



Beyond the Fringefan

[#531]

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN will stick his neck out and say that it's been an interesting couple of months 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)), but he and his lady are still keeping their heads up. This is **Beyond the Fringefan #531**, for

readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 21, #2 (e-APA-NYU #207) and others who are hot under the collar, published February 2023 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Loose Parts* by Dave Blazek, 3 February 2023. All uncredited material copyright ©2023 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.

LIVING AT A BREAKNECK PACE: The bureaucracy that dominates the medical care delivery system in this country often requires patients to jump through hoops to get the help they need. If the patient has diminished mobility, it makes all that jumping even harder, as we've been finding out this month. It was during a visit to her cardiologist on 11 January that Donna tried unsuccessfully to climb onto an examining table and was unable, even with my help, to lift her right leg high enough; she lost her balance and we both fell on the floor, with Donna knocking her head against the side of a treadmill. The doctor and I were eventually able to get her back up onto a chair. As far as we can tell, she did not suffer a concussion, but she had head and neck pain that did not go away over the next several days. She saw her PCP, Dr. H., on the 17th, and he referred her for a CAT scan of the neck. Meanwhile, we found a soft cervical collar, and she started wearing it whenever awake and not eating. It reduced the neck pain but added its own discomforts.

The earliest appointment we were able to get for the scan was the 25th, two weeks after the original trauma. Dr. H. got the results and called us late on 1 February to report that she had a broken bone, specifically the odontoid process. (This is an upward protrusion from the second highest vertebra; it's essential in supporting the skull.) He referred her for a consult with a neurosurgeon at Methodist Hospital in Park Slope, and also prescribed her a rigid neck brace. I had medical appointments of my own that precluded my picking up the paperwork until Friday the 3rd, whereupon I proceeded to a

surgical supply place in Park Slope (the ones nearer to us having closed down a couple of years ago) to get the brace. However, the man there told me that it wasn't a stock item; she had to have her neck measured at a doctor's office and pass the measurements to the store, which would then order the brace and have it for us in "four or five business days." I headed home.

We tried calling the number for the neurosurgeon, and got someone at the hospital who claimed there was no such doctor in that office; she couldn't say whether the doctor even worked at the hospital. We double-checked the number; all online sources said it was the number for the doctor in question. Eventually we found another number for the neurology department, where a nice guy named Darien informed us that that doctor did indeed work there, and he'd be glad to give us an appointment the last week of March! When we asked whether a broken neck might not be an urgent enough situation to call for a bit less delay, he made us another offer: I could go back to the radiology center, obtain a CD-ROM of the CAT scan, and bring it to the hospital, and the neurologists there would analyze it and determine whether Donna's situation warranted an expedited visit.

By this point it was almost 5 pm on a Friday, but I called the radiology center to inquire about getting a CD burned. After half an hour's futile attempts to reach a human being through its phone tree, I opted to go there (only a mile away from the Cadre) instead. I got there and was told that they'd be happy to burn the CD for me, but their CD burner was currently out of commission because of "network issues." So bright and early on Monday the 6th, I returned to the place, and got our CD with minimal hassle. I shuttled it up to the hospital, handed it to Darien, and waited while he uploaded its contents. The doctors would make their evaluation and get back to us within 24 hours, he said.

Someone from the same office called us two hours later and pretty much repeated what Darien had told us; otherwise, we heard nothing, so after 26 hours had elapsed, we called again. Darien had some news: the neurosurgeon whom Dr. H. had referred us to was not really the guy we needed to see. Dr. S., a neurologist in the same department, was our man, and he could see us in as little as two weeks! We asked whether that meant they were sure there was no danger of death or paralysis occurring in the interim. After putting us on hold for several minutes, Darien assured us that that was the case—though he said we were always free to visit the emergency room if anything were to change suddenly. So we made our appointment for the 21st and attempted to go about our business meanwhile. We've spent enough nights in emergency rooms to know what to expect there, and so far, the pain and anxiety Donna was in were less than the pain and hassle we expected to face in an ER.

In the interim, a person we trust referred us to a couple of websites where rigid neck braces can be ordered online without a prescription. Many require measurement to choose the proper size, but we found one model that's adjustable, and ordered it. We brought it with us when we saw Dr. S. on the 21st.

