

The

Cruise

of the

"Foo Foo Special Jr."

- B Y -

Art Widner Jr.

THE CRUISE OF THE "FOOFOO SPECIAL JR"

by Art Widner Jr

The saddest words of tongue or pen, are these: "I might've thumbed."

On Fri morn, the 3rd of July, I finished working the "graveyard shift" from midnight to 8AM. After a number of last minute preparations, I finally set out at 10:20AM, with the mileage on the shiny new speedometer of my Raleigh three-speed bicycle reading 83.9.

"Junior", the former property of one Louis Russell Chauvenet, behaved well, and I averaged 15 mph without effort in spite of working (well, staying awake, then) all the previous nite.

When I hit US#1, the relation of road surface to pedaling effort immediately became apparent. I had been satisfied with my progress on macadam and crush rock, but when the wheels touched the smooth concrete I seemed to shoot ahead as if I had been given a tangible push. I sailed along about 20 mph for a few miles until the novelty wore off, then settled back to a little over 15. I also tried to catch a lumbering truck a quarter of a mile ahead as I entered the main road, but a sustained spurt of 25 and slightly better failed to do it, so I gave up that idea.

Farther on, the driver stopped for lunch and started again just after I passed. A steep hill loomed ahead, and I hurried a bit to get part way up, then loafed until the truck crawled up beside me. I grabbed the back and got myself a free lift.

At the summit, I perceived there was another hill ahead, so I decided to stay with the truck. The driver started pouring it on, in order to make the next one in high, or a reasonably accurate facsimile. A slight downgrade and a long level stretch saw us making 40 per. I was enjoying myself, watching the scenery whiz by, until I happened to glance at my speedometer. Egad! I couldn't have released my grip more quickly had I discovered I was holding the southeast tentacle of an octopus.

Things started to happen. I only had one hand on the handlebars for a moment, and just then I came out from behind the shelter of the truck and the wind hit me.

I weewawed all over that road for about 15 seconds like a tank with a full crew, a nest full of hornets, and a stuck hatch, before I regained full control. 'Stoo bad none of fandom's camera fiends were there to click the expression on my face. I must have had my mouth open and my eyes buggin' out like a tromped-on toad-frog.

I made a resolution not to hitch on the back of any more trucks, and besides no more came along at propitious moments.

After much sweating up hill and down dale, but not yet really fatigued, I came to a large area of smoky haze; and upon entering same, I found that it was Providence.

As I vibrated across a cobblestoned bridge, I saw a tall church steeple thrusting up darkly on a hill in the distance. It looked forbidding and unnatural, and I thot it must have been the one Lovecraft wrote about in The Haunter of the Dark.

I day-dreamed a bit over the pleasure that might have been mine, to find College Street and spend an hour or two in the company of "The Last Gentleman". I kicked at a mongrel yapping and snapping at my ankles and thot of what a strange world it was, where Lovecrafts die and Kummings go on living--and what is worse, writing.

Cities are a tedious bore on a bicycle, and I was glad to find

RL#3 and leave the sprawling warrens behind. I was also glad to stop and rest in the suburb of Cranston to scribble a few postcards and absorb my first liquid since leaving home. I was dry. When I started to drink, the lemonade went "Ssssssssss!" he hissed.

Here I began to realize the enormity of my bone-headedness in taking along a Boy Scout knapsack full of ten or fifteen pounds of clothes. The straps chafed my shoulders, a slight wrinkle in the canvas busily occupied itself with trying to wear a hole in my back, and its weight pulled up the sleeves of my polo shirt, so that I got a wicked three-inch band of sunburn on my upper arms.

Shortly after, I passed Zilch's garage. I had always thot that Zilch was as mythical as Milquetoast, Throttlebottom, or Pinchpenny, but it appears to be the goods. I wonder if I would have dared make inquiries if I had thot of it at the time.

As I pushed southward, not so enthusiastically now, the sun came out, and my troubles began. My rear tire had taken a severe wallop someplace and, unbeknownst to me, developed a slow leak. It probably went down to about 20 lbs, where it stayed because the hole was too small to let that low pressure thru.

When I began to walk up hills no steeper than those I had previously made in second with ease, I thot I was just getting tired and became quite disgusted with myself. The hills got bigger and the tire got flatter, and I was forced to rest every five or ten miles. After 25 miles or so of this agony I finally discovered my Nemesis.

