

Burblings for February 1986. FAPA. Charles Burbee, P.O. Box 1128 Garden Grove, CA 92642. Artwork by John Burbee.

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If I had to cut stencils for this thing it might never get done. Imagine, in the old days--the Forties--I kind of got a heady got-to-write urge when I smalled a stencil or a can of mimeo ink. Right now my mimeo sits in my bedroom among a lot of old phonograph records. It's covered with a plastic kitchen table cloth and hasn't turned out an inky sheet for some years. Since I am the type who never throws anything away I will have it twenty years from now.

Got a card about a month ago from the Municipal Court, City and County of San Francisco, which said my car had been illegally parked during street cleaning hours and I should either appear in court to dispose of the matter or send \$13 bail right away and if I didn't send the \$13 by the deadline, the bail would go to \$25 and if I didn't pay that I might have a bench warrant issued for my arrest. I wrote on the back of the card that I hadn't been in their city on the date specified, and neither had my car or its plates. I'd gone out to examine the car for missing plates soon as I got the card. I signed it where it said "I declare the foregoing is true, under penalty of perjury" and sent it back.

A week or so later I got a slip headed "Final Notice of Illegal Parking and Intention to Notify Department of Motor Vehicles" and besides mentioning a bench warrant for my arrest, told me that if I didn't clear this thing up I'd have one hell of a time ever re-registering the car. They didn't put it exactly that way.

Well, since my naked word wasn't good enough for the City and County of... I called the local office of the DMV, told them the story and asked what I should do.

"Come in," they said, "and we'll run you through the computer."

So I went in the next day to be run through the computer.

See next issue: BURBEE THROUGH THE COMPUTER AND WHAT HE FOUND THERE. It starts out: "Curiouser and curiouser," thought Burbee as he gazed about him in Computerland."

Next issue? I can't wait that long. Let's tell what really happened. I went to the DMV and went to a desk where four women were working. I told my story to the one who paid attention to me and she told me to go to the end of the counter and the supervisor would see me. I went there and a charming lady, the supervisor, listened to my story and said, "Write them a letter telling them what you told me and send the citation back with it. Have the slip filled out properly and sign it. Staple the citation a couple of times. That'll keep them from just automatically running it through the computer and somebody'll have to look at it in person."

I said, "So if someone looks at my letter maybe they'll clear me of this thing, but if they unstaple that citation and run it through their machine it'll just tell them the same thing they already believe, and they'll send me another citation."

"Probably," she said. "Send it back. If they keep coming, send them all back."

I did what she said. That was twelve days ago. No word from the yet. Is this the end of the story?

...I Was Sitting There Dying...

I was sitting there dying. There I was, sitting in front of twenty-five or thirty people who'd come to listen to me as I told stories and whatever came to mind, acting like the "raconteur" described in the program booklet. They were looking at me expectantly and I knew I was supposed to perk up and start to entertain them. After all, they'd paid money to get into this Convention and they deserved their money's worth. And I had nothing to give them.

It was LOSCON 12, 1985 in a room at the Pasadena Hilton, Sunday December 1 and I was supposed to go into action at 2:00 PM, which was right now. At that moment I devoutly wished I'd said "No" when Bill Rotsler asked me about a month before, to be on the program. At first I was incredulous that anybody would seriously ask me. What would I talk about, I asked. Anything that comes to mind, he had said.

"You mean talk to a dozen or so people about just any old thing?"

"Sure," he said. "You can do it. I've seen you do it a hundred times."

"Well, yes, at a party I might tell some stories but that's a different thing from standing up in front of an audience at an announced time and place and trying to entertain them for an hour or so."

Bill insisted I could do it. But Bill is no ordinary person. He can run a panel on HOW TO FLIRT for women only, and HOW TO FLIRT for men only and have a critique on both panels for both men and women, and get away with it. People actually give him a standing ovation for this sort of thing. He probably thinks that just about anybody could do that. He seemed supremely confident that I could entertain a group of people for an hour.

