because our ETA was definitely "E", and subject to the whims and roadblocks of Murphy), but she managed to do it anyway. The six of us ate hearty, or heartily, as well as Italian, and I think everyone had seconds and waddled away from the table.

I won't attempt to reconstruct or catalog the various twists of conversation. It was what I call eclectic. We rode pogo sticks, bouncing from segue to segue. Very, very enjoyable.

Then it was over, it was very late indeed, Bruce and Dodie left, the rest of us trotted up to bed, and I was asleep the instant my head hit the pillow.

I got up about eight, showered (later -- Dave: "Now that's a shower." Frank: "Yes. Amazing what all new pipes can do when you don't think you've got any water pressure."), and wandered downstairs to inhale

coffee with Alice. I then got to read Mary Francis' prize-winning short story, enjoyed it a great deal (as did Jackie a little bit later), and made a mental note to say so when I got to this spot in the trip report. Later Jackie came down, and then Frank, and except for an excursion to gawk at the back yard we all sat around the dining table abusing caffeine and nicotine and yakking until noon.

Then it was up and away. I went out to load our luggage and clean New York State fauna off the car's windshield. There was a brief, shameless public hugging with Alice on the sidewalk in front of her home, and then Frank and Alice drove ahead of us to lead the way to a Special Route which would get us out of Syracuse without the congestion encountered on our way in. Frank pointed at an entrance ramp, I tooted the car's horn, and then the sidetrip was officially over. We were on our way again.

We had encountered gracious hosts and four very nice people, and I was more pleased than ever that I had become a member of Apanage. "Fandom" covers a lot of territory these days and no one will ever explore or even encounter all of it, and I feel fortunate to have found as many good fannish communities as I have in the last 24 years. Apanage is definitely one of them.

Three and a half hours later found us in Indian Lake, drinking diet cola and looking out of a large picture window at woods, mountains, and lake. Also looking at a high school yearbook, and a program folder for the "Seventy-eighth Graduation of Indian Lake Central School", and an old newspaper containing an article on the fifty-fifth graduation back in 1962. If such a thing had existed, we'd probably have also been looking at something from the late 1920s when my father attended the same school.

And that brings the press of time right up to the present moment, early the morning of yet another graduation as I sit here listening to the sudden onset of rain on the cabin roof. Outside, trees are being whipped about in accompanying gusts of wind. All nature's white noise. I doubt I'll even register the feel of my head on the pillow before falling asleep tonight.

... As ever, time passes ...

About two weeks' worth of it.

The next day came and went on feet of mercury.

Brian's mother suffered a defective roll of film (it wouldn't advance), I suffered an inadequate camera (the flash wasn't good enough for shots taken in the gym), and Jackie suffered the folding chairs (as did everyone else, but for her it was the difference between pain and discomfort). Brian suffered standing in one spot outdoors while a receiving line, consisting of most everyone in town, ambled past to offer congratulations and to abuse his hand or lips or shoulder or back.

Then Brian went off to party at several different places, presumably one at a time, and while he was doing that Phoebe and Jackie & I made an evening of going out to eat. We had reservations at a place called Wilderness Lodge, which is so secluded it may be the only which could survive a nuclear armageddon.

At noon the next day, Brian and Jackie & I were in the car. I turned it around, and we drove back to Cin-sanity. At 1:30 the following morning, here we were.

The next weekend the three of us took in Midwestcon; not, however, before Brian sent off thank-you notes for graduation gifts and we sent one off in appreciation of superb Morigi hospitality.

Yesterday was July 4th. We saw PALE RIDER, a few fireworks, some tennis on the court and some Wimbledon on tv (and if you happened to watch some of it and see Boris Becker, the 17-year-old unseeded new player, you should know that the three of us here were amazed. Except for Becker being a couple of inches taller, he and Brian are look-alikes. They are even move-alikes. Uncanny. Anyway, if you caught Wimbledon, that's what my son looks like. Except when he's playing tennis), and here it is the morning of the 5th. Everyone is asleep as I sit here once again listening to the sudden onset of rain on the roof. Tomorrow night, Saturday, Brian gets airmailed back to the northwoods. On Sunday I type this up (hi, here I am -- hiding in the back-ground impersonating a typist), electrostencil it, run it off on twil-tone, and on Monday I mail it 1st Class to David or kiss the deadline goodbye.

Time and again there is not enough time for everything. Not enough time to tell you I got probation-confirmed as ChoiceCare's Member Services Manager together with yet another raise, this time 16½% (which means, in this new field, that I'm now making as much as I was making in my old field just prior to my last two years in it; pre-1979). Not enough time to describe the egoboost of being offered even further promotion and money, and turning it down because it involved travel, shaving, and 3-piece suits. Not enough time for mailing comments, or movie and book recommendations (except, go see FLETCH and THE GODS MUST BE CRAZY, and go read Dave Barry's collection of columns entitled BAD HABITS, Gregory McDonald's FLYNN'S IN, and Jonathan Carroll's THE LAND OF LAUGHS), or to describe any of the other happenings of the last two weeks or two months. Why? Because this coming Friday is the deadline, and Sunday is The Day To Do This. The day to stop traveling about, turn on the typewriter, crank up the mimeo, and pub the ish.

