

NO. 22  
NOVEMBER 1982

Redd Boggs'  
**SPIROCHETE**

LOVE STORY

They was parked in the dark by the cement works.

The young man was unwontedly ecstatic, even poetic. "Wotta night! Wotta night!" he exclaimed over and over. "Lookit it! Dese stars and dis moon!"

Gradually he began to realize that the young woman seemed unmoved by the beauty of the night and by his paeon to it. "Dese stars and dis moon!" he shouted, shaking her. "What'sa matter, babe? Ya don't like um? Huh?"

The young woman patted the leather upholstery of the car's bucket seat. "Nah! What I like ain't dese stars and dis moon, but dat sun!"

LOOKING BACK AT THE DAWN

When you travel too far too fast you suffer from jet lag. The airliner itself suffers from metal fatigue after a while. God knows what the air suffers from such stress, but it shudders and howls as if in torment, and supersonic speeds obviously do something dreadful to the atmosphere.

I suffer from jet lag when I saunter down the hill to the doughnut shop, and I worry about jet lag if I publish too much too often in FAPA. My Gestetner 120 (obsolescent as it is, poor contraption) may fall into flinders if I use it too strenuously, and the ozone may begin to sizzle from the mad whirl of the crank. But I have decided, despite all these hazards, to revive Spirochete, and even to publish it regularly, perhaps every mailing.

It's all G. Legman's fault. He wrote me asking for a copy of issue #4, 17 March 1965, in which I reported a lecture by Legman in San Francisco which Gretchen and I attended a few weeks earlier. Digging up the issue for him, I reread the whole file after all this time, and decided that the title ought to be continued despite a lapse of eight years.

In reviving this magazine I have gone back to the early issues for inspiration. A fan editor ought to do this periodically, I think, in order to recruit his energy. "Keep true to the dreams of thy youth." Herman Melville pasted a copy of this admonition inside the lid of his writing box. It's not an easy admonition to follow. What were the dreams of thy youth? It's hard to remember, even with fanzines that have had an uninterrupted history, a continuity of effort, you can trace (if you have a file of back issues) back to the start. You seldom go back to see what goals and aspirations you had long ago, but if you

don't, you soon lose touch with your roots. Each issue of a fanzine takes its impetus largely from the previous issue, not the early ones.

In the case of Spirochete, it was not too useful to go back to the beginning. I have brought back a few elements of format and layout, including Gretchen Schwenn's original heading, which I have used in preference to the modified one from issue #8 and henceforth. "Top of the Hill," the mood piece published below, revives a series begun in 1965 with two sketches in #6 and #13. But Spirochete, when it began in the autumn of 1964, was originally a little enchiridion for Apa L, the LASFS weekly apa; this is quite a different thing from a quarterly publication for FAPA. Still, I am glad I went back, if only to experience the silver shock of it. Like a plunge in the ocean at Arroyos de los Frijoles it was refreshing.

I have tried in this revival issue to recapture a sort of casual, informal tone consistent with the early weekly publication, the spirit of those long-ago times. I don't intend to write any Major, Solemn Es-says here, but only to write briefly and offhandedly of the world 'round about, a series of voluntaries. Like the old story of the Spanish mariners becalmed at the mouth of the Amazon and dying of thirst because they did not realize that all they had to do was to lower their buckets for fresh water, we are surrounded by little essays which need only to be dipped from the torrents flowing past on all sides. Pardon me while I drop my bucket into the drink.

#### THE TIMEX OF MY LIFE

I suppose each of you has one of those fabulous analog quartz watches with countdown timer, 24 hour repeat alarm, six-digit readout showing hour, minute, second, day, month and date, button-operated back-light, indicator for the time in Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and Melbourne, and a stud (as they used to say in Captain Future) you can push to play "Yankee Doodle" on command, all powered by a long-life lithium battery.

As for myself, I carry a Timex that cost about \$21 at Payless drugs over four years ago. It tells the correct time, more or less, using two hands and a face, archaic as that method may be. In little windows at the three o'clock position on the face the day of the week and the date are indicated. The watch is self-winding, its innards kept ticking by the motion of my wrist. I am a little abashed by the plebian simplicity of such a watch, but we want nothing but Facts, sir, as Mr Gradgrind said solemnly.

There's only one difficulty. The "date" cycle on the Timex is set for 31-day months only. At the end of a 30-day month, when it is actu-

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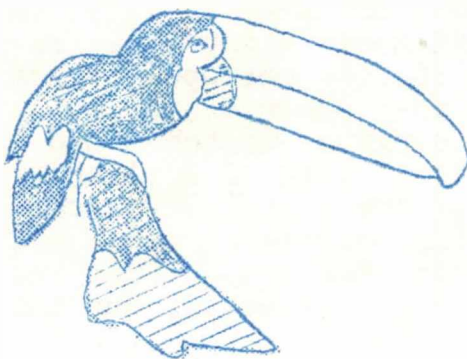
ally, say, Thursday the first, my watch indicates that it is Thursday the thirty-first. You can imagine how confusing it gets on Thursday the first of March, when my watch says "THU 29" with implacable inaccuracy.

