



Sporadic 32

July 2015
For the 306th Mailing of the Southern Fandom Press Alliance

SPORADIC 32

“You better learn to make a living with your head, Boy, because you’ll never do it with your hands.” – Charlie Plott to teenage son c. 1962

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ILLOS:

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Nancy Wilstach: 6.
Bill Plott: 4, 7, 8.
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The Mom Hunt

EDITOR'S NOTE: A preface to the following story. I have noted a number of times that it is silly to say Do Not Quote when material is displayed in a public forum. I still hold to that view. However, I will ask for cooperation on not disclosing this material if, by some slim chance, any of you should be acquainted with any of the people mentioned below. I think the reason for the request will be self evident.

On Friday, June 12, we hit the road for Louisville, Ky. The occasion was vacation and hopefully a conclusion to a story that could be right off the Lifetime channel or *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The back story:

In the late fall of 2011 or early spring of 2012 I answered our then land line. A woman asked if this was the home of Elbra Lillian Wilstach Plott. I told her it was not, but that Lil was my daughter and asked if I could help her. I figured it was another one of Lil's many creditors.

The woman said, "I think I am related to her because of the name Wilstach." I told her she had best talk to my wife, who is the Wilstach in the family. Nancy talked for some time, then hung up and looked at me with a somewhat bewildered look on her face.

"I just talked to a cousin I didn't know I had," she said.

Nancy was a late and only child, and all of her cousins were about 20-30 years older. One branch of the family was the Beutenbachs of Louisville. Twenty years ago we had visited with Marjorie Beutenbach (Tune). This was the first time Nancy had met this first cousin. Also present were Marjorie's two older sisters, Elbra Frances and Patricia Beutenbach, both members of the Sisters of Loretto order of women religious.

In 1983 we had passed through Louisville and spent a couple of days with Carl Beutenbach III, the eldest of the five Beutenbach siblings and a commercial artist who painted many Kentucky Derby winners. His house --aconverted stables -- was a wonderful, rambling place on Hill Road. His yard was full of assorted art, including things such as airplanes made out of spark plugs and other found objects. Carl was quite a character. He asked that we not use the restroom nearest the room where everyone was visiting; plumbing problems, he said. Later, he pulled me aside and said there was nothing wrong with the restroom. He was just discouraging the women in the party from going to the bathroom too often. "These women go to the bathroom so often that they will cause the Ohio River to overflow its banks," he said. He also mentioned that he used different social security numbers because he didn't "believe in giving out too much information." The Sisters said later that little peculiarity caused a lot of problems when he died and there was an estate to be settled.

Carl's house reportedly was formerly the stables of the home occupied at one time by Civil War CSA Gen. John Breckinridge Castleman. During our visit, Carl referred to conversations apparently had had with the late General Castleman. "As I told General Castleman the other night..." he would begin and relate some intriguing story. A bitty nutty but very funny and interesting to be around. Carl, his brother Joe, and the Sisters have since died, and the surviving sibling, Marjorie, is the person of interest here.

Marjorie Beutenbach, a librarian and spinster, married Butch Tune at the age of 42. The first time Nancy and I met this cousin was on the second aforementioned trip to Louisville around 1993. Marjorie was reared separately from her brothers and sisters, following the death of their mother when Marjorie was nine months old. Marjorie's mother was Nancy's father's sister. We met her and Butch at a skating rink, where, at the age of 73, they were out on the floor like teenagers. Butch has since died, and Marjorie lives alone – cared for her by her late brother Joe's daughter.

Nancy's "new" cousin was Lynn Norris, who revealed that she was one of two illegitimate daughters of Cousin Marjorie. Nancy was absolutely stunned. No one in the family had ever mentioned this circumstance. Even today, it cannot be determined if other family members were ignorant or participated in keeping it secret. Certainly, her current nieces and nephews appear to be unaware of the babies. As was not uncommon in the 1950s, Marjorie was sent off to New Orleans to a home for unwed mothers. Both girls were put up for adoption after they were born. Lynn was adopted by a loving family and grew up in the Atlanta area. The whereabouts of the other girl are unknown.

Although perfectly happy in her adoptive family, Lynn eventually got the itch to know her origins. She hired a private detective, who acquired the birth certificate. She wore out internet search engines, which eventually led to the stunning phone call to our house in 2011-12. She also tracked down Marjorie in 2011. Marjorie refused to see her but they have had many, many telephone conversations over the past four years. Marjorie is now 91 years old and still rooted in the day when her behavior was considered scandalous. She's afraid her nieces, nephews and friends will find out even now. She doesn't realize that today nobody would give a damn.

We met Lynn and her husband, Walter, in the spring of 2012. They live in the community of Kinsale in the Virginia Tidewater area. We stopped there en route to Philadelphia to see son Charles and his tribe. Lynn turned out to be a sort of latter day Hippie. Walter was a senior administrator at a nearby community college. The two of them and several of his other relatives were all delightful people that we enjoyed hanging with for several days. Since then, there has been a lively email correspondence and telephone relationship with Lynn. She has taken a special interest in Atticus, frequently mailing him wonderful children's books.

Back story presented, we rejoin the present.

I suggested a few months ago that we should meet Lynn and Walter in Louisville. Although Carl's house was torn down because of termite infestation, we could still visit the neighborhood where some of Lynn's relatives grew up. I suggested she tell Marjorie that she and her husband are meeting Nancy Wilstach and her family in Louisville in June. Would she (Marjorie) be willing to have a visit?

We did not know what to expect.

Finally, Marjorie said it couldn't be on Sunday because her niece came then and she didn't want her to know about any of this. It couldn't be on Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday because that's when her caretaker came (and the secret must be preserved). That left Monday and Wednesday. It was agreed that Lynn and Nancy would call upon Marjorie on Monday, June 15. They would gauge that visit and determine if Marjorie was up to also meeting Walter, Atticus and me.

Unfortunately, we were not able to use the camper for this trip. Transmission problems, detailed below in another segment. I rented a Chevy Tahoe and we booked a room at the pet-friendly LaQuinta Airport & Expo location in Louisville. When we went to pick up the car, we found that had had to substitute a Buck Enclave. It was most disconcerting to have drive a Buick since we've had a longstanding family joke about that brand. When we moved into our present neighborhood, I told Nancy we had joined a Buick Neighborhood and were required to buy one because we were over 60. At any rate, it turned out to be a very smooth ride with plenty of room for four adults and Atticus in his booster seat.

Friday, June 12

We left Montevallo about 10 and had a relatively uneventful trip until we reached Kentucky. At the rest area/welcome center we learned that I-65 north was completely shut down up ahead because of a truck wreck. The accommodating welcome center employees had maps already marked to show the best alternative route and which exit to take. The alternate route was on two divided highways, the William Natcher and Western Kentucky parkways, so the detour was not a real problem.

Yet, it was a bit longer drive than I had hoped. We were pretty tired when we got to the motel. Atticus had not napped the entire trip, giving us concern that he might have a typical 5-year-old meltdown right in the middle of dinner. Fortunately, we had easy options. There was a local pizza place two doors down and a Mediterranean restaurant across the street. I walked over and got their takeout menus. We decided on the Mediterranean. Nancy got lamb kabobs and Falafel salad. I got mixed kabobs (chicken, lamb and beef) and a Turkish salad. Mirage did not have a bar where you could wait for your order, so I told them I'd be back in 20 minutes. I had spotted a watering hole across the highway called The Deuce.

I took a seat at the bar and asked the bartender if she had any local beers. She started rattling off the usual BMC (budmillercoors) fare, but she did have a Sam Adams so I took that. A woman came in and sat a down a few stools down the bar. She asked the bartender if they had a particular spirit (I didn't catch what it was) and the bartender replied, "Honey, I've got Jack and Turkey." Nothing wrong with Jack Daniels and Wild Turkey, but they both happen to be *Tennessee* bourbons. The Deuce is not going to get caught up in this sustainability notion.

The food from Mirage Mediterranean Restaurant was very good.

Saturday, June 13

Cousin Lynn and her husband, Walter Norris, were staying with Alan and Laura Krones, old University of Virginia college chums, about 10 minutes from LaQuinta. We picked them about noon and headed downtown. Lynn said Walter, who normally plans trips down to the last detail, was going to let the combination of the Mother Hunt and my interest in beer guide the week's activity. Walter had developed an interest in craft beer and wanted to learn how I approached it. Nothing like a sampler tray to get started.

