

♀ HALF-LENGTH ARTICLES ♂

NUMBER ONE

FAPA FOREVER

I wish to swear publicly on a stack of Shan-gri-T'Affaires that the events depicted here are not fictional, nor are the characters represented herein fictional. In point of fact, this is not a fictional account. It is all fact. It all happened substantially as reported here; this is a true and complete account, as I remember it, of the evening of August 11 and subsequent events involving the getting out of the last mailing. If anything, the high points of the story have been toned down a little for our family readership.

Burb

DO YOU THINK HE
HAS A FINE MIND?

WELL, YES
AND NO.

HALF-LENGTH ARTICLES is published whenever the occasion seems to arise by Andy Anderson, 1011 West 34th Street, Los Angeles, 7, California. This, the first, intended for the Fall, 1947, mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, appears largely because of the aid and comfort furnished to the publisher and the author, respectively, by F Towner Laney, a local patron of the arts. This is dedicated, of course, to the noble officers of our organization.

FAPA FOREVER

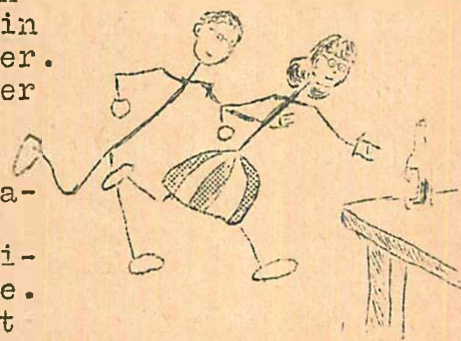
...being the story of how
the last mailing came out

BY CHARLES BURBEE

I thought you might be interested in knowing just what and who and such were involved in the getting out of the last mailing. Of course, Elmer had set the deadline for material at July 26. Believing him to be speaking truth, the LASFS boys who are members were batting away madly at the mimeograph. Hart, Evans, Willmorth, and Ackerman gave the LASFS mimeograph quite a workout the Thursday and Friday preceding the deadline date, which fell on a Saturday. Laney had gotten his mag in before (about two weeks), and I did not have mine done yet, being pretty sure that Elmer would not be on time. I had some other things I wanted to do, and I did them, and still had plenty of time to get out my mag.

As Elmer told you in last mailing's Amateur, Laney and I, armed with a letter from Milty, went up to his place and quizzed him about the mailing. He showed us three cut stencils and seemed to be very sincere about getting the mailing out that very evening. We didn't quite believe this, but we did give him a second chance before we decided to blitzkrieg the boy. This was Saturday.

Monday I called Elmer up, asked him how he was coming. He said he was cutting stencils on the Amateur. I asked him if he had the mailing assembled. He said no. Well, of course, I hadn't given him Burblings yet, but that shouldn't have held him up. At any rate, I said I would be over about 9 pm, at which time he said he'd be through stenciling. I said I'd drive him over to the LASFS clubroom where he could run off the Amateur. I'd help him, after I'd gotten some Shangri-L'Affaires lettering-guide work out of the way. He said OK. About 8:30 he called me back and told me to bring four or five stencils because Betty (his wife) had torn up three cut stencils. I did so, arriving there about 9. I found Elmer in his shirtsleeves, busily cutting stencils. As I walked into the room in which they live, Betty was lying on the bed, her face covered from the world, in a semi-foetal position. I said hello to her. No answer. I thought she was asleep. Elmer greeted me vociferously, and, by the gleam in his eyes, I could see the boy was wine'd up. He was cutting stencils madly. He placated me with the mailing, of which he had assembled one full assortment, and I immediately went through them looking for my name. Betty was absolutely silent, and she'd sort of slipped from my mind when Elmer got up and went across the room for a bottle of wine. Quick as a flash the inert woman was on her feet and had reached the bottle before Elmer could get there. Then started a family quarrel about who had bought the bottle and who had drunk most of it, etc.



Thus awakened, Betty began to clamor for more wine. They begged me as a "friend" and "a good friend" and "a true friend" to go buy them more wine. I declined but was finally persuaded to do it. That was my mistake of the evening. I drove Betty out to get wine and bought 2 fifths of Padre Port and 2 bottles of Acme Beer (the beer, as they said, was for me.) When we got back Betty insisted I drink my beer at once. Among the litter on the table she found a glass with a scum of old milk in the bottom and handed it to me.

"This is hardly what I'd call a clean glass," I said in my typical diplomatic fashion. "You don't mind a little milk, do you?" asked Betty, wide-eyed.

