

WHATHELL

NO. 2



WHATHELL — brought to you first draft, right here as we go along, by Dave Locke, 4215 Romaine Drive #22, Cincinnati, Ohio 45209, 513/272-3259, in time for the June 1981 FLAP #10 mailing. The mimeography is courtesy of J. Causgrove Publishing Empire, Inc. (thanx, Jackie). The illo above, provided I can find one to fit the amount of space I have arbitrarily left, is by Lea Reed.

Welcome to May 31st, 1981. It's perspiration time here in Humidity City, and the emotional ambiance of the past week is something I would gladly trade in for any piece of good news to come down the pike.

I spent five days, ending this last Wednesday, visiting my mother in Indian Lake, New York. She has an advanced case of cancer and a very limited number of days remaining to her, and I hadn't seen her since 1973. Tuesday night I called Sue Cagle and learned that Ed was again too sick to come to the phone. Wednesday morning I learned that he had died in his sleep.

Not a good week, and no need to belabor it.

Recent happenings of a more joyful nature include a visit to the Coulsons where I encountered the largest cat I have ever seen, the second-largest cat I have ever seen, and one normal-size cat. Buck demonstrated the second-largest cat's trick of falling over to play dead whenever its tail was pulled. Juanita whipped up a Chinese dinner which we happily dug into while Buck ate his pizza (everyone knows that Buck is perverse...). Happy chatter and a good visit.

We saw OUTLAND, the Sean Connery sci-fi flick. Good entertainment and recommended. Without Connery it wouldn't have been as good by half.

Current recommended reading includes King's FIRESTARTER and DEAD ZONE, and I'm currently devouring 'SALEM'S LOT. I keep hearing that his earlier novels leave something to be desired, and have a tendency to believe that this may be so, but in the meantime I'll enjoy working backwards through his output.

Martha Beck came down to visit for a couple of days. More happy chatter, this time of a transcendental nature ('Martha-Logic' has to be encountered to be understood).

With what remains of this stencil I'll merely impart that I haven't as yet read the last mailing. As usual, this makes comments difficult. Tell you what: let's comment as we read along (we: me and my eyeballs).

COMMENTS TO:

JOE NICHOLAS

No specific comments this time around, Joe, but I do have a general one. The first half of your zine was the usual polemic bullshit, but the second half — written in response to the last mailing — showed an effort to be something other than just a dogmatic pain in the ass. Whether or not it's what you had in mind, I read an effort to communicate and caught a quick glimpse of a human being behind the facade. I don't see it as a turn-around, but it did appear to be a change in direction. I applaud it, and hope it continues. FLAP would be a nice place for a little digression in the nature of your fanwriting; a change of pace, shall we say. A good spot to show some tact and people-orientation in the manner that your own personality would convey.

BRUCE ARTHURS

"As near as I can ascertain, it was purely for reasons of personal animosity" that the Iguanacon committee shitcanned Mevelin. On rare occasions that's all the reason anybody needs. Maybe they didn't like the gracious manner in which possibly he offered to help counsel them.

I'm uncertain what to make of your commentary on who gets the cold blast when two people take a shower together. You know, you could turn the shower head to spray against the wall until the cold water in the pipe has been blown out. You also could turn on the shower while you're outside the tub. If all this fails you could take tub baths, or wipe each other down with washcloths.

You have an "unpublishable fanac" file, too? Wanna trade?

Yes, I've known of women who had a baby before they even knew they were pregnant. Admittedly overweight, indeed. One of them was called Big Mary.

If I get transferred to Douglas AZ I'll know I'm in deep trouble, because plans are to phase out the Mexican facility and transfer production to Haiti. I will be going to Douglas, though. From there I'll jump to California for a frenetic weekend of seeing old friends.

I really enjoyed this wordwhipping, Bruce, despite the short m/c. Your writings just keep getting better. Now tell me what you've been doing lately to get a postage waiver for fanzines.

JUTZ STEVENS

"The adult publication for people who wish another fling at childhood." Does this zine make you feel like a kid again, Jutz? Anything that makes you feel like a kid again can't be all bad. Presuming you enjoyed being a kid, which some people didn't. The only thing I do nowadays which makes me feel like a kid is playing those damned electronic games, which is interesting because they didn't have them when I was a kid...

