

Beyond the Fringefan

[No. 512]

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN recently found himself among a group of people irrecoverably unsubscribed against their wishes from two email lists, when those lists softly and suddenly vanished away, to never be met with again. Even the Genial Host couldn't grant his wish to resurrect them. After a month working at it, he has replacements for those lists in operation, and hopes eventually to be able to reconstruct the old lists' membership. It's just business as snafusual 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** #512, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 19, #6 (e-APA-NYU #188) and other enlistees, published July 2021 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Speed Bump* by David Coverly, 26 September 2018. All uncredited material copyright ©2021 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.



REBOOTING THE FRANCHISE: OK, the technology scorecard so far this year: I got a new mobile phone and a new laptop, both of which I'd more or less intended to get, and a new (used) receiver and a new ISP, both imposed on me by the sudden failure of their predecessors. Now add to that second group a new server for the NYUSFS e-lists.

Back in 2004, I proposed as O.S.A.A.&C. to discontinue the apa on paper and take it to the 'Net, and asked for help in working out the best way to do it. Richard Segal, the fan probably better known as Jailbait (a moniker that has been counterfactual for over 35 years now) or JB, volunteered to create a <nysfs.org> domain on his server and to host both the apa and a NYUSFS bounce list thereon, using a software app called Mailman. (I credited him in the APA-NEWS as Genial Host.) The system has worked pretty well over the ensuing 17 years, though not without the occasional hiccup. I had little idea of how it worked internally; we'd send in our zines, and I'd sign on to the admin interface via the Web, update the APA-NEWS, release the zines that were held for moderation, and then tell Mailman to send out a collation (or "digest," as they're called in the world of e-lists).

It should be noted that JB is not the greatest at correspondence, nor does he claim to be; when we had those hiccups in the past, I'd e-mail him about them, and he'd fix them, usually in a day or two, without

ever responding to my e-mails. If it took longer, there was no way to find out how long, or why, or what I could do about it.

Unfortunately, we had a couple of hiccups in rapid succession this spring, wherein the server and the domains were totally inaccessible for extended times. One of them happened in late April; apparently JB had failed to renew the registration for the <nyusfs.org> domain. I e-mailed JB. I DM'ed him on Facebook. [DM=Direct Message] Finally, after hearing nothing back for days, I put up a public message telling him that if he didn't want to host us anymore, that was his option, but it wasn't right for him to ghost us. (Hmmm...Genial Host...GHost...maybe I should've given him a different title....) JB finally got things straightened out, it seemed, but by then, the April collation had been delayed for five days into May.

The second hiccup happened in late May...and is apparently still happening. All the zines sent in bounced back, and any attempt to access anything in the domain met with a 404 Not Found. I was eventually able to reach JB via DMs, but two weeks after telling me "I'll be trying to get things working later today," he came back with bad news: "The story is, that for many many reasons, I'm barely able to concentrate on this project... and I'm sorry. It's only nearly dead. Among the steps needed to revive, though, is getting the old hardware up and running at my house, because I realized something that I forgot to get off of it before the changeover. And this is an ever bigger PITA. I remember so little of what I did to set this up AGES ago, and the (new, current) os I'm now using is Different® anyway, so it'd only sort of help if I DID."



(Brewster Rockit, *Space Guy!* by Tim Rickard, 20 August 2018)

So it seemed we were stuck, and needed to find a new host for the apa (and also for the bounce list). By that point I'd already been checking out e-list software, but most of what was available was not compatible with the operating system on my laptop, or with the languages I'm familiar with. There are, however, some websites that are willing to host "groups" cheaply. Not as many as there used to be (YahooGroups shut down earlier this year), but they're there. Chas Belov (thanks, Chas) mentioned one, Groups.io, that seemed compatible with what we need as I looked into it. Best of all, it's free for groups of up to 100 members. (The company makes its money selling premium services to profit-making organizations.)

So I set up an account for myself at Groups.io (which took five minutes) and then set up two groups, apa-nyu and nyusfs. The nyusfs group was easy; it's a simple bounce. Send a message ("post") to it at <nyusfs [at] groups [dot] io> and it will immediately be sent out to all the members. (Replace the [at] with @ and the [dot] with a dot.)

The apa-nyu group required a fair amount of futzing with settings and working around a few of Group.io's procedures, but I think I now have it set up to work kinda sorta as it did on JB's server. It

doesn't let me create a custom digest header per se, but I can submit the APA-NEWS as an ordinary post. Every post sent in will go into hold ("moderation"), and when I'm ready to put out the collation, I'll submit the APA-NEWS. Then I'll sign on as group moderator and release the APA-NEWS post first and then all the others. The next morning at 6 am, Groups.io will issue a digest, with the APA-NEWS at the top since it was released first. (No, all this will not be on the final exam; I need to know it, but you don't. Just Pub Your Ish and send it in to <apa-nyu [at] groups [dot] io>.)