I picked the Bluegrass Brewing Co., for lunch. I ordered flights for each us and California Common for Nancy. Lynn opted for water and Atticus for milk. There were seven beers in the flight: American Wheat (4.9% abv), Alt Bier (4.19), Bourbon Stout (8.1), American Pale Ale (5.79), Dark Star Porter (5.), California Common (unspecified) and Spring Bock (also unspecified).

While sampling the beers, we had appetizers of beer and cheese bread, fried green tomatoes, and artichoke and spinach dip with pita bread. My entree was a large salmon salad and Nancy had a portabella mushroom sandwich.



Louisville has a wondrous array of architecture. The city has repurposed rather than torn down so many fascinating homes and businesses. After lunch, we rode around and looked at buildings for a while. On our drive, we decided to go scope out two family residences. One was the location of Carl's house even though we knew it had been termite infested and demolished after his death. The other was Marjorie Beutenbach Tune's address as preparation for Monday's possible meeting between Lynn and her mother.

Carl's converted stables sat behind what had been General Castleman's main house. When we got to 32 Hill Street, Nancy thought she recognized the driveway. She and Lynn walked up, encountered a guy in his yard. He confirmed that the buildings there now had been built on the site of Carl's house. Nancy said she had a feeling that Carl – an artist and prankster – might haunt the new residents when they made unfortunate decorating choices. Next up was Marjorie's house, which we found with little difficulty.

Cousin Lynn and Nancy

That chore down, we decided adult beverages were in order and Walter GPS'd us to a restaurant and bar called The Holy Grail. There was a great medieval look to the place but also a restriction to 21 and older. However, they directed us to another part of the restaurant that was family friendly. It was not nearly as interesting, but we enjoyed it anyway. Walter, a connoisseur of fine coffees, found something to his liking. I ordered a can of Cougar Bait American Blonde Ale, a product of Country Boy Brewing Co., over in Lexington.

Sunday, June 14

Although we had been to Louisville several times, we had never been to Churchill Downs. Walter has a Louisville cousin named Douglas Harrison. Douglas's son-in-law has a box in the Premium Box section down from the Turf Club. They had arranged for our party to use the outstanding seats almost on the finish line. Douglas has owned race horses in the past. He was a fountain of information about the complexities of the sport, explaining such things as claiming races, jockey agents, creative wagering, etc. We were later joined by his daughters, Diane and Linda, whose last names I didn't catch. Having grown up with Douglas, they knew all the ins and outs, also.

Atticus found the leap out of the starting gate fun and the finish exciting for a couple of

races, then settled down with Nancy's I-pad while the rest of us sampled mint julips, Grey Goose Lily Oaks, Stella Artois draft beer and popcorn. Following Douglas's lead, I bet a 5-6 exacta late in the day, won 40-something dollars, breaking about even on the wagering.

After the races, Douglas directed us back downtown to another son-in-law's restaurant, Bearno's by the Bridge. I had a Submarine Gondola sandwich and the others shared pizzas. They had a house beer, Bearno's Red Ale, that is made by West Sixth Brewing Co., in Lexington. I enjoyed one of those while Walter had the local Falls City Lager.

It was a thoroughly delightful day, for which we are indebted to Douglas and his family for making possible.

We dropped him and the Norrises back off at the Krones's and finalized plans for the greatly anticipated meeting of Lynn and her mother one Monday.

Monday, June 15

The Big Day had arrived with a lot of anticipation, but also a lot of stress and anxiety. Nancy feared Marjorie might get cold feet or even forget about the visit, calling 911 to repel these strangers at her door. Walter told me later that Lynn had a very restless night.

We had decided that the best approach was for Nancy, who had met her cousin Marjorie once 20 years ago, and Lynn would go to the house alone. Five strangers, including a rambunctious child, might be too much for the 91-year-old. We loaded Nancy's Wilstach and Beutenbach photos and other family memorabilia in Lynn's car and gave them good luck hugs. Despite a strong front, Nancy was nervous and Walter told me later that Lynn had been up and down all night long.

Walter, Atticus and I then went searching for lunch. By now I have quite corrupted Walter. He is ready to visit another brewery and have another flight. We needed to kill a little time before going Against the Grain, a brewpub that is part of the Louisville Bats Triple-A baseball stadium downtown. So, we drove around amore industrial and poorer section of the city for a little while. Walter, suddenly remembering his phone was turned off, and turned it on and was dismayed to see that he had missed a call from Lynn.

Oh my God! It had only been half an hour. Had the visit blown up that soon?

Not to worry. Lynn was calling on behalf of Marjorie who needed an answer for the crossword puzzle she was doing when Lynn and Nancy arrived. They had been received cordially and the visit was succeeding!

Thus relieved, the three guys went to find lunch at Against the Grain. Walter was already studying flights when Atticus and I returned from the restroom. ATG offered six beers plus the possibility of adding up to three others at an additional \$1.25 a pop. The basic flight was Juicy Poot Session Hefeweizen (4.6%), Son of pHoperator IPA (7.0), Whim Vidal Saison (6.1), Roggen-ERA Weissenomics (5.6%), Tex-Arcana Stout (6.5), and MacFannyBaw Barrel-Aged Rauchbier (6.0). I got one extra, the Ball Control Pale Ale, and Walter got the Tartan Titan Scotch Ale.

Against the Grain had the most interesting selections of the four breweries we would eventually visit on the trip. They also had excellent food. Walter got a Smoked Sausage entrée while I took a Pulled Pork Sandwich. We both had the Simple Salad, a house salad with a nice house dressing. Atticus had nachos and a glass of milk.

About the time we were finishing lunch Walter got a phone call saying the visit was over. The ladies had spent a couple of delightful hours with Marjorie. Although she still doesn't want her nieces and nephews to know about "when I was bad," she hugged Lynn and said, "I'm glad you're my daughter." Nancy and Lynn felt like the relationship had been strengthened and,



Marjorie, left and Lynn

additionally, they would now have faces and personalities to go with their future telephone visits.

We picked them up back at the Krones' house and went off to explore more of Louisville. It was now mid-afternoon and they had not had lunch. We went back downtown to look for an eatery and stumbled across Down One Bourbon Bar. The restaurant gets its name for being down below street level although you can see the street from inside. The drinks menu was fascinating with scores of assorted whiskies being sold by the shot as well as mixed. Some of the prices for vintage bourbons we had never heard of were quite shocking. I regret I didn't make notes. I ordered beer cheese and bread and a Falls City

Lager.

After lunch we walked down the street to the Evan Williams Bourbon Experience. Alas, the one remaining tour was sold out. However, a few doors away was Heine Brothers, dealers in organic Fair Trade coffee. Walter, of course, was just as interested in their wares as in spirits. I had a spicy Fair Trade Maya Mocha. It was tasty but a little too spicy on the finish. Nancy and Walter had no trouble polishing it off while I sipped Heine Brothers own bottled water.

Exhausted from the day, we decided to eat in our room that evening. I walked down the block to Hometown Pizza and ordered a medium Chicken Artichoke described as: "Our signature pizza sauce covered with basil, fresh pressed garlic, feta & mozzarella cheese. Topped with artichokes, chicken, red peppers & parmesan/oregano blend." There is no hype in their description. The pizza was fantastic.

While waiting for them to prepare it, I sat at the bar and enjoyed a draft Lemongrass Wheat Ale from West 6th Brewery in Lexington.

Tuesday, June 16

Just as we had never been to Churchill Downs on previous trips, we also had not been to the Kentucky Derby Museum. The Derby, we learned, at 141 years old, is the oldest continuous sporting event in America. Billed as the two most exciting minutes in sports, which perhaps it is, but I think the celebratory nature of the event probably hypes that notion. The displays of women's hats, racing silks, etc., is quite interesting. There are some interactive experiences including three horse torsos that you can mount and participate in a race simulation. That activity owned Atticus especially after he brought home a winner on his last ride.

Nancy recalled a Kentucky Derby game she had as a kid on which little horses named after race winners were moved forward by a spinner. I, too, remember having that game. Today's version is battery operated with generic horses identified only by color. That was Atticus's souvenir choice and he is still playing with it at home.

There was one disconcerting moment at the museum. Lynn struck up a conversation with some guy on the walking tour. She mentioned that she was curious to see if any of her "uncle" Carl Beutenbach's portraits of Kentucky Derby winners were in the museum. The guy said something to the effect of, "Beutenbach? My sister lives across the street from Marjorie Beutenbach. I know her well." Lynn, fearing "the cat is out of the bag," gracefully disengaged from the conversation and avoided the man thereafter. She was filled with concern over the chance encounter getting back to Marjorie and...well, you see the concern. We assured her that the conversation was going nowhere. The likelihood of the guy even getting the story straight later was somewhat remote. And, to date, there have been no repercussions.