How about an Intila where she's in bed with an alien of either sex and discovers that neither of them are hers? I refer to Intila as "she" from the basis of looks only.

Well, now that Becky has gone to a convention and is in a state of near-gafia, when are you going to take the plunge?

MARTY HELGESEN

Now that I know what OOK means (I never did, really; at least, not in the sense that you mean) I don't look upon it so badly. I still don't like to encounter it in someone's writing, but at least I know that it serves a purpose which some like to think is useful.

Enjoyed those quotes, especially the one by the teacher who had first-hand knowledge that a particular student was indeed a "pain in the ass," and wanted a clever way to support the author of that statement.

I would agree that it's important to know, in your own mind, whether or not there is a purpose to life in general. And I would have to agree that the question of God is a part of that. Any thinking person wonders about that, but sooner or later many of them come to be skeptical that anyone really has the answer to that question. I have heard apologia for more answers than you can shake a stick at, Marty, and I have yet to hear one which clicks on all points as being a good answer. Most click on hardly any points at all. Everything that I observe about life points to nothing more than a closed circle of politics and nature. Politics: the general populace is jerked about by the machinations of a superstructure of authority, and so is anyone in the superstructure. Nature: all things are born, live for a while, and die. If there is more than that I am interested in hearing about it. But you'd better be convincing.

From everything I've heard, I agree with your comments on Catholic schools, or for that matter any parochial schools. "...the public schools, deprived of their virtual monopoly, will have to improve themselves in order to compete for students." Let us hope so. The quality of public education in this country has steadily been reflected in the quality of the country's leadership. The whole damn world is plagued by its increasing stupidities, and now is the time to grapple with the matter of how we open the minds of our young. But we won't: the quality of education everywhere will continue to be a tool of politics and/or inattention.

"Saying that something is unknowable but need not always remain unknowable seems little different from saying we don't know." You got it, Thorwald. That's the way I look at it.

If the purpose of human life is to prepare ourselves for the life to come, then I guess I'm ready for just about anything...

MIKE SHOEMAKER

"In practical morality, success is the only measure of all actions." Damn, I can't agree with that. Of course for all I know "practical morality" is a phrase with a fixed definition. However, if it isn't anything more than two words strung together to convey a literal meaning, then I have a different interpretation. And it doesn't involve being a hypocrite by denying that a pickpocket deserves my wallet more than I do. If morality is virtuous conduct, and to be practical is to be level-headed and efficient, then "practical morality" strikes me as eschewing the notion that the end justifies the means; or more specifically it doesn't encompass the notion that ripping someone off is okay if you get away with it.

I too value character more highly than intelligence. Why, some of my best friends are characters...

Bitter argument or not (in Slanapa), I am fascinated by your concept that the will of the majority will always prevail when instant change is possible. As related to the

notion of video democracy. I see your point totally, but have always rather presumed that push-button opinionating should be a tool rather than an implementation. Having virtually instant access to public opinion can be very useful, but not necessarily a cut-and-dried indication of the way to go. I haven't seen any articles on this subject, but a number of ramifications spring instantly to mind. For example, it is assumed the polling would be done via television, and the subject of who controls television becomes a whole new ballgame. The matter of what is fair presentation of opposing viewpoints, prior to any polling, will likely become a legal nightmare (pay attention, Meade, this is a comment hook...). The whole nature and categorization of polling will require more regulation and audit than anything we have ever seen. The whole subject will likely become swamped in conflict and detail as it reaches a point of political focus. Ultimately, however, is the question of how the results will be used, which is what you are addressing. Your fears and pessimism are understandable. The concept of democracy in this country will truly be challenged. Do we continue to exercise it through elected representatives, or do it directly? I would agree with you that the latter is to be avoided at all cost, despite the inadequacies of the former regardless of the system used. As I would interpret it, your position is that the minorities will have some representation under the current muddle of the lobbying system, while video democracy would relegate the minorities to a low-number statistic. You may well be right, given Flinagle's Law. On the other hand, it's possible that instant polling may come out of the legislative swamp as more of a tool than a mandate. Knowing politicians, I would tend to believe that the latter is much closer to what will actually result. After all, politicians and the press and consumer groups special interests and etc. and etc. will likely get their finger into the polling, and it will be realized that the answers will be a direct reflection of the phraseology of the questions (and marketing efforts on the issues). The eccentricity of public opinion (as it can be molded) will be realized, consequently downgraded, and likely used in some manner of perspective.