Anyone can send something in, but you have to register with Groups.io and join the groups to receive the posts or digests. (Oh, I've discovered that posts sent in by nonmembers may get rejected as spam, and I'm still working to see if there's anything I can do about that.) So please, if you were on either of the old lists, please sign up and join the new lists. Groups.io does not demand a lot of personal information, and I have no reason to think you'll get spammed. Also, please spread the word; with JB's server down, I have no access to the rosters of who was on the old lists, and no way to contact them to tell them to re-up. At press time there were only eight people on each of the two lists.



(Bizarro by Dan Piraro, 21 August 2017)

TWO LEGS GOOD, SIX LEGS BAD: We continue to change Donna's bedding weekly and inspect all the nooks and crannies of the headboard for bugs, but we haven't seen anything clearly identifiable as a bedbug anywhere in the house in several weeks, and we have decided to declare the job of debugging complete. Hallelujah! We had a few people over to celebrate on the Fourth of July. We're back to dealing with the annual invasion of ants that seems to follow the first few big rains every summer, but after the past year, that seems fairly benign. We got a *new* new office chair for Donna in the Wreck Room, one with a mesh back and seat; no upholstery, but she's finding it quite comfortable. Now I have to put my money where my mouth was and finally get around to getting a new bed for myself (the mattress is at least 20 years old, the frame and box springs more like 30). I intend to put bug-proof encasements around the new mattress and springs, and to get all-metal frame and headboard, so that it will be as inhospitable as possible to any return visits.

I posted a review of E-Z-Pest (aka EZ Bed Bug) on Yelp in mid-May. It wasn't strident, I believe; I thought I'd summarized what had gone on between them and us in a deliberate and even-handed way, and I acknowledged that we had clutter in the house and that that was probably the reason things didn't work as well as the company advertised. I gave them three stars out of five, which I thought was pretty fair considering that we'd still had bedbugs after all their treatments. I was surprised when the co-owner of the company telephoned about six weeks later, calling the review "a slap in the face." (I guess he wanted me to change the review; I don't know if that's even possible.) If I'd wanted to slap them in the face, I'd have given them one star (you can't do zero on Yelp). I guess he felt that anything less than a five-star rave was unfair to them.

THE HIP HOP NEVER STOPS: I had the gel injection in my right hip joint, as performed by Dr. U.S., on 5 June. It was a bit more elaborate a procedure than the injection in my shoulder three years ago; they put me under sedation, and, as with my colonoscopies, the next thing I knew, they were done. I napped for much of the rest of the day.

The difference it made is much less dramatic than with the shoulder injection, I'm afraid. The pain is far diminished and isn't really noticeable until after a fair amount of exertion, but I'm still limping to what seems like a noticeable degree, and I don't think I can walk as fast as I used to (and running is out of the question).

After about two dozen sessions of physical therapy (about one-third of them after the injection), the PT place said I'd had all that Medicare would pay for, so since late June I've just been doing exercises at home. I'll continue those, and maybe go back to see Dr. J.S. the orthopedist in December to see if he wants to prescribe me some more in the new year.

In other follow-ups, the MTA got me my replacement senior MetroCard only five weeks after I'd turned in the dead one in person, and the full balance was restored. Verizon credited us for the returned router and is now charging us only what it claimed for the Fios service. And on 5 July, Donna ate her first ear of corn on the cob in over a decade, and pronounced it good.

Valentino, the one haircutter I currently trust not to make my hair too short, still hasn't returned from Florida. Latest word is that he was not just visiting his girlfriend there, but had gone so far as to get married. I hadn't gotten trimmed since last September, and it was starting to get in my eyes, nose, and mouth; so in desperation I subways up to Astor Place Hairstylists (a big basement with a couple of dozen cutters) and saw Scott instead—he works a couple of chairs over from Valentino. Unfortunately, my distrust of everyone but Valentino was borne out when Scott trimmed me sufficiently short that I probably won't feel a need to go back there until Thanksgiving or so. Maybe Val will be back by then. (Scott opined that Val is never coming back; he now has reason to stay in Florida and is older than I am. If he's indeed retiring, I wish him and his new bride happiness and good fortune, but it's going to be a pain training someone new to cut my hair the way I want.)

Fringe Reception: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 19, #5 (e-APA-NYU #187)

DOPING PANDA vs. PXNDX (Chas Belov):

"PXNDX" looks like a new politically correct gender-neutral designation for pandas. /*/ (¢Blackman) "I've been okay dining out alone for years, although there are some restaurants I would not be comfortable doing it at." I've dined out alone without a second thought when traveling (and of course for lunch when working at a place where it wasn't convenient or acceptable to eat at my desk), but never had much of an urge to do so otherwise. It may be simple cheapness: there's plenty of food in the house, why spend time and money to go out?