Looking for lunch, we drove over to Bardstown Road, which is a long stretch of eateries, many of them locals, not chains. There are also art galleries, head shops and other such venues that are always fun on a walk. We stopped in front of an LGBT-friendly T-shirt shop called Dirty Tease, with a window full of neat ideas. Nancy had to have one that read: "I'm a lady with the vocabulary of a well educated sailor." I didn't buy a shirt, but I had to have a picture of one that I thought was hilarious. I still find the Care Bears insipid after all of these years. Although we knew Cumberland Brewing Co., was on Bardstown Road, we didn't have the specific address. Walter and I found it providential that the first parking space we found happened to be right across the street from the brewpub!

They didn't open until 4 p.m., and we were all quite hungry. Down the street we found Café Mimosa Sushi Bar. All four of us love sushi so that was a no-brainer for a lunch stop. Nancy got the sashimi dinner with eight assorted pieces of fish, seaweed salad, miso soup, and squid salad with sushi rice. I just got an Arizona Roll (yellowtail tuna, scallions and mayo) because I figure rightly that her salad and rice would be sufficient for sharing. Atticus got Vietnamese-style barbecue.

They had a decent beer selection. I got a Schlafly's Oatmeal Stout (5.7%) from The Saint Louis Brewery. Nancy had a Viet 33 Extra, a Vietnamese beer that I had had before.

Now it was time to return to Cumberland Brewing Co., for, you guessed it, flights. They offer four choices from a menu of about eight. I got the Cream Ale (5%), Red Ale (5.5), IPA (7), and Moonbit Wit (5). Nancy got the Summer Sipper Bitter, so I got to sample that. Walter shared a taste of his Nitro Porter (6). Cumberland has a rather tacky presentation, though. The samples are just set on the table with the server trying to remember what they are. Most places serve flights at least on a paper placemat with identification.

Back at the motel, we took Atticus to cement pond for a swim. There we encountered several members of the McCoy family that we had met earlier in the week, largely through Atticus, who does not know a stranger, just barging into their lives and making himself at home.

Teenagers Brett and Madison played with him almost daily in the pool. The family is descended from Devil Anse McCoy of Hatfield and McCoy Feud fame. We enjoyed talking with them about the History Channel presentation last year. Their reason for being at LaQuinta was not so pleasant. They live over near Owensboro, but are camped out at the motel because of a son who is hospitalized in Louisville. His prognosis for recovery is not good.

Atticus also befriend Miss Jewell, the woman in charge of the free breakfast each morning. When she was off one day, another employee called her on the phone so she and Atticus could have a brief chat.



Atticus and Miss Jewell

Series.

Wednesday, June 17

Our last day in Louisville. Walter had spotted Falls City Brewing Co., on one of our sightseeing drives and was delighted to see that it was a just a block down the street from Peerless Distillery. One of Douglas Harrison's daughters had mentioned it while we were at Churchill Downs. One of her daughters may be married to someone there, I don't recall. Anyhoo, that was our Wednesday afternoon agenda after getting lunch. We had tentatively planned on taking the wives to Against the Grain, but we found that it was game day and there was no hoping of parking anywhere close. Walter called Falls City and they made a couple of recommendations of good restaurant fairly close to their location.

Miss Jewell gave him bags of snacks twice, including a large bag for the road when we were leaving.

Back in the room, it occurred to us that although we had enjoyed some wonderful lunches, we had not eaten dinner out a single night. That would not change. We were too tired to get back in the car so again I walked down to Hometown Pizza and placed an order for a couple of Mediterranean Salads. It consisted of romaine lettuce, cherry tomatoes, red onions, black and green olives, cucumber, banana peppers, artichoke, feta cheese and vinaigrette e dressing. Also, hot garlic bread. It was an excellent wind-down meal while watching an evening of sports on TV. First, the USA women's team advanced to the Knockout Round of the World Cup, then the Golden State Warriors whipped LeBron and Cleveland on their own floor, and finally Vanderbilt remained undefeated in the College World

At Dish on Market, a restaurant also cited in one of the dining guides, Walter and I both tried a highly-touted open face local sandwich called Hot Brown. It consisted of roasted turkey, applewood smoked bacon, tomato, Texas toast, savory mornay sauce, sharp cheddar and green onions. This is one you eat with a fork as there is nothing to grip for conventional sandwich eating. However it gets to the mouth, it is a wonderful meal. I had half at lunch and half back in the room that night. Nancy had a turkey sandwich and Atticus had a Belgian waffle. The beverages of choice were ice water and the Nut Brown Ale from Bluegrass Brewing Co.

Now, it was time for our first distillery tour, something Walter was really keen on because he has toured a number of Scotch distilleries across the Pond. It looked problematic because we faced a half hour wait for the next tour. Once again, Atticus charmed the ladies. They gave him a pair of sunglasses (five bucks in their gift shop) and got one of the employees to come out and give us an earlier tour. Understandably, he found the tour petty boring after a few minutes and I did a lot of carrying since we didn't have a stroller with us. He did enjoy the bottling operation, though. We saw them air dry the bottles, fill them four at a time, then cap and shrink wrap the tops before going on down the line for boxing. It's not that different from other bottling operations I've seen but they always intrigue me.

Peerless has only been open a year or so. Since their rye must age for two years and their bourbon for four, they don't have any available to sample at the end of the tour. They have Lucky Moonshine brand flavored wines, though. I did not care for either the green apple or the chocolate pie samples. Nancy liked the green apple enough to buy a bottle of their Lucky Moonshine Lemon Drop. It might be good over rocks on a hot summer afternoon. That was the product we saw on the bottling line, and she bought the very first bottle sold at retail.

Falls City Brewing is a resurrection. The original Falls City Brewing Co., died in 1978 after the brand was acquired by G. Heileman. I was very much interested in how the brand had resurfaced. The bartender said a local man acquired the brand, logos and recipe in the mid-'90s. He was able to start producing an improved recipe of Falls City Lager around 2005. The brewing operation has since been sold to Old 502 Winery, which has a tasting room for both beer and wine. Our flight consisted of Heather Ale (5%), Kentucky Common (4%), English Pale Ale (5%), Hipster Repellent IPA (6.5%) and Imperial IPA (8%). This was the first Imperial that we had encountered in Louisville. Imperials are usually just a regular style such IPA or stout that has the alcohol level kicked up to something like 8 or 9 percent.

After weaving through not-too-bad rush hour traffic, we delivered Lynn and Walter back to the Krones' house and had our farewells on the sidewalk. It had been a delightful vacation and we all basked in the success of the Mother Hunt.

Again, we were too tired to think about dinner out. I went over to the Mediterrean restaurant and got Nancy a Falafel Sandwich. It was fried chick peas, parsley, onion wrapped with hummus. Plus a Jerusalem salad with lettuce and tomato. She also added feta cheese and banana pepper toppings. I settled for a Turkish Salad and the remainder of my Hot Brown from lunch.

Thursday, June 18

Atticus and I went to the breakfast bar off the motel lobby. He had another nice visit with Miss Jewell, whose photo is somewhere in these pages. We also saw the McCoys again while loading the car for the trip home. Madison gave me her cell phone number and asked Atticus to do Face Time with her that evening. The drive home was uneventful except for a windshield crack when a truck threw up a rock. Our American Express insurance covered that.

After dinner at home, Atticus called Madison and they chatted for a few minutes. Then Nancy talked with the McCoy mother. When she got off the phone she said, "Jeremy McCoy has been upgraded to stable and is going to rehab in two or three weeks."

What a blessed end to the trip.

Unexpected Family Reunion

My middle brother, Jack, who lives in San Angelo, Texas, usually flies into Opelika for a visit of several days in May. As usual, I told my brother younger brother, Jerry, I'd come down for us to go to lunch together. We agreed on May 20. Jerry called a few days later and said cousin Tom Plott, who lives in Opelika with his wife Fran, wanted to have a cousin get-together. His brother and sister were going to drive up from Foley. Tom then contacted the Fletcher cousins, offspring of my dad's sister.

The back story is that 10 of us first cousins separated by about eight years or so from oldest to youngest, grew up within a few blocks of each other. We were together frequently just to play as well as for more structured family gatherings such as Easter egg hunts, Christmas, etc. Eight of the 10 were present on May 20 at Olive Garden. Missing was Herman Jr., the oldest, deceased, and Leon Fletcher, an English teacher who was in the middle of exams and unable to get off. It was the first time all of us had been together in probably 20 years or so.

