

BOBOLINGS

NOVEMBER 1969

remains the stomping ground of Bob Pavlat, whose address is and should for a while remain 5709 Goucher Drive, College Park, Md 20740. Some day I may even memorize this address. Only a day ago I gave it out as "9705" etc. It was only to a creditor, so I'm not much bothered.

Last mailing Peggy related our awe at a post office that could translate our change of address notice to the Ballards as a change of address for the Ballards. Most of the chaos was corrected within a week, though we did get a weekly news magazine of theirs for about a month. Not too bad. Saturday we suddenly received one of their monthly magazines. A rather inefficient one, since it had taken them some four months to process the misinformation. What's most bothering is that it will take at least another four months to stop getting the magazine.

It would appear that it isn't the Post Office that's at fault, but some clerks and carriers. I've been well impressed by forwarding service from our old house to this one (we had a good regular carrier at our old address). The carrier at this address will load our mailbox with mail for us and the prior residents, even when he has to pick up mail we've re-addressed to the old residents at the same time.

The new house is still all pleasure. Take tonight. Six bundles arrived today for the next mailing. I picked them up, carried them down a flight of stairs, and plunked them in the corner of the basement where material for next mailing goes--out of the way, yet available when wanted. I glanced at the mimeo--conveniently by the stack of bundles for the mailing, on its own stand, in a house-temperature basement. At the old house the mimeo would have been in an unheated room, and probably would have been on the floor since there wasn't "room" for a stand. We ate dinner tonight in the kitchen. Too informal a meal for the dining room. At the old house we might have gotten a table into the kitchen, but even Kathy would have found trouble fitting into the space left for chairs. The old house was rather nice (Like huge bedrooms, fine windows (the picture windows, not those casements!), the outdoor grill, and some other things.) The grill and the windows I miss. Happily. I can even get at my collection here--or will be able to once it's all out of boxes. (Seventy linear feet of shelving is almost enough; a little more and I'll have enough room to start organizing.) The space is great. Not raking leaves is great. The neighborhood is great. I miss the paper-can trash collection system of our old address, but I'll haul metal cans twice a week more than happily for other benefits.

Even at today's interest rates the move was a great decision. I thought I was buying an extra bedroom, air conditioning, and some extra space. I bought almost enough room to live with all my clutter, and a house that gives more than it takes.

When a year elapses between mailings, there are always new possessions. A new house. A new car. Furniture. Knowledge. And, if you'll pardon the term "possession," a son. Eric Kendall, born September 24, 1969.

Eric's a gem. But I'm not going to talk about him. Peggy probably (!) will.

The new car, which Peggy probably won't talk about, is a '68 Saab, now almost a year old. Four cycle, V4, front wheel drive. It's a strange little beast that I'd like to know better, but I drive it ~~at~~ rather seldom and under restrained circumstances (I don't cut a hard corner with a three-year-old rather uncertainly tethered someplace in (I hope) the car), and hence may be a while in learning. All last winter I wanted some snow or ice to test front wheel drive performance. Yet, even on our trip to Vermont, slippery roads were impossible to find. A sandy road might do, but the freedom to search out a bad stretch of road just isn't here. You can fake some things on a good road under high acceleration, but the Saab hasn't been properly tuned since we bought it. (Mechanic? Or car? We'll see if the new mechanic can put it in better tune.)

I've been making a lot of noise at work recently to the effect that "The purpose of a report is to lead to a decision." More on that later. I wish I could express as tersely my opinion of the purpose of a car. Possibly it has more than one purpose. It's quite sure that to me the purpose of Jerry Butler's car is to get me to work and home again in a safe and timely fashion. I ride to work with Jerry, so this is a fitting purpose for his car. It's not the purpose for which I bought the Saab. That was bought for reliable transportation on local errands, comfort within a 500-mile range, economy of operation and maintenance, and driving pleasure. However, when it comes to evaluation of a car, I tend to look primarily at performance and handling. Ferrari taste with a VW budget, that's me.

My pets are my Alfa, my Mercedes, and my brother's Fiat Abarth Allemano. All sadly ex, and all save the Alfa sadly deficient in one or more aspects. The Mercedes had rust. The Fiat Abarth Allemano could not be maintained without a full machine shop & body shop. (To explain the name: the engine was a normal Fiat 600D that had been taken by Signore Abarth, bored out to 750cc by him (and to 800cc by my brother and a couple of Englishmen who were willing to take the chance that they could do it), had had exhaust, intake manifold, cam timing and other parts reworked by Abarth with the help of such others as Weber, and finally had a body designed by Allemano. Great. There were probably twenty-five such in the whole of North America. My brother's was probably the only 800cc one anywhere. Parts were--difficult.