After I had pumped it up I kicked myself across the road and back for not thinking of checking the tires before. The sun was getting low and I still had 20 miles to make New London, my goal for the day. The tire started to leak faster, but now I was on my guard and managed to keep up fair pressure with the help of an occasional filling station.

Still, progress was slowed, and the last faint light had disappeared from the sky when I worked up over a hill and breathed a sigh of relief to behold the lights of New London beneath me.

NL is a dimout area, and I had a thrilling ride down an extremely steep and lengthy hill, guided only by the taillight of a car in front of me and my own feeble spotlight. Roller coasters are tame in comparison, and I suppose I shouldn't have taken such a risk; but after the laboring up I had done, I hated like the devil to cut into my hard-won advantage by putting on the brakes.

I didn't realize how bushed I was until I got off and applied for a room at the YMCA. I was ready to drop, but I was also hungry and uncomfortably sweaty and dirty. I managed to summon enuf energy to go downstairs for a shower.

I think that shower will always rank high among the most pleasant memories of my lifetime. The hot water soothed both my mind and body into a blissful state of half-consciousness. I stayed under it for at least a half-hour before I could rouse myself enuf to consider the duties of soaping and scrubbing. No better nepenthe for my case could have been concocted by Maal Dweb himself.

With 50% of my strength returned, I bethot myself of food. Leaving the locker room, I spied a scale. "Hmm, betcha I lost five pounds today." I had weighed 182 the day before.

I surrendered a bas-relief of Honest Abe and watched the pointer bounce around. Gulp! I staggered upstairs, muttering to myself. The pointer had indicated 172! I checked with another scale, and it proved correct.

Jeepers! A pound for every ten miles! It's a good thing I wasn't going to the Pacificon via bike. At that rate, according to my carefully checked and rechecked figures, I would have disappeared complete-

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ly at 1820 miles, or just this side of Dallas, Tex. . . .

In the morning, I was furnished with an excellent illustration of how a fantasy fictional mummy feels when revived after being dead for two or three milleniums.

On the road again, I loosened up a bit, but I still knew I had been somewhere. The tire was completely flat when I started, and it soon lost the air I pumped into it. Nothing to do but fix it.

I buzzed along fairly well for a while after with my mind free (not having to worry about the tire), until I ran into a stiff south-east breeze which came in off the sound and slowed me down to a no-loafing ten mpM. This was annoying, as I had expected to make good time on the level.

The going got tougher and tougher, and I was soon walking on all but the slightest grades. The tire was all fixed, I told myself, so it must be that the breeze and the grind itself was wearing me out. About ten miles from West Haven, I felt the breeze slack off as I coasted down a long hill. But still I didn't gain speed. I lackadaisically rolled along at a mere 20. It couldn't be the tire so soon again, but it was.

I pulled into a garage and inspected the casing. Yup, there was another break thru which daylight could be seen. Ho hum. . .

Wearily I alighted at 170 Washington Ave, around 1:30, having taken eight hours to cover a measly 50 miles.

But Trudy was home, and so was Lou, and the Kuslan hospitality was up to the mark. Nice cold beer was administered to the sufferer and followed up with a good square meal.

We talked of rocket ships and women's slacks and cabbage-headed fans with wings, and all too soon it was four o'clock and I had to mount my metal steed once more.

Plenty tired was I, and the pain of that little strip of sunburn was becoming unbearable, especially when the sun shone on it. I suddenly thot of the old polo shirt I had been using for a rag, and I tore off the crummy sleeves. But how to affix them to my own sleeves? My kingdom for a safety pin! Finally I contrived the makeshift business of rolling up my pants legs and using the discarded clips to put around my arms. They grasped the raw flesh a little too tightly to suit me, but at least it was better than having it cooked some more.

One break was the light traffic due to gas rationing. Where I stopped for a drink, the woman told me that last year on the Fourth of July, 48,000 cars had passed thru the toll gates of the Merritt Parkway, but this year it had dwindled to a mere 8,000.

I could believe it too, after the startling number of forlorn, boarded-up filling stations and roadside lunchrooms I had passed. In the open country, only Howard Johnson and the Greyhound Post Houses appeared to survive; and even those looked rather futile, with less than a dozen cars in their parking lots, where before they had clustered like flies around a lump of sugar.