It was a most enjoyable event, not one that you necessarily would launch for on a frequent basis, but a lot of fun. My thanks to Tom for pulling it together.

Opelika and Auburn have adjacent city limits. South of Auburn a few miles is Chewacla State Park. We camped there for two nights. The park has a couple of acceptable playgrounds and water activities. The water is large lake rather than a pool. Atticus, who has been reared to be conscious of litter called me over to the water's edge to point out some trash he wanted me to remove. It was a dented beer can but about a foot away from it was a Coca-Cola bottle. I knew when I picked it up that it was an oldie. Sure enough, the heavy green glass bottle had "Opelika, Ala" embossed on the bottom.

It was a neat find and had me wondering if folks in other parts of the country gambled on Coke bottles. When I was growing up it was a common practice for people to put a small amount of money, maybe a quarter of fifty-cent piece in a pot. They would then get Cokes out of the vending machine. In these days every Coca-Cola bottling plant stamped the name of the producing city on the bottom of the bottle. In the game, the person with the bottle from the longest distance won the pot.

One scary thing on this trip was realizing just about the time we reached Auburn that I left my wallet at home on the kitchen counter. Nancy did all of the car driving (and had to pay all of the food bills!) I felt reasonably secure driving the camper on the interstate but I was glad to get home without a law enforcement encounter.

When we got home, we had only one day to restock the camper with food and clothes for the next outing described below.

Back on the Trail of Killer Oysters

We got another chance at a non-kid-centric outing over the Memorial Day weekend when Atticus went to Florida with his dad, Adam's girl friend and kids, and several other members of

that family. We immediately went back to one of our favorite haunts, Florida's Forgotten Coast.

We stayed at Ho Hum RV Park in Carabelle with friend Carol Kehoe a couple of spaces down in her Winnebago Vista. This is one of those parks that does not allow children – something that usually rankles -- but you can kind of see why in this case. It is very much fishing oriented with no pool, playground or other kid amenities. In addition, it is located right on U.S. 78, an extremely busy two-lane highway.

We arrived on Friday after a long drive through Apalachicola National Forest and Tate's Hell State Forest. Both of us had spots right on Apalachicola Bay. Utilities on those sites area arranged so you pull forward into the spot, thus having your vehicle front window serve as a picture window of the water. We took the dogs out for some beach time, then decided we were all quite hungry.

That called for a drive over to East Point, about 20 miles west, to visit Lynn's Quality Oysters, the raw bar we discovered last year just as it opened. During the intervening year, Lynn had completed plans for an outdoor eating area on the water. We ordered beers and enjoyed the antics of pelicans and sea gulls while studying the menu. Of course, for Nancy and me, the starter was easy. Carol, who had had a bad experience with oysters many years ago, decided to brave the delicacy again – but not raw. Lynn's expanded menu included two kinds of baked oysters. Suddenly, Carol had found a new go-to food on the coast.

On Sunday, we planned our regular excursion to Apalachicola, located a nice, along-the-coast drive 26-miles to the west. Apalach has a lot interesting antique stores and such., also good places to eat. Our first stop was Boss Oyster Bar, one of our longtime favorites. Nancy and I had Coronas and Carol a Diet Coke. I rarely drink Corona except on the coast. Somehow it seems fitting there.

After our usual dozen raw oysters, we delved into the raw and baked selections with exotic toppings. Carol had them baked with melted butter and Parmesan cheese. Nancy had one called Japanoise, oysters topped with chives, ponzy, wasabi and flying fish roe. I got a combo with four different preparations. Captain Jack had bacon, jalapeno peppers, Colby cheese and hot sauce for toppings. Other choices involved toppings such as shrimp, caramelized onions, garlic and a spicy Creole sauce. Mighty fine groceries all around.

Surprisingly, some of the stores were closed for the either Sunday or the holiday weekend. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a visit to the Tin Shed, a store full of current schlock but also many antique nautical items. It's always a fun place to wander around in, but they do tend to be a bit pricey. You can get away with that in a resort area.

One of my goals on the trip was a return visit to Oyster City Brewing Co., which was under construction when were in Apalachicola last year. They were closed, but I caught the attention of a lone worker through the window. He opened and visited for a few minutes. He said their tasting room was located across the street next to the Owl Cafe and would open at 4 p.m. We were among the first through the door.

The Oyster City flight of four beers included First Light of Day Pale Ale, 5% abv; Mill Pond Dirty Blond, 5.5%; Apalach IPA, 5.7%; and Hooter Brown Ale, 8.5%. For an appetizer we ordered Crusted and Fried Goat Cheese. It was topped with capers, roasted peppers, artichoke heart crème and crostinis. I also had a pint of Cigar City (Tampa) Brewing Company's Guayabera Citrus Pale Ale, 5.5%.

On the way back to the campground, we stopped at Lynn's and Nancy got some take-out mullet dip. That made a great light dinner with a salad that night.

We had a nerve-wracking moment on the trip home. After a stop, I pulled out onto the highway and found the transmission straining badly. There was a loud THUNK and a jolt as if someone had run into the back of us. After a few minutes everything stabilized and we got home without further incident but with slightly frayed nerves.

At this writing, our camper is in a truck repair shop for transmission work. It is not expected to be ready for the Louisville trip which kicks off this issue's natter. See above for more details.

Bye bye, Land Line

We certainly aren't the first to make this move. The commonality of it is shown in the fact that the telephone company no longer puts out a white pages directory. Except for a very few calls from friends who do not have one or the other of our cell phone numbers, practically all of the calls on the land line are from telemarketers. How's that, you say? Aren't we registered on the Do Not Call List? Well, we all know about that bit of governmental fiction. The callers are so tech savvy now, they can skirt that in a heartbeat and leave you no way to follow up.

At any rate, please note my cell phone is 205-908-8703. Nancy can be reached at 205-531-1495. The land line was scheduled to be discontinued on Monday, June 22, the final billing date.

9th Annual

Magic City Brewfest

If you had told me nine years ago that Alabama could not only have such a festival but also approach one nearly a decade old, I'd have said you were dreaming. After all, I can easily remember when it was against the law to have point-of-sale advertising for alcohol in Alabama, wine could be purchased only in a state-run ABC store, and "Cold Beverages" was marketing code for "We Sell Beer."

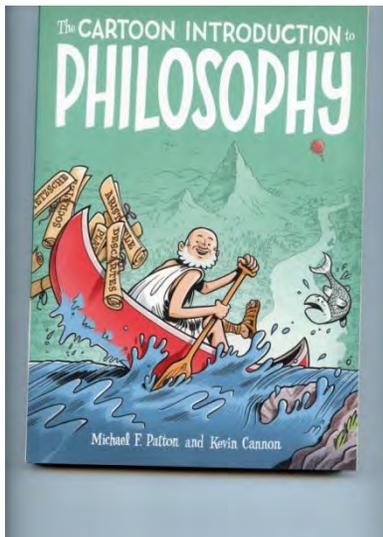
But here we are with the Sloss Furnaces festival No. 9. The growth of craft beer in Alabama has been explosive the past few years. The 2015 Brewfest featured 19 Alabama breweries among the 75 or so participating, serving more than 250 different brews. As was noted by several people, there are enough Alabama breweries now to have a state brewfest. In fact, the state players set my agenda. I make it a point to visit the tent for any new breweries (Ghost Train of Birmingham debuted this year), then visit with the brewers and owners I know, sampling anything new they have. I rarely get to the other national and foreign tents. Even with that, I limit myself to half pours (one ounce instead of the standard two ounces) on the high alcohol samples. And I had Nancy, who samples far fewer, to handle driving if necessary.

This year I added 20 new beers to the I Have Tasted List, pushing my total a good bit past 8,000.



“I’ve never yet come out of a bookshop without purchasing something... Sometimes I half-heartedly determine not to buy any more books until I have read the ones I already have, but such madness soon passes.” – Al Andrews

Reviews



The Cartoon Introduction to Philosophy by Michael F. Patton and Kevin Cannon (Hill and Wang, New York, 2015, \$17.95)

When Michael Patton, coordinator of the philosophy and religion program at the University of Montevallo Alabama, received the email he thought it was a joke. He was being asked to write a script for a graphic-novel style history of philosophy. When he told his students he had a book coming out they were ho-hum about the news. But when he mentioned artist Kevin Cannon, their faces lit up. “I guess that shows where I stand,” he laughed.