"I don't care for milk much," I said. "Not this way."

"Well," she said, "I'll drink out of it. Here, you take this glass. This is a clean one. It's only had orange juice in it."

God forgive me, I took the glass, which seemed not too dirty, and as I opened the bottle I had to pour Betty a glassful which was, as she said, "To wash the taste of wine out of my mouth."

She asked then if I liked poetry. I said no. So she said she would read me a poem I would like. I declined with thanks. So she said, "Oh, but you'd like this one." "No," I said, "I don't like poetry. Especially fan poetry, which practically always stinks."

"You'll like this one," she said.

"No, I'd rather not hear it. I don't like poetry."

"I'll read it to you."

She had a copy of one of Dale Hart's mags. When I saw that it was inevitable, I had to give in and enjoy it. I said I would read the poem myself, and took the mag and read this sonnet by Sidney Johnson. I said I didn't like it too well.

"What kind of a fellow is Sidney Johnson?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said. "I've never heard of him before."

"How old is he?" she asked.

"I don't know. I don't even know the man. Never heard of him in my life."

"Do you think he has a fine mind?"

"Well, that's hard to say, from reading one sonnet and that not a very good one."

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"Who?"

"Sidney Johnson."

"Oh," I said, "you mean Sidney Johnson!"

"Yes," she said. "What kind of fellow is he?"

"Oh," I said, "he's not a bad fellow---now, I guess."



"How old is he?"

"Thirty-eight."

"How do you know?" asked

Betty.

"His brother told me."

"Who's his brother?"

Johnson. "Teaches English at IACC. Used to be a great friend of mine."

"Are you sure he's 38?"

"Well, that's just a guess. He might be 42."

"Oh no! He's not more than 40!"

"Well," I said, casting a sidelong glance at my host, busily cutting stencils a yard or so away, "I don't see why it matters."

"It matters a great deal," declared Elmer's bride. "I may want to marry him some day."

Well, I guess he's around 42."

"You said 38."

"So I did."

"Come on, Burbee, give a girl a break. He's 38, isn't he?"

"Welllllll, come to think of it, he is."

"That isn't too old, is it?"

"I guess not."

"Tell me about him--what is his philosophy?"

"He had a strange philosophy. I guess he was a black sheep. Of course all my information is 7 years old, so he might have changed and be entirely different now."

"What did he do?"

"Oh, the family educated him. Brought him up to be a dentist. Paid some \$2000 to teach him the dental profession. After graduation he went into the business and after three years of work he'd paid them back and saved up quite a sum of money. So he thought he would take a little vacation. He went all over the world."

"Where did he go?"

"He wound up in India, where he ran out of money and he got a job of some sort. Maybe it was in Tibet--I never listened very well when Johan told me about it."

"Johan,"

murmured Betty, "who is that?"

"That's his brother who teaches English at IACC."

"Oh, and how did he know all this?"

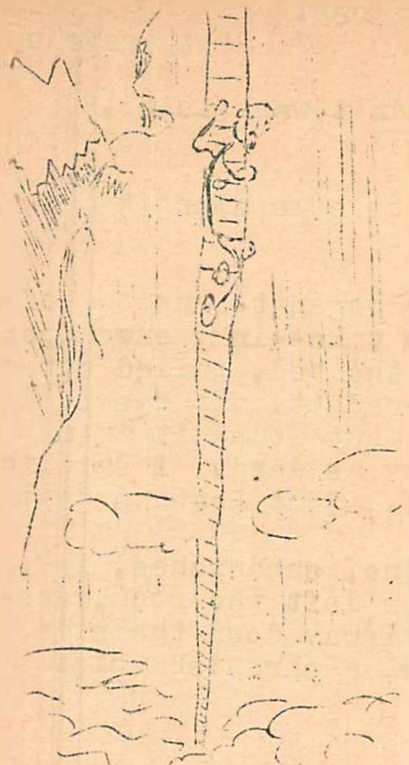
"Well, after all, even black sheep write letters home now and then. He wasn't completely estranged, you know."

"And how long did he stay away?"

"Eight years."

"But how old is he now?" "38." "Are you





sure?"

"Well, not positive. Let me see, I will figure it out. He got out of college at the age of 22, was a dentist for 3 years, was gone for 8 years, and that was 7 years ago--that makes him 40."

"Oh no!"

"Well," I said, "I happen to know he is 38, so my figures are wrong. They were only approximate, anyhow. Ah, yes," I added reflectively, "he thought he would take a little vacation and so he went to Paris." I drank a little beer. "And how long was he gone?"

