

Beyond [#506] the Fringefan

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN has seen people in charge dropping a lot of balls over the past year (and more), and only hopes that 2021 and its successors will see just a little less such behavior. He wants to warn anyone who may care to listen that auld acquaintance should *not* be forgot, no matter how much we'd all like to, if any lessons are to be learned from the experience. He may not be able to spend New Year's Eve in his customary fashion 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](http://www[dot]nycadre[dot]org))), splitting a bottle of sparkling wine with his wife as they make fun of the idiots packing Times Square, if there's no one packing Times Square this year, but no doubt they'll figure out something. This is **Beyond the Fringefan** #506, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 18, #11 (e-APA-NYU #182) and others who are reeling in the years, published December 2020 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Real Life Adventures* by Wise and Aldrich, 27 December 2016. All uncredited material copyright ©2020 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.



DON'T BUG ME, DON'T MUG ME, THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY: Two weeks after the third spraying, Donna was again finding bedbugs in her bedroom and the Wreck Room, so we called E-Z-Pest once again. Henry, the co-owner, said that if bugs return after a third spraying, it usually means they're coming through the walls from an adjoining unit. If this were an apartment building, the next step would be for the management to have inspectors look at all the adjacent apartments, and maybe those on the floors above and below. But the Cadre is a semi-detached private house, so there's only one adjoining unit. We're on good terms with the neighbors at 1086, and we'd really like to keep it that way. The owner is a lady a bit younger than me, living there with her husband, her two kids, and her aging and increasingly frail mother. We'd told them about the bugs when we found them in our house last summer, so that they could take whatever steps were appropriate. As I found out, they'd immediately purchased a variety of insecticidal products and begun assiduously dusting, spreading, and spraying them around their house.

Henry offered to have one of his men inspect the house next door when they came by to spray ours for the fourth time, so I spoke to the owner to see if we could arrange something. She was concerned about having strangers enter her house in the midst of the pandemic, especially considering that her mother had just gotten back from a few days in hospital; after at first agreeing to let the inspector come in, as long as he stayed away from her mother's room, she decided to change her mind and refuse any inspection. She told me that they hadn't seen a bedbug there all year, though they'd had an infestation three years ago that necessitated their discarding and replacing an entire roomful of furniture. She wanted to know how much of the furniture in our bedrooms we'd junked, and when I said none—and that no exterminator we'd talked to had ever said that we had to get rid of furniture—she asserted that we were being ripped off.

I called Henry back and explained that the neighbors were not willing to have an inspector in, for what seemed rather good reasons. He voiced doubt about their self-assessment of freedom from bedbugs—how did we know how thoroughly they were checking, and could they be sure that the stuff they were spraying wasn't just causing the bugs to find better hiding places, and so on. He agreed to treat the Cadre a fourth time at no further charge, but warned that if we were still seeing infestation after that, he couldn't do it again without an inspector verifying that the house next door was bug free. He added that if they wouldn't agree to allow an inspection, we could call 311 and report the problem, and the city's health department could force them to let an inspector in. (Donna and I agreed that this would be a great way to make our neighbors into enemies for life, and that it was to be avoided if we could find any alternative at all.) We scheduled the fourth treatment, stayed a night at the Holiday Inn Express, and came back to reassemble the beds, in what was now becoming an annoyingly familiar routine.



(Off the Mark by Mark Parisi, 9 December 2002)

Meanwhile, Donna, Ethan, and I were speculating on whether there were any hiding places at the Cadre where bugs might be so well insulated as to survive what E-Z was doing. Donna's heavy wooden headboard-with-bookshelves seemed one candidate, since she was finding the bugs on her pillows in the mornings, and when the guy from E-Z came and we asked him about such hiding places, he indeed mentioned the headboard as a possibility. But Donna is reluctant to change any parts of her bed, which she custom-assembled some 30 years ago out of two disparate pieces she'd bought—Ethan calls it a Frankenstein's monster—and we weren't even sure that the headboard could be detached without the whole thing falling apart. Nonetheless, we resolved to try doing so if we were still seeing infestation after the requisite three weeks.

Now, the office chair Donna sits in at her laptop in the Wreck Room was old, 20 years or more, and we'd been talking about getting a replacement for months. One of the wheels broke around this time, making the need for replacement more urgent. As it happened, Deb had acquired a "gaming chair" in late summer and had determined after a few months that it did not fit her needs; we agreed to take it off her hands, cheap, just a few days after E-Z's fourth visit. As Ethan attempted to take the old chair apart for easier haulage, he found a few bugs in between its cushions, apparently alive and well. We hastened to get the thing into plastic bags and out of the house.

Was the office chair the culprit? Were bugs hiding there, making their way onto Donna or her clothing, and thence to her bed? Is the headboard (not to mention our neighbors) not responsible for the reinfestation after all? These are the questions whose answers we await as I type this the day before Xmas. [To Be Continued...]

WHEN ONE WINDOWS CLOSES, ANOTHER ONE OPENS: Since we still can't put in any serious effort at Putting Everything Back Together, I decided it was finally time to select and purchase my next laptop—not a choice to be made lightly, since I now spend more of my waking hours with my hands on the keyboard than doing just about anything else, and since whatever I buy, I figure to keep using it for years. (It's been more than nine and a half years since I bought the one I'm typing on now; its predecessor was in use for about seven years.) I've been seeing random wonkiness on this laptop's part ever since the hard drive died and had to be replaced (with massive aid from the late great Harold Stein) in the summer of 2018, and it's been seeming worse lately, with more than occasional incidents of freezing or spontaneous reboots while using Zoom. And of course, the operating system it runs, Windows 7, is now officially unsupported.

