

Beyond the Fringefan [#517]

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN does feel a bit as though we've all been here before as 2021 draws to a close, and he prays, to any deities who will listen, that the nation and the world are not becoming characters in a movie called *Groundhog Year*. He'll be staying the hell away from Washington, D.C., on 6 January just to play it safe. (Besides, he was there just a couple of weeks ago.) Meanwhile, here's **Beyond the Fringefan** #517, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 19, #11 (e-APA-NYU #193) and other déjà viewers, published December 2021 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. You'll find him spending New Year's Eve as usual hunkered down 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)), making fun of the fewer than usual fools in Times Square. Cartoon above from *Brewster Rockit, Space Guy!* by Tim Rickard, 26 December 2021. All uncredited material copyright ©2021 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.

INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM: We made it to Worldcon this year, my first since 2009. The concom, demoralized after the hotel's bankruptcy (taking the concom's money) a year ago, had rallied under a new chairperson, moved to another hotel a block away (and another date four months away), and gotten together a tolerably good convention despite all the circumstances working against it. There were in-person, virtual-only, and hybrid program items, for fans both present (about 2300, I heard) and distant. The 90-year-old Omni Shoreham hotel, with a vast array of accessibility-aimed retrofits, struggled a bit with the number of wheelchair- and scooter-bound attendees, but the hotel personnel, more used to dealing with diplomatic attachés, did their best to handle the fen with grace and good humor. The neighborhood seemed more gentrified than the last time we were there (read: no cheap eateries; R.I.P., Tucson Cantina)—but then it has been at least 40 years since Disclave departed the Sheraton Park.

Everyone there was fully vaxed and masked whenever in public areas; yet reports started to trickle in, even before the con was over, of attendees getting positive COVID tests and thereupon absenting themselves from the festivities. There were only two or three during the con, but as people rushed to get tested afterward, the number was up to 31 as of nine days after the closing ceremonies. Some had symptoms, some didn't. (One turned out to be a false positive.) My test, four days after we left D.C., came back negative, to my relief. I don't know yet what I'll be doing about upcoming non-virtual cons.

My hernia-repair surgery is now scheduled for the last day of January. The intervening month will be pretty busy, as in order to be cleared for the surgery, I have to see my PCP and my cardiologist and get a set of lab tests. It was while thinking about all the logistics involved that I was reminded of the late great Phil Ochs's "Draft Dodger Rag" and its litany of imaginary ailments.* Those of us old enough to remember the draft now have our own litanies of physical afflictions, the difference being that ours are all too real. Thus:

DAFT CODGER RAG

By Beyond the Fringefan a/k/a Marc S. Glasser
 To "Draft Dodger Rag" (Phil Ochs)

Well, I'm just a typical Boomer boy,
 Born in the days of Truman;
 I used to think my health was good
 For a '50s-vintage human.
 Now my best friend's on a walker,
 And my wife uses a wheelchair;
 We're living on Social Security,
 And all our doctors take Medicare.

[CHORUS:]

Well, I'm just 69, got compression of the spine
 And I live with a registered nurse.
 I got eyes like a bat and my feet are flat
 And my asthma's gettin' worse.
 My right hip's bum, my feet are numb,
 I'm getting deaf as a post;
 And my bladder keeps waking me up all night,
 But I think I'm doing better than most.

I tried to schedule a checkup
 With my favorite PCP,
 But I had to cancel 'cause it conflicted
 With my physical therapy.
 So what else is new? I'm in the queue

To get hernia surgery,
 I said that's great, but it'll have to wait
 Until my colonoscopy.
 [CHORUS]

I've had CAT scans, echocardiograms,
 MRIs and EKGs,
 Cortisone in my hips and shoulders,
 And they want to replace my knees.
 I take Lipitor and Allegra,
 Tylenol and Ventolin,
 I'm friends with the clerks at the CVS
 And they wave when I walk in.
 [CHORUS]

They tell me cats can have nine lives
 And Time Lords regenerate;
 And how many new *Star Treks* have we had
 Since 1968?
 But more and more of my old friends
 Are six feet underground,
 So I guess I'll just wheeze and rub my knees
 Till my time comes around.
 [CHORUS]



(Broom-Hilda by Russell Myers, 26 September 2020)

