

THE RUMBLE

is a one-shot published by Walter Breen, (311 E. 72 St, New York) and Pat & Dick Lupoff, (215 E. 73 St, New York) in fond commemoration of

May 15, 1960, the day of the Futurian picnic, possibly the first fan gathering ever to be broken up by the threat of gang warfare. These Futurians, incidentally, are that segment of New York fandom who hold to a wide variety of philosophies and modes of living, the sole proscribed outlook being that to which the "Thismeetingisherebycalledtoorderwewillnowproceedtothefirstitemofbusiness" attitude is appropriate.

Well, for the Lupoff household the picnic got off to a head start -- it was scheduled for 2:30 PM -- when Walter Breen arrived at one o'clock. I (Dick) made up a batch of bloody marys which were universally detested, except for me, fortunately, to the result that I got to drink just about the entire batch. "Too much tabasco!" Pat and Walter, in loud unison, cried. Pah!

We packed our lunch, took a bus and subway ride, and were shortly up at the general location of the picnic. That is, the picnic was scheduled to take place under the George Washington Bridge. "Under the GW Bridge" takes in a lot of territory even if you discount the water and the New Jersey side. So we paraded, waving copies of STARTLING STORIES and TESSERACT to attract the attention of any other Futurian who might be around. Oh, let me mention that none of the three of us knew any Futurians except the Whites, who were nowhere in evidence.

We passed plenty of people who gave us odd looks, especially after they saw what it was we were waving, but failed to raise that look of faanish recognition for which we had hoped.

Finally, just as we were sitting down to eat at four o'clock, planning to hoax up a picnic report for F A N A C, we spied Sylvia and Ted White coming from the other side of Riverside Drive. The five of us then had a little food -- actually, only three did, the latecomers being stuffed --and a bottle of wine. We all finished the wine and started wandering off in search, one last time, of any stray Futurians.

As we searched, we passed near upon the shore of yon blue Hudson's River, and, inserting the proper message...

"HELP! I AM A PRISONER IN AN ITALIAN WINERY!"

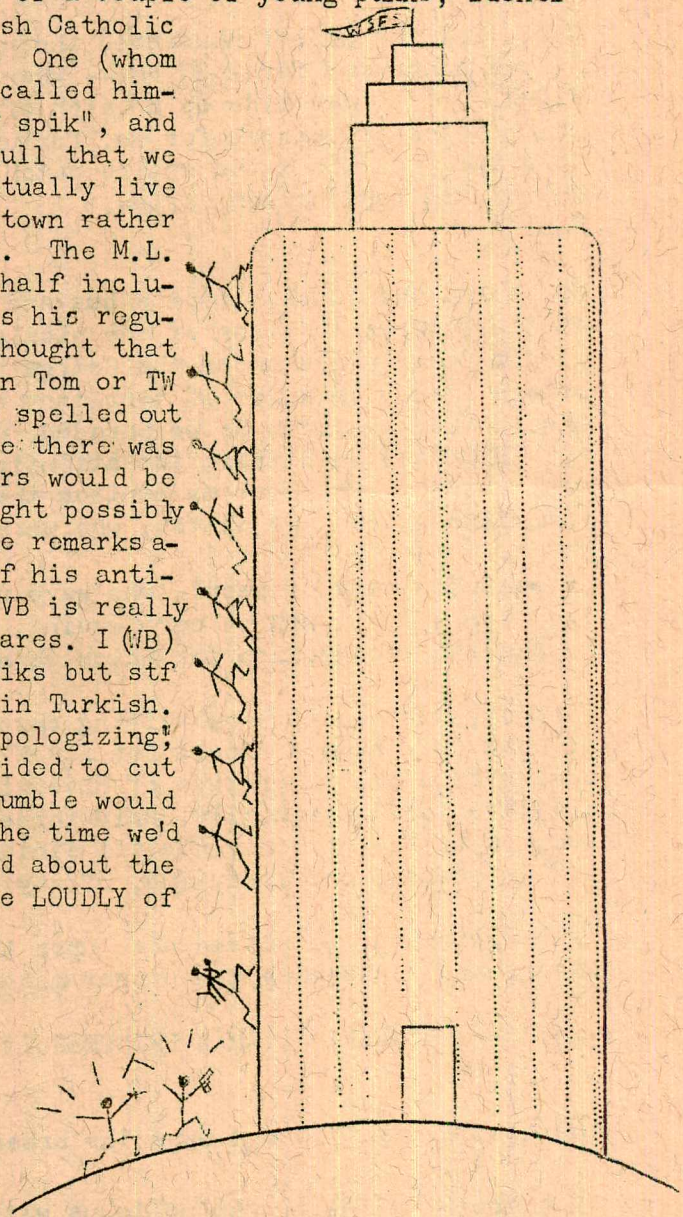
...and recorking the bottle, sent it out upon the breast of the river.