Patton and his wife Cheryl own Eclipse Coffee and Books, the local watering hole and gathering space in Montevallo. Their contribution to the intellectual and artistic

flavor of the community is immeasurable. Now, they have expanded that contribution with Patton’s book.

With wisecracking Heraclitus guiding us through the centuries, Patton’s humorous but informative prose and Cannon’s whimsical-if-not-downright-playful illustrations, we are carried from the pre-Socrates era to modern times. After an introduction to the general topic, we are introduced to major thought divisions: Logic, Perception, Minds, Free Will, God, and Ethics. They use clever segues to move from one philosopher to another within each division. Three-quarter-page profiles introduce us to new individuals on the journey.

Cannon’s style reminds me of R. Crumb, Will Eisner, and Alan Hutchinson, whose work I have encountered only recently in Oblivion. Like with their work, the black and white drawings

bring a dimension that would be less appealing in color.

Patton and Cannon have yet to meet. Michael sent his script off to Cannon and countless emails and telephone conversations followed. Patton said he hopes to bring Cannon to Montevallo for a major arts event next year.

Out of Range by C. J. Box (Berkey, Prime Crime, New York, 2006, used \$3.00)

This is book five in Box's series of murder mysteries featuring Wyoming park ranger Joe Pickett.

Will Jensen, a good friend and fellow ranger, has killed himself over in Jackson Hole. Pickett is sent there to temporarily fill Jensen's post. Life in (for Wyoming) big-city Jackson is a far cry from the small town of Saddlestring where Pickett normally works. As Pickett begins to feel his way around the new surroundings and work routine, he comes to the conclusion that something doesn't seem to fit about his friend's reported suicide. The angle of the .44 bullet into Jensen's head is not right.

As usual, other law enforcement entities are not pleased when Pickett begins investigating what they considered a closed case. And former Sheriff Red Banum, Pickett's nemesis in Saddlestring, is still not out of Joe's life in spite of having lost his job. Back in Saddlestring, Banum is stalking Pickett friend Nate Romanowsky and making secret, threatening calls to Pickett's family.

As Pickett wades through dealings with unscrupulous developers he learns that Jensen's home life was becoming unravelled before his death. At the same time, Pickett senses trouble in his own home life situation. He knows that he and Mary Beth need to talk about his job demands and their future. Some parallels between the two rangers are openly obvious; others surface subtly to show the isolation the game warden endures compared with other law enforcers.

Box brings these threads together in another exciting, totally unexpected finish, making him one of the best mystery writers out there.

Quotables:

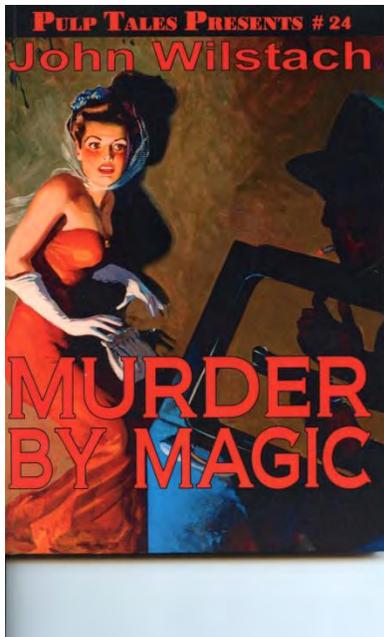
--It had started at dinner with a melancholy pot roast and vegetables Sheridan complained were undercooked. Joe recognized her attitude for what it was: She was at an age where if she was angry with her father or mad at the world in general she took it out on her mother, who was the disciplinarian in the family. Lucy's way of showing her disapproval for his leaving was to ignore him and pretend he wasn't there, which to Joe was even worse.

--It felt strange to be in a compact rental car instead of a high-profile pickup, he thought, as the national Elk Refuge passed by his window. It felt like he was sitting on the pavement as he drove, and when he looked in his rearview mirror he saw the grills and headlights of vehicles behind him, not the drivers.

Murder by Magic by John Wilstach, Pulp Tales Presents #24, Pulp Tales Press, 2011, trade pb, internet purchase)

Some of you will recall the search for Nancy's distant kinsman, pulp writer John Wilstach, a few months ago. Another cursory internet search for some of his writing turned up this volume and my introduction to this series of reprints.

Jim Lorten, an "Underground patriot," is called upon to help determine what is going on in the mysterious replica of an ancient Greek temple. Is there magic involved in the disappearances



of espionage operatives or is there amore plausible explanation. At any rate, there is menace to the nation in this World War II setting. The story is passable but not particularly memorable. There is a level of complexity that was sometimes hard to follow if I got distracted from it for a couple of days. Like any decent pulp writer, Wilstach could create a story line and characters that provided several hours of entertainment. I found a lot more substance in his writing in a previous novel – *Escape From Doom* in the April 1945 issue of *Fantastic Adventures*, a Ziff-Davis pulp.

One thing that struck me was a kind of basic sexism. For example: "...most gals sit back and wait for the fairy prince" and "nice women never enjoy going slumming." And then this: "We don't frame stuff in this County for your news mongers," the official told a sob sister with long crimson nails." Or this one; It was delightful to be trusted by Jim Lorten, and she was pleased

that she had repressed a feminine impulse to ask question." I am hoping that this kind of writing is more a reflection of the times than the author's personal viewpoint.

Included in the volume are two shorts stories – "Death on Locations" by A. Boyd Correll and "Hattie Had a Hatchet" by Frances Deegan. Neither is particularly good. Which begs the question of how does Pulp Tales Press select what appears in their releases. Obviously, there are much better stories available in public domain thsee days. I also puzzled over the cover. This is not the artwork that appeared on the cover of the first issue of *Mammoth Mystery* in February 1945. I would much preferred to have the original magazine, but it was listed at \$249.95 on eBay a few weeks ago.

Still, Pulp Tales Presents does make available in an affordable format a lot of stuff by such pulp stalwarts as Don Wilcox, Ralph Milne Farley, Ray Cummings, G.T. Fleming-Roberts and others. I will likely pick up a few other titles occasionally.

Quotables:

--"And why bring in Irene? She doesn't kill bachelors – she does worse – marries 'em."

--The blackmail deadline, too, was edging near Tom Graham. Jim watched him down at the tavern becoming that most unsocial of beings, a solitary drinker.

--"You realize my motives are solely selfish."

"Selfish motives are the best – for they can be satisfied."

--"Here we have not yet taken to holding men on grim suspicion – taking no chances – as in England. We shall come to it – and thousands of names are in the files."

--"Fools!" she said heatedly. "Three-fourths of Chicago is fool, and the other one-fourth is parasite, and they are all trying to get something for nothing!"

The Imitation Game, Black Bear Pictures.

With Atticus off to day camp with his dad for a week, we finally found a night to sit down and watch a movie together. Nancy had picked up this DVD quite some time ago, as much because of fondness for Benedict Cumberbatch as for the good reviews the film had received.

There have been reviews in the mailing that took the film to task for historical inaccuracies. I had never heard of Alan Turing until the film came out. Therefore I did not have the historical background of the book to color my opinion. I will say simply that we both enjoyed it thoroughly. I had to remind myself at times that this was not Cumberbatch playing his version of Sherlock Holmes because the intellectual capacity of Turing and Holmes was so remarkably similar. Cumberbatch's best moments may have been in showing Turing's naivete about such things as flirting and having casual friendships. I'm so glad we finally got around to seeing this.