"Hell," I said. "I can't stand or sit up there all by myself and amuse a bunch of people."

"I'll sit up there with you," he said.

"I don't want you. I want to be the star."

I threw away a first-class man for the sake of a cheap joke.

So now, without Bill Rotsler to charm the audience for me, I sat there staring at my notes and slowly dying.

Professional entertainers will tell you there is nothing in the world worse than standing there dying. It's the worst feeling in the world.

Why had I gotten myself into such a predicament? When Bill had first asked me, I'd finally said, "Let me think about it for a while."

By "A while" I meant a week or a month or more. But he said "Tell me by Tuesday because that's the printing deadline for the program booklet." Tuesday was only three days away. So for a couple days I paced up and down talking to myself, "Burb, tell the man No. You're no public speaker. Oh, you did OK talking to fifty or so people at a Union meeting. You lost the election and got fired for union activity. Your speech was well-received but the patient died. And you did OK at the Pacificon in 1974 or 1975 with your Fan Goh talk, even though you were so nervous your hands shook so badly you couldn't read your notes and had to ad lib until your hands settled down. Trouble with you, Burb, is stagefright. You can't do this thing. Or can you? Can you?"

Outside opinion was what I wanted and needed. I called Elmer Perdue. "Meyer," I said, "could I hold a fan audience for about an hour talking about anything that comes to mind?"

"No way, Meyer," said Elmer.

I asked another local fan, Dik Daniels.

"No way, Burb," he said.

"Two guys I've known for a total of seventy-five years don't think I can do it. And I don't think I can, either. But Bill Rotsler thinks I can. That's three against one."

So I called Bill and told him I'd do it.

The die was cast. My appearance would now be announced in print. I was committed. I had to appear. I couldn't let Bill down. He probably had a time convincing the LOSCON committee--"That old bastard Burbee? Forget it." But maybe Bill had said, "But look, kids, the old ba--the old gentleman is seventy years old. How many more chances to get him will you have?" So they said all right. I started taking notes. For days I took notes so I'd have plenty by zero hour.

But could I sit up there alone? I'd rejected Bill for no good reason. How about some fresh faces--people that didn't usually appear on programs, like, say, Elmer Perdue and Bob Bradford? Who are they? Local fans who've been around since the 1940's. Elmer and I have done fanzines together, and Bradford as a professional Catholic is fine to argue with. He might be something to astonish and amaze the onlookers.

I called Elmer and asked him to sit up there. I asked him to take notes. He said he'd be there. "Take notes," I said, "about me, good or bad but interesting. I'm the star."

I called Bob Bradford and he agreed to show. I told him to take notes, too.

A few days before the Con I call/^{ed}them both and asked them if they were taking notes. "No," said Elmer. "No," said Bradford, "I'll think of something."

I thought it might be a good idea to have a shakedown cruise to see how we worked together. But we didn't have one. Could have used one. My fault, I fear.

I asked Elmer's permission to tell the story of how we met in December 1944. "I need your OK because you look kind of bad, but it is a good story with semi-legendary critters like Myrtle Douglas, James Lynn Kepner, Forrest J Ackerman, and maybe Phil Bronson, T. Bruce Yerke and Sam "Gankbottom" Russell."

"Go ahead and tell the story," said Elmer.

On December 1 I arrived at the Pasadena Hilton to find that Bob and Elmer were ahead of me. Did my heart good to look at their angelic faces. I owe them each a small one. I looked around for Dik Daniels, who'd more or less promised to come. He'd volunteered to take video movies of the event. But the evening before he'd been rear-ended twice on the freeway in the rain--a rather spicy thought until you realize it means his auto was hit in the rear twice--the second time by a drunken young lady "very pretty" who said she was tired and lay down on the freeway in the rain. He said he doubted that his car could make the trip and besides he had a bad tire and no spare and no tire jack, so not to depend on him. So it was not surprising that he didn't show.

