

# Beyond the Fringefan

[#511]

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN's 69th birthday was pretty blah as birthdays go, so he won't bother talking about it here. Chalk it up to his Grumpy Old Man persona gaining ascendancy for the moment over the Dirty Old Man who would otherwise make some sort of clever play on the number *soixante-neuf*. He's hoping that the next month or so will bring increased mobility, decreased pain, and more interesting (and pleasant!) experiences both inside and outside 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** #511, for readers of APA-NYU Volume 19, #5 (e-APA-NYU #187) and others who are old enough to know better, published May 2021 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, 23 January 2019. All uncredited material copyright ©2021 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.



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**HEISENBUG UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE:** As of Mother's Day, we hadn't seen any bedbugs anywhere in the house in a couple of weeks. The last ones we'd seen had been in and around the upholstery of the office chair Donna sat on in the Wreck Room. (We'd gotten rid of that chair and brought in another, and then *that* one showed signs of infestation, so we got rid of *it* and put in an upholstered wooden chair for a few weeks.) It was time to call in the bug-sniffing dog.

We'd cleared out some more Stuff, and finally had room to move all the remaining furniture at least six inches away from the walls in all the upstairs rooms, though it would be awkward to move around in the rooms that way. So Thursday night before the dog and his handler showed up, Ethan and his friend Peter came by to actually move all the furniture, and Donna and I made it through the night somehow without knocking anything over.

The dog—a beagle (I think) named Syn, short for Synergy—and his handler showed up on time on Friday. Syn sniffed around every room in the house, including the basement and garage, but paid the most detailed attention, at our request, to the three upstairs rooms where we'd actually seen bugs over the course of the year. The handler said, "He goes crazy if he smells bedbugs." Syn coughed a little—the rooms were dusty from all the moving we'd done—but never made any behavioral indication that

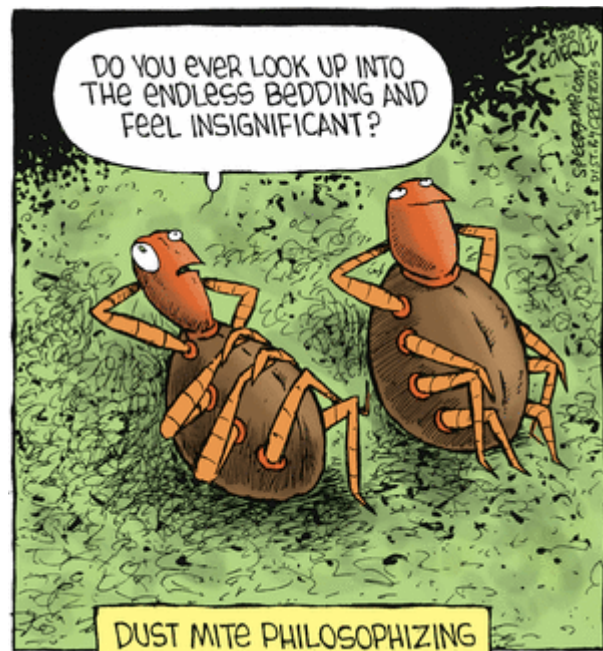
anything was out of the ordinary for him. The handler's conclusion: We were at long last bug free. Hallelujah!

Ethan and Peter came back that evening to move the furniture back into place and help us rejoice at the good news. Finally we could go on with our lives and start finding all the stuff that had been packed away for nearly a year. I made plans to start shopping for a new bed for my room, and for a new office chair for the Wreck Room. I woke up to a sunny Saturday—and found an e-mail from Ethan, headed “Peter mentioned....”

Peter had, upon getting home Thursday night, taken off the clothes he'd worn while moving stuff at the Cadre, and put them in a plastic bag he could seal. (Ethan has been doing this all year as a precaution.) He put them back on for the return visit Friday; later in the evening, he mentioned to Ethan that “when he opened the bag he put his clothes in yesterday, he saw a bug. He also says he squished it and something red came out.... He thinks it's evidence there might still be bugs around your house.”

This knocked me and Donna for a loop from which we have yet to recover. In the whole year that this has been going on, Ethan has never found a bug on his clothes after leaving the Cadre. We hadn't seen any bugs anywhere in the place in weeks. The dog hadn't smelled any bugs. How could Peter have gotten one? Peter had not taken any pictures of the bug he'd found, or saved its remains, so we have to take it on faith that it was indeed a bedbug. (He had them once in his place, so presumably he'd know a bedbug when he saw one.)

After intense discussion, we decided to inspect all the surfaces where we could recall seeing bugs since January; spray store-bought bedbug killers over “any areas that seem like they could be/could have been good bug hiding places” (Ethan's words); and inspect again in two weeks and maybe spray once more just to be sure. If no evidence of bugs either live or dead should turn up in that time, we're going to call the job done, on the one-year anniversary of our finding the critters in the first place. Donna and I just can't go on this way anymore.



