



BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN [#432]

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN is a bit concerned about whom his car may soon be talking to, and what it will be reporting. It's a 2001 Odyssey, and it's already given him grief a number of times about opening the pod bay doors, so he's been feeling more than the usual need for caution, but now there seems to be a move underway to turn automobiles into informants. Will Daisy the minivan have to join the Witness Protection Program, move far away from the N.Y. Cadre (1088 East 40th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11210 (☎(718) NY-CADRE; 🖨↔️ nycadre [at] alum [dot] rpi [dot] edu; 🌐<http://www.nycadre.org>)) and live under an assumed name? The answers will not be found in **Beyond the Fringefan** #432, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 11, #3 (e-APA-NYU #107) and other autodidacts, published March 2013 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above by Isabella Bannerman for *6 Chix*, 13 November 2011. All uncredited material copyright ©2013 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.

SAFETY DANCE?: So my insurance agent telephoned the other week and told me about a wonderful new discount plan called DriveWise, in which a little transmitter gizmo plugs into your car's diagnostic port and sends information to a central computer about your driving. You then get discounts on your insurance, supposedly up to 30%, if you don't engage in the four behaviors deemed most hazardous: driving faster than 80 mi/hr; driving more miles than they want you to (12,000/year, he said); "hard braking" (I haven't seen the definition yet); and driving between 11 pm and 6 am.

Driving faster than 80 mi/hr is not something I'm much given to doing, especially on the streets of Brooklyn, though I'd be lying if I said I'd never done it on a straightaway on an Interstate. But even at city-street speeds, hard braking is impossible to avoid if you don't want to crash into the idiot who just changed lanes without signaling and jumped in front of you. And if I had to be home from FISTFA before 11 pm, I might as well not go. Presumably it is the habitual indulgence in these behaviors rather than their occasional incidence that the insurance companies wish to curb, and one or two late nights a month would not wipe out the discount, but I'm still awaiting some of these details.

So I haven't yet signed up, and as I think more about it, I develop more doubts, since I don't guess the system provides any way to contest and correct whatever allegations the box makes about your driving, and I'm willing to bet that anything it says will be used against you if you get into an accident. But being the paranoid that I am, I'm also wondering what OTHER information it collects that they're not telling us about, and what uses it will be put to. How much of a window am I willing to offer Big Brother in exchange for 30% off my insurance?

Do any of the better-informed geeks out there know more about this? How worried should I be about what will happen if I take this particular bait?



(Frazz by Jef Mallett, 8 March 2008)

STILL FALLEN BACK: In spite of supposedly having had more free time in February, I'm still trying to catch up with all the Stuff I fell behind on in January—this zine being just one example. Getting the tax information together to pass on to our tax persons was complicated by the fact that our tax persons announced at the end of the year that they were, after several years in semi-retirement, getting out of the game for good. Fortunately, I had a good recommendation for another—by a stroke of luck, another with ties to NYUSFS, even.

Andre the plumber was back to finish a few last things that hadn't been completed in the bathroom, and while he was here, we asked about getting a new window under the skylight—the old one broke nearly two decades ago, and we were feeling a cold draft. That project evolved into a whole new ceiling for the upstairs hallway. We'd already committed to having him refinish the hallway floor, after pulling up the ratty old piece of carpeting there that went back to the house's previous owners. The fact is, lots of things in this more-than-a-century-old house need work, but none of us is really up to the planning, expense, and inconvenience that a full overhaul would entail, so we're ending up doing a piece here and a piece there as they become unavoidable. Will we live through the process? Well, if not, Ethan will get to enjoy a nicer house, or maybe sell it for a better price...

FRINGE RECEPTION: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 11, #2 (e-APA-NYU #106)

JAMISON, TAKE e-LETTER (Mark L. Blackman):

"note: it's the Weather Channel that's started naming winter storms, not the National Weather Service; FINDING NEMO jokes abounded, Captain Nemo forgotten." The odd thing is that the Weather Channel is deliberately using names that it can argue are in the public domain: "We don't owe Disney/Pixar any royalties—can't you see we're referencing Jules Verne?" The list of names includes Draco (not a Rowling reference, oh no, but a northern constellation), Gandolf with

an "o" (which just happens to be the name of a character from William Morris' 1896 novel *A Well at the World's End*), and Q (which they apparently intend to insist is purely a reference to a New York subway train, should Roddenberry's heirs bring suit). /*/ "My mother used to say that NYC has the best weather – it doesn't have hurricanes like Florida or earthquakes like California or blizzards like Buffalo." Um, we were getting the occasional hurricane here when you and I were in grade school, and the Blizzard

of 1947 dumped over two feet of snow on the city and shut down the subways. Earthquakes I don't remember. /*/ "‘Deaf Culture’ firmly opposes cochlear implants." Not every deaf person does, though. In particular, I'd think that those who were not deaf at birth but lost their hearing later would welcome them (hence "first electronic device to restore a human sense"). /*/ Per both the NY Times and Wikipedia, he was born Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., and legally switched to a first initial at the age of 18. /*/ "It might be more accurate to say that Woese redefined/recategorized Archaea (microbes) as its own, distinct Kingdom." Hard to say; other schemas that include a third kingdom of Protista go back over a century before Woese. And in recent years, proposed kingdoms have proliferated (one system includes eight of them), as well as other plans that add a higher level above kingdom (domain or empire). There doesn't seem to be general agreement yet among scientific organizations on which system to use. Science can be so messy sometimes. /*/ (¢Nelson) "Leaving FISTFA, Daisy usually squeezes in 9 (an odd number)." Um, no, we've only done 9 a couple of times. Daisy's nominal capacity is 7, and with one person squeezed in at the tailgate, that's 8. ➔

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): Good luck reading *Les Miserables*. /*/ "I grew up with science fiction that predicted advances in science and how the future would be different because of them. Does anyone write that sort of thing

nowadays?" Yes, though the way technology accelerates lately, it's hard to stay ahead. I'm not reading new s-f at the pace I once did, but there's still plenty that talks about the future, with computer technology taking a lot of the focus. *Accelerando* by Charles Stross (which I read at Ethan's recommendation a couple of years back) has people using refinements of 3-D printing technology, brain mapping technology, and high-speed data communication to create instant clones of themselves on distant planets, or reincarnations after the originals die. /*/ "Or has science fiction been taken over by the vampires?" No, there are werewolves and zombies too.



(The Argyle Sweater by Scott Hilburn, 5 June 2012)

I've been watching with amusement the recent fight about soda servings in New York City. (For the out-of-towners: Mayor Bloomberg was pushing a law to limit the size of sugary sodas served at restaurants and snack bars to 16 ounces.) It would hardly affect me either way, since I drink diet soda when I drink soda at all, and usually ask for tap water at restaurants. (Yes, I'm a cheapass; guilty as charged.) It's hard to take a stand against encouraging healthy behavior; but from a viewpoint strictly based on principle, I'd have to be against Bloomberg's proposed restriction, since I favor the right of all sentient beings to damage themselves by means of their own choosing (as long as it doesn't directly damage anyone else; I call this "freedom of handbasket"). Yet I haven't felt compelled to campaign on the matter, since it seems to me that the chief beneficiaries of the measure's defeat are the companies that make big bucks selling sugar and soda, and I think they're quite capable of taking care of themselves. Overall, it seems like one more pointless waste of money and energy. On balance, though (and recognizing that Hizzoner will no doubt continue this misguided fight), I'm glad that a judge of the state Supreme Court saw fit to strike the law down.

>Portions of the preceding will drink to that—with a large sugar-free iced tea.<