



BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN

[#478] **BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN** has been absent from the zine scene since May, and so has the apa of which he calls himself the e-S.A.A.C. Was there anything catastrophic to blame? Well, his wife being in hospital for the better part of a week might qualify. An ex-girlfriend being in two hospitals for the better part of two weeks, perhaps. (He personally has only had to visit his cardiologist a couple of times, so that alone won't tip the scales.) Flooding in his kitchen? Possibly. Otherwise, just another full dose of Life. He's putting pots and pans away again while recovering from it all at the N.Y. Cadre (1088 East 40th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11210 (☎(718) NY-CADRE; 📧↔️📧 nycadre [at] acedsl [dot] com; 🌐http://www [dot] nycadre [dot] org)). This is **Beyond the Fringefan** #478, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 15, #5 (e-APA-NYU #154) and others who live in houses older than they are, published August 2017 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **HIGAMAJIG**. All uncredited material copyright ©2017 by Marc S. Glasser. Cartoon above from *Peanuts* by Charles M. Schulz, sometime during the summer of 1965. Member fwa.

Though we hadn't been much in touch for a while, I should offer props to my aunt Honey, known to the literary world as Ann Birstein, who passed away in May, just a few days short of what would have been her 90th birthday. Honey wrote *The Rabbi on Forty-Seventh Street*, the biography of my grandfather Bernard Birstein, along with half a dozen novels and a few memoirs, and was married for decades to the critic Alfred Kazin, serving as his alpha reader and uncredited editor. She was my last surviving blood relative in my parents' generation (my sister, about to turn 69, is now the oldest), and her living that long gives me hope of reaching my 80s (my parents died at 73 and 78).

I SEE YOUR SPINE, AND YOUR SPINE LOOKS DIVINE: My annual physical checkup—the first one to be covered by Medicare—turned up nothing scary. (I told Dr. B. that I'd been having rather more headaches than usual over the preceding month, so he sent me for an MRI of my head. Yes, I finally had my head examined. **rimshot** They looked inside my head and found nothing. **rimshot** The headaches went away around that time; if they come back, I'll go back to my dentist, Dr. G., and investigate TMJ issues.)

But once the overall physical was done, I went to see a different Dr. B., this one a podiatrist. I'd seen her last year to discuss a surface numbness which had been developing in the sole of my right foot for a year before that. She'd seen nothing obvious, but tried putting pads in strategic spots in my sneakers to shift pressure points; she'd said that if that didn't help, I'd need to see a different specialist, perhaps one who could do neurological testing. (I should note that this numbness has not been crippling; I can still walk a mile or two without problems. It's been distressing mostly because my ability to pick objects up off the

floor with my toes has been severely attenuated. Oh, and because it clearly means that something is wrong that will eventually require medical attention; better before it becomes crippling than after.)

So this year I told her I thought I needed to take that next step; the numbness hasn't gone away and may be (slowly) spreading. I'm getting occasional sciatic-like aches in the right thigh, and I often wake in the morning with a cramp in the right calf. Dr. B. said it looked more and more like an issue with my lower spine, and recommended I see an orthopedist; she eventually suggested a couple of guys at the Hospital for Special Surgery over on the upper East Side of Manhattan.

So the day before Contata, I spent a few hours having my spine imaged three ways (MRI, CAT scan and plain old x-rays) before getting to talk to orthopedic surgeon Dr. L. Dr. L. told me that I have some of the classic lower-back symptoms of aging. He used the words spondylosis, stenosis, subluxation, and arthropathy, but what it boils down to is that a lumbar vertebra is misaligned, a couple of discs are bulging, and some nerves are getting slightly pinched on their way out of my spine.

Dr. L. is a surgeon, and he was straightforward in recommending surgery to deal with this issue—a procedure called laminectomy, which removes a layer of material from the back of the spine to give the squeezed nerves more breathing room. I told him that while I wasn't ruling out surgery in the future, I had no desire at this time to deal with the dislocation of my life, not to mention the risks, posed by major surgery under general anesthesia (and convalescence afterward). If things get significantly worse, I may be willing to place my life and mobility in his hands, but as I said, right now it's just an inconvenience and an annoyance.