Isn't first draft wonderful? I just thought all that out as I typed it...

Not to bore the shit out of you, Mike, but I think you miss my point about Hearts. I cannot statistically deny that a win is a win, whether or not it occurs in the last hand of a game or in the first hand of a new game, but I can deny that the situation is the same. People do pay attention to point distribution, increasingly so as the individual game progresses (ie: with the first hand everyone is even at zero, but from there it changes), and as a consequence the possibility for manipulations increase accordingly. The same distribution of cards when the score is 0-0-0-0 will not be played the same way when the score is, for example, 10-44-48-54, let alone 0-20-41-95. Human nature plays to the game at hand; a factor that must be taken into account. Think on that a bit.

"Your comments to Nicholas are brilliant." Gee, what can I say?

If an ethic is indeed a principle of right or good conduct, as my dictionary says, then I disagree that "'Ethics' is a myth invented by civilizations that want to pretend they are still moral without subscribing to the religious foundation of morality." Religion isn't necessary to come up with a code to protect people from each other. Any 'political' association, from two people on up, is going to result in such a code. The edges of it will be fuzzy, just like the edges of religious foundations of morality, but the core will be generated out of the same common sense which arises from any community of people. Practicality and necessity.

I think I most enjoy disagreeing with someone I respect and like. Such a circumstance seems to provide the most interaction in terms of both enjoyment and education and general to-and-fro. I just said "both," and listed three things... The joys of first draft... And I very much enjoy disagreeing and communicating with you.

BECKY CARIWRIGHT

I just got through reading your zine, while having smiled and chuckled along the way, and then turned to the stencil only to note that I hadn't absorbed any comment hooks. Do you prefer comment hooks to be absorbed or do you like them impaled? I know that you "set" a hook into a fish, so maybe comment hooks are set into people. But wouldn't it sound strange for a person to say that they were set upon by comment hooks?

Well, let's look a little closer for comment hooks. You're telling us here that you have a terrible temper. I've never seen it, but for some reason I have no trouble visualizing it. I'll bet you explode all over the place... Is your temper a safety valve because the steam can't come out any other way? With me, I rarely show temper because in myself I view it as a weakness. In an instance of being angered by something I feel a temper directed at an inanimate object to result in some rather silly behavior on my part ("you dumb fucking chair!"). If it's anger at somebody, only some of the time can a display of temper be a help rather than a hindrance in dealing with the situation. In other words I let mind overrule emotion in the situation at hand, and let off the steam afterward if it's still around to bother me. Unfortunately, sometimes the defenses get zapped and I go right straight to anger without having time to think about it. And the anger stays in control for too long. Given that condition, I'd be willing to tell Tarzan that I was going to kick him in the balls, and then go try to do it. Ask Bruce Arthurs. I think he's the same way.

Enough about anger, goddamit. Does Kent tell you you're beautiful when you're angry...?

Are you going to ride a horse to your next convention? Are you going to strap a unicorn's horn to its forehead when you do?

Sounds like the work is a nice change of pace for you. Obviously other things, like corry and apac, will have to be cut back to clear the way for the change in routine. Keep your hand in, though, to let in the rest of you when writing time can once again be set aside. There's something wrong with that sentence, and I'm going to send it to the clinic as soon as this mailing comment (?) is finished. But the thought is still there, perhaps more succinctly stated as "keep in touch." There'll be time once again in the future. He said.

SUZI STEFL

You're kooky; you know that, Suzi?

Yes, maybe you do.