In a moment a fellow ran up to us with a frantic plea for help to climb a tree and get down a caught kite. It was Lin Carter, and shortly the picnic was up to full strength: the Lupoffs, Walter Breen, the Whites, Lin, Martha Cohen, Martha Atkins (it was her kite), and (a few minutes later) Tom Condit carrying a small creature whom he introduced as Christopher Dennis MacLean. Katherine, Christopher ~~xxxx~~ Dennis' mommy, didn't make it.

After assorted fannish socializing, we decided to post a sign in case any more Futurians should wander by (sign: a tall pole surmounted by a beer can, suspended from which was a paper inscribed FUTURIANS and an arrow). Meanwhile Ted and Walter were trying to get the kite up as far as it would go--seemingly almost the height of the bridge at this point--with the help of much enthusiasm, some body english, and a favorable wind. They eventually succeeded, anchoring it to a stump amid much applause. During most of the next hour Ted was over by the kite making it do tricks. Tom left to buy additional food, and the rest of our group started building a fire to roast frankfurters.

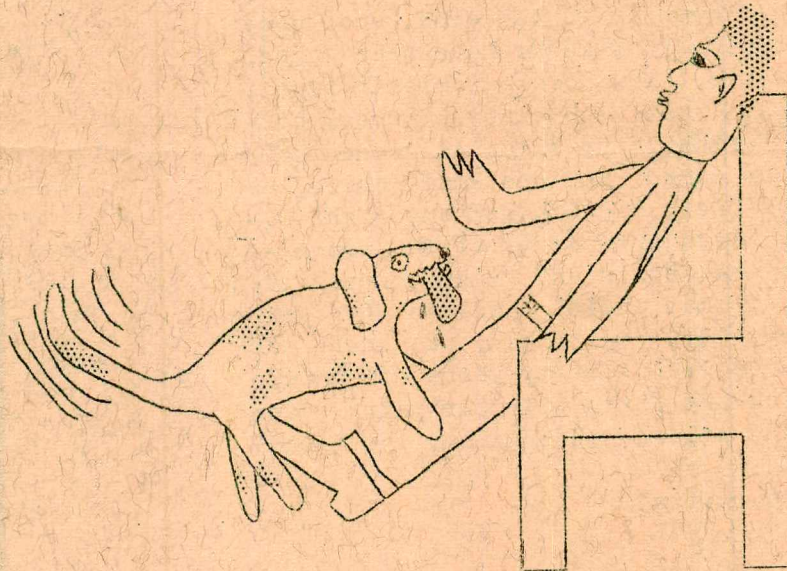
(WB here for a few 9s) We didn't get to roast even one, though. Our preparations were interrupted by the arrival of a couple of young punks, identifying themselves as "Cavaliers" (an Irish Catholic gang) and this park as Their Territory. One (whom we privately dubbed the Missing Link) called himself a half-breed, "half Irish and half spik", and we couldn't get it through his thick skull that we were not another local gang, that we actually live in our own homes in different parts of town rather than being denizens of one neighborhood. The M.L. began telling us how he hated "spiks" (half including himself) and how Sunday evening was his regular night for beating up beatniks--he thought that we were beatniks despite not having seen Tom or TW (the only beards among us). Both hoods spelled out how we'd better leave RIGHT NOW, because there was going to be a RUMBLE, and any interlopers would be shot. Neither one could dig that we might possibly be peaceable neutrals. The ML made some remarks about raiding the Village Barn as part of his anti-beatnik pogrom, not realizing that the VB is really a touristy night-club, strictly for squares. I (WB) tried to explain that we were not beatniks but stf fans, but I might as well have said it in Turkish. The ML kept using 4-letter words, and apologizing, while brandishing a thick stick. We decided to cut out, though wondering if the promised rumble would ever be more than a lot of words. By the time we'd left doubtless everyone around had heard about the impending rumble; one of the girls spoke LOUDLY of calling the fuzz.

The pilgrimage to the Atkins pad was a sight: various Futurians carrying ale bottles & food bags, and I (WB) in the rear carrying little Christopher, who slept through it all (even through a record of "Rite of Spring" later on), up a series of steep ramps, and stairs and slanty sidewalks. The vertical distance was some 300 feet (the height of a 30-story building) above our picnic site--quite a climb!