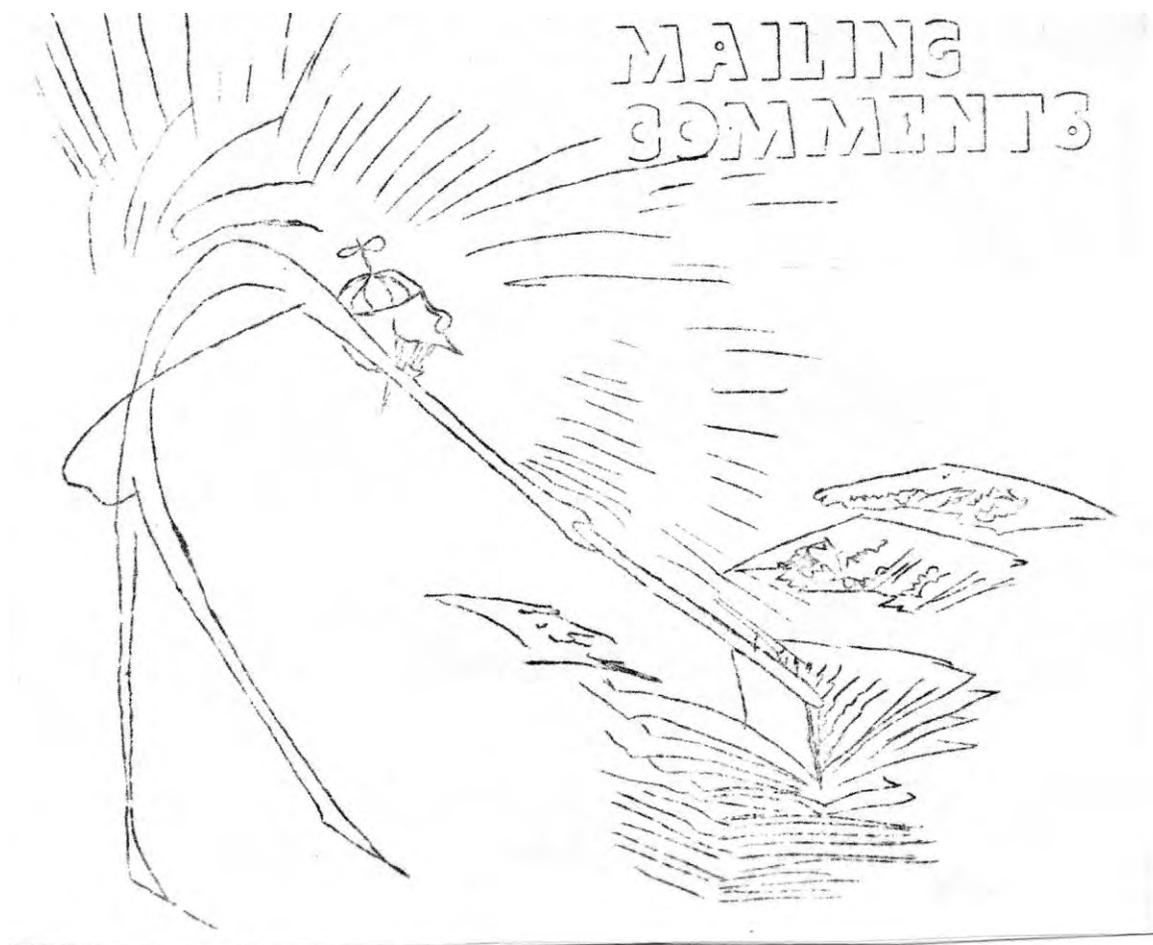
Of course, winning the war notwithstanding, it is impossible not to feel great sadness and anger at the British government's treatment of homosexuals and efforts to "cure" them, thus leading to Turing's eventual suicide.

Captain American: Winter Soldier, Marvel Productions

Scanning premium channels one Saturday night -- I have no idea which ones we get as part of our Uverse package and which ones may be occasionally thrown in as subscription teasers -- I noticed this Marvel epic was coming on within minutes. Although I had to occasionally shoo Atticus out of the room because of the unending violence, I finally got through it. And "finally got through it" is appropriate. What a lot of of endless, mindless kung fu-ing, chasing and blowing things up.

I do want to see *Guardians of the Galaxy*, but this was just tiresome. Yes, I know it wasn't made for jaded old men, it was made for twenty-something young men. So be it.





The Southerner #305/Joe

A genuine New Member! Well done, sir.

The New Port News 281/Ned

You and I corresponded privately on your problem with a getting a lawyer to handle your brother's estate in Shelby County. I trust that situation is now resolved for you. Our daughter basically had no estate, but we hired an attorney to help us navigate Social Security benefits for Atticus. I've sent out at least a dozen no-estate notes and copies of the death certificate to Lil's many creditors, mostly medical facilities and student loans. It's amazing the complications you can leave behind for someone else to deal with. I'm trying to whittle down my massive accumulations to head some of that off.

Aha! The old at-least-one-semester-on-campus requirement for a degree. I knew there had to be more than appeared on your UVA master's degree in one semester comment. I think that is a fairly common requirement at a lot of schools.

Yes, McFarland's books are expensive. I've had to gently inform some friends and relatives that I actually had to buy a copy of my book for myself! I got 10 author's copies. Four of them went to research associates in the Midwest who helped out when I couldn't get necessary interlibrary loans. I donated one to the local chapter of the American Association of University Women for their scholarship fund-raiser, and the other five went to our kids. It's been a little

embarrassing to tell friends and relatives that a book is 40 bucks (\$39.95). They are still pricey even with my author's discount.

That being said, I am still extremely pleased with my entire McFarland experience. The sense of accomplishment is unbelievably rewarding although I'm pretty well convinced, Spielberg is not likely to call about film rights....

The Typo King #31/Robert No need to apologize for a slowing of fanac. We all hit that problem that occasionally. In fact, I am desperately trying to finish MCs so I can get this thing printed and in Moudry's hands when we meet for lunch in two days. Another in fact, I am at least one *Fadeway* LOC behind so if you don't get another one out right away, it'll give me a chance to catch up...maybe.

The flea market/Cliffhangers episode is an incredible story. You do a great job of laying out the scenario and carrying it to its conclusion. However, I think I am going to call "chicken" and "yellow" on the idea of changing the meeting night. Are you afraid that the weather wizard solution might work – for whatever coincidental reason – and thus compromise your beliefs? Oh, Bobby, you must be brave, or at least put it up to a vote of the membership. Still, a funny, interesting, well told story.

The SFPA News & Views October Issue/Robert Not a whole lot for me to comment on here except to say this is an incredible piece of work, one that should rank with the all-time best issues in SFPA.

The Typo King #31-1/2/Robert Not a lot that I feel moved to comment on at this time, except to say it's your usual enjoyable collection of comics complemented by some fun and meaningful quotes.

Uncle Lon's Unofficial Box Scores/Gary B. I was a little surprised to see that I continued to hang on to fifth place in spite of the very abbreviated contribution to Mailing 303. That's a comfortable spot for me.

Con Confessions/Gary B. I'm delighted that MegaCon 2015 was a more enjoyable experience for you than 2014's illness-plagued outing. Congrats on the autographed cover art. Nice photos of you, friends and family and other attractions. When Joe Moudry and I made our monthly trek to 2nd and Charles, the great local second hand media outlet, I was surprised to see that both *Donald Duck* and *Uncle Scrooge* comics are still being published. I figured they disappeared a long time ago. I bought the latest Uncle Scrooge for Atticus and he insisted on our reading the first story immediately rather than waiting for bedtime.

Alan Hutchinson's Cereal Box Collection tale is fascinating. That's the kind of treasure trove we all dream of stumbling across, no matter what we collect.

CONtraflow 5 Dep South Con 53/Sheila I am registered and planning to make a hotel reservation soon. I'm hoping we can arrange a sitter for Atticus so Nancy and I can take off for a couple of days. We honeymooned in New

Orleans and have only been back once or twice since then.

Peter, Pan & Mary #121/David Ct. Guy. Because of our sad experience, I'm not sure how far I want drug legalization to go. Yet, I know that prison overcrowding is partially a result of people going to jail for possession and personal use of illegal substances. Except for rampant theivery to support the habit, most of these people are really of no danger to anyone. We've felt for along time that marijuana should be legalized and are pleased that some limited medicinal use is working its way into Alabama now.

Ct. me, you and Ned. I am completely in favor of rote memorization for early math use. It has served me well all of my life. There is plenty of room for theory as children get older.

Ct. you. We spent part of our tax refund on the construction a small chicken coop. We anticipate getting three or four layers sometime soon. They are not legal in our neighborhood, but the place is full of small backyard flocks and one family even has a goat. We had a lot of chickens when we lived in the adjacent, more rural town of Wilton some years ago. I miss them and their fresh eggs.

Your wrong number with tip on the missing woman is fascinating. Any new developments?

Jewels and Bincoulars #25/Tom M. Welcome back aboard, Tom. You seem to have had no problem jumping right back into the swim. It was pretty much the same for me and my hiatus was considerably longer than yours. A very readable first offering. I hope your health issues will remain abated so you can participate fully.

I am a bit intrigue by your Jehova's Witness experience and checked out the web page. I've had a couple of good friends who were JW's. Indeed, Al Andrews, one of the founding members of SFPA, was a JW. He provided answers and copies of the publications when I was curious about their position on some issue, but was never heavily proselytizing. His sister-in-law told me, though, when he first converted he ran off a few friends because his approach was heavy handed at that time.

