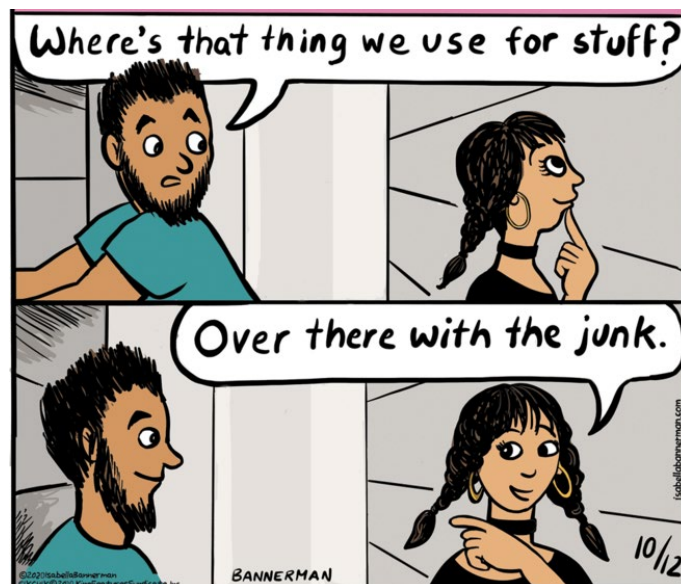


# Beyond the Fringefan (#540)



**BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN** and his lady are looking for all their Stuff right now, after being without it for a week in a hotel room. With any luck at all, their long-time home 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)), pursuant to its invasion by three different crews during that week, is once again free of bedbugs. They're half holding their breath as they try to locate everything that got packed away, while awaiting confirmation that the procedure was successful. If you have any wood handy, please knock it as you read **Beyond the Fringefan** #540, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 21, #11 (e-APA-NYU #216) and others who need a Place for Their Stuff, published November 2023 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above by Isabella Bannerman for *Six Chix*, 12 October 2020. All uncredited material copyright ©2023 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.

**WHEN IT'S LEAST EXPECTED, YOU'RE ELECTED:** When I served as a poll worker in June and was issued my copy of the *Basic Poll Worker Manual 2022/2023*, I noticed that the "Schedule of Elections for 2022 Certification" on page 5 only went up to those primaries. This made me suspicious that I'd be required to do another training course before the general elections rolled around in November. Accordingly, I began checking the city's poll workers website weekly so that I could sign up for a training course at a convenient time. Every week until late October, the website told me that there were no courses available, either in person or online. By the last weekend of October, I'd concluded that they just didn't need me this time around. But on Monday, 30 October, just eight days before Election Day and a few days after early voting had begun, I received an e-mail from the Board of Elections inviting me to "participate in the online Basic Training for the November 7, 2023 General Election" and exhorting me to "complete this course as soon as possible."

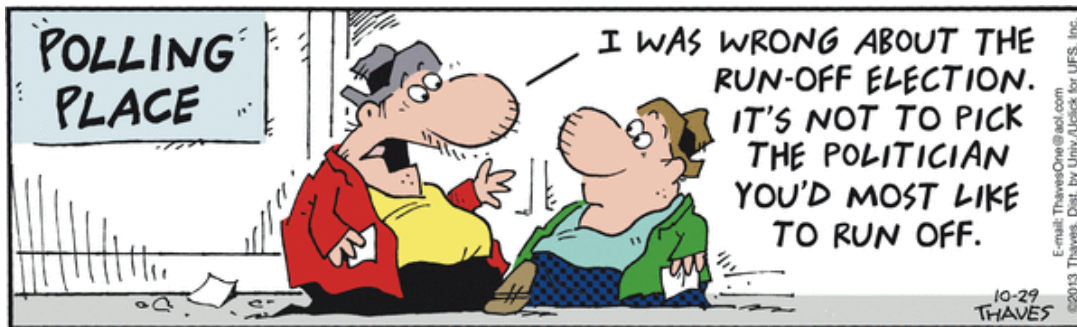
Given that I had a medical appointment and Donna had three over the next three days, it was challenging to find time to attend to this. I was unable even to start until Wednesday night, whereupon I found out that the online course amounted to about 20 modular units, each containing several videos ranging in duration from one to fifteen minutes. You had to let each one play to the end before you could start the next one, and end to end they totaled about 4½ hours. Luckily, you could go away and pick up where

you left off when you came back. It was Friday evening before I finished. How were they going to mail me my marching orders and ID badge, I wondered.