The road stretched ahead monotonously. I neither knew nor cared where I would spend the night, but leaned heavily on the handle bars and moved my feet mechanically, my mind in a trance-like condition. Twilight found me wavering into Norwalk, and a smart-looking YMCA building with a diner beside it brought me to, and somehow I made the effort necessary to stop.

A shower helped some, but it didn't feel like the one of the previous nite. It was sort of a trickly affair in a small closet, and I couldn't really deluge myself as before.

As the kniks worked their way out of my muscles in a grey, foggy dawn, I ruminated ruefully on the excellent quality of my hindsight, wondering how I could have been so stupid as to take that thrice-accursed knapsack along and why I hadn't stripped the bike of half the useless gadgets it sported. Oh well.

However, I did better than I had expected to and arrived at the Whitestone Bridge connecting the Bronx with Flushing about noontime. Another hour would see my journey's end. As I started to pedal down the complicated twists and turns leading to the bridge entrance, I stopped in consternation.

There was a sign that read: NO TRUCKS, TRAILERS, PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLES, KIDDIE KARS, HORSES, PONIES, GOATS, LAME TURTLES, HOMELESS SNAILS, or AGED AND INFIRM BEDBUGS ALLOWED ON THIS BRIDGE.

Nuts. (Actually and literally I was not so concise or euphemistic about expressing my opinion of the bridge managers, but "nuts" will have to suffice in this account until people become more broad-minded.)

So, putting a hex on the sign which turned all the letters into Sanskrit, I disgustedly set out for Triboro Bridge, ten miles farther on.

All went well until I grabbed a truck at a stoplite. The next stoplite chanced to be a pedestrian operated affair, which the yap wanting to cross the street chose to operate and step off the curb when we were ten feet away. The truck stopped very well; in fact, I congratulated the driver on his brakes as I picked myself up off the sidewalk and the bike from underneath the truck. My ankle is still a bit sore from where it knocked down a mailbox.

After this, I made a resolution not to hang on the back of any more trucks. Besides, no more came along at the right moment.

Triboro Bridge, with a heavy headwind blowing along it, seemed to stretch out to eternity on the level and uphill side. Downhill, it was much too short. It was the same way coming back. Damned clever, these New Yorkers.

Ah. Brooklyn, here I come. (It says in the script.) My map had blown away when I was hanging onto the truck, and I thot I could procure another one easily. But gastations were sparse, and all closed. I followed my nose.

Finally I blundered on one that was open. Ah, I thot, this beautiful map of New York showing me every street will solve my difficulties pronto. Besides, the attendant gave me explicit directions which I followed faithfully. Sure enuf, a few minutes later I came out on Grand Avenue, which was where I innocently believed I wanted to go.

The only trouble was that it was Grand Ave in Queens instead of Brooklyn. On its ten mile cobblestone length, I jolted out what few brains had not been fried searching for my number, until I returned to Queens Boulevard which I had left an hour before. One less inhibition and I would have sat down on the curbstone and blubbered.

After this, I rode along with a glassy stare, making resolutions at every intersection not to try any more short cuts. Besides, there weren't any.

I must give my aunt credit for being a woman with iron nerves. I know very well that even if he did have a bicycle and was expected, I would not have admitted the purple-faced, drooling madman that was I. I would have shrieked bloody murder and called for the squirrel squad, but immediately.

Under her kindly ministrations, it was only 36 hours before I was nursed back to a semblance of sanity. That is, I could feed myself, tie my shoelaces, and answer simple questions. However, it was decided

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that I should wait a bit longer before being trusted to the subway system, so my cousin brought me over to Manhattan in his car and gently deposited me on the doorstep of the **Electrical Testing Labs.**

Contrary to popular belief, H C Koonig (pronounced KAY-nig) is not a giant, red-eyed mongoose who crouches, snarling, over a mountainous pile of lurid stf pulps, subsisting entirely on a diet of hisses. (Take your pick of the antecedents, Heck; I have a large stock.) Hiss Catcher is a blonde, slender, affable guy, who doesn't look that old, but must be, because he has adolescent chillun and has been roading and collecting fantasy since way back when. He has also worked at the ETL long enuf to be important enuf to be able to take half an afternoon off to talk to wandering jerks like me and show them all over the joint. If I could remember half of what he showed me and explained to me I would be rather smart.