When Dik told me he might not make it, I asked Elmer if he had a small tape recorder because I'd lost mine and I wanted an audio recording of the event to transcribe and put into FAPA. He said he did and he tooted and fooled with it after the program began and I realized that he'd bought it at a police auction and was just now learning how to operate it. He could have used a shakedown cruise. He missed the first twenty minutes or so, and had the volume so low he had a lot of mistakes in his transcription.

I got a brief look at his transcription the other week. He had me saying "Our town was so small our school bus was a scapegoat." I corrected it to read: "Our town was so small our school bus was a skateboard."

So Dik didn't show but Bob and Elmer did, and fifteen minutes later we were ready to go. Elmer according to the program booklet was supposed to start me off and so he did--by telling the story of how he and I met in December 1944!

Feeling somewhat miffed at this casual theft, I glanced down at my notes--I had a comforting stack of half-sheets loaded with small block-printing. I couldn't see them clearly enough to read anything. I looked harder. Actually, I couldn't make out so much as one word.

And that's when I started to die.

What had happened? I could read my notes at home but I couldn't read them here. Why not? Because at home I'd written them at my kitchen table with 120 watts of light three feet over my head. I'd used a fine-line ballpoint pen, small block-print. Clear enough under 120 watts, they were mere blurs under the yellow golf-ball-sized hotel lights over my shoulder. I couldn't read them. I said a couple of times, desperately, "I can't see these notes. I just can't see these notes." I was in a half-panic state. I was sitting there dying...the worst feeling in the world, and somebody in the audience spoke up and said, "Tell us how you made love to a glass of water."

Was that Bill Rotsler or Len Moffatt? I don't remember, but I should, because that person saved me. He rescued me from having a great blow to my psyche. I told the story, and then I believe Terry Carr asked me to tell about the fella who defecated from the top of an oil derrick, and with Bill and Len and Terry leading me by the hand, so to speak, I was off and running. They kept me going for seventy-five minutes.

If ever I learn to pray I am going to pray for Bill Rotsler and Terry Carr and Len Moffatt. I think they need all the praying they can get.

John Stanley Woolston 86-4223

That number is on the Missing Persons Report I made to the Garden Grove Police Dept a little while ago because nobody's seen Stan since January 25 about 9 PM. Stan is an ex-member of FAPA.

I was driving him to a party that night at the LASFS clubroom in North Hollywood. I was going by a route June Moffatt had given me as better than the one I'd contemplated. June never dreamed that a California boy could get lost on the California freeway system. I did, though, and phoned the LASFS for help. Ed Cox gave me nice directions which I somehow fouled up because I went astray again and got new directions, and this time, at long last, we were in the proper area. I'd been there only once about six years before so nothing looked familiar. Stan said he didn't recognize anything. I pulled over to check street numbers. They indicated we'd overshot our mark some, so I turned around. I said to Stan, "We're on the correct side of the street and going in the right direction because the numbers are odd and getting smaller. We'll cruise slowly and keep the eyeballs peeled; we can't miss it." Stan, justifiably irked, irritated, frustrated, exasperated, said, "Back and forth. Back and forth. You're going in the wrong direction but you have to have your way. Let me out. I can do better walking than you can driving. Let me out. You're looking at signs and I'm looking at numbers. Let me out."

So let him out and a few blocks later found the club.

His last words still ring in my ears. Just before he swung off in the wrong direction he said, "I'll see you there if you ever get there."