The answer was that they e-mailed me a note on Saturday afternoon telling me to log on to receive my assignment. No clue as to getting my badge, but the site informed me I was assigned to a polling place at a school about a mile and a half southeast of the Cadre, on Avenue M near East 51<sup>st</sup> Street. That was good, at least; given clement weather, I could bike there in under ten minutes, and even go home for my lunch and dinner breaks (and make sure Donna was OK). As on the other two occasions when I've done poll work, the only hardship would be getting up and dressed and breakfasted and over there by 5 am. But I managed to do so.

This was a large location; the school's lunchroom having been cleared out, it was capable of handling the setup for nine different EDs. There were dozens of poll workers there, and the coordinators seemed to have it pretty well organized; things were ready for opening time at 6 am. They didn't have a badge for me, so I wore the one I'd worn in June. Officially, I was designated a Line Management Clerk. Had there been a long queue of people waiting at the entrance, it would be my duty to walk up and down the line reminding people that if they knew their district, they could skip the information table and go directly to the district table, and that if they had absentee ballots to drop off, they could go directly to the box on the information table to do so.

In the event, it being a very off-year election, we seldom had more than a single individual on queue, so instead, I sat at the information desk and looked up people's districts. I split this task for most of the day with a middle-aged black guy named Kevin, who flirted with all the women who walked up to the table (they seemed to enjoy it). Mostly I was using the tablet computer to do the lookups, and I would say "You should go to table 29" or "The Board of Elections wants you to go to table 36" or "The computer says your table is 38." Once I pulled a Karnak and intoned, "The spirits say...you should go to table 34..." and Kevin, without missing a beat, responded, "Are they *friendly* spirits?" Friendly? Just listen! One woman asked if I needed to know her party affiliation; I told her no, since this was not a primary. "It's your party, and you can cry if you want to." She brightened up and replied, "Lesley Gore!"



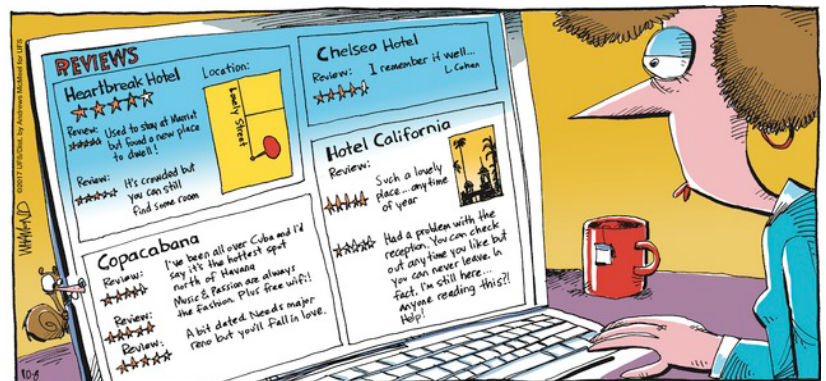
(Frank and Ernest by Thaves, 29 October 2013)

I did bring my own power bank to recharge my phone this time, though I didn't need it until very late in the day, possibly because it's a brand-new phone (see last month's zine).

After the poll closed at 9 pm, everyone got busy taking down signs, shutting down the machinery, and folding up tables and chairs. Since I was not among the bi-partisan pairs crewing the district tables, I didn't have to be involved in the elaborate cross-checking to make sure the numbers of ballots scanned matched the numbers issued, so I got out at a reasonable time and got home just about 10 pm. I will volunteer again next year, but I expect it's going to be a much busier and more hectic scene.

