

Beyond the Fringefan

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN sends his [#461] best wishes aux Parisiens et tous les Français for a speedy healing and an end to the insanity, even as he recognizes the unlikelihood of that happening in this life. Last week's events seem far too reminiscent of earlier ones in that city and a growing list of others; it seems as though the human race could use a reboot and some better writers. This writer will be watching 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 [dot] nycadre [dot] org)) for new developments in the story. This is **Beyond the Fringefan** #461, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 13, #10 (e-APA-NYU #137) and other confreres, published November 2015 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Bizarro* by Dan Piraro, 12 July 2008. All uncredited material copyright ©2015 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.



OOPS: I neglected to update the identification of last month's logo cartoon ("I don't know what to tell you, man—maybe upgrade your GPS—but this isn't Asia"). It was actually by Isabella Bannerman for *6 Chix*, 10 October 2011. We're sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you for your patience. (I'll bet that doesn't make anyone feel any better, any more than it does when the MTA says it.)

WET HOT AMERICAN AUTUMN: Over the last few winters, I've noticed a steady increase in the amount of water our furnace uses for steam heat (separate from the hot-water supply for sinks and showers). It should use almost none, because it's supposed to be a closed system, constantly recirculating the same water; but the meter has been showing a daily use of five or six gallons during the cold weather. This implies that there's a leak somewhere in the system, and the furnace is refilling itself from the plumbing to replace what it's losing.

According to what some people from Petro, our oil supplier and the installer and maintainer of our furnace, have told us, the constant influx of fresh water is not good for the furnace because the incoming water has oxygen dissolved in it, which accelerates the process of the furnace's innards rusting. (We did have a furnace rust out in a matter of five years or so last decade. It wasn't pretty, or cheap.)

We've replaced all the valves on all the radiators—the usual suspects when such a leak is suspected—some of them more than once, and it doesn't seem to have made a difference. This summer it occurred to me that perhaps it was not the valves but the radiators themselves that were at fault; most of them appeared to be as old as the house (a bit more than a century). Who could tell if one or another of them

might have a pinhole leak? I therefore talked with Andre the Plumber about the cost of replacing six superannuated radiators and getting the old ones out of the house. It came to upwards of \$1000, still a lot less than we paid for the replacement furnace (only part of which had been covered by a warranty). It seemed a worthwhile investment, even if it only eliminated one more factor in the troubleshooting.

So the penultimate weekend of October, Andre came with new radiators and spent all of Saturday and part of Sunday—not to mention a little of the following Wednesday—putting the new ones in and taking the old ones out. This did not go smoothly. There was a cloud of steam in the downstairs bathroom—the result of an overlooked valve—on Sunday night, and a rather large puddle of water in the basement around the furnace for most of the week (I’m still not clear on what Andre forgot to do that caused this.) Andre apparently did himself some damage schlepping the old radiators out—he’s about my age, and those things are *heavy*—even with the assistance of a much younger and stronger guy, a Sawzall, and a handtruck/dolly; he was delayed in finishing off the job by a visit to his doctor and an E.R. We got some Indian summer (hmm, politically incorrect terminology?) weather right afterward, so it was a couple of weeks before I could tell if we were using less water. Finally, after the first cold snap in November, I checked the water meter on the boiler and—it doesn’t seem to have made much difference. I need to have Andre double-check all the connections and valves on the new radiators, but we may be no closer to solving the problem of the vanishing water. Oh, the joys of home moanership...

I found myself replacing another old piece of equipment this month: my cassette deck (pause to allow laughter to die down), which I still use to record episodes of *A Prairie Home Companion* for playback in the car. (This will continue either until I’m no longer listening to *APHC*—Keillor claims this will be his last season as host—or until we no longer have a vehicle with a cassette player in it. There’s no way to get the show digitally except to stream it, which doesn’t work reliably when you’re traveling through fringe reception areas.) After the old deck’s motor gave up the ghost after some 14 years, I did some hunting online and was pleasantly surprised to find out that such equipment is still being manufactured at all!

The bad news is that if you want something from a trustworthy name, you now have to pay for a high-end model. Teac and Sony are offering decks for upwards of \$300. I found one from Pyle Electronics (a company I’ve never heard of before and hope not to hear of again) at B&H for under \$100, and ordered it, but when it arrived I found it defective—the metal spring that opens the cassette door when you hit the button, refused to stay in its track and blocked the door from closing. The deck also lacked monitoring capability, and its level meters didn’t seem accurate, so I took the opportunity to return it for a refund. It was around then that I remembered that I still had my parents’ cassette deck, which I’d moved into the Cadre’s front office when I cleared their apartment out in 2000, and have hardly used at all in the interim. That unit is now up in my room and functioning; against its eventual demise, I’ve downloaded to my laptop a piece of software called Audacity, which claims to be able to capture streaming audio. I ought to be able to figure out how over the next few months.