We discussed Smith, and Weinbaum, and Jenkins, and the FAPA, and Vollhoim, etc, while a thunder squall boomed about the canyon without. When the dripping sun came out, I was solicitously tucked into a cross-town bus with directions for Campbell's office that even I could understand and given a copy of THE NEW ADAM to keep me amused.

It did.

I was informed by Mr. Weinbaum that lead left out in the weather for long periods becomes slightly radioactive; in fact, the whole story more or less hinged on that alleged "fact". It didn't seem quite reasonable to me, so I asked Campbell to check up on it.

JWC said it was just the opposite and supplied one of his delightful anecdotes to prove it. He seems to have an inexhaustible supply of information on every subject. Altho it is alleged that only one man has ever read the Encyclopedia Britannica from cover to cover, I wouldn't be surprised to find that JWC also has not only read it, but memorized it as well.

He told of the ancient cathedrals in Europe that have lead roofs which have been exposed for centuries to the elements. In the summer the lead expands, and in the winter it contracts. It is so heavy that in each case the action is downward, so that pretty soon the lead is sticking out around the edges like unfinished pie crust. This used to be trimmed off and put back on the top.

Mined lead invariably contains minute quantities of radium or other radioactive elements and so is not much use in making delicate instruments such as Gieger Counters, which are extremely sensitive to anything of that nature. But the lead trimmed from the church roofs is completely "dead". Not a spark of anything radioactive remains. So the church officials have been selling their trimmings to the scientists for \$15 per pound and putting nice fresh, newly-mined lead back on top at \$8 per pound, and everybody is happy. Heheh.

I also like the way he illustrates his speech with his hands. No, not the ordinary vague, waving motions that most people use, but a 100% efficient auxiliary to his tongue. He makes you see what he's talking about. JWC would make an excellent teacher, I think.

I had arrived late, so there wasn't much time to talk before Campbell closed his desk and departed for his New Jersey home.

Once again I entrusted myself to the underground labyrinths of the city, and behold, I was soon "home" with no trouble at all!

New Yorkers don't appreciate their subway the way they should. At least not until they've come to Boston. I was perpetually amazed at the distances one could cover in a short time, and for a nickel, too. In Boston, it takes two hours to cover 20 miles, and it seems like you have to shell out a dime every time you turn around. Wonderful place, New York . . .

That evening I went out to see Julie Unger. I got on the surface trolley instead of the elevated, however, and was several blocks past my stop before I realized it. This boner cost me a half hour of wasted time, as I was hoping to reach Dahill Rd before the blackout went into effect.

There were a half dozen people in the car, and the usual banalities were exchanged when lites in the neighborhood did not go out promptly. 'Twas sort of peaceful to sit there in the cool dark and watch the busy fireflies that were the airaid wardens come and go, and leave more complete blackness behind them.

On the sidewalk near us, an arw flagged a big car to a halt and commanded them to shut off their lights. Evidently they were bigwigs of some sort, because they proteated, altho they had no authority to be around and about in the blackout. The trolley operator became quite incensed. "Ought to have a coupla bombs fall on 'em," he growled.

The car continued to argue with the arw. "Let's boo d' bums," suggested the trolley operator. So we booted d' bums. They shut up. "Thanx," said the arw and went off to become another firefly in the distance. . . .

So when the lights came on again, I went back and found Julie's place, and we gabbed quite a bit, and I tried to convince him he should put something better in the FAPA, but I didn't succeed, and then I looked at my watch which said ten minutes of eleven and his wife yawned and I said I better get going and they said wait a minute and have some canteloupe and ice cream and I had some and we talked some more and I looked at my watch again and it still said ten minutes of eleven and I said gosh and Julie went and looked at the bedroom clock which said 1:30 AM. So Julie went to the trolley stop with me and we missed one and made arrangements to meet at Doc Lowndes' office the next day at lunch time.

But he didn't show up because he got a job and had to go right to work, so I had lunch with Doc and Scott Feldman and a guy who worked withem but wasn't a fan. After we drove the waitress crazy with double talk, we went back to the office, and I looked over the covers for the next Future and Science Fiction Quarterly, and Doc gave me Joe Gilbert's story about Joe Destiny or somebody so I would keep quiet and he could get some work done. I was telling him just why Joe's story was lousy, when damon knight came in.