"8 years," Betty laughed. "He sounds like quite a guy. What does he look like?"

"Well, I never saw him."

"Yes, but was he tall, dark, blond, or what?"

"I don't know."

"He's tall, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, now that you mention it. I'd say he was about 73 inches tall, weighed about 170 pounds of lean, hard sinew."

"I thought so," said Betty.

"Had a lot of strange experiences in India. Once, while climbing up a rickety rope ladder while ascending Mount Kachima in southern India--right near Tibet, you know--he made the mistake of looking down. The lines of perspective pulled him down to the valley floor, three thousand feet straight down. He lost his head. He clung weakly to the rope and messed himself. Yes, he clung there, weaker than beer with ice in it and messed himself. Said he almost died there."

"Why," said Betty, "none of that shows in his poetry."

"Yes, that I must admire him for," I said. "A man like that, who knows at least fifteen native dialects, refrains from putting one word in a poem. That shows great restraint, which is the basis of artistry. Of course, there is a bit of Urdu philosophy in lines 8 and 9, but it is all to the good."

"I didn't notice that," said Betty. "I haven't read as much as you have."

By and by Elmer finished cutting stencils. He showed me the "cut stencils" Betty had torn. "They" were one stencil, uncut, wrinkled but not torn.

"Let's go to the Half World," I said. "I got some lettering guide work I want to do. Then I'll help you with the Amateur."

"Coming along honey?" said Elmer to Betty.

"No," she said.

"Oh come on," he said. "No use staying around here. Come on along."

"No," she said, "I don't want to."

"All right then, honey," he said. A moment passed. Betty said: "Trying to run out on me,

huh?"

"No," said Elmer. "I asked you to come along."
mighty easy when I said no."

"You gave up

"I thought you didn't want to go."
know damn well I'm going."

"You

"Well, I asked you to come along."
were trying to run out on me."

"You

Eventually they began to run out of words. Elmer stacked up the stuff he wanted to take--ink, envelopes, stencils, paper. Then he got up, went over to the bed, pulled out a suitcase, threw the suitcase on the bed and opened it. It was full of sandwiches. He offered me one. I declined, but found it in my hand anyway. I started to eat it. It was soggy as lard. I said it was too soggy. Elmer looked at me in amazement. "But Betty made it herself!" he exclaimed.

Finally, with beer, wine, sandwiches, ink, envelopes, stencils, paper, and potato chips, we left the room, descending the side entrance, a rickety wooden stairway down the side of the house, and as we passed the lower window, a shrewish voice from inside began to shout about people who raised hell at all hours of the night.

"What could possibly be wrong with her?" asked Elmer. "It's only 10:30, and we weren't making much noise."

"Just before Burbee came I was screaming. You were choking me half to death."

"Why shouldn't I? You bit me. In three places."

"Not hard. Not one of them drew blood."

"You bit me three times."

We got to the club with practically no mishap except for the spilling of a cup or so of wine on the floor of my ancient car.

As soon as we got in I put on stencil number one and began to remember how the LASFS mimeo worked. After a time I got it run off. While I was running it off, Elmer went over next door to Myrtle's (Myrtle Douglas' house, in which live the Ashleys, Jack Wiedenbeck, Myrtle's son Virgil and Walt Liebscher).

When he returned, Betty said: "Did you tell Myrtle I looked a fright and didn't want to come over but would if she wanted me to?"

"Yes honey," said Elmer.

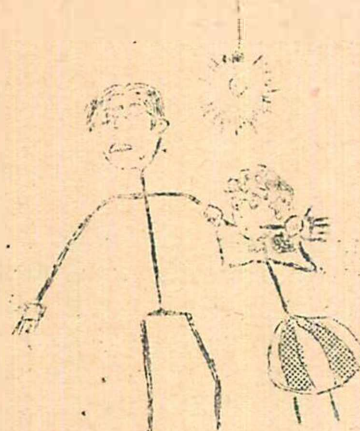
"And what did she say?"

"She said it was all right. She was just going to bed. Said you could come over but she was just going to bed."

"Did she thank you for the present?"

"Yes, and she said Virgil would thank you too when he saw you again."

"Didn't she say she wanted me to come over?"



"She said you could come if you wanted but she is just going to bed."

"Then she doesn't want me. I won't go."

"Aw, go on over to see Myrtle, honey."

"No, she doesn't want to see me."

"Sure she does. She wants to see you."

"What about?"