A guy I worked with appeared to have had an arranged marriage with a woman he had never met until they became engaged. At least, that was the way it came across to his co-workers. Although not particularly offended by it, we were surprised that none of us were invited to the wedding. Bad call because they would have gotten some good loot from the co-workers!

I used to listen to a lot of radio when I was working and was outside the office good bit. Riding around on the job was the best opportunity for me to really listen to a new CD without a lot of distractions and interruptions. I never got into pay-for radio, MP3 players, etc., for one simple reason – I like *radio*. There are still some good stations out there. We have a couple in Mobile and north Florida on our pre-sets for vacation listening. The Birmingham scene pretty much sucks across the board. However, Shelby County, where we live, has a new low wattage community station. It is called APH Radio for Alabaster, Pelham and Helena, three of the cities in serves. He streams high school sports and twice a day kids at one of the high schools read news headlines. Reception is not reall good here, but I ony need to drive a mile north to get a clear signal. His playlist is extraordinary. He has current stuff from all genres (rock, alternative, hip hop, country, contemporary Christian). And dropped in occasionally are popular and country songs that go back to late '50s and early '60s.

You're right, the quality of the Classic Sci-Fi TV set is pretty mixed. Some of them are so muddy as to be practically unwatchable, but others are okay. One show I had never heard and found interesting was *One Step Beyond*, kind of a cross between *The Twilight Zone* and *Science Fiction Theater* maybe. Did you notice that none of the episodes have titles? Strange.

I'm returning to these comments a few days after writing the above. I dug out the disk with two SF-type episodes from *General Electric Theater* this week. My recollection of that program was that it was of high quality (even with Ronald Reagan hosting I snidely and Democratically remark.) These two episodes were bad beyond belief despite casts that included Thomas Mitchell, Cloris Leachman, Vincent Price and the Gipper. Both were set in the South and filled with syrupy Southern accents that made you want to gag. And the stories were trite, *Fate-ish* drivel. Nancy kept yelling from the other room, "What in the hell is that awful show you're watching?" It was a hard question to answer.

Ct. Jeff. Pluto is still a planet to me. I'm sometimes slow to accept change. For example – are you listening, Larry Montgomery? – Missouri and Texas A&M are not really in the Southeastern Conference. Hell, I just got around to accepting Arkansas and South Carolina.

Trivial Pursuits #170/Janice

Thank you for the emails regarding drug abuse and my grandfather. I had not thought about *Billboard* being the source for all entertainment news. I, at least, have some more identifiable reference points now for his career as a carny. I really don't know what years he did that and have no likely way of learning that now that most of the older family members are gone.

Ct. guy. Al Capp was a fascinating man. He used to appear on the Johnny Carson show occasionally and was always full of funny stories. One that I recall was he had gotten drunk and passed out in his hotel room with his prosthetic leg being on the floor, partially under the bed. He called room service while still abed. The bellman came in, paused a moment and said, "And will the other gentleman be needing anything?"

I don't know that there is a fad about fresh eggs or if it's just another way of coping with the economy. When we lived in a semi-rural area we had chickens. I enjoyed them for the eggs and just to watch. We took a small portion of our tax refund to buy a coop from Tractor Supply a few weeks ago. We will soon be purchasing three laying hens. They are illegal in our neighborhood, but we know the area is full of people with backyard flocks. One family even has a goat. Stay tuned for future reports. (I now realize this is a repeat of remarks above.)

Ct. Joe. You hit on several of my favorite reads. Warren St. John's book on Crimson Tide tailgating was a fun read. We have never done that but daughter Maggie and her tribe did it a time or two with our old camper and have expressed an interest in doing it with the new one... Florence King's *Southern Ladies and Gentlemen* is a wonderful frolic in Southern culture. Since it was written way before any gay rights activism was dreamed of, the chapter on "Town Fairy" was particularly enlightening. She was correct that every small town had some guy who was the local historian or was sensational with flower decorations and the darling of the little old ladies. Nancy, by the way, joined the *Charleston News & Courier* not long after King went somewhere else. The stories of her tenure were abundant... I have been a fan of Planet Proctor for many years although I usually only see it in *Funny Times*. One of the funniest pieces I remember was when he put the domonitions in Leviticus in a modern setting. Made me want to go up to some conservatives and say, "Have you put any of your sinful family members to death as The Bible commands?"

The Noctuary #11/Joe Thanks for the definition of chapbook. I think I basically knew what one is, but you gave me a little better perspective. In fact, a couple of the high school football books I wrote years ago probably fall into that category.

Variations on a Theme #105/Rich L. Ct. Rich D. I think we tend to see the worst drivers in the places we frequent most. However, I will say about Atlanta drivers that they seem less inclined to let you in when you are trying to change lanes on the interstate. Where are the best drivers? I dunno. The ones around here seem to be pretty good. That probably goes back to the idea behind the worst above.

Ct. Gary R. I've never had a 360 spinout, thank goodness. My worst experience once after one of our every few years major ice storms. I was being cautious because there were still a few icy spots. I topped a hill going into a small town where I was headed to cover a council meeting. The far side of the hill, a fairly steep one, was a sheet of ice. All of a sudden I was tobogganing down the the hill at an ever increasing speed and no traction in the brakes. Fortunately it leveled out before I reached the bottom, but there were several terrifying seconds for me.

Your virtual walk has a proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, as far as I'm concerned. When I first came on board, I think you were just reaching Texas.

Tydallite V4 #181/Norm I agree with you that not including dates in future settings would "vaguize" science fiction stories. While you are reading the stories, the dates give you a context for them. And some of them hold up okay. I'm reading Gregory Benford's *Timescape* right now and the 1998 "future" date is not particularly disconcerting to the story. Benford was just ahead of his time – the environment issues are still with us today and global warming gives the story a continuing urgency. Nor do stories with Martian and Venusian natives bother me if they are still good stories.

Regarding Travis Taylor's unabashed enthusiasm for Heinlein, mine has certainly subsided over the years. I agree with your good-excellent-regressed assessment of RAH's writing. To show how my tastes have changed, I started reading *The Moon Is a Cruel Mistress* a few weeks ago and tired of it after a few chapters because of the preaching. In my youth, I didn't pick up on his rather strident views. By the way, I may return to the novel above, but not right now.

Spiritus Mundi 267/Guy My deepest sympathies to you and Rosy on the loss of her mother. As you know, I can well relate to such loss these days. Your description of the final drama was well written and poignant, fitting for this family that we have all been part of, especially the past year or so with your moving to Florida.

Twydrasil and Treehouse Gazette #152/Rich D. Wow, I don't recall a soft porn book from that era being quite so openly sexual. I wonder what the book was about. A mystery or just fooling around?

Ct. Jennings and comics online. I don't know that it can resuscitate the comic book industrr but it can sure keep artists and writers employed. For example, *Unshelved*, the online comic that Sheila turned me on to, has been published for a number of years now. And there are

anthologies out there, so maybe there is a printed book angle, after all. I've got to find time to go online and get myself tuned into the resurrection of *Bloom County* soon. I always loved that strip.

I agree that science fiction magazine covers did tend to be sexier than fantasy covers. Nevertheless, in both cases, I always wondered if those metal bras didn't cause the wearers strikingly painful moments in extreme heat or cold.

Ct. Tom and retirement. I have not had one moment of boredom in retirement. Indeed, I find myself with not enough time in a day to address all of the things on my agenda. Getting back into fandom has only exacerbated that situation – not that I am complaining. This has been a wonderful rediscovery.

Ct. Joe/Guy. Christmas is both a religious and a secular holiday. It has become so much of a secular holiday that I find it quite annoying when groups start bitching about nativity scenes, etc., in public places. They don't object to Santa Claus, which is a religious figure, also. It's very selective objection by secularists. As I have said before, if you don't think it has become a secular holiday, just go into a big box store the day after Labor Day and look at the new displays.

I never found Pink Floyd noisy, certainly not in the way of most of their contemporaries.

Fingertip Reality 92/Joe Ah, the assorted aches and pains of the aging process. As I so inelegantly put it to a friend a while back: When you get old, shit hurts. Yet, you seem to be coping very well and the dental ordeal appears to be nearing its conclusion. Well done, old timer.

I was blown away to learn you were once of the principles in *Wyatt v. Stickney*, the lawsuit that turned Alabama's mental health and retardation treatment apple cart upside down. I was working at *The Tuscaloosa News* when some of that came down. I didn't cover any of it, but I wound up serving as foreman of a grand jury not long after the major court ruling. The panel decide to forego the traditional touring of the jail and county shop. They asked the district attorney if we could go to Bryce and Partlow. The DA said a grand jury can go any damn place it wants to. Either the DA or me, as foreman, called the institutions and said, "We are on our way." The folks on the grand jury just loved having that kind of clout for a brief moment in their lives. It was eye-opening because of the warehousing nature of the treatment in those days.