Safely ensconced in Martha's pad, out of reach of the Cavaliers, we settled down to music and fannish yak about almost everything under the sun--I particularly recall Tom and Ted expounding about peyote and recent and pending court trials (the U. S. v. 20 lbs. of peyote is still pending, I think). In the meantime a couple of the girls had gone to telephone the fuzz about the impending rumble, figuring that there was no reason why the Cavaliers should have their fun if they denied us ours. A faction arose who maintained that we should have stayed down, insisted on our rights and fought for them if necessary. None of these had raised his voice to that effect while we were down there confronting the Cavaliers. There was later considerable speculation on whether the fuzz would find our FUTURIANS → sign and assume that the Cavaliers' opponents in the rumble were to have been a new gang of that name, and whether in that event the NY Futurian Society would make Monday's scandal sheets -- particularly since the fuzz had raided the Nunnery at least once, while it still was a Futurian hangout.

The faanish yak was occasionally punctuated by laughter when the Atkins beagle, "Pammy", began clasping my leg and repeatedly attempting to copulate with it. This was the funnier in that the dog was a female, and a spayed one at that!



(RL again) When the conversation turned to stf- and other movies, the end was in sight. Lin has a single interest, apparently, when he goes to the movies: effects. Effects, special, as in stfilms; effects, feminine, as in Solomon and Sheba, Boy on a Dolphin, and the like.

Upon leaving Martha's, we all made for the West Side IND and the A train, Christopher being held up to the front window of the front car to see the onrushing subway tunnel. His sense of wonder radiated to us all.

SERIOUS CONSTRUCTIVE TYPE POST SCRIPT

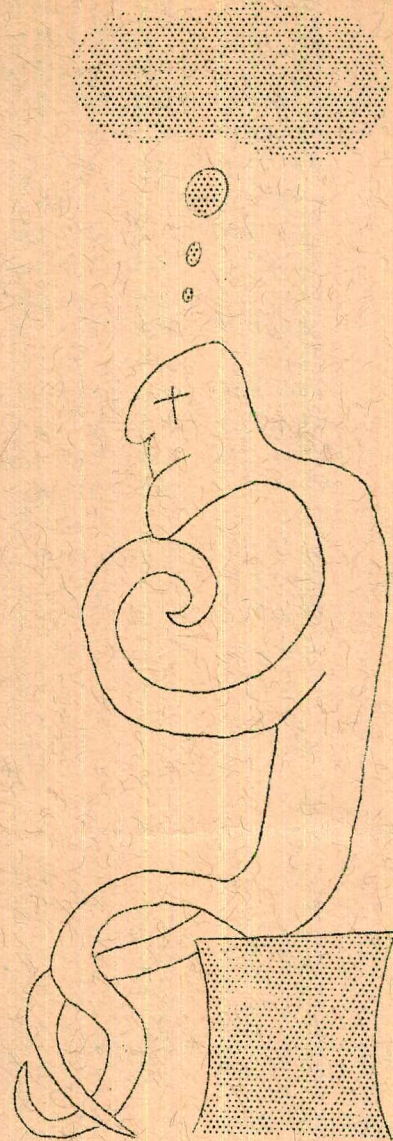
Now that l'affaire Cavaliers has receded to the perspective of a few days, a serious question arises as to whether we did the right thing by leaving the park upon the threat of the coming rumble. On the one hand--and I think that even such odd bedfellows as Robert A. Heinlein and Harlan Ellison would agree -- it may very well be an actual moral wrong for persons who have a clear right to be someplace, to allow themselves to be intimidated by hoodlums into surrendering their right and leaving. Not only do such acts deprive people of the exercise of a right, they (far worse) aid and encourage hoodlumism and possibly contribute in the long run to the ultimate collapse of society.

On the other hand -- is this the voice of practicality versus that of principle? -- had the assembled Futurians risked a fight rather than leaving when we did, it would have been at best a bloody and painful fight (even if we had won), and more than likely a couple of us might have been killed. This is no hyperbole. "New York's foulest" fight, not just with fists, but with clubs, knives, bottles and guns. Further, the Futurian group included five men, four women, and one small child, as we pointed out before. Had the men any right whatever to risk the lives and safety of the women -- and further, had the adults any right to risk the life and safety of that child? Besides the pair of hoodlums immediately confronting us, there was a third we could see about fifty yards off (and who kept shouting back and forth with our pair), and who knows how many others hidden among the trees?

Your comments are invited.

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