The doctor accepted this with equanimity, and said that in the meantime, physical therapy might be of some use; he didn't expect it to help the numbness, but did think it might reduce the muscle cramps. So after researching the available places, I started visiting Professional Physical Therapy on East 52nd Street, a 10-minute walk from work. I've been showing up there twice a week after work, getting some heat treatments and doing a lot of low-stress exercises intended to stretch my hamstrings and strengthen my "core," whatever that is. I'm also trying to fit in one or two sessions a day of doing the exercises at home. This kills 40 to 60 minutes a day, with no benefit that I'm yet perceiving. (A co-worker has suggested I talk to a chiropractor, and recommended one she likes in Park Slope. I figure to go that route when the Medicare funding for the PT runs out.)

ROCK ME ON THE WATER: At the start of July, we noticed a little water on the kitchen floor that didn't belong there. We wiped it up with a towel, but it was back the next day, and the next. It appeared to be leaking out from under the built-in cabinets under the kitchen counter. So Andre the plumber paid us a visit and replaced a valve going to the dishwasher, and there was no water in the kitchen the next day—but there was water in the basement, near the furnace. We called our heating oil company, and a serviceman came by and told us the backflow valve had worn out and had to be replaced. Of course, we had him replace it. The next day we had water in the kitchen again.

Andre came over again and, contorting himself under the counter, found a pipe inside the wall, possibly a century old, that had rusted through. He replaced that, but the next day we had water on the floor again. (By now I was wringing out four towels twice a day.) This time, Andre had to come back with a



(Bizarro by Dan Piraro, 4 October 2008)

couple of assistants to remove the 100-pound solid countertop with built-in sink that we'd been so pleased with when we redid the kitchen nearly ten years ago; move the cabinets; break through a bit more of the wall to get at the next pipe that had rusted through; and replace it. And yet—the next day, we once again had water on the kitchen floor. (I was now wringing out four towels *thrice* a day, plus mopping up the water that was getting past them while I was off at work or sleeping.)

Andre now returned his attention to the dishwasher, and ultimately we established that it too was leaking, not just from its hose connections but from somewhere internal. Since it was nearly ten years old, we decided to get a new one, which fortunately was delivered and installed a mere three days later. The kitchen floor is now dry once again, and my dishpan hands (from all that wringing out of wet towels) are healing nicely. Andre has reattached the countertop but still has to regrout the newly replaced tile just above it.



(Frank & Ernest by Thaves, 11 November 2010)

OH, NO, NOT AGAIN: Sometime between the ordering and the installation of the new dishwasher, Donna woke with a shaking chill one day; around 8 pm, after nearly passing out, she checked her vitals and discovered blood pressure of 81/45, plus a fever. Dr. H. recommended we get her to an emergency room right away, so we called an ambulance and then spent a lovely night at the Methodist Hospital ER, where the techs found out she had low potassium and an elevated white cell count. Donna was admitted and spent four days being treated for an infection—probably a UTI that had gotten too big for its (or Donna's) britches. She's home now and apparently no worse than she was before this episode.

OH, NO, NOT AGAIN: And the last weekend of July, I experienced some chest discomfort—not strong enough to call pain, but it kinda reminded me of what I'd felt five years ago, just before I was diagnosed with pericarditis. That was disturbing enough to make me call Dr. T., my cardiologist, and go in for an exam the next day. (Of course by then I was feeling much better.) Dr. T. found no evidence of pericarditis in my EKG or echocardiogram, but when the blood tests came back, he found an elevated CRP, one of the common indicators of inflammation (though the inflammation could be anywhere in my body). So now I'm on the same drugs I was on after the pericarditis, as a precaution. I'm also scheduled for a stress test later in the month, to see whether coronary-artery disease can be ruled out. (Dr. T. said I shouldn't bike in to work until we have this figured out. This would be more annoying if I weren't heading home later and tired from the PT anyway.)