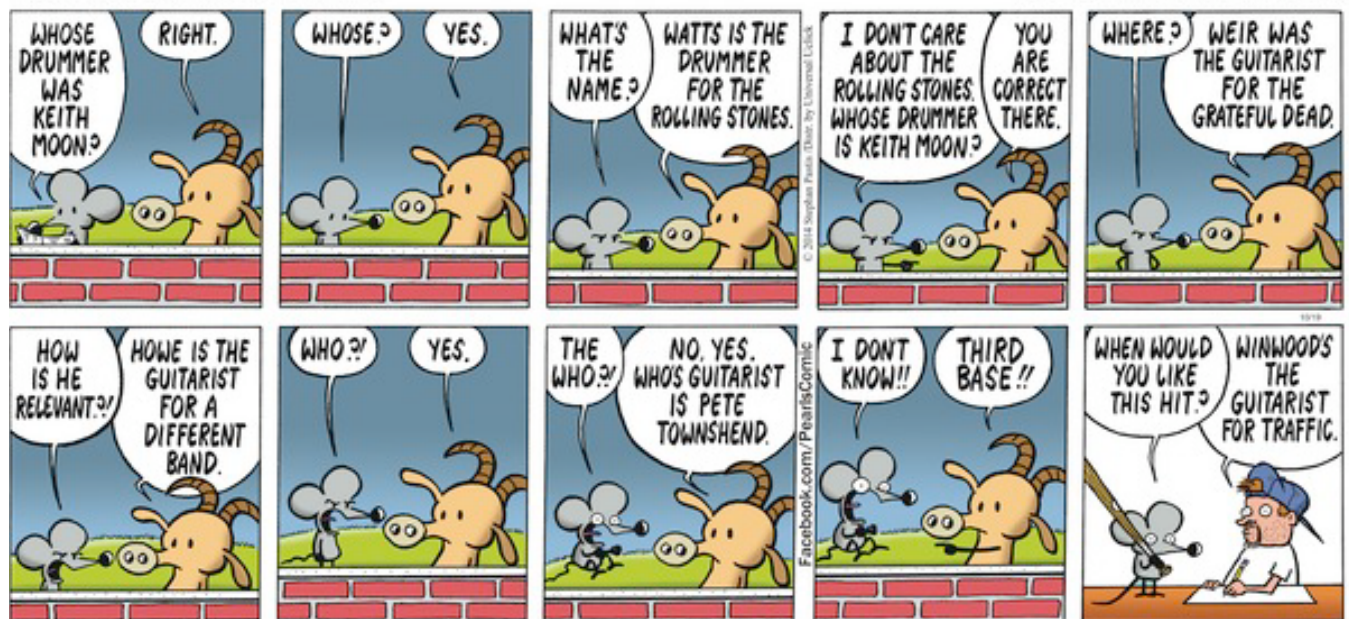
*A note for those readers to whom the 1960s are ancient history: There was a set of laws called “the Draft” under which any able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 35 could be compelled to join the military, undergo training, and be sent to Southeast Asia to kill and maim or be killed or maimed himself. Many of us found the idea of killing and maiming strangers distasteful, and the idea of getting killed or maimed ourselves even more so. In the original of this song (find it on YouTube), an 18-year-old presents himself as a physical and mental cripple in the hope of being disqualified as unfit to serve.

Fringe Reception: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 19, #10 (e-APA-NYU #192)

JAMISON, TAKE e-LETTER (Mark L. Blackman):
(cBelov) “There’s a puritanical streak, apparently across cultures, that demands a price for magic and has wishes backfire.” Is it puritanism? It could simply be cautionary wisdom equivalent to “know what you’re doing before you touch that red-hot metal/push that button/swallow that pill.” Anyone who’s programmed a computer knows that there’s often a big difference between what you *thought* you were telling the machine to do and what your instructions *actually* told it to do. (In deal-with-the-devil stories, of course, the devil deliberately manipulates that difference, to the mortal’s ultimate chagrin.) /*/ In the early years of the MetroCard, the MTA used to hand out purpose-designed slip-cases for them. I kept my MetroCards in one such for 20 years and never had a problem until the 16-month gap in my ridership. The case finally fell apart last month, but I found another in a desk drawer. I expect it’ll last until the new system that replaces MetroCards is fully implemented.

APA-NU vs COVID Variant Nu (Chas Belov):
“The Hindustani Times reports that WHO skipped over Nu and Xi, to avoid confusion with

the word ‘new’ and Chinese premier Xi Jinping.” Officially, WHO denies it was a concession specifically to Premier Xi; a spokesperson said Xi was omitted “because it’s a common surname and we have agreed [to] naming rules that avoid using place names, people’s names, animal, etc. to avoid stigma.” That’s odd; there are lots of places called “the Delta,” but they didn’t have any problem using that one. /*/ The best variations on “Who’s on First?” that I’ve seen are based on rocknroll bands—whereas Abbott and Costello required the listener’s suspension of disbelief that a baseball team could have players with all those silly nicknames, there really are bands named Who and Yes and Guess Who, and most folk of our generation are aware of them. (See below.) /*/ (cBlackman) No, the last BeyondtheCon to date was in 1995. I was beginning to find the preparation and clean-up overwhelming, so I announced that as BeyondtheCon had reached the age of 21, it was time to send it out to make its own way in the world. I’m not ruling out a reappearance, but it would be a very bad idea to hold your breath waiting for its return. /*/ (cme) “¿What’s up with



(Pearls Before Swine by Stephan Pastis, 19 October 2014)

that about the CDC card being too big? I was able to force in but it has a curl along one edge as a result.” The rudimentary research I’ve done suggests that of all things relating to COVID vaccines, designing the card was one thing the CDC just didn’t put a lot of coordinated effort into. (The CDC may also have intended the card to be folded in half, making it a bit smaller than a credit card, but then you’d have to pull it out of the wallet or case to enable anyone to actually

read the information on it.) I gave up on getting mine into my wallet. Donna and I got some plastic badge holders at Staples that fit the cards nicely—probably anyone who’s been to a few conventions and saved the badges has some like them, possibly on lanyards. The holder is transparent and protects the card well, and it fits into most of my shirt pockets. That may not be much help, however, to people who habitually wear shirts without pockets.

A quick shout-out to my mother, Julia, whose 100th birthday was just a few days ago. She could walk into a room full of strangers and leave a roomful of friends. (That’s a very useful ability for a junior high school teacher.) We sorely need more people like that now. Miss you, Mom!

And that about wraps up another year; as I wrote at this time last year, “...and somehow, we (or most of us) have made it through a year we won’t soon be forgetting.” Once again, let’s hope the next is better, healthier, safer, and saner.



(Dilbert by Scott Adams, 31 December 2018)

>Portions of the preceding want their team’s lineup to include Molly Pitcher and Ben Katchor.<