Between times, over the course of a month or two, I always forget the method of adjusting the watch so it will tell the correct date once more. It isn't as easy as it sounds to coordinate the day and date, but I won't explain how it goes because at the moment I can't remember. The Timex continues to show the wrong date till at last I manage to find the little leaflet that came with the watch and discover again the trick of adjusting it.

At this time of year, I look forward fretfully to the dark and often rainy (here in the Bay area) winter season to come, but there's one consolation. After I figure out how to adjust the "date" indicator on my Timex at the start of December, I won't have to worry about the matter till the first of March. The prospect is almost enough to cheer me up even on a sad afternoon when the wind blows cold from the Pacific, the foghorns warble their musical but melancholy notes, and the weatherman promises rain after dark. As my Timex ticks inaudibly away on my wrist, I will sit here in solitary comfort, sipping coffee and nibbling lemon nut cookies, feeling more relaxed than I have been since the end of September.

#### THE SAINTLY DAYS OF YORE

Gretchen drew this picture of a toucan for a brief article called "A Toucan Looks at Lying" which I wrote for Spirochete #1, 19 November 1964. The title was a pun on A Texan Looks at Lyndon, a piece of political propaganda that Henry Stine and/or other LASFS members had franked into the Apa L distributions just before the 1964 election (Lyndon Johnson vs Barry Goldwater). It pleases me to reprint Gretchen's drawing after 18 years and give her work a tiny share of immortality.



The toucan, not the raven, was the familiar of our household, Gretchen's and mine, when we lived at 270 South Bonnie Bree, Los Angeles 90057, in the autumn of 1964. She had brought along the small stuffed replica of a toucan (one the size of a jay, not the big 24-inch variety found in the Amazon) when she arrived on my doorstep Friday, 28 August 1964. She had bought it at a store in Old Town, Albuquerque, where later on trips to New Mexico we bought a few other bird replicas.

The little toucan, a tropic bird of bright plumage related to the woodpecker, perched insouciantly on the shade of our floorlamp in the succeeding months, and I have a photograph or two taken in October 1964 showing it there.

Unfortunately, not having the demonic persistence of a raven, our little toucan disappeared, along with a few other items, on and after our hegira of December 1964 when we dashed off to Albuquerque for the holidays and then came up to the Bay area. A misplaced wall thermometer



turned up, years later, in an inside pocket of an otherwise empty suitcase, but the toucan never reappeared. From time to time we lamented its loss and speculated on what had happened to it. We never forgot its benign presence watching over our apartment in the city of dreams in the golden past. Now, represented by Gretchen's little drawing of it -- which I reproduce from her original, fortunately preserved all this time -- I invoke the toucan's happy influence upon this fanzine in this year of 1982.

BOY, THAT'S FUNNY!

Aside from the unexpurgated lyrics of "Mademoiselle from Armentières," the funniest stuff I remember hearing in my boyhood were these jokes: (1) "Have you read The Yellow Stream by I. P. Standing?" and (2) "Have you read The Jungle Princess by Erasmus B. Black?" These exquisite witticisms really bowled us over (and over and over) when we were ten years old, but I haven't heard either of them in many years. This may indicate that these quips have been forgotten in this world where feeble wits like Mel Brooks and Woody Allen are accounted comic geniuses but more likely it merely shows that I am no longer ten years old.

TOP OF THE HILL (3)

Richmond, Wednesday, 25 August 1982, 2345 hours

On a clear night, from the intersection nearest our home on a Richmond hill, we could see San Francisco dazzling against the sky. "It looks like a fairy city," Gretchen used to remark, giving the adjective its usual double meaning. Diminished by the distance, its outlines softened by the mist over the bay, the City glows serene and lovely, seemingly as remote as the planet Venus.

The terrifyingly tall edifices of the west coast Babylon teetering atop the earthquake fault that shrugged and destroyed much of the City in 1906 are no bigger, from this remove, than those of a toy village in a Lionel train set. They are loaded with tiny prismatic lights that resemble nothing so much as a sparkling haze. To see the metropolis from our own hilltop puts into mystical perspective the human drama being enacted at all hours over there. Many and many a night Gretchen and I paused in our midnight walks to gaze down the silent vista of Burlingame avenue and a little to the left, past the spire of the stately evergreen tree and speculate on the dark adventures happening before our eyes but beyond our vision. We felt we were close enough and far enough from the City where we stood, for we were both country bumpkins at heart, but the vision from afar somehow seemed to be ennobling.

Luminous memories come over me tonight of those walks with her in the witching hour when the rest of the neighborhood was asleep. She is gone now, as into a dark and brambly wood, but -- a little to my surprise -- the City still shines across the bay. I stand looking at it a long, long while, then turn and walk back alone to the house in the hush of midnight.

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Life is a cautionary tale.  
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