I observed to my sorrow that the demon has become completely Futurized. Not that that is such a horrible fate in itself, but I liked him better as a guy from Hood River than a guy from New York. I mean I still like him fine, but I wish he hadn't changed so much.

Anyhow, damon got some money that was due him, and I went along when he left. We went up to Central Park for damon's daily excercise, viz; rowing about the lake for an hour to build himself up. As we got into the boat, a young lady of approximately two tons got into another boat nearby, presumably to build herself down. Ah, Life--I thot.

So we rode around and exchanged stories, a few of which were clean, and played TSOHG, which is GHOST played the hard way, especially when you run up against something like osteomyelitis, with which I stuck the demon. Then we went downtown and played stinky pinky on the bus. D is quite brilliant at the game.

That nite I met some friends of my cousin who were stf readers, and we played Monopoly and discussed stories. The fellow likes UNKNOWN best, while his wife prefers FFM. I have sent them a copy of Fanfare, but I doubt if they are fan material. But what a cutthroat game of Monopoly they play! I've never seen the like. I was figuratively

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dressed in a barrel before I knew what was going on. Well, maybe next time I'll be better prepared.

The next day Doc and I were supposed to meet a gang at a sea food place uptown, which we did. I think Damon came along too. We went up to Norton's office, but nobody seemed to be around except Norton and Dorothy Lea Tina who reads manuscripts or something for Popular Pubs. So the four of us went to the sea food joint, hoping the others would show. They did.

Fred Pohl arrived soonly, and then Will Peacock, new ed of PLANET STORIES, and a couple of other fans who didn't have much to say. There was quite a bit of interesting chatter while various crustaceans and cephalopods (all dead, of course) disappeared down various gullets. I was quite happy with my honey dew melon and ice cream.

Doc, late in getting back to his office, got foozled on the train changes somewhere and left us precipitately to find the right subway. Damon shrugged, so I shrugged, and he got off at 42nd St, and I did too, and then we parted as he had to see somebody not connected with stf. He suggested I drop around the Foundation (the latest Futurianest) that evening.

So I walked up to Broadway and had my shoes shined and thot of the legend that sooner or later everybody in the world passes by that spot. I waited a while, thinking I might see Hitler and have the pleasure of knocking his mouth around so 'twould look like the side entrance to something, but no luck.

So I went back to Fifth Avenue and decided to ride on a double decker bus and look down at the world. So we chugged along to 34th St, and there was the Empire State Bldg looking down on me. Such a state of affairs could not be tolerated, and wasn't it a vacation, a gala affair? All right. So I opened my wallet, shoed out the moths, planked down a dollar ten, and went up.

From stories I had heard, I didn't expect my stomach to arrive at the 86th floor for about five seconds after I did, but the elevator ride was rather prosaic except for the rapidly changing air pressure. Swallowing fixed that easily, however. Then another elevator took us up another 16 floors, and there we were.

I went outside and walked "nonchalantly" (it says in the script) over to the edge and looked out. * Gulp * Surprisingly enuf, the vertigo I usually get in high places didn't bother me. It's so doggone high that the instincts just don't grasp it for a minute, and by that time you are so interested instincts don't count.

There they were, the whole five boroughs, laid out like a map. I strolled around and rubbered at all four points of the compass, long and leisurely. Put a dime in a telescope and went on a tour of the city without the bother.

Then I went down and back to see Doc, who was about ready to go home. I asked who'd be at the Foundation that nite and whatime should I show up. So he invited me to have supper with him.

"What'll we have?" he asked as we got on the bus. I suggested a good feed of chili might be in order. I vetoed the suggestion of a mex restaurant, so we made it ourselves.

That was the best chili I've had yet. Just as I wanted it. To the traditional basis of hamburger and red beans we added large white onions, a can of mushrooms, fine noodles in place of tomatoes, and sliced green peppers. I drool at the memories.

The chili powder seemed not quite strong enuf, so when Bob Studley conveniently dropped in, we sent him out for some tobasco sauce. He watched us, fascinated, and finally broke down and asked to sit in. He

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got a plate and all went well until the time came to apply the tabasco.

Doc suggested he touch his tongue to a little on the back of his hand to see how much he could stand. He couldn't stand much. The two old gourmets laughed at his misery and dug in for a second big helping.