I must say, though, that I am having a hard time visualizing Joe Moudry – fan, bibliophile, lunch companion, etc. – as psychologist.

Isn't the Lewis D. Taylor of Gunter'sville letter to *Weird Tales* fascinating? Who would have expected enough fans in Marshall County to "gather and discuss the stories"? Hell, imagining enough folks in Marshall County who could read in those days is a challenge!

Spartacus #8/Guy As always, interesting reading because we are pretty much on the same page politically. Reading your essay on the Hugo squabble makes me a little glad that I've kept my return to fandom somewhat limited. How sad that what should be the genre's highest honor is so embroiled in politics.

All Along the Watchtower #110/Larry I do wish you had told us what the front and back cover images are. Or is that something too obvious to everyone else that it needs no credit line? I hope the Burns reunion in Cullman – complemented by some of your work – was a success. Not much else to comment on this time.

ROM/Tom F. I am not seeing any signs of boredom and lack of things to do in your retirement. You and Anita appear to have continuously busy schedules with the classes, concerts, etc., My prediction still remains: you will come to lament the lack of time to do all of the things you want to do.

Good selection of film and book reviews, stirring my interest in a couple of them.

madness is all in the mind/mike I assume this is part of the package you hand delivered to Moudry. I'm sorry I was unable to meet you guys for lunch. It was on my calendar but family stuff got in the way. And speaking of family stuff, thanks very much for the Tinsely/Beck carnival information. I wish I knew what years Poppa (Cowboy) was in that line of work, but this adds a bit to the family archive on my grandfather.

The Son of Watermelon/Jeff Yeah, the Twin Peaks biker shootout in Waco was one of those scratch-your-head moments. I heard more than one wag, usually noting the Branch Davidians disaster, refer to the city as Whacko, Texas.

I was really interested in your review of Mitch Cullin's novel, *A Slight Trick of the Mind*, largely because of the notice the film version, *Mr. Holmes*, has received. Of course, Ian McKlellan lends credence to some of the positive film reviews. Although I have enjoyed virtually every Holmes pastiche I've ever read and most filmed versions of the sleuth, you have me wondering if I will add this one to the list.

Rediscovering *North By Northwest* every few years is such a joy. It is one of my favorite Hitchcock films and the crop-dusting scene is such a classic. Cary Gant has the most wonderful face for expressing bewilderment and terror, especially in Hitchcock treatments.

While waiting for *Questions to the Prime Minister* to come on C-Span one Sunday night, I happened to catch Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield on Q&A. They included or concluded, I forget which, his rendition of Bowie's "Space Oddity." I thought it was most entertaining and had planned to mention it here. Then I forgot about it, so you've given me the chance to say what fun it was.

Thanks for your thoughts on my fatherly frustration over Lil's death. It is no longer my first aking thought, but it is still never very far away. And I do appreciate your shared view on the eight prescriptions approaching malpractice.

Thanks also for the *Beany and Cecil* reference. I may look into that as another Atticus indoctrination from PawPaw.

Revenant #87/Sheila Well, you've thrown me a bit of a curve. As long as I have watched *Dr. Who*, I've never thought of the shows as being "Series" rather than "Seasons." Indeed, I'm going to have go online and sort out just what the deliniation is for that. I generally think of them in terms of Dr. No. So-and-So and seasons. Still, I agree with you that Catapaldi is a refreshing change from the some of the more recent hormonally overloaded doctors.

I am not a huge Marvel fan, but I loved *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The mix of humor, spoof and action worked well for me. On the other hand, I will quickly say that I thought

Captain America: Winter Soldier was awful. It was one of those films that I made myself watch all the way through to give it a fair chance. (And again, writing these notes over such a long period of time, I find another repetition.)

Again we differ. I've really enjoyed Seanan McGuire's October Daye and InCryptid urban fantasy series. They can be a bit over the top at times, but I find the characters and the worlds she has created interesting. I look forward to meeting her in New Orleans since that didn't work out in Roswell a couple of years ago because of scheduling conflicts (for me).

And finally, I agree that *Monk* eventually got a little too cute although I still enjoyed most episodes. On the other hand, I could never get into *Psych*. I watched the first episode, found it lame and never went back.

High School Reunion Confession/Gary B.

I'm glad you enjoyed your high school reunion. I've enjoyed all of

mine even though I don't maintain regular contact with anybody in my class. I can't imagine such a huge class. We figure the Class of '61 in Opelika was the first one to have 100 graduates. I knew everybody, had grown up with most of them all the way through school. I must say we did not have an athlete of the calibre of Ted "The Mad Stork" Hendrick.

Oblio #217/Gary B.

Handsome young lad there on the cover. Somewhere around here I have a sketch of me that was done by Suzy,

the late wife of longtime fan Shelby Vick. I need to resurrect it and see if it is not too yellowed to reproduce for a cover. I appreciated the obituary on Dexter Taylor, although I was unfamiliar with his work. Interesting that an artist can spend most of his career with one particular character that he did not himself create.

Good luck with your "similar situation." Tough love is a painful step to have to take with a child, but sometimes there is no other option. I have no guilt and no regret about the steps we took. There were other lives being impacted and in need of stability. The moment that I am apprehensive about is when Atticus asks about his mom's remains, i.e., where she is buried. In fact, she was cremated and the urn is in the house. I'm not sure how to deal with that and I'm not sure our priest will have the answer either.

The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant was a fun read. I remember later reading a baseball history of some sort by Douglas Wallop. The movie was great fun, also. The book was easy to adapt into the musical format. I don't know if it was the story line, the music or both, but Lil loved the VHS I picked up years ago. Since she was not allowed to say "damn," she referred to it as "Joe Hardy."

Tennessee Trash #125/Gary R.

My deepest sympathies to the Robe Experience on the loss of the Good Doctor. As in my case and in

the Lillians' case with Rosie's mother, knowing it's coming doesn't make it any easier. You did nice job of relating it all. A very fine obituary and congratulations on getting it published for free, despite the circumstances. They are quite expensive these days, but I have no regrets for what we spent. It was a much more meaningful tribute to Lil than, say a marker at a columbarium. I enjoyed your dad's rules to live by and can say that Nos. 22-23-24 are among my bywords, much to the dismay of my wife.

Congratulations on getting out the underclass business. I'm happy for Isaac's success and

also for the fact that he wasn't hurt in either of those accidents. Considering the one at the same Sunoco where I had my problem, perhaps there should be some kind of official warning posted or SFPAs about that intersection!

Thanks for your kind comments on our shared experiences with the medical profession the past few months. So frustrating and not a damned thing we can do about any of it. I would love an opportunity to call one of her psychiatrists a quack to his face. Might not be accurate, but it would make me feel good.

I.R.R.egular #9/Isaac

My sincere condolences on the loss of your grandfather. It was a not unexpected outcome that I think we have all followed in your family over the past the year or so.

That was an interesting class schedule. I can see why it was a semester you rather enjoyed despite the weather problems. Good luck on finding the appropriate graduate program. Being a graduate assistant has a lot of rewards others than the pittance the university gives you.

Try not to dwell on the car wreck too much. No one was hurt and you will, no doubt, be a better driver for having been through that frightening experience.

Sabre Dance/mike

There was a time when Daniel Mannix was unquestionably my favorite nonfiction writer. His *Memoirs of Sword Swallower* opened my eyes to a whole subculture totally out of my awareness zone. He also introduced me to the real world of the barbaric Roman games with his *Those About to Die*. Images and activities from that book still come to mind when there is a new movie about that period of history. I have often wondered in later years about some of his resources, particularly for such topics as the Roman games. At that point in my life, he found topics that fascinated me and presented epic amounts of information on them.

Yes, all Standard Poodles creep me out, not just the one who was scoring points on Westminster a few months ago. I find them as something of a cross between pornography and Lovecraftian horror.

I do not understand the question about Foster's Lager and "how does the Gadsden brewed stuff compare?" Foster's is just basically an imported form of BMC (budmillercoors) with not particular distinction in the taste. It is, by the way, brewed in the U.S. in Fort Worth by Anheuser-Busch as well as Down Under. Back Forty is a brewery in Gadsden, Ala., that makes very good craft beers and is very supportive of all things sustainable.

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