(Speed Bump by Dave Coverly, 22 August 2012)

**HIP HIP HOORAY:** After nearly two months of physical therapy, the annoying aches in my right hip joint had not diminished and may even have increased, so I decided it was time to take the next step: a gel injection into the joint. Dr. S. the orthopedist had given me such a shot in the shoulder during the “frozen shoulder” episode of three years ago, and it helped a lot. But he said that he personally didn't do these for hips because of the greater size and complexity of the joint. He referred me to a pain management specialist in the same practice, Dr. R. But when I called for an appointment, the receptionist informed me that Dr. R. was leaving the practice imminently. (Turns out he's moving upstate.) She referred me to another pain management specialist, Dr. S. (Hmm. Too many Dr. S'es. This is getting complicated. All right; my orthopedist is Dr. J.S., and the receptionist referred me to pain management specialist Dr. U.S.)

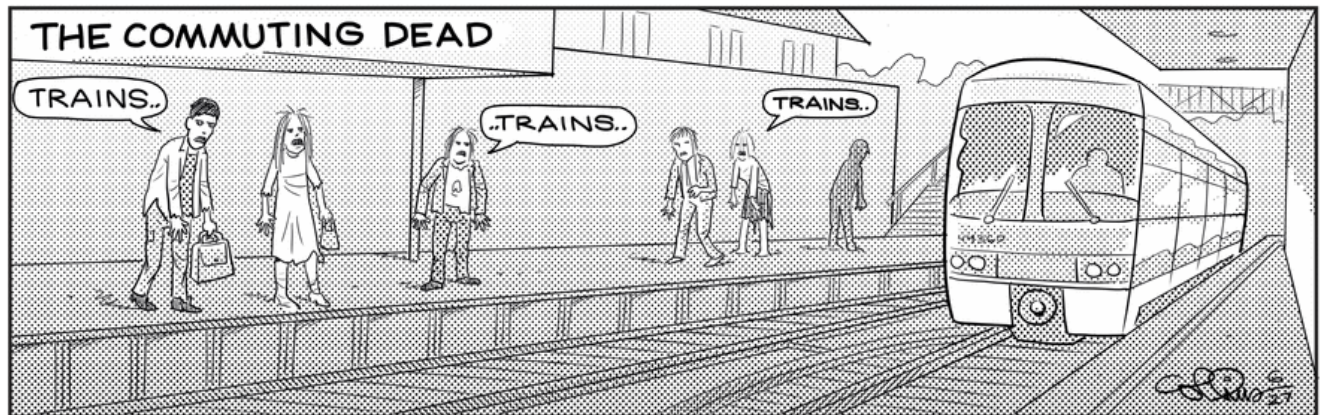
Dr. U.S. has three offices, and one was at a hospital only a few blocks further away, so I got to see him there the Saturday before my birthday. He seemed to know his stuff, and was pleasant to talk to. After

examining me and determining that I was a good candidate for the injection procedure, he mentioned that he would be performing it there a week later on several patients, and would see if he could fit me in.

Unfortunately, as I found out when I called back later in the week, he or someone else decided that no, they couldn't fit me in; so I did not get a pain-free hip joint for my birthday. At present I'm scheduled to get the injection the first weekend of June, and will have to watch out how much walking and stair-climbing (and possibly biking) I do until then.

**THIS TRAIN DON'T CARRY NO FRINGEFAN, THIS TRAIN:** I finally got around to reinitiating my relationship with the subway, heading to midtown Manhattan to meet a few people for dinner. Inauspiciously, my senior MetroCard failed to work. None of the turnstiles responded in any way when I swiped it; not even an error message. I slipped it into the vending machines and clicked "Get card info," but they all displayed "FAILED TO READ CARD" and spat it back out. I ended up doing a lot of extra walking (which my hip joint didn't appreciate) to find open token booths with attendants who buzzed me in, twice. Next morning I called the MTA, which invited me to request a replacement, either by mailing the card in or by making an appointment to bring it to the office near Bowling Green where I'd first signed up for a senior MetroCard. Being concerned about the reliability of mail delivery since DeJoy took over, I chose the personal visit even though it would take a couple of hours round trip; with \$99.90 in stored value on the card, I had a lot to lose. So I made it up to lower Manhattan on the day before my birthday, handed in my moribund card, and was told I'd get a replacement card in the mail in five to six weeks, with all my stored value restored. Meanwhile, they gave me a temporary card (no photo) which I have to refill separately.

I was unpleasantly surprised to learn of another change in the MTA's treatment of seniors: last time I checked, even if you didn't have a senior MetroCard, you could get a one-way or round-trip ticket at the discount rate by showing proof of age at the "token" booth. But sometime over the past year, the MTA has stopped selling senior discount fares at the booths; in fact it's stopped selling fares of any kind at the booths. You have to use the vending machines, which don't know from senior discounts, and which charge extra for a new card (I paid \$3 to get up to Bowling Green that day). And if the machines are being balky and won't take your currency or your credit card, then you're just outta luck.