As with my previous laptops, I chose to customize a machine from a major vendor rather than buy off the shelf, so that I could get a few hardware upgrades that could keep the machine from getting obsolescent too fast as software evolves. I wanted a solid-state drive (SSD) rather than a hard disk, for speed and durability, and that drive should have at least a terabyte of capacity, since that's what I have on the current machine. More RAM than the low-end machines come with seemed a wise move, too. And of course, with aging eyes that were never all that sharp to start with, I had to make a 17-inch screen (the largest readily available on a laptop) a non-negotiable demand.

I looked at the offerings from Dell, maker of my previous two laptops, and also Lenovo (maker of what were formerly the IBM ThinkPads), which also came recommended. I was disappointed to find that hardly any laptops are available with an internal CD/DVD drive any more. The ones that were listed were chiefly low-end ones that I couldn't upgrade. So I guess I'll have to get myself an external drive if I want to access the dozens of CD-Rs of music I've archived over the years. I also found that many machines that come with small SSDs (128 GB or 256 GB) are unable to handle larger ones, for technical reasons I don't understand.

In the end, I went with a Lenovo Legion 5i, nominally a gaming machine, despite the fact that I seldom play any computer games more demanding of system resources than Tetris. But it has a 17" screen, a 10th-generation i7 processor, 16 GB of RAM, a terabyte SSD, and a bay where I can install a second hard drive if that isn't enough. (Yes, it's Windows; go ahead and jeer.) It'll be over a month before they ship it (the downside of purchasing a customized computer during the holiday season), but that will give me time to decide what security software I want to install—pay for Norton or McAfee or the like, or go with the steadily improving free offerings? Free advice would be welcome.

Donna's still awaiting her new permanent bridge, so there's no further news to report there. My cardiologist and his blood tests report that my recurrence of pericarditis has now abated. I'm tapering off the ibuprofen but will continue the colchicine for a while, and I can resume cycling if and when the weather seems conducive to it. We eagerly await word of when COVID-19 vaccines will be made



(Reality Check by Dave Whamond, 17 May 2002)

available to folk over 65 who have asthma and/or heart conditions but are not in essential occupations and don't live in nursing homes.

Fringe Reception: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 18, #10 (e-APA-NYU #181)

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

(¢APA-NEWS) You're right, I failed to note Connery's knighthood. I plead guilty as Sir charged. /*/ (¢me) After the past few months, I don't think I'll ever have the hubris to claim "Glasser Beats Bedbugs." Just as there's no way to know how our infestation originated, there's no way to be sure they won't sneak in again. The same could be said of certain politicians. /*/ I could have walked to the Brooklyn College location where the voting was going on, but I preferred to bike it. If I'm reading the campus map correctly, the building is the West Quad Center; the queue snaked all around the quad, then across the middle, out the gate, up Bedford Avenue, and 'round the corner of Campus Road past James Hall. /*/ "When I buy couscous or kasha, I try to get the larger granules. My microwave can't handle rice practically (the dish melts before the rice boils)..." The dish I use is

accessible from outside." Many branches are open for pickup (and return) of books reserved online.

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): (¢Blackman) I don't think anyone's yet explained just how all those ballots and envelopes got mismatched. It hadn't occurred to me that it could all have been caused by "just one dropped envelope early on," but in the absence of better explanations, that sounds quite plausible. I understand that the printing company got the job in a no-bid contract deal [allegedly because of the tight time frame]. Think the city board of elections will learn its lesson? /*/ (¢me) "'bug-sniffing dog' What will they think of next?!" How about another kind of bug-sniffing dog: dogs that can identify people infected with COVID? Think how much time and hassle (and how many people's sinuses) that would save. /*/ Kudos on your "cutting the cord." I don't think I'm ready to do so; there are only a



(Rhymes with Orange by Hilary B. Price, 28 June 2016)

Pyrex and handles even the longer cooking time needed for brown rice. The last time I cooked couscous, the recipe I used called for boiling the water, pouring it into the dry couscous and covering it; the steam cooks the couscous in minutes. If you use larger granules, though, that might not work. /*/ (¢Nelson) "NYC libraries (NYPL, BPL, QPL) are closed, but their wi-fi is

few programs I follow religiously, but they're on basic cable (Comedy Central or TBS) or HBO. /*/ I actually communicated with my former co-workers a couple of times recently, when one or two of them sent out group texts relating to the elections, and conversations ensued. Everyone seems to be alive and well, and my former boss has finally moved to Nashville.

BACOVER (Nieves/Bogin/Wunder): That image of me has now become my avatar on what social media I post in (mostly comments on comic strips at the GoComics website, where I pun under the name The Brooklyn Accent). Many thanks to Nina for her permission to use it that way.

...and somehow, we (or most of us) have made it through a year we won't soon be forgetting. Assuming no coups or incipient civil wars on Inauguration Day, I'll see youse in month or so. Stay warm, dry, sane, and healthy.

>Portions of the preceding think too highly of Joe Biden

to point and say "Look at the schmuck with that Kamala!"<