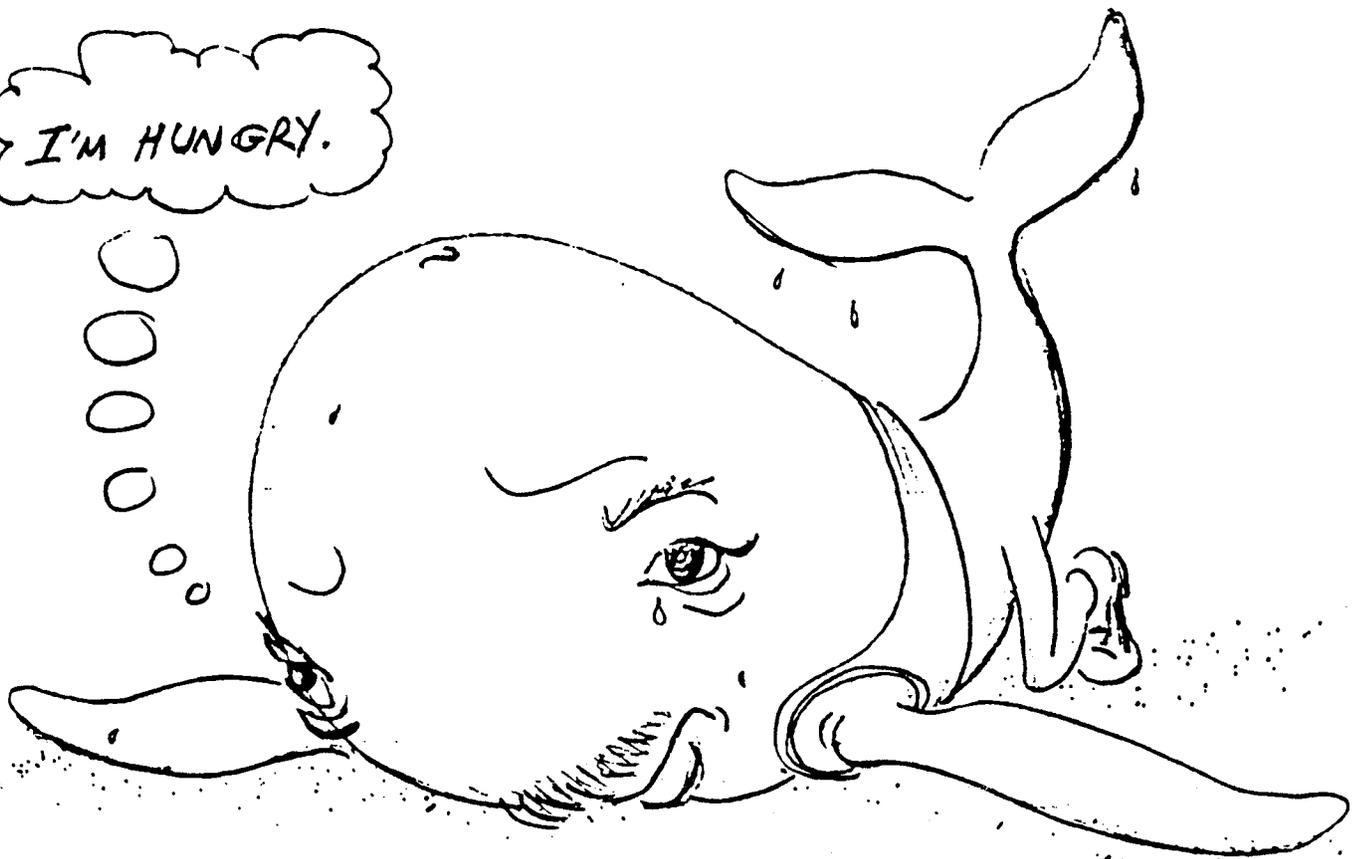
But he never got there.

That was eleven days ago and nobody's seen him since.