All three cars had one thing in common. They were as safe at 70mph as they were at 7. They were safe because they could turn, or stop, or take a bump.

Those three cars establish in large part my standard of performance, modified by a Buick with reserve power at 80 and beautiful riding qualities at least up to 90, the steering of an Anglia (Peggy's) and a Volvo (Papa Evans') and the shifting qualities of the ZF gearbox on, for example, a Porsche.

Possibly one could invest the money in the Saab engine to get performance. It isn't a hot engine (nor was the Mercedes). I don't really think performance is an end with me. I like performance, but I'm happy to stay within class. Alfas don't race Corvettes. Saabs should race VW's. I'm not sure that ours could.

A race, however, is not a dragstrip. VW is an ill-handling car. I don't yet know the Saab. Kathy loves dirt roads, and when she's in the front seat, seat belt buckled, I'll sometimes search out one of the infrequent dirt roads in the area and put some pressure on. Front wheel drive is different. It bites when I don't expect it to. The car's rear drifts out instead of being forced out of line. A four-wheel drift (at my present level of skill) is not attainable. Hell, I can't even imagine how to set up a four-wheel drift in a front wheel drive car. (In a four-wheel drift, all four wheels are moving sideways as well as (hopefully) frontways at a driver-controlled direction and speed.

The Saab doesn't really do anything with distinction. It lacks power. The steering is heavy. Turning radius is unsatisfactory for body length. It sharply over-reacts to road swells and dips of moderate to short length. (This trait seems to be lessening slightly. Maybe that will work out with time.) Its better qualities include great bump-absorption and traction on a really rough road, non-grabby brakes that will stop you as fast as you want in a straight line, and reasonably good visibility. The flat interior floor which results from front-wheel drive is a nice feature, just about counterbalanced by the extra noise up front.

Hopefully I'll learn more about its handling this winter. Winter is for travelling--to and from snowy hill country.

Which leads to an I*N*V*I*T*A*T*I*O*N. Peg and I will ski in the Maryland-Virginia-Pennsylvania area as time, money, and snow permit in December, January and February. We plan to again make the New England ski scene either the week before or the week following Boscon. We haven't made positive plans yet as to area. Killington, where Peg learned last year, is unquestionably a great learning area. And lord knows there are many slopes there that I can't yet handle. Stowe has many attractions--but so do many other places in New Hampshire and Vermont. Imagine we'll try to get together with some of the people we skied with last year. But for some strange reason I'd still like to get some fans out. If you're interested let's try to get together.

US Treasury Department

Internal Revenue Service
Washington, DC 20224

November 5, 1969

Mr. Robert Pavlat
Management Analyst
Processing Branch

"Dear Bob,

"I'm happy to inform you that as of November 17, 1969, you will assume new responsibilities as Planning and Control Officer for this Division."

Funny about that. I had planned some job-derived material for the next couple of pages. I had not realized that I would be talking about the job I'm leaving. The new position was a distant possibility. Twenty-eight of us had been considered. Seven had gotten to the interview level. One of the seven was senior in grade to me and had been detailed to the job for almost a year. One other was senior in grade, and two others had far more experience in planning and control. And I completely blew the interview. The job looks like a demanding one. But it also looks like fun.

Promotions are rather nice too.

The past is prolog. Possibly my recent fun and games had something to do with my selection.

About a year ago the Branch I work for inherited the job of running the Internal Revenue Service's test computer. Exactly one person in the Branch technical staff knew anything about computers. Not a lot, just anything. Me. Now I know much more. Not a lot, just more. That's been my fun and games. I can't run it. I don't program it. I don't even use it very much. I just solve problems. Why is setup and halt time high? Should we change our maintenance schedule? Should we spend the money to replace our tape library? Some of the information I need is available through computer runs, though seldom in the form I want, so I get to figure out how to get at what I want. Manual compilation? Re-programming? Software?

Back in February we started seriously considering our second computer, one completely different from the one we then had. A new realm of problems was disclosed. Staffing. Training. Supplies. Room layout. Compatability between computers.

Something went wrong. We got out new computer, but about three months ahead of schedule. One became available locally which we

picked up on rental. It wasn't exactly what we'd wanted--it was really quite a bit more computer than we were planning for.

• One of my responsibilities was lining up supplies for the new computer. The change in both schedule and components had some affect of course, but the real fun was the things I hadn't anticipated. The new computer has a console typewriter. Did you know that console typewriters needed typewriter ribbons? Obvious-- but not in my plans. They need a special size paper too. Gee, I didn't know that. Strangely enough I can't think of anything else that I overlooked; the rest of the problems resulted mainly from the change in timing.