"She'd just like to see you if you feel like dropping over. You could meet her cousin. Very lovely girl. You could see her cousin."

"Did she say she wanted to see me about something?"

"No, she said she'd be glad to see you if you wanted to drop over."

"But she's going to bed."

So Elmer began to run off a stencil, having all sorts of trouble getting started, staggering around quite a bit. I was over in the far corner, doing lettering-guide work on Shangri-L'Affaires stencils.

"Take me home Burbee," said Betty. "You can come back."

"No," said I. "I came here to do lettering-guide work and I'm just starting. If I leave here now I won't come back."

"Take me home," she ordered. "You can come back."

I went on with the lettering-guide work.

"Give me the keys, Elmer," she said. "I'm going home."

"Aw, stay around awhile honey," said Elmer.

"I'm tired. I'm bored. You're just running that machine and I have nothing to do."

"You want something to read? We have books here. You have potato chips and sandwiches to eat and a jug and beer to drink."

"That's Burbee's beer." She took a drink from the bottle.

"Why don't you go over and see Myrtle?"

"She doesn't want to see me."

"Go over and see Myrtle."

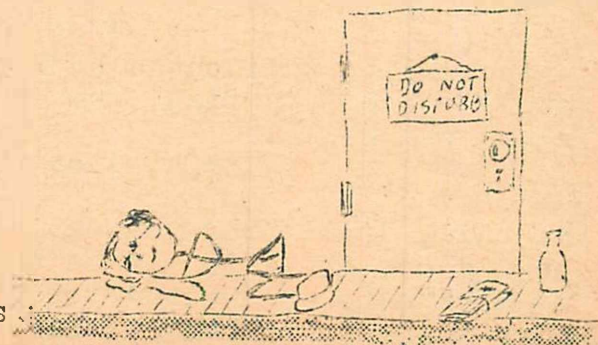
"I don't want to."

"Aw, go on over, honey, and see Myrtle."

"She's gone to bed."

"No she hasn't. She asked me to tell you to come on over."

"That's a damned lie, Elmer. You told me she was going to bed and now you tell me different."



"You could see her cousin. Very lovely girl."

"I don't care. I caught you lying to me. Give me the key. I'm going home."

No answer. She repeated this request or order three or four more times before Elmer finally said, "Will you let me in when I get home?"

"Why? Where do you want to sleep?"

"I want to sleep home honey," said Elmer.

"You want to sleep home. You want to sleep home. You don't care if I have a place to sleep or not. You want to sleep home. Give me the key, Elmer, I'm going home."

"Will you let me in when I come home?"

"I think you'd better give me the key." "Will you let me in when I come home? I don't want to sleep on the floor out in the hallway again."

"Will you give me that key?"

"No honey."

"All right, then, I'll take it." She made a grab for his hip pocket and got a good handhold. He pulled away and started to stagger. She began to swing around with him. And there they were, Betty hanging onto his hip pocket, Elmer swinging on a long circle, both staggering in unbelievable fashion. Betty was shouting: "Stop pulling. You'll tear your pocket and that'll cost you 75¢."

"Let it," said Elmer.

Around and around swung Elmer, like a dead cat on a string, a smile on his face; no expression on Betty's face, unless it was a grim smile. After a while, having rolled a cigarette, I said: "Elmer, got a match?"

"Yes, Meyer," he said as he swung past, and proceeded to pull out a book of matches. He carefully and deliberately opened the flap, fumbling madly as he did so, going round and round the while.

"Oh, just throw me the matches," I said.

"No," he said, "I'll pick you out the one I want you to use." Eventually he did so, isolating it on the outside of the closed flap. I lit my cigarette and waited for him to come round again so I could give the matches back to him. But he never did complete that circle. Betty pulled him off balance and he fell against the mimos table. He began to choke her. I went back to my lettering-guide work for Shangri-L'Affaires. (10¢ per single copy, 3/25¢, 6/50¢).



After a time things were abnormal again. Elmer was back at the mineo and Betty was sitting watching him.

"You may think he's calm and quiet, but he's not," she said. "He's hit me in every conceivable place: in the stomach, in the breasts, in the back. Once he kicked me out of bed, right onto the floor. And he's even kicked me in the tail. That's the worst thing a man can do--kick a woman in the tail. You kicked me in the tail, Elmer."

Elmer swung around from the mineo. "But not tonight."

"No, but you have kicked me in the tail."

"But not tonight. Remember that. Not tonight."

"Burbee," said Betty. "How many children have you got?"

"He has five children," said Elmer.