BOB-O
THE
LAND
WHALE
COLORING
BOOK

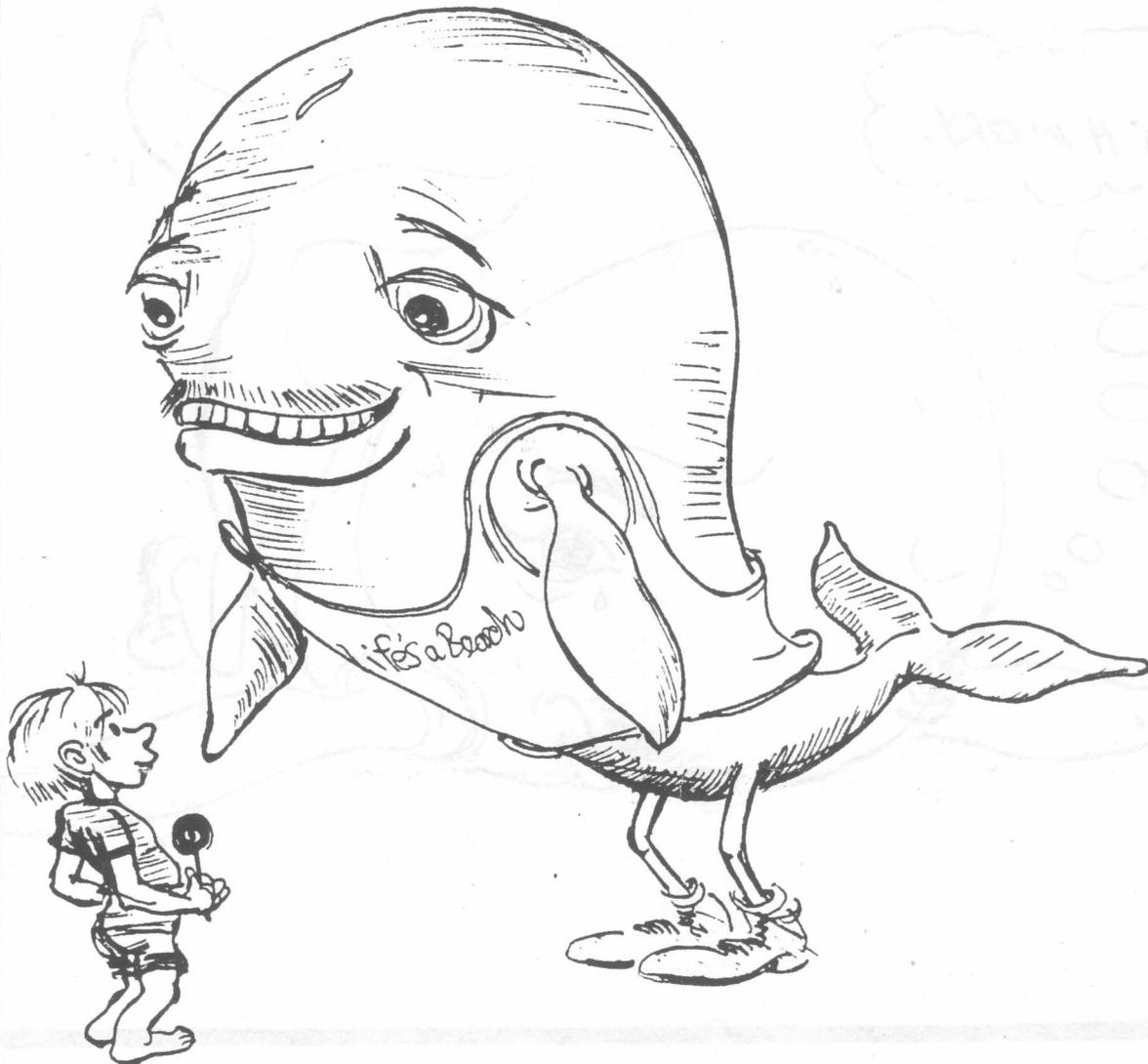
BOB-O BECAME A LAND WHALE WHEN HE
WAS BEACHED ON THE SANDS OF SEAL BEACH.

I'M HUNGRY.



BOB-O THE LAND WHALE CRAWLED BACK
FROM THE SEA BECAUSE "LIFE'S A BEACH"
(HIS TANKTOP SAID).

BOB-O SAYS HE LIKES KIDS. BOB-O SAID:



"SO, KID. WHATTAYA GOT TO EAT?"