THREE TO GET READY; NOW GO, CAT, GO: After a month, Heifer’s presence at Ethan and



(Margaret Shulock for 6 Chix, 3 February 2015)

Rita’s place does not seem to have caused anyone any major allergic reactions, so it looks as though that will be her residence for the rest of her natural life (or at least this

one; I can't speak for the other eight). Nonetheless, I intend to wait until her demise before considering any plans to fix up the various floors at the Cadre that were damaged by feline urine and other bodily wastes. Donna and I visited her the other day; she seemed comfortable, and was as happy to see us as a cat ever appears to be (she deigned to allow Donna to hold her in her lap, and accepted strokes and scratches on the back as her due).

Fringe Reception: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 13, #8 (e-APA-NYU #135)

ANCIENT & HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE DROWNED RAT GRAND FALL SHIKAR (Mark L. Blackman): “(‘It’s the East Village, so there’s no dearth of nearby eateries.’ – Marc S. Glasser)” And a very good thing it was, too, considering the trouble we had finding a place within Deb’s walking distance that wasn’t mobbed. The Persian place we ended up in was quite nice, though.

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

I didn’t go to the Brooklyn Book Festival this year; I was exhausted from having driven the entire attendance of FISTFA home the previous evening. The Festival offers few freebies, as you remarked, and no bargain books; on that score, we do better at a Shikar. And the talks and readings have a tendency to be mobbed if they involve anyone interesting. (If I’d tried to see Jules Feiffer there two years ago, I’d have been standing in the back for two hours; still, I’m finding myself wishing I’d taken the opportunity.) /*/ Thanks for not participating in Sudden Cardiac Death Month in October. /*/ (çme) “If I understand, you have to sit on a horse in Fargo to watch DirecTV?” Umm...I don’t know. I tried to bet \$2 on Sun-Up, but that didn’t work out. What are you talking about? /*/ “My objection is calling something that delays/slow down travel – and that won’t speed up service afterwards – ‘fast’; it’s Orwellian doublespeak.” No, you misunderstand. By not sending any trains down those tracks all weekend, they’re not feeding them, so the tracks are fasting. (Anyway, if they don’t do the work, the tracks will fall apart, and that will slow down service considerably; compared to that, just maintaining the current level of, um, service looks speedy.) /*/ (çNelson) “CAN Fandom be explained to outsiders?” Explained, yes, but the

full experience can’t be transmitted. You can teach someone the rules of chess and explain the elements of its strategy, but that doesn’t mean that person will know what it’s like to be Boris Spassky facing off against Bobby Fischer.

RISE AGAIN AND OTHER SIGNS OF LIFE (Deb Wunder): “...anything that lets me fit over 1000 books into my purse without reaking my shoulder carrying them is a welcome addition into my life.” It is good if your shoulder doesn’t reek. /*/ “why, yes, I do collect librarians; thank you for asking” Don’t you have to return them after a few weeks, or end up paying overdue fines? /*/ The *Rise Again* concert was indeed fun, and thanks for the gift of the ticket and the book. Ironically, the new book doesn’t actually include the song “Rise Again” (aka “The Mary Ellen Carter”), which appeared in the first book. But with 1200 other songs in the book, this small inconsistency is easy to forgive. /*/ With your tales of woe with your microwave and FIOS box, and mine with the cassette deck and the VoIP setup and the city tax auto-debits, and Mark’s with his computers and Juno, and Abby’s with the digital TV and the iPod, this apa could be Exhibit A in the case proving that the machines really have begun to revolt against humanity.



(Dilbert by Scott Adams, 31 January 2013)

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): (çme) “‘the fare was finally raised to a dime in 1948’ Doubled in 44 years. That works out to a mere 1.6% a year.” They’ve made up for it since then. A 2,740% increase over 67 years works out to over 5% per annum, compounded annually. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ inflation calculator says that a

dime in 1948 would be worth about a dollar today.) /*/ (çBlackmançCinī) “‘I seem to have too many errands, places to walk to, to stroll for the sake of walking.’ Same here.” It works the other way for me: having places to go and things

to do is what motivates me to get off my butt and out of the house. (More often than not, it’s into the car, but in the warm weather, I can usually persuade myself onto the bike instead.)

Since I wished the Mets a World Series win in this space last time, I’m morally obligated to include the only proper follow-up this time: Wait ’til next year!

Enough. I’m late again. Perhaps I can yet get this out before Philcon. May we all have something to be thankful for next week. See you next month in the midst of the annual War on Reasonableness.



(Frazz by Jef Mallett, 17 December 2001)

>Portions of the preceding know there isn't a grand conspiracy controlling the world.

They just want you to believe there is.<