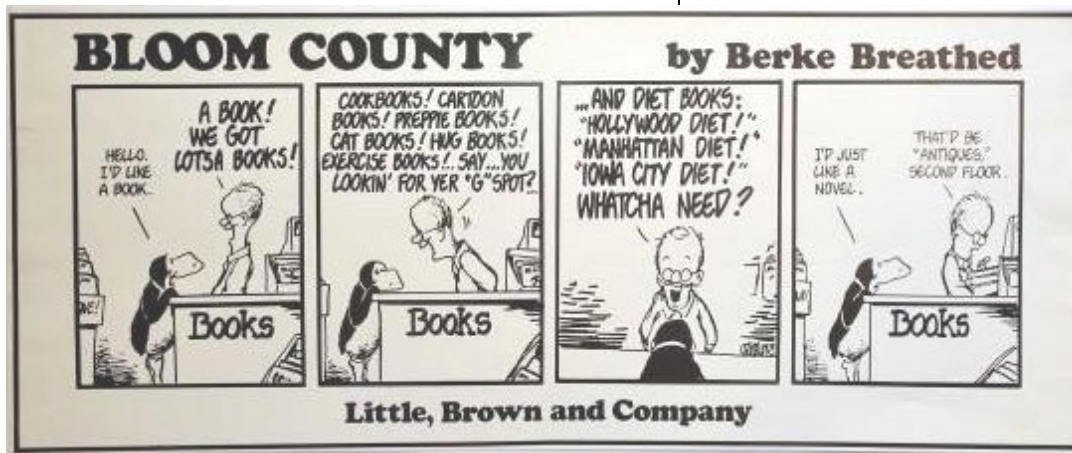
Dr. S. showed us the images from the scan with the broken bone, not that we really needed to see them, and told Donna that this sort of break usually heals on its own in a month or two, with the help of the neck brace (though at our age, healing might be a bit slower), and the likelihood of any long-term problems was quite slim. He fitted the neck brace on Donna and showed us how to adjust it. So now Donna's neck looks like Darth Vader, but she's feeling much less panicky about the whole thing (and that can only be good for her blood pressure).



Fringe Reception: Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 21, #1 (e-APA-NYU #206)

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

“A ~THUMB DRIVE~ that I’ve been using for 3 years to move files between my desktop & the library computer declared suddenly that it needs to be formatted, making everything on it inaccessible & doomed to erasure.” My experience is that when that happens, the drive has gone bad (or just worn out) and needs to be replaced. Formatting it and trying to start using it again will just lead to recurrence of the problem. /*/ (çme) “I’ve never been a fan of headphones.” *Chacun à son goût*, I guess. “Sound fills the room, but headphones lock the listener in place.” Not if the wire is long enough—I used to have a 50-foot extension cord when my headphones were plugged into my receiver—or if the ’phones are plugged into a mobile device. /*/ “(In the Tax Men’s version of Math, if 2 people share an account or a safety deposit box, they say that each one owns 100% or 0%, whichever benefits the tax creatures.)” Are you surprised? /*/ A recent episode of the new *Quantum Leap* had another plot point hinging on the idea that the person the leaper jumps into experiences a blackout until the leaper jumps out—once again, a clear violation of the original series’s continuity. (One or two of the old episodes turned on information the people at Quantum Leap Central obtained from talking to the leapee.) /*/ Yep, same *Bloom County* poster.



(*Bloom County* by Berke Breathed, sometime in the 1980s)

Since it’s set in a bookstore, I’d bet we both picked it up at a Fifth Avenue Book Fair. /*/ (çself) “Why is my submission dated Sat. the 31st in the email header when I sent it Thurs. the 29th? (The library wasn’t even open at 12:03 am.)” I hadn’t noticed that (since I usually do my

commenting based on the hardcopy edition). The answer is this: I have the group set up on groups.io such that everything submitted to the group goes into hold until I release it. (Otherwise the site will produce a digest every day even if there’s just one submission in.) So after I’ve finalized and submitted the APA-NEWS, I release that, followed in rapid succession by everything else that’s been sent (trying to keep them in the order they’ve been submitted). Apparently the digest labels them with the time I released them, not the time they were originally sent. (You’ll notice the time stamps are in order and all around midnight.)

ALWAYS vs. SOMETIMES (Chas Belov): “I’m not spending nearly as much time with it [Mastodon] nor am I as engaged [as with Twitter]. But maybe that’s a good thing.” I’d think that’s a good thing, unless you have lots of free time you need to burn. Being able to dip in and out as your life and your inclinations allow is preferable to being addicted. /*/ “Weekends are strange. I’m now working Mondays through Thursdays (less legal holidays) so all day Friday I have to keep reminding myself that it’s Friday and not Saturday.” I went through something like that, from the other end of the week, as I started cutting back my hours at AB. Wednesdays were my virtual Mondays during the off-months in 2018 and 2019. Now that I’m retired, a number

of things are completely reversed: where I used to do most of my errands on weekends (because that was when I had the time), now I avoid the weekends (because that’s when the stores are more crowded). /*/ I should mention that I’m enjoying your reviews of Asian

yaoi (“boys’ love”) TV series even though I’m unlikely ever to watch them myself. /*/ (çme) I have a couple of dozen gigabytes of music files on my phone, twice that much on my laptop, and a couple of hundred gig on the network storage appliance Ethan installed here, but when I get the

urge to hear one particular song, I'm likely to stream it, partly because I may not be able to remember where my file of it is. (Oh, I also have fifty or sixty CD-Rs of MP3s that I burned a

decade or two ago, but my current laptop doesn't have a CD drive, so to play them, I'd first have to find the external CD drive and connect it up.)



(Frank and Ernest by Thaves, 6 January 2023)

That's about it for this month. Happy Purim, St. Patrick's Day, and resumption of Daylight Saving Time. Hope you all don't break your necks.

>Portions of the preceding tried to call the neck surgeon, but only got his answering cervix.<