**PAIN IN MY HEAD, BUGS IN MY BED:** We'd pretty much decided by this time last month that the only course of action we could feel confident about, regarding the bedbug re-infestation, was what we've come to call the nuclear option: letting a moving company pack all our possessions up into trucks and fumigate them, then moving out of the Cadre for a few days while the exterminators came in and treated the place top to bottom with high heat and assorted chemicals. With Ethan as point man, scheduling became an issue, as he was out of the country for a week for Worldcon, and then out of town for another week on business. Thanksgiving weekend was also looming. After dozens of e-mails were exchanged between him and us and the movers and the exterminators, we finally committed to letting the movers come in starting on Saturday 18 November, and getting ourselves out on Sunday night the 19th. Somewhere along the line, the movers recommended a cleaning service to do a "deep cleaning" of the empty house after the exterminators were done. Since we haven't done much of anything that could be called cleaning in the 36 years we've been there (including 27 years of cats wandering around), we ultimately agreed.

The Holiday Inn Express on Kings Highway was, it turned out, booked solid for weeks in advance—I have no idea why—and we didn't really much like the Days Inn on East 51st Street where we'd stayed last time, so I let the Holiday Inn reservation people talk me into making a reservation at the Holiday Inn Express Sunset Park, on 39th Street near 9th Avenue. It's about four miles from the Cadre (vs. one mile for the one on Kings Highway), adjacent to Green-Wood Cemetery (quiet neighbors) and on the edge of one of Brooklyn's Chinatowns (decent food options). I made a reservation for four nights, arriving Sunday and leaving Thursday (Thanksgiving), though it was looking increasingly likely that we'd be staying through the weekend.



(Reality Check by Dave Whamond, 8 October 2017)

The movers showed up bright and early (ugh) on Saturday—about 11 guys and a fairly large truck (18-foot?). They hit the basement first, schlepping out all the crates and bins that haven't been unpacked since the last time as well as the ones that have accumulated over our many decades. From what Luis told me, several of the older boxes fell apart as they were moving them and had to be repacked into the movers' own boxes. By noon, they had pretty much emptied out the basement, other than the washer, dryer, and freezer. I was a little surprised to find seven or eight trash bags in the alley, along with a couple of big cardboard boxes marked "trash"; we had not asked them to throw anything out, and if they'd asked, we'd have told them explicitly not to. So when Ethan arrived soon after, we opened up all the bags and boxes and sorted through them to see what they'd tossed. A lot of it was just the disintegrating boxes, and some of it was stuff we'd have eventually decided to jettison anyhow in the course of decluttering, but we did find a bag's worth of things we wanted to save (largely old craft stuff of Donna's, but a couple of books and games had found their way in as well).

Ethan was a bit jet-lagged, having just returned from a work trip to San Francisco that morning, but managed to keep us and the movers out of one another's hair as they loaded the truck and then proceeded into the living room and dining room. The contents of the china cabinets got emptied, wrapped, and packed, as did the contents of the apa closet. By the time they quit around 6, they'd filled up the truck and emptied half the street level of the house. Only the front office and the kitchen were



untouched. It was unsettling to look at the rooms completely devoid of contents except for a lot of dust and a few random scraps of paper on the floor; I kept expecting to see tumbleweeds.

As Donna and I were figuring out what to pack for our hotel stay, we realized that some of the supplies we would need had already been taken out in the trucks by the movers, necessitating a couple of stops to resupply. We put a couple of days' worth of clothing, all of it freshly laundered and sprayed, in new plastic bags in the car. The suitcases and laptops we packed were marked "short term"—they'd be fumigated with the rest of our possessions, but delivered to us at the hotel on Tuesday morning.

We got up Sunday morning in time for the movers' return, and I showered and put on freshly laundered clothes while they did their thing in the kitchen and the office. They were starting to lay waste to the upper floor by the time we were ready to leave a bit after 3 pm. It was getting dark by the time we reached the hotel, checked in (the accessible room we'd requested was not available, but we were able to get Donna's wheelchair into the regular room), and went to dinner at Asea, a Japanese fusion restaurant two blocks away. I told the desk clerk when we got back that we'd be staying through at least Friday and probably Saturday.