FRINGE RECEPTION: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 15, #4 (e-APA-NYU #153)

METAL-MUNCHING MOON MICE

(franked/Blackman): Yes, "Marc G. was very visible (and audible) in the Filk Room all weekend." So much so that you might have thought you were seeing (and hearing) double.

JAMISON, TAKE e-LETTER (Mark L. Blackman):
 Since I didn't get myself involved in the

ConCardia schtick—did each staffer get to choose the instructions printed on his/her cards, or did someone else assign them? /*/ "(he said Eve & Lilith were created from dust; no, Adam was, they from his rib)" Most versions of the story have Lilith created at the same time and from the same dust as Adam; Eve isn't created

(from Adam's rib) until after Lilith rebels and is exiled. /*/ FYI, the inverted-circumflex diacritic over the "C" in Karel Čapek's last name is called a haček (pronounced like "hat check") or a caron (pronounced "Karen"). Doesn't Ed Meškys have one too? /*/ "people we might think of as filkers don't/didn't regard themselves as such. Filking non-filkers include Weird Al, Tom Lehrer (he's a satirist, and, btw, just turned 89; I later thought of Mark Russell), Alan Sherman, and MAD." There's also a burgeoning "comedy music" scene that takes its inspiration from Dr. Demento, and has some interaction with filkdom but largely maintains its own identity (see the Funny Music Project, www.thefump.com) and even runs its own cons (FUMPfest). /*/ (ɔme) "In college, I once took part in a biofeedback study in which meditation lowered my heart rate. Now I use medications instead of meditation, with unpredictable eruptions of side effects." If meditation worked better, why aren't you still using it? It's a lot cheaper than medication. /*/ Re retronyms, I make iced tea using so many kinds of flavored and herbal teas that when I use unflavored black tea, I refer to it as POOT—for plain old ordinary tea. /*/ And with the MTA now running "express," "limited," and "select" buses on various routes, what do we call a bus that you pay a fare when you get on and that makes stops every block or three? (Besides "slow as *&\$#", of course.) /*/ (ɔself) "I managed to pay a Verizon bill online despite them not letting me register, saying that I was already signed up, then rejecting that same User ID when I tried to sign in." I've had a number of corporate sites reject my logins, and when I clicked "forgot my ID" or "forgot my password," they e-mailed me the same ID and password they'd just rejected. Sometimes I'd just had the bad luck to try to log on when they were doing system maintenance (not that they'd do anything silly like put up a message, "try again later, we're doing maintenance").

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): "I was prepared for that by getting my DTA degree after six years of study at Stone Cold University of Austin 3:16 in 2003." Not having attended that institution, I had to look up "DTA." Now I know, and it only took me five minutes. /*/ "Meditation differs from Medication by just a letter, so they should have similar effects." I think you must be on drums. /*/ "I thought the Pseudo-Roster had more than fifty." The original APA-NYU pseudo-Roster had 327 names on it when we held the last dead-tree collation 13 years ago. The list of names I included in these pages the other month was everyone currently on the e-APA-NYU mailing list, a different set entirely. /*/ Bikes are only fun if they get you somewhere interesting. /*/ "Metric is more efficient, true, but eats the soul out of culture." I dunno; I think once the metric system gets fully adopted (assuming that ever happens here), we'll see the development of new aphorisms, figures of speech, and other cultural references that integrate the units. But it can't happen until people are used to using the units in everyday life. (I once saw a bumper sticker that read, "Down with metrics! Inches are neater. My mission in life is to Kill a Meter.") /*/ A phone



(The Argyle Sweater by Scott Hilburn, 9 March 2014)

with 16 GB of internal storage is nice. It's even nicer if you can plug in an SD card and increase it by a factor of 3 or 5 or 9. I still can't fit all the music I want to have with me on my phone yet; fortunately, there's YouTube to fill the gap.

I'll wrap this up now before anyone else gets sick and I have to update it any more. Enjoy the rest of the summer, everyone. Happy New Year to those who observe it, and happy back to school for those who attend it.

>Portions of the preceding may be cowardly, but at least they know they're not spineless.<