I highly resent your viewing my writing and envisioning me as being the oldest person in this apa. 53, indeed. I'm 37 and don't feel any older than every minute of it. Actually I do feel older than I am, except when I don't. Yes. But then, David Hulan is convinced that I was born old, and I have only my mother to refute the statement. It's true that I said "you bastard" when the doctor first slapped me on the ass, but it's a dirty lie that I punched him in the nose. I wasn't big enough. I punched him on the ankle. And, yes, I did my first fanzine when I was a year and a half old, called COTTONIC DIAPER RASH, but I was 24 before I changed the method of duplication from fingerprint to hekto. I don't know why you have any cause to go and say that from the evidence at hand you perceive me to be 53, but I do know that I've written to get my deposit back on that reservation for a canoe. Instead, I've purchased a ticket in your name for the Michigan Annual Log Rolling Contest. We'll see who's 53.

JOHN BANGSUND

Having trouble with your typewriter there, John? Recrcrcrcrcrcr.

I never thought of using junk mail to fill a letter column. If you ever see me do this, which you likely will, don't forget to send me a bill in the morning if I fail to credit the idea, which is also likely. A likely story.

I'll guess it took you 1-1½ hours to type that cover. You forgot to hyphenate. Occasionally such a thing happens, I guess.

Where's that big super-issue that never made the Christmas mailing?

JACKIE CAUSGROVE

Hi. Nice talking to you again. And, once more, I forgot to change the typing element back there.

We've got to stop meeting like this.

"...intended for the 9th Mailing of FLAP. A limited number of extra copies go to friends." Well, I guess us FLAPPans know where we stand. And you didn't even give me an extra copy. No, that's alright. Never mind. It's okay. I understand.

Rain is nice to look at, but I've encountered relatively few who actually enjoyed armoring themselves and going out into it. It does present hazards, discomfort, and general, uh, wetness when it comes to being mobile. Much better to encounter it when there's no plans or necessity to do anything except stay inside and listen to it, and maybe throw open the curtains and watch a lightning display. There's no accounting for personal taste (an excuse I use to defend my own aberrations), but I am surprised that you find it "ludicrous" that most people aren't thrilled about being outside when it's raining.

Well, I just looked up Mary and merry in the American Heritage Dictionary. The difference in pronunciation concerns the a and the e. The a in Mary is supposed to be pronounced like the a in care. The e in merry is to be pronounced like the e in pet. In other words, mare-ee, and meh-ree. I pronounce them mare-ee and mare-ee, and until now I've never lived in the Midwest. So it goes. And I don't hear, and for the life of me do not recall anyone pronouncing merry as meh-ree (believe me, I think I'd have noticed...). Maybe we're deaf. Maybe I left out several words in that next-to-last sentence, too.

DAVID HULAN

Wow, that's a lotta pages. Yup, sure is.

I hadn't heard "hind-part-before," but in the Northwoods the term "ass-end-to" was quite common (the best kind of common, I suppose).

You know, I would have sworn on a stack of UNKNOWNNS that Bob Jennings used a micro-elite. I even said that to him one time, while in the context of expressing astonishment at his ability to type postcards without leaving an iota of margin on any side. He came back and said no, he ^{had} an elite. Obviously, while I don't remember if I checked that out with a ruler, if I did check it out (and I probably would have to satisfy my astonishment) then I didn't find him wrong, or I would have remembered it. I of course don't see why he'd lie, so I guess he had an elite...

LON ATKINS

COLD DAY IN APRIL was a superlative piece of short fiction. I'm not used to encountering such things in fanzines... Except when I read yours.

For a guy who couldn't beat me at Othello, you've got a lot of balls to propose a ranking system of "Atkins, Master, Novice, Locke." I can still remember our plotzed conversation where you asked me what the secrets were and then argued with me while I was trying to synthesize them...

How about Othello by mail...

I am intrigued by your computer games programming and more than a little wistful that I'm not out there to give you the proper guidance. However, I think you're far enough along now in your practical experience that you should begin work on programming a Hearts game. To get you started in the right direction, here are a few things you should bear in mind while you're working on it.