We didn't do much on Monday except recuperate from the stress of the weekend, though being without our laptops was stressful in itself. I went out for more supplies and walked a bit in the neighborhood. (I also spoke with a desk clerk who told me that the reason for the scarce availability of rooms at the Holiday Inn Express hotels was that the city had contracted with them to house some of the recent influx of refugees and immigrants. I was unable to verify that this was the case for the one on Kings Highway, but there are news articles online confirming that this has happened with a couple of others, including one in the Financial District that had gone bankrupt and one in Gowanus.) Tuesday we had a couple of medical appointments to get Donna to (at Methodist Hospital in Park Slope, which the hotel wasn't too far from), but when we got back to the hotel, our suitcases and laptops were awaiting us in a big, heavy box. We spent the evening catching up with what we'd been unable to read and watch for the previous 48 hours.



(Bizarro by Dan Piraro, 18 June 2016)

I was parking on the street to avoid paying \$40 a night in the garage attached to the hotel; there were alternate-side rules but no meters to feed on most blocks nearby. There was a spot right across the street that we snagged Sunday and Monday nights, but I had to go a block and a half away on Tuesday night. Still worth it.

Ethan and Ashley had gotten tickets for the four of us to go see the revival of *Spamalot* on Thanksgiving eve, so we got dressed, headed out to where I'd parked the car—and found another car in the spot. No sign of ours. We called 911, which told us to call 311 to see if the car had been towed. It hadn't. 311 told us to call the nearest police precinct to take the next steps in reporting it stolen, but just then a patrol car passing by halted to a stop. I asked the cops what to do, and they called in the license plate number. It turned out that the city department of transportation had decided to do work on the street that day, and had "relocated" several cars to the surrounding blocks. (There was no sign that any street work had actually been done.) Our car was, ironically, back on the same block as the hotel; if it hadn't been past sunset, we might have actually seen it. We made it to Broadway just in time for the opening curtain. When we got back that night, I opted to pay and park in the garage (though I was able to get parking on the street again on the remaining days).

By this point, it was looking as though trying to move back into the Cadre before Sunday the 26th would be futile; neither the cleaners nor the movers would be done. We told the desk clerk, when we got back from *Spamalot*, that we'd be staying through Sunday. I was therefore a bit surprised when I found an e-mail from the hotel while having breakfast Thursday morning, telling me to check out digitally. I went to the desk and asked the clerk, who told me that we were on record as planning to check out that morning, and that we couldn't extend our stay, as everything was booked solid for the next three nights. None of the clerks had ever bothered to update our reservation or to tell us whether there might be any problems. After we argued about it with a clerk and a supervisor for half an hour, they finally found a way to let us stay in the room through Sunday—at nearly twice the rate we'd been paying. (“Oh, everyone's rates go up for the holiday weekend.”)

There were no further disasters before we left the hotel on Sunday. We drove home to find the movers still in the last stages of moving stuff in. Unfortunately, literally everything that wasn't furniture and that hadn't been nailed down was still in boxes—over a hundred of them, mostly in the rooms where their contents belonged, and in some places piled so high as to prevent furniture from being in the proper place. We got Donna's bed set up, and discovered when we tried to get her upstairs that someone had managed to break off the control switch on the stair lift. (Fortunately, the remote control still worked.) We called the stair lift company to find out how much repairing the switch would cost, and deducted the amount from what we paid Luis to settle up. It was after he left that we discovered that the TV in my room was dysfunctional (sound but not picture). Ethan let him know, and he said he'd order a replacement. That was just a few hours ago as I'm typing this.

Oh, yes, there was an issue with the thermostat. Our thermostat is located on a wall that a sliding door (between the living and dining rooms) slides into. We haven't actually slid the door out in decades, but apparently when we had the thermostat moved from the other side of the wall around the turn of the millennium, some wiring got put in a vulnerable location where pulling the door out pulled on the wires. We never knew about this. The cleaners pulled the door out, which damaged the wires. We had no heat Sunday, until we called in to our oil company, which sent a repairman, who reconnected the wires so we had heat; what he didn't know was that a short had developed near the furnace, so that the heat wouldn't shut off all day Monday. A second repair call revealed that problem, but it won't be fixed until we get an electrician in (hopefully) on Tuesday.