• As a simple example, we ran the old computer on a two-shift basis, with a total of six operators. Enough to cover leave, whether scheduled or not, and periods when overtime was required. Four experienced operators, two trainees. Throw in a new system, with no experienced operators: Continue operating the old system on the same two-shift basis, and start operating the new system on a one-shift basis. Comply with these requirements: The old system must be maintained at full production; Training on the new system should be completed in-so-far as possible by December 31; highest-grade (= most experienced) operators must receive priority in training on the new system; The new system requires a minimum of four operators on duty at any time (retaining two as the minimum for the old system); Hire up to the new staffing level but don't expect to be able to find experienced operators (nor could we); Plan for two-shift operation on the new computer within a month. We could not and did not succeed. And yet we didn't really fail. The new computer just happens to be quite a machine. The habitual IRS process is to run a job into the computer, process the job, then print or otherwise record the results. On the new computer we input a job and start processing; input another job and start processing; input a third job and start processing; input a fourth job and start processing as the first is reaching the printer; input a fifth job and start processing as the first is still on the printer and the second is calling for the punch; input a sixth job and start processing as the first is still on the printer, the second on the punch, and the third is on the other printer and one output tape; input a seventh job.... As of last week, we'd still been unable to overload the system, with the result that we're doing more than two shift's work in less than one shift. I've been in and out of a lot of computer rooms in the past eight years. This is the only machine that ever scared me. This is an embryonic HAL. Somewhere here, less a relay or two, a few million bytes of memory, and some communications equipment, is Heinlein's MIKE. I'm happy with our old computer. I can understand a panel with lights X X X X which mean (in one application) "you haven't turned on the key punch unit." I don't much care for the new computer which types out a message which, interpreted, says "I've finished internal processing of job number xy and as soon as az finishes using the card punch I'll punch out the results of my efforts."

Now I leave the fun and games to be a Planning and Control Officer, whatever that is. Management Information Division is one of the three divisions under the Assistant Commissioner (Data Processing). The Division has two branches (Processing and Reports Management) in Washington, and one in Detroit (IRS Data Center). At last count, there were 102 people in the Washington Branches. I don't recall the number in Detroit, but it's something around 600. The work is varied--payroll for all of the Treasury Department; working with operating divisions on such systems as maintaining control over the number of returns in the Audit inventory (design of forms for capturing the data, designing work flow, designing formats for the output of consolidated data, programming computer operations if the data is to be processed in Detroit, etc.); manual compilation of many reports, and so forth.

Some of the workload is static (more or less) and relatively easy to predict and schedule. Payroll, for example, is very straightforward. Designing a new reporting system is considerably less susceptible to determination of time or effort required. Anticipating a sudden decision that a given system needs a new system falls in the realm of astrology.

For reasons of budget, by January of this year we have to have a pretty good idea of our requirements for fiscal 1971. How many people and where. What computers. How much travel and overtime. The Planning and Control Officer has to work with the Branches on an integrated system to attempt to predict workload and measure, through the year, whether work requirements are being met.

I think I'll have fun. But I might miss some of the close association I've had with computers this past year.

Did you hear the Clarion call?

I have but two regrets about the St Louis con. That Peggy Rae couldn't go. And that one of the best could-have-been cons was marred by a hotel. In every respect that I can think of which was at all under the control of the committee, the convention was superb. Harlan severely marred the banquet, but here for a refreshing change the hotel's service made the damage minimal.

The most pleasing thing about Saint Louis con was commented on by the Browns. You could find people. You could talk at ease in a large or small group. There were parties enough, they seemed to be reasonably open to all, and yet there weren't the mobbed parties of some prior years. It was a friendly con.

If Elliot sent Harlan to Clarion, should one call that a Shorter trip?

These are o-l-d stencils, and the fo's are falling from this stencil like blue dandruff.

The 128th mailing:

DETOURS. I'm rather happy to see pornography barriers come crashing down. America has been hung up on sex for a long time. I hope that more freedom means less hang up, and therefore a reduction in harmful misuses of sex--principally rape. As OE I hope I don't have to decide whether to include "Kiss" or equivalent in FAPA. At the time the present constitution was written, Evans, Eney and I agreed that the nearest we come to determining mailability for FAPA was to turn to Federal law. At this time I have no idea of where Federal law stands on the mailability of Kiss or similar publications. The courts--and the Court--have resolved nothing. I'd probably decide that, if I could find something similar on DC newsstands I'd let it pass. At present, there seems to be no prohibition against anything on DC newsstands.