Replete, we sat around waiting, and Doc separated Bob from some loose folding money via the sale of some original Boks and stuff. Incidentally, those of you who have met Bob will recognize the likeness on the Summer '42 SFC cover, for which Bob posed.

Damon came in after a while, and we played TSOHG and "S T F period" which is like GHOST only the words have to have some connection with stf or fantasy. Then we played poker all evening like mad for ten cents worth of chips apiece. I forget who won, but Doc got the "lalla-palooza." Futurian house rules on poker are quaint and charming. I like them. Studley had to go out and get the beer, and then we all joined in a "Praise Fantasia" session which degenerated into a goofy whistling contest, with everybody trying to show off his musical knowledge by whistling different "tunes" from the production all at the same time. Studley whistled so earnestly that he grunted at the same time, which annoyed Damon.

Then a guy named Charley came in, who is sort of a semi-fan, and I don't know if he is a Futurian. So we blabbed away the nite until Johnny Michel came home about 3AM and kicked us all out. Studley and I walked down to Penn Station and saw a small fire on the way.

I slept thru until the afternoon next day and then went over to Doc's office again to see if Scott Feldman had arranged anything with Hy Tiger who was stationed at MacMitchell Field. He had. I looked over the proofs of SFC which had just arrived, and Doc gave me the plot for a sequel to his "Quarry", which had proved unexpectedly popular. Hope I can do justice to it.

Before returning to Brooklyn, I popped over to the Munsey offices to see if Mary Gnaedinger had returned from her vacation, but no luck.

After supper, I hied me out to the wilds of Brownsville to see Scott and Hy. They were there, and an enjoyable evening of gabbing was spent, and Hy, to celebrate his army pay raise, bought Tom Collinnes for us.

We sauntered and dilly-dallied on our way back to the subway line, swapping stories and general gab as fast as we could. I was particularly reluctant to part as I thot of the long ride to start on the morrow and the return to humdrumity at the end of that ride.

I was up bright and early that Friday, and on my way about 7 AM. A motorist at a red light seemed thunderstruck to think I had come from around Boston on "That thing". He sat there looking at me sort of dreamy-eyed and was roundly honked at for holding up the line when the light turned green.

The eighty mile journey to New Haven was made without incident in eight hours, and I was only moderately tired when I arrived. Lou Kulan rode me over to the city and I tried to get a room at the Y hotel, but no soap. So Lou climbed in his car, and rather than go thru the bother of fitting the bike into the rumble seat again, I wheeled off downtown to find lodging, with the promise to meet Lou and Paul Spencer at the corner of Church and Something Streets as soon as I got cleaned up.

I finally found a cheap hotel which wasn't bad at all, except that it looked cheap. Incidentally, here's a note for financially embarrassed fans traveling to and from conventions, or just travelling.

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The hotel in New Haven is one of a chain called the Milner Hotels, which have rooms for \$1 per nite, or \$1.50 with bath. They have hotels in practically every big city in the US.

I obtained a dollar room in a hurry and went up. But the door was a pretty sad sort of a door and it wouldn't close and lock after I got it open -- and I couldn't find the community bathroom after searching thru a labyrinth of narrow zigzag corridors for fifteen minutes. So I went down, paid 50% more, and got a room with a bath. This was much nicer, since I had no bathrobe and didn't care to go wandering thru a mile and three furlongs of enigmatic doors, any one of which at any moment might disgorge a horde of finicky females who would shriek bloody murder or something and have me arrested for being clad only in a towel. It never occurred to me to undress in the bathroom, simply because I have never done that.

So anyhow, what with the delay in getting a room, soaking overlong in the hot shower, and rummaging around in my knapsack for a clean pair of socks which seemed to take fiendish delight in playing hide-and-seek with me (I refused to dump the whole contents out on the bed as being unsportsmanlike), I was an hour late and then some to meet Lou and Paul. In fact, Lou was just setting off into the beginning drizzle in search of me when I arrived.