So, I'll go do that.

Will I see you in September? ~~Quickly/And/that/that~~

Hi, this is the real-time me, and I'm all through timebinding you now. Well, it's about time. 6:00 pm on Sunday the 7th of July, to be specific.

Becker won Wimbledon. Youngest player to do it, and only unseeded player to do it. Felt like I was in some alternate universe where Brian had been blessed with a natural bent for tennis. Weird.

Time to wrap this up. Yes, I will see you in September.

Later.

DAVE



Dave
Barry

History Requires Civil Mind

The difficult thing about studying history is that, except for Harold Stassen, everybody who knows anything about it first-hand is dead. This means that our only source of historical information is historians, who are useless because they keep changing everything around.

For example, I distinctly remember learning in fifth grade that the Civil War was caused by slavery. So did you, I bet. As far as I was concerned, this was an excellent explanation for the Civil War, the kind you could remember and pass along as an important historical lesson to your grandchildren. ("Gather 'round, boys and girls, while Grandpa tells you what caused the Civil War. Slavery. Now go fetch Grandpa some more bourbon.")

Then one day in high school, out of the blue, a history teacher named Anthony Sabella told me that the Civil War was caused by economic factors. I still think this is a lie, and not just because Anthony Sabella once picked me up by my neck. I mean, today we have more economic factors than ever before, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Average, but you don't see the North and the South fighting each other, do you? Which is good, because the South has 96% of the nation's armed pickup trucks, whereas the North mainly has Fitness Centers, so it would be over in minutes.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: What kind of a name is "Dow" Jones? Explain.

Nevertheless, I had to pretend I thought the Civil War was caused by economic factors, or I never would have escaped from Mr. Sabella's class

and got into college, where the history professors sneered openly at the primitive high-school-teacher notion that the Civil War had been caused by anything so obvious as economic factors. No, they said, the Civil War was caused by acculturized regionalism. Or maybe it was romantic transcendentalism, or behavioristic naturalism, or structuralized functionalism. I learned hundreds of terms like these in college, and I no longer even vaguely recollect what they mean. As far as I know, any one of them could have caused the Civil War. Maybe we should lock them all in a small room and deny them food and water until one of them confesses.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Was the author "just kidding" when he made that last "off-the-wall" suggestion? Cite specific examples.

What is the cause of all this disagreement among the experts over basic historical issues? Economic factors. If you're a historian and you want to write a best-selling book, you have to come up with a new wrinkle. If you go to a publisher and say you want to write that Harry Truman was a blunt-spoken Missourian who made some unpopular decisions but was vindicated by history, the publisher will pick you up by your neck and toss you into the street, because there are already bales of such books on the market. But if you claim to have uncovered evidence that Harry Truman was a Soviet ballerina, before long you'll be on national morning television, answering earnest questions from David Hartman in a simulated living room.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Don't you think David Hartman is just a little TOO avuncular? Why?

So I propose that we laypersons forget about historians and agree among ourselves to believe in a permanent set of historical facts once and for all. Specifically, I propose we use the facts contained in a book I found in my basement recently called *Civilization Past and Present*, which is apparently one of my wife's high-school textbooks.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Did she steal it? Or what?

Civilization Past and Present combines the advantage of having a snappy title with the advantage of ending in 1962, just before history starts to get really depressing. It's easy to understand, because my wife has

underlined all the important words and phrases ("Germany," for example). And it doesn't beat around the bush. For example, on Page 599 it makes the following statement, in plain black and white: "The causes of the American Civil War are complex."

Since some of you laypersons out there may not have *Civilization Past and Present* in your basements, here's a brief summary to tide you over until you can get your own copies:

HISTORY

5,000,000,000 B.C.-1962

After the Earth cooled, it formed an extremely fertile crescent containing primitive people such as the Hittites who believed in just the stupidest things you ever heard of. Then came Greece and Rome, followed by Asia. All of this came to a halt during the Middle Ages, which were caused by the Jutes and featured the following terms underlined by my wife: "the steward, the bailiff and the reeve." Next the Turks got way over into France, after which there were towns. And the Magna Carta. Then France and England fought many wars that involved dates such as "1739" and were settled by the Treaty of Utrecht, which was also used to harness water power. By then the seeds had been sown for several World Wars and the Louisiana Purchase, but fortunately we now have a fairly peaceful atom. Now go fetch Grandpa some more bourbon.

DEFINE THE FOLLOWING:
"Avuncular."

Dave Barry is humor writer for Knight-Ridder Newspapers.