I have no idea what other surprises await us as we try to get the house in some kind of order. We intend to bring another bug-sniffing dog in to confirm that all bedbugs are gone, but we have to wait a couple of weeks. Luis seemed to think that we should unpack as quickly as we can, but Kevin said that the dog will be more effective doing the job if we haven't unpacked everything, so we should only unpack what we need. Problem is that we can't tell which boxes have what we need without opening the boxes. I expect we'll all be on edge here through the end of the year. Nuclear option, indeed: I feel like the place has been bombed.



(*Pearls Before Swine* by Stephan Pastis, 8 December 2020)

**WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS NECKS:** Donna had a CAT scan and a follow-up visit with Dr. J.S. the neurosurgeon on 14 November. He told us the CAT scan showed—hallelujah!—some bone healing in her neck. Accordingly, she can now go without the rigid neck brace she'd been wearing since February, though the doctor recommended putting on at least the soft collar when riding in a car or wheelchair, since those can both be bumpy rides. She will continue to use the electronic bone stimulator on a nightly basis until told otherwise.

I got my RSV vaccination. No problems. I still need to check with my PCP, when I go in for my physical in January, whether I'm up-to-date on pneumonia, shingles, and whatever else they're offering.

### **Fringe Reception:** Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 21, #10 (e-APA-NYU #215)

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

I've been noticing a fresh wave of spam lately, including a lot of e-mails that don't even list my e-address under "To:" (I guess they have me in the Bcc: list instead). I've also received a lot of text messages on my cell phone asserting that "The USPS package has arrived at the warehouse and cannot be delivered due to incomplete address information," with a link to [usps.uspsxxx.com](http://usps.uspsxxx.com) (the value of xxx changes from message to message). Many of them seem to be from phone numbers in the Philippines. 'Tis the season, I guess. /\*/ (¢me) I tried to text once



(*Real Life Adventures* by Wise and Aldrich, 29 December 2017) or twice on the flip-phone that was my first cell phone. I gave it up as hopelessly impractical. Phones with an onscreen keyboard work somewhat better (though I still fight Autocorrect more often than not), but I've never used my thumbs, only my index finger. /\*/ (¢Belov) The style guides I've seen seem to prefer "Sept." if

you're spelling out June and July, but "Sep" if you use "Jun" and "Jul," thus providing a consistent three-letter length.

BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN (me): (¢Nelson) I was in error when I said that BBC America would be showing the *Doctor Who* 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary special—actually three specials, it turns out. The showrunners and the BBC decided to sell the international rights to them (and future productions) to Disney+, and there will not be so much as a mention of *Doctor Who* on BBC America. Bah. (I think it's ironic that BBC America is showing several episodes of several flavors of the decidedly non-British *Star Trek* a week.) I guess I won't be seeing those specials anytime soon.

THIS vs. THAT (Chas Belov): (¢Nelson) "Strange that the colloquial Cantonese character didn't print in my zine (in the PDF) but did print in your zine when you quoted me." Stranger, it seems to print from my copy of the PDF.

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): (¢Blackman) "The technical term for Western visitors to China is 'idiots.'" Um, Ethan went to Worldcon in Chengdu last month, figuring it was a trip he might not get another chance to take, and he was probably safer as part of a large gathering. /\*/ Best wishes for the continued good health of your faithful automotive companions. /\*/ I missed our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Tute reunion because of the various medical and entomological things going on around the Cadre; however, I doubt that there would have been more than a very few people there that I wanted to hang out with, and I get to hang out with at least one in these pages and whenever we go up to visit Donna's sister, so I'm not too heartbroken. (It would be nice if the school's website listed the attendees from our class year, but no such luck.)



A GREEN ENGLISH TALK ABOUT A PAIN IN THE NECK (Donna Camp): Not much I can add to this, having lived through it and written about it myself (though not in such detail). I'd quibble that my recent extraction of two teeth did not

constitute my "formal introduction to old-age dentistry"; that was my acquisition of a permanent bridge across six upper front teeth half a decade ago.

I guess I'll be keeping busy in December opening boxes and figuring out why I wanted to hang on to the contents and why the things I was really looking for aren't there. Will we find all our Stuff by year's end? Stay tuned. Meanwhile, have a wonderful solstice-adjacent festival, and Always Look on the Bright Side of Life.



(Broom Hilda by Russell Myers, 24 November 2014)

>Portions of the preceding haven't written a program in years, but are still debugging.<