"Is that right, Burbee?"

"Well," I said. "I guess that's about right. Let's see; one each by two girls I should have married, and three by Isabelle."

"You're married to her, aren't you?"

"In the sight of God, yes."

"But what about these other girls? Why did you get them pregnant?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought it would be a good joke, I guess."

"I cant understand a man who will do that."

"Well," I said, "women are pretty hard to understand, too. For example, when I brought home a girl I had got pregnant, Isabelle refused to take her in. I merely wanted to take care of the girl while she was that way, but Isabelle wouldn't hear of it. That seems like a very strange attitude for a woman to take against a member of her own sex."

"But why did you get her that way?"

"Oh, I was thinking of something else at the time. You know how it is. But hell, Sidney Johnson had fifteen children, so I'm a piker beside him."

"I thought you said he was single."

"Well he was. He had five or six native wives. But you can't expect a native marriage to hold in the courts of this country."

"No," said Betty. "I suppose not."

Then Elmer swung away from the mimeograph and fell to the floor. Among crud sheets and automatic slipsheet cards lay the Official Editor of FARA, senseless, unmoving.

"Is he dead?" cried Betty.

"Only socially!" I answered.

On the floor lay the Official Editor of FARA. One stencil he had run off, and the floor was strewn with crud sheets. But the Official Editor was not aware of the crud

sheets. On the floor he lay, oblivious to all but the numbing influence of wine in his cells.

He lay there, and all over the nation and England and Canada, Fapa members gnashed their teeth and nervously wondered where the mailing was. And on the floor lay the Official Editor of FAPA, senseless, lifeless, inert. One stencil run off. They were wondering where the mailing was and why it hadn't come out, and the Official Editor of FAPA, duly elected by his constituents, lay stone senseless on the floor.

Betty went over to him. "Get up Elmer," she said. "Get up. We're going home." He didn't move. "Burbec," she said, "see if you can get him up."

"Let him lie there," I said. "It does my heart good to see a fellow Fapa member at repose."

"But he's just lying there and I want to go home. Get him up, Burbec."

"Let him lie," I said. "He may need the rest." So I went over to the mimeograph. I checked the sheets he had run, the one stencil. He had run off 75 sheets, insisting that this was the ideal number of copies. I ran through them. Offset, pages half printed, semi-black pages due to the roller's being inked. I sorted out the blemished sheets and found only 20 out of the 75 could be used. I ran off the additional 55, turned the page over and ran off the next page.

Then I ran off two more stencils. After each stencil, Betty, who was sitting beside the unrun stack of stencils, would say, "Are you finished, Mr. Burbec?"

And I would patiently answer "No. I still have to run those stencils on the chair beside you." So I'd run one off and every time I stopped to replenish the paper supply or something she'd say, "Are you finished Mr. Burbec?" After the fourth stencil or so, I got disgusted with it all. "I'm through," I said. "I'm going to get out of here. I'll drive you home and Elmer if he can be moved."

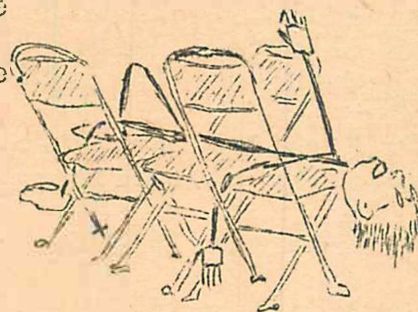
So I tried to awaken Elmer. Two hotfoots did not make him stir. While we were trying to lift him onto a chair, a car went past the open clubhouse door. It stopped up the street and backed up in a hurry. Curious onlookers peered from its windows. Inspired, I said, "My God, it's the cops!" The senseless, inert, lifeless body in my arms jerked into sentience. Elmer straightened, started to get up, looked out the door, saw not cops but curious onlookers and immediately became inert, lifeless, senseless once more.

After a time he mumbled something and pulled a piece of paper from his pocket. I read it. It seemed to be a pricelist of dishes. I put it back in his pocket. I shook him and shook him, telling him repeatedly to get up if he wanted to be driven home. At last he half opened his eyes and words tumbled from his lips. "Fuggem all," he said. "Fuggem, every one." Later, when he was sitting up, I let go of him. This man, who found himself utterly without muscles to even try to stand unaided, kept his balance neatly on the chair. He began to pull chairs into position for sleeping purposes. "Did he run off 75 copies of each stencil?" he asked. "I didn't finish," I said. "I'm going home."