1. The standard three players to be simulated by the computer should be Dave Locke, Lon Atkins, and Hank Reinhardt. In case any of us decide to practice using the computer, you should build in the option of substituting David Hulan for any of the standard three. For anyone who really wants to be challenged by practice games, however, a person should have the option of choosing "Dave Locke" for each of the three computer-simulated players. With the understanding, of course, that no computer program could possibly play as well as the real McCoy, unless the real McCoy has been drinking heavily, which the real McCoy has been known to do on occasion.
2. On every fourth hand the Reinhardt simulation will take in 25 points. Not straight-line, but on the average of course.
3. The Atkins simulation will invariably fail to pass a low heart, just to keep the simulated game operating on a realistic basis.
4. The card distribution will be totally random, with the exception of the "Hold" hand in which the Dave Locke simulation will receive the bare Queen of Spades and four mediocre cards in each of the three other suits, for the purpose of simulating the usual situation in reality. As an option, the user of this program should be able to choose a pass distribution which does not include a "Hold" hand, as this will make the Dave Locke simulation happy.
5. If a simulated player eats the Queen as a deliberate sacrifice to prevent the Reinhardt simulation from shooting the moon, the CRT screen will display a short but appropriate film clip from the movie CLASH OF THE TITANS. In the event that the real, live player is the one to sacrifice against the Reinhardt shot, the program will immediately terminate and a special showing of the "good parts" from TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and the aversion-therapy film DEATH ON THE HIGHWAY will march across the screen.

There's more, but this is enough to get you started. After you've first-drafted it, I'll give you some pointers on fine-tuning the program. Don't forget, of course, that the program should be more visual than just a mere display of the playing table as each card is set down. There should be close-up computer-simulated focus on each player represented by the computer. The Reinhardt simulation should slam each card to the table. The Atkins simulation should deliberate for 45 seconds before firmly playing a card. The Locke simulation, after the fifth round, will have his card ready and in motion before the lead-card is played.

I'm counting on you to do this right, Lon.

DEAN GRENNELL

Hello, old Shoe. To borrow a phrase from Hubert, I'm pleased as punch (end of old phrase from Hubert) to see an Old Bhuddy enjoying himself doing a little wordwhipping for the troops. Keep it up, or wherever it feels most comfortable (to borrow an old phrase from Cagle).

I swear though, Dean, that your aversion to mailing comments is all in your mind. When you do them, you do them right, and they're readable as all hell. Both inside and outside the apa. Now that you've shitcanned FAPA, where mailing comments had all the respectability of a six-pack of Coors, maybe it's time to acknowledge that any form of writing can be as bad or as good as the wordwhipping capabilities of the writer. I won't push mailing comments on you, but I will say you're full of shit in avoiding them "because I wanted and needed to hit a few nonmembers with spare copies." When you do them they're as readable to a non-member audience as they are to the person you're addressing, and you're giving yourself a knock if you think anything different. End of prolix wrist-slap. You write good shit, Tonto.

I absolutely cracked up at the idea of the elderly neighbor lady unscrewing the light bulb, flicking on the switch, and, in view of the fact that she was paying for a minimum electric bill which she wasn't close to fully using, letting the electricity run right out on the floor.

Repetitive things that run through the mind with heavy hooves. "Left, Left, Left a wife and seventeen children in starving condition with nothing but gingerbread left, left, left a wife and ..." Henry Kuttner lives!

Former FLAPPan Frank Denton once wrote an arkle entitled HOW TO WRITE GOOD. As for THE TECHNIQUE OF CLEAR WRITING, I should think that polyethylene ribbons would be the way to go. Don't you?

Let's see now. If you collected only one-third of the promised amount for those two short stories in UNIVERSE #5, then you collected only two-thirds of the amount owed you for just one story. If you then split one-half of this with Art Wesley, how much did you have left? Be quick, you have only ten seconds. No, ten seconds is not the answer. Right, "damn little" is the answer.

Enjoyed the LKGA. When are you going to do The Smashing Success, The Idle Chitchat, and The Crock of Shit?

ED CAGLE

Goodbye, old friend.

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And a few lines left over for whatever.

Whatever.

I still haven't had my old typewriter repaired. I think I'm hoping that I'll stumble across a microelite in good working condition (or capable of being repaired). Several times now I've come close to laying hands on one, but it never worked out. Hey, Eric, you want to sell and crate one of yours?

Whatever. See you all in the next mailing.