(Looks Good on Paper by Dan Collins, 27 June 2019)

**BEYOND THE BLUE VERIZON:** Verizon's technician arrived as scheduled and set up our Fios service. He had to run a new wire into the house from the Verizon fiber-optic cables in the street, but otherwise it wasn't terribly dislocating. Unfortunately, once he had the modem hooked up, he was unable to get our existing router to talk to it, so he installed a Verizon router just to prove that the Fios service was working. Fortunately, Ethan was here the next day, and got the old router to talk to the Fios modem. (It seems to work faster than the Verizon router, in point of fact.) So I returned the Verizon



router a couple of days later to Verizon's office at Gateway Plaza a few miles from here, and presumably Verizon will not charge us the extra \$15 a month for the router.

The nominal speed of the Fios service is about half again what we were getting from Ace, but I don't perceive much change in how Web pages load. The differences I see are in file downloads, which seem to complete in about a tenth the time they used to, and in streaming video, which seems to pause for buffering hardly at all anymore. Donna notes that her games are loading faster, too. It's costing us about \$15 a month more than Ace used to (separate from the \$15 for the router), but it doesn't seem too horrible. And we're still getting our VoIP from Ace.

## **Fringe Reception:** Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 19, #4 (e-APA-NYU #186)

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

*Banquets of the Black Widowers?* I didn't realize there were more than two collections of those stories, but it seems the Good Doctor actually filled up six books of them before his death. I'll have to look for the ones I haven't read. Does the question of Frederic's year of birth turn on whether he (or Gilbert and Sullivan) recognized the Gregorian rule about century years? /\*/ (¢me) "It seems that avoidance of kitniyot during Pesach is down in Israel among Ashkenazim." Perhaps in another century or three, all the rabbis worldwide will come to an agreement. But I'm not holding my breath. /\*/ (¢self) I did not realize that 4/20 was Hitler's birthday. Cannabis and Nazism make for an odd juxtaposition. /\*/ (¢Nelson) I heard that Krispy Kreme was giving out free doughnuts to the vaccinated—but of course there are no Krispy Kreme locations in Brooklyn, and paying a round-trip subway fare to get a "free" doughnut kind of defeats the purpose. When I was in Baltimore last month, I made my way (with an equally vaccinated friend) to a fairly convenient Krispy Kreme stand, only to find it locked up with no indication of when it would reopen. Bah.

RED PANDAS vs. REAL PANDAS (Charles Belov): Looking at pictures of red pandas and "real" (giant) pandas, I find it hard to understand how anyone ever could believe that the two species were related. /\*/ (¢me) I often do my food-observing several days after the "proper" time, as the leftover seasonal goodies start showing up on the discount racks. When I enjoyed my Purim hamantaschen this year, it was halfway to Pesach. /\*/ "There needs to be a process to make sugar stick to donuts and poppy seeds to bagels?" It came as a surprise to me as well. I always figured that both of those treats came out of the oven (or fryer) tacky enough that



(Bizarro by Wayno and Piraro, 8 March 2019)

if you just dipped or rolled them in something granular, it would stick. /\*/ (¢self) "Looks like whatever I did to get pseudo-quotes into my email didn't make it to my zine. Isn't tech wonderful?" If it was word-processor formatting (such as strikeout or underline), no, that gets stripped out when you convert to plain text. In plain text, the best you can do is to put a hyphen before (or after) each quote mark. (Be careful about using an underscore rather than a hyphen; some software will automatically italicize or boldface text enclosed by underscores.) /\*/ (¢Nelson) I'm finding YouTube's advertising increasingly annoying. It used to be an ad every couple of songs, but I recently tried to play an album's worth of music and got at least one ad before each song, more often two (and it's difficult hitting the "Skip ad" buttons every three minutes while biking). (Donna adds that the news-analysis videos she favors often get

interrupted in mid-word for advertising.) It appears YouTube is trying to make its “free” service more obnoxious so as to steer customers to its subscription services. I don’t think I want to reward YouTube for this practice by paying \$12

a month to avoid the ads; I’ll just bypass the app and the ads by downloading more music, or podcasts, to my phone before I head out on a trip. /\*/ (øbacover) I don’t remember the story about the “delayed” cover either. I was hoping you did.

After much thought and dithering, I’ve decided that while things are indeed finally opening up after the pandemic, it’s probably still a bad risk to schedule a Staten Island Ferry meeting this July; there are too many still-unvaccinated people around to figure out the best logistics at rush hour in crowded lower Manhattan, and who knows what new variants may pop up between now and then? My regrets to anyone who was counting on it.



(Rhymes with Orange by Hilary B. Price, 8 October 2012)

Today I heard of another mass shooting, this one in San José, identified as the 68th in the past two months—more than one a day. Today I also heard that the state legislature of Texas is in the process of passing a bill that would effectively allow anyone over the age of 21 to carry a gun without getting a license, a permit, or any training; the governor has pledged to sign the bill once it passes. What’s wrong with this picture? I believe I’ll be staying a good distance away from Texas for the time being. I may also be checking out investments in manufacturers of Kevlar.

I hope everyone has a good June and, like the oldest stamps in my collection, remains imperforate. Best wishes for seeing more of you in person Real Soon Now.

>Portions of the preceding are on a road to nowhere; come on inside.<