STUPEFYING STORIES 80. The world is a year older than your poll results, and I think it's a different world. At least I feel the "fear of entering hazardous area" positive response among my co-workers is much higher this year than it would have been last, even considering that DC was quieter this year than last. Or maybe I'm just closer to the problem (two friends' cars vandalized, one girl molested.)

MOONSHINE. I know of no fanzine contents index by Swisher. He might initially have planned something like this, but later (c. 1946) was having so much trouble just keeping up with fanzines that I'm sure he'd not have tackled anything more extensive.

RAMBLING FAP 44. A long time ago (about May 1955) I made up a listing of members by mailing with which they had joined. I've even managed to find the card file (ah, the advantages of a house with room to store necessary items like this in their own little niche). Without updating except to delete cards for people no longer in FAPA, here's the list by mailing. In some cases, people were in and out and in again; in these cases the person is listed by the mailing of his latest FAPA incarnation:

PRE MAILING 42: Boggs, Moskowitz, Perdue, Speer, Warner, Wesson.
MAILING 42: Woolston. (Feb 48)
49: Silverberg. (Nov 49)
50: Pavlat. (Feb 50)
51: Marion Breen. (May 50). (Also in mlg. 45-49).
51: Evans. (Also in earlier).
52: Eney. (Aug 50).
53: Hoffman. (Nov 50).
54: Tucker. (Feb 51). (Bob had also been in earlier, but he dropped out in mailing 43.)
57: Martinez (Nov 51).
58: Carr. (Feb 52).
59: Calkins. (May 52).
63: Rotsler. (May 53). (Bill was also in mailings 42 thru 62, but his membership in non-continuous.)
65: Grennell. (Nov 53).
67: Ballard. (May 54). (Also in 54-58.)
70: Lyons. (Feb 55).
71: Raeburn, White. (May 55).
73: Georgina Clarke. (Nov 55).

I count Grennell as #19 on this basis--either DAG or I apparently missed something. Was Woolston out for a while? !! I'm willing to do what I can to research the prior 41 mailings, but my collection is

incomplete. !! Your comment to Main was perfect ("And I'm not the moving on type....")

RAMBLING FAP 45. A car-pool member came here this spring from Anchorage. He and his wife had both lived there for many years--I gather his wife might have been born there. He and she faunch to return as you faunch for Colorado. More the people than the country I-gather, though both are important. The girl teaches school, and finds it near-impossible to adjust to the undisciplined brats that we easterners find normal. From the pictures I've seen of their area in Anchorage, it's very much like eastern Colorado/southwestern Wyoming.

• HORIZONS. I really doubt if FAPA correspondence is worth retention. I have a slight pile of it (perhaps a linear foot) accumulated from various times and sources, and serves no earthly purpose. If memory serves I passed on some very early material to McPhail--we probably should reclaim that (early records not duplicated by publication in some form in the FA; today's FA far better represents what's going on in FAPA than did the FA's for FAPA's first ten years.) I imagine the most-nearly complete FAPA collections are yours, Speer's, Moskowitz's, the ex-Ellick collection, and mine. Mine's quite incomplete from roughly mailing 20 thru 41. I haven't tried in the past five years to complete the missing parts, but I'm now more than eager to do so, even thru Xerox copies. !! Whacky I 1 is an old indexing problem. My only prior note on editorship of this says that it may be Unger since the paper is the same as that used by Unger. !! Milty Rothman is still well and active, tho not in fandom. Some years ago Peggy and I approached Milty for his old FAPA mailings (this long before Peggy and I got married). Milty had junked them, very shortly before our requests.

Kathy just gave me "a baby for me to love." Ever try typing a stencil with a doll on your lap?

DESCANT. Try Greek lemon soup someday. I've had it just once, as prepared by Peggy's mother, and found it really fantastic--a slightly lemony taste, about as a good onion soup has a slightly oniony taste--with body and character.

HOW ARE THEY ALL ON ZUBENELGENUBI IV? Welcome to FAPA. I'm not going to comment specifically, but I like what I've seen of your output.

SNICKERSNEE. I've sorted almost down to the S's in the fanzines Bob. Which Spaceships are you still missing--I'll probably have most of them. (The ones you got from me before were from my duplicates, which were easier to find than the main run.) !! What's a heffalump? !! Bob Silverberg is a fink for letting the eighth page interfere with his story.

But time presses me too. The miling (make that "Mailing") is more important than another page here. And so as the sun sinks slowly into the western sea of mimeograph ink....