Paul Spencer turned out to be a very pleasant chap, slight of build and light of hair and knowing lots and lots about science fiction and all sorts of interesting side-trax therefrom, as you no doubt agree after reading his entertaining article in Spaceways. We landed in a restaurant and spent the evening there after ravenously consuming a good-sized supper. Finally, about 10PM, we essayed forth into what was by then a very thick drizzle. Just about one thickness short of a good soaking rain. We ducked under awnings until we reached the college magazine store. This place, I am confident, had a current copy of every magazine then being published. There were also some inexpensive edition books with several fantasy titles. Lou bot one, and I guess Paul bot one, but I can't remember what.

I gave the clerk instructions to call me at five, but I never heard the bell, or else the so-and-so forgot. I didn't like his looks anyway, so I prefer to believe the latter.

It didn't make any difference, tho, because the drizzle was now so thick that the atmosphere was 90% water, and I might just as well have headed for home via Long Island Sound. After breakfast it still continued with no signs of letup, so I bot the current issue of Weird Tales, the best I could find in the limited stock of a nearby cigar store. I settled in an easy chair and finished half of it by noon, interspersed with many glances out of the window. Finally, I could stand the inaction no longer, since I had to be home the following day, and I easily persuaded myself that the rain had let up a bit.

I rode a couple of blocks and easily persuaded myself that it was raining harder than ever, and took shelter in a garage. I read a couple more stories. Keller and Lovecraft had written them and they were fairly good. I started out again and was forced to ride a couple of miles before I could find shelter again. I read some more. Finally it did let up a little. I sallied forth and made the city limits, where it promptly clabbered up and sluiced down again. I waited in a cagstation, consumed most of their soft drinks, finished the WT, and fidgeted. I fidgeted until three o'clock and finally determined to try for New London come hell or high water.

Indecisiveness, useless irritability at the inevitable, and unjustifiable timidity put aside, I found that it wasn't very bad after all.

in fact I even enjoyed it a little. What the heck, I was warm enuf, so why should I worry about a little nice clean H₂O? The rain stopped by four and the sky was clear by five. I splurged \$1.25 for an enormous fried chicken supper at a classy roadside eatery. I also enjoyed the malapropos effect of my very presence. To say I contrasted with my surroundings is putting it mildly. The waitress was at first icily efficient, but later, observing I made no attempt to secrete the silver ware and napkins in my knapsack, must've swung over to the theory that I was an eccentric playboy or something, for she thawed out considerably and gave me all sorts of attention toward the end of the meal.

I whizzed along at a good clip after this and was well on my way to make New London before sunset and some to spare when I discovered I had left my knapsack ten miles back at a soft drink stand. (!!!/#!@##.!!/!!) So there was an extra twenty miles to do. I was ready to chew up the handlebars and gum the rubber grips for dessert. To punish myself for this colossal blunder I pelted the whole twenty just about as hard as I could, covering it in an hour and five minutes, so that I reached NL at 9:30, which wasn't so bad after all. Even at that, I was quite chipper compared to my condition there on the way down. I had a sandwich and a glass of beer, which unaccountably made my legs feel like lead.

But I really slept. I felt so good in the cool dawn, I thot I must've slept 14 hours in seven. I maintained a steady 10 mph even in the face of climbing the hills in southern Rhode Island. Finally, a good steep one piled on top of two others, each about a third of a mile long, forced me to get off and push; and the push gave me the idea that breakfast at the summit diner might be a very good idea. There were half a dozen trucks there which had passed me at varying distances back along the line, and all the drivers expressed admiration at my arrival so soon. They were very friendly, and listened well to the account of my exploits, trials, tribulations, and the extolling of the virtues of the FooFoo Special Jr. The biggest one offered me fifty bucks for my steed when I got to Providence where he lived, but I refused.

Then, either thru admiration, just plain generosity, or the desire to talk me into selling, he offered to tie the bike onto his truck and take me to Providence. I accepted with great rejoicing and was exceeding glad. We had difficulty in selecting a suitable place where the bike might ride without damage, and finally the quietest one spoke up and said there was just enuf space for my bike between his tailboard and his load of blueberries. I asked him where he was going.

To Boston?!!! Hallelujah!!! He would pass within ten miles of Quincy! Offer \$1 was politely but hurriedly declined, and FSJr was securely tied in place. Eighty miles! Eighty luxurious miles I rode in the hot, bouncing, swaying cabin of the truck, and I loved it. No pedals to push, no worrying about my ragged tires, nothing to do but sit and arrive rapidly home.

Which I did at 11:30 AM, surprising my wife no end.

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