Even bringing back takeout requires a fair amount of motivation to overcome my inertia. /*/ (¢me) "Re pseudo-quotes, Thunderbird doesn't have a strikethrough format so I guess I'll have to do without. Annoyed the Unicode didn't work." Do you have "Send messages as plain text if possible" set in your Send Options? (I usually do.) If so, you can't use italics, bold, underline, or any of those cool things. But if you're composing in HTML mode, you should be able to select text, then pull down Format/Text Style, and click on Strikethrough. (I think you can force HTML mode by holding down the Shift key

when you click Write.) BUT note that Groups.io will probably remove all the formatting when it sends out plain-text digests anyway, so it may not be worth any more hassle.



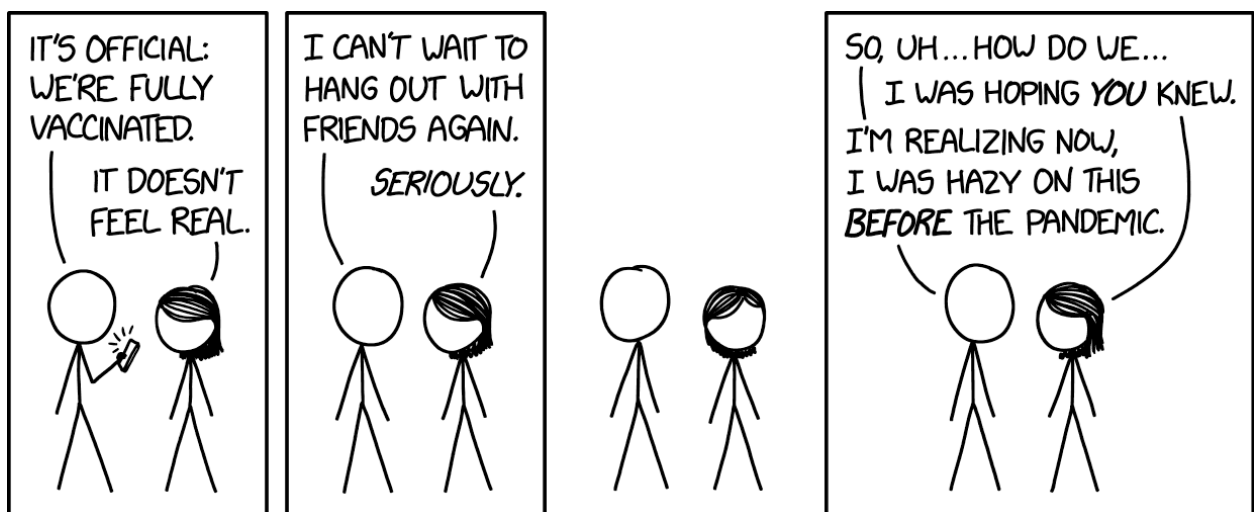
(Broom-Hilda by Russell Myers, 25 April 2018)

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

The computers at the library “won’t recognize thumb drives, so I can’t download files” anymore? Have you asked the librarians why not? I’d think they ought to call for some tech support on this issue. /*/ (¢cover) “(Heifer calf should not be confused with Heifer Cat, or Heifer Not-Cat.)” In fact, that cover of yours was the inspiration for naming HeiferCat. /*/ (¢me) I never liked stationary bikes much. Then again, I never liked exercise much; it’s boring (repetitive) and uncomfortable verging on painful. I’ve embraced biking as a form of exercise because of its redeeming quality of getting you somewhere (so at least the scenery is interesting, and it’s

useful for running errands). A stationary bike loses that asset and reverts to being just exercise. /*/ Biking seems to stress my right hip less than a tenth as much as walking a similar length of time does. I’ve done an hour uninterrupted (other than by traffic lights) with barely noticeable distress. /*/ “Could my mouse nonrecognition be my USB hub?” Could be. Can you borrow another, or temporarily plug the mouse directly into the computer, and see if it makes a difference? /*/ “Why did [Verizon] take over 8 years to get to your neighborhood?” Only Verizon knows. I’ve wondered if perhaps there are fewer apartment houses near me, so that Verizon gave priority to higher-density districts.

Since all the Usual Suspects have been fully vaccinated, FISTFA has resumed, thus restoring my one locus of social interaction outside of shopping. I’m hoping I’ll be prepared for my first non-virtual convention since 2019. (That’ll probably be Philcon, assuming the country dodges the dreaded Fourth Wave.)



(xkcd by Randall Munroe, 7 May 2021)

Have a good August, everyone, and if you possibly can, steer clear of Washington, D.C., on the weekend of the 14th, when certain conspiracy believers claim a certain former occupant of the White House will be “reinstated.” Could get ugly.

>Portions of the preceding fear a new wave of pandemic caused by the newest COVID mutation.
They’ve got the Delta blues.<