I began to load stuff into the car, preparing to leave. As I came back from one trip I saw Betty kicking Elmer in the ribs with clinical savagery. He roused from his coma and struck at her swiftly. She jumped back out of range expertly after being hit only twice. (Later she told me she had been "prodding him gently with my toe and he struck me like a madman.")

Elmer flopped down again on his line of chairs. Betty pulled out the chair on which his head rested, and the Official Editor of FAPA lay there, head strained back in mid-air, mewling gutturally like something out of Lovecraft. He pulled the chair back. She pulled it away again and he lay there, mewling gutturally once more. "I'd better get the key," she said. She got it. "I'll leave him his benny," she said. So we went out of the LASTS clubroom, leaving the Official Editor of FAPA alone with his five or six run-off pages, stencils, paper, ink, and his bonzedrine. We drove away from that place. When we had gotten two miles away, Betty said, "Drive back. I want to leave him a jar of wine. He'll need it when he wakes up."



"I'll let you off here if you want to go back," I said. "Right now I'm on my way home. I intend to drive you home and go home myself." She decided against going back by streetcar.

"Do you think Elmer has a fine mind?" she asked me.

"Well, yes and no," I said.

"What do you mean by yes and no?"

"Well, from some points of view he has and from other points of view the issue is in doubt."

"Well, what do the other members think of him?"

"I never hear them say."

"You mean he's verboten?"

"Not necessarily."

"Well, I was wondering if he had a fine mind. He's always telling me he has, and I've been wondering what the rest of you think."

After a time, she said, "Do you think Elmer is a genius?"

Epilogue *****

Tuesday night I called up Slanshack to inquire about Elmer. It seems he was around, having just come in to borrow a pair of pliers to open a can of ink with, so I spoke to him. Said he'd slept in the clubroom till 6, had gone home to get a coat and had gone to work. Now he had come directly from work and was winding up the mimeo work. Had two stencils to go. So I was happy. He also said I had a lot of apologies coming to me for the way I had been imposed on. I agreed with him. Thursday night (Aug. 14) at

6 he called me up. "You've got to get out the mailing," he said.

"That's fine," I said, and waited for the punch line, because this was obviously a gag. But he was serious. Said Betty's mother had died and he had taken days off from work and they were leaving at once. I said in that case I'd be glad to get the mailing out. "How about express charges?" I wanted to know. "I have no money for this."

"Mail it," said Elmer Perdue, the Official Editor. "There is nothing unmailable in the lot." Some of you might read that statement over again. I'll write it here for you. "There is nothing unmailable in the lot." Read that and ponder on it, Croutch, Dunkelberger, Hart. "But," I said, "with that writing in the Amateur, the mailing would have to go first-class, at 3¢ an ounce."

"No," said Elmer, "that is a dedication to a book and does not come under the classification of written matter."

"But the Amateur isn't a book. It's only a magazine by a stretch of the imagination."

"Mail it," said Elmer. "Get the money from Ackerman."

"Are you leaving town?" I asked.

"I haven't time to talk to you," said Elmer. "We're leaving right away." He'd told me how to come get the stuff--somebody'd let me in.

At 6:30 he called again. He told me nobody'd be in the rooming house to let me in, so I could enter by finding the key on the window ledge and would find the entire mailing (rather, the 49 envelopes he'd prepared) and on top would be the Amateur and the ballots. Again I asked him where he was going and so forth but he cut me off.

So in about 45 minutes I left and drove over to Elmer's place, which is about 3 miles from here. I got in, found the stuff on the landing, hauled it away and drove to the Half World, where a meeting was scheduled (it being Thursday). I picked out the Anateurs for the localites and later saw that they were delivered. In Slanshack I spoke to Myrtle Douglas. She mentioned Elmer and told me that he and Betty were not leaving town. They'd decided they couldn't make it. "Why," I said, "That's a late development--when did you hear about it?"

"At 6:30, when he called," she said.

"6:30!" I said. "Why that's when he called me and told me for the second time he wouldn't be around and I'd have to get the mailing out. And I stayed around the house for 45 minutes, and got to his house and nobody was there, and no note was there telling me not to bother...."

For some inexplicable reason I got disgusted with it all. So the mailings sat in my car and went to work with me and back Friday. And Saturday, F. Towner Laney, who felt he had done nothing so far to help, said he would get the mailing out, so he took the stuff from my car to his car (we work in the same shop so it was all easy) and he said he would get money from Ackerman Thursday 21 August and probably mail the stuff Saturday 23 August. #####