BOB-O SAYS HE LIKES GIRLS, TOO.
BOB-O SAID:

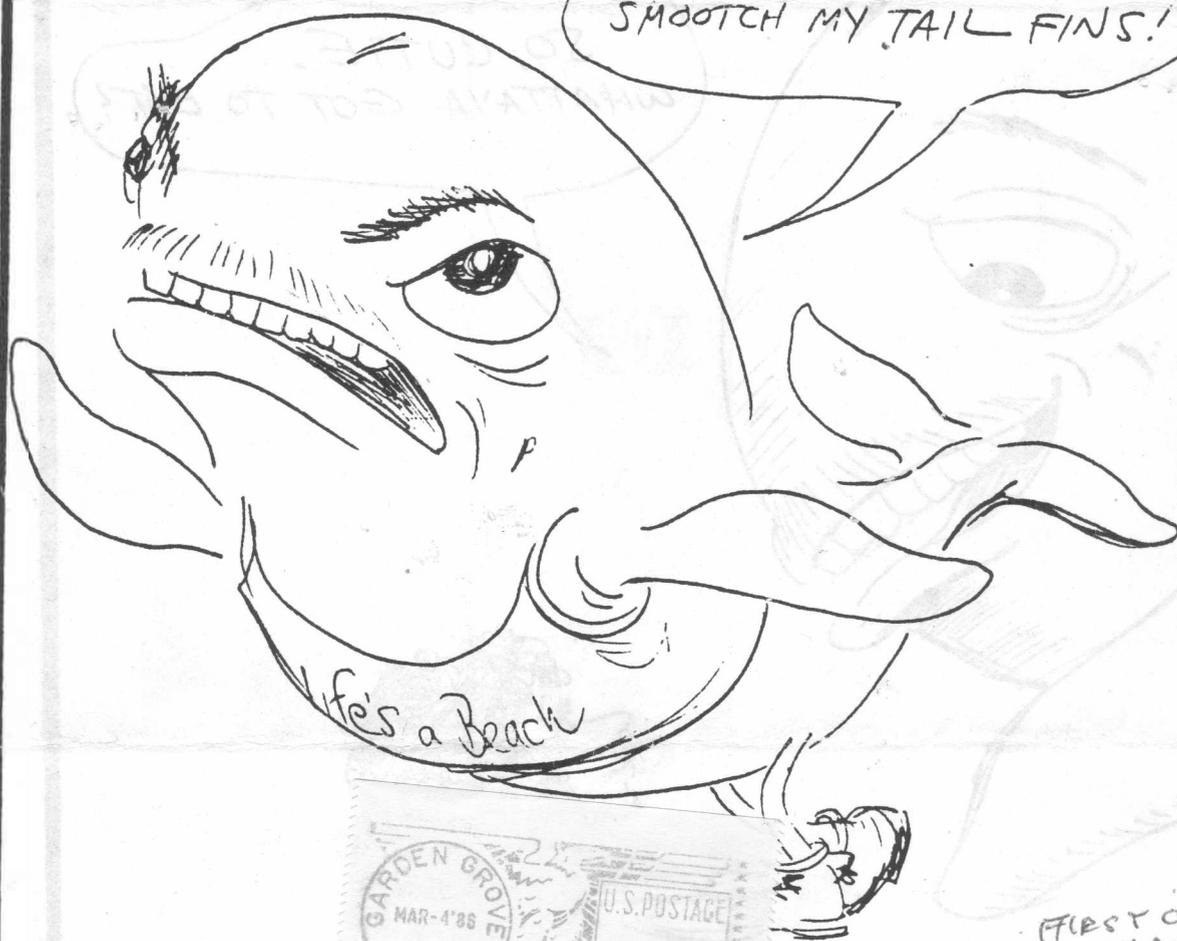


SO, CUTIE.
WHATTAYA GOT TO EAT?



BOD-O THE LAND WHALE HAS FEELINGS, TOO,
(HE SAYS). HE IS A SENSITIVE AND TENDER
SOUL. WHEN HURT, HE "PRETENDS" TO BE ANGRY.

NOTHING FOR ME TO EAT?!!
SMOOTCH MY TAIL FINS!



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