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CAVEAT LECTOR!

If I had been publishing mailing comments these past few mailings, doubtless Mal Ashworth would have had the largest number of lines out of the February Mailing. I enjoyed that particular issue of FRINGE as much or more than any other fapazine within recent memory.

I cannot, at the moment, locate the May Mailing although it is to be hoped that it will turn up before I come to the end of this issue. So, if you don't mind, I'll natter on about Mal's FRINGE, with perhaps other commentalia on the Feb. Mlg.

First of all, Maldemer Old Bod, let me assure you that I do not, by any manner of means, look down my curvaceous nose at air-guns. As a matter of sober record, I have owned a lot of non-powder type artillery one year and another. I still have one air-rifle and a brace of gas-powered, rifled, pellet pistols and I would not part with them --at least not with the rifle--except with the greatest reluctance.

The two air pistols are Benjamin. I have the formless impression that the firm is now defunct, not sure. They both operate on carbon dioxide rather than compressed air. One slips the little bottle into the lower barrel, screws the cap back snug, cocks and trips the striker, which releases the gas into the lower chamber and you are set for perhaps 90 shots or thereabouts...provided you fire them all within a short space of time, otherwise the gas leaks softly away, never again to be seen. I have two of them for various reasons: it is convenient if I wish for a spot of sociable shooting with someone else. Or it affords a fast second shot if it should ever prove desireable (it never has). You have to load the little skirted pellets into the chamber one at a time; both guns are calibre .177. They are, on the whole, reasonably accurate. There is none of the "lunge" which you find objectionable in the spring-driven air-guns. I have rarely hunted with them. As a matter of fact, I rarely hunt anything with any sort of weapon...which is a mildly astonishing admission from the owner of some forty-odd firearms of divers categories. Except for a few unsavoury vermin such as dump-rats, starlings and foxes, I find little or no pleasure in shooting at living targets. It's surprising how many other gun-fanciers there are who feel the same as I do. However, I did knock off a pigeon once with one of the Benjamins, somewhat to my surprise (not to mention its). I would not have thought the gun possessed enough pizazz for the job. It will not, for example, drive a pellet through a single thickness of the metal commonly found in tins...I've never encountered a CO_2 gun that could penetrate tin and I've had rifles in both the .177 and .22 sizes. But they're small, light and nicely fitted to the hand and I enjoy working out with them occasionally. It would be fun, I think, to get together with the Ashworths for a small schuetzenfest.

The air-rifle is 5 mm. in calibre and it is of the Sheridan persuasion. This, Mal, I wish you could try. It is my personal opinion that Sheridan is to air-rifles as Rolls-Royce is to motour cars. I believe that the Sheridan is not altogether unknown in the British Isles. I seem to vaguely recall seeing ads for them in a British gunzine I used to buy (a very good 'zine too, by the way; I wish they still sold it on the stands here). I know that the Sheridan is extensively covered in a small but very comprehensive book titled "Air-Guns and Air-Rifles," written by a Briton with the arrestingly euphonious monicker of Leslie Wesley (no known relation to Art Wesley!). Wesley (L.) affirms that when pumped up with 12 strokes of the handle, the Sheridan delivers a muzzle velocity of 770 feet per second...which is approximately equal to that of the U.S. point-four-five service pistol. I had the use of a chronograph for a while a year or so ago and checked out my own Sheridan at 12 strokes and it came out very close to that figure (728 f/s, if memory serves). Suffice to say that the Sheridan will drive its pellet enthusiastically through both sides of a beer-tin and will, moreover, bury the same pellet out of sight in a board behind the tin. For power and penetration, it vastly exceeds any other air-gun that can be purchased in 1963. I qualify that statement because there have been air-guns of very considerable potence in days gone by. Austria, I believe it was, that once had a military air-gun with which a number of their troops were armed; and this was something like half an inch in bore with a wallop comparable to the bumbling punkin-balls fired in the crude blackpowder flintlocks of the era.

Sights for the Sheridan can be had in open, peep or telescopic. Of the three, the peep variety is to be preferred. Mine has the open (v-notch) type but this is hard to use, not as accurate and prone to be knocked askelter. The scope type sounds good but in practice, it also comes a bit unglued while engaged in the strenuous drill of working the pump handle and, moreover, it requires a metal shroud over the receiver area which makes it difficult to cock the striker and clumsy to insert the pellet. One day I mean to have my Sherry fitted with with the Williams adjustable peep sight specially made for this gun. It costs perhaps a couple quid or so, which is why I've not yet got around to it. Even with the open sight, it's no great trick to hit a mark the size of a sixpence most every time from fifty feet or so.

The traditional American air-gun (which differs, technically, from an air-rifle in that it has a smooth bore) is the Daisy "BB" gun. I put "BB" in quotes because the air-gun shot so termed is not of precisely the same diameter as the shotshell pellets of like nomenclature. Long time back you could get air-gun shot in lead or cadmium-plated steel but the lead type has been off the market since sometime in the latter thirties. The only variety available today is the copper-plated steel stuff which is not inordinately accurate out of any arm known to me at this time. I had a Daisy once, of the slide-action type, which was not bad. I recall taking it out in the motorboat once, with a large bagful of spent flashbulbs. I was near the middle of the lake, where the water was a couple hundred feet deep and a goodly mile from the nearest point of shore-

line so I had myself a quiet little ball by tossing the flashbulbs into the water and cruising slowly back and forth past them, steering the tiller of the outboard with my knee and whanging away right merrily at the floating bulbs with the Daisy. It was neither powerful nor especially accurate but it could be fired with relatively great ease and rapidity (say 30-40 rounds per minute) and I was able to sink most of the bulbs with but a single pass of the boat, although this might entail 10 or 15 rounds. It was great sport but when I finally ran out of bulbs or BBs, I chugged back to shore and beached the boat, there was this cadaverous Norwegian from Chicago who had the cottage about five places east and he came galumphing up all ory-eyed and deeply grotched. "Didn't you hear me yelling at you?" he thundered. No I didn't hear him, what with the sputter of the motor and all (from a mile away? with MY ears? wotta boff!) "Well, I was hollering at you to stop shooting that thing out there. We could hear them rifle bullets rikkashayin' right over our heads!"

If you take this as proof that the Daisy will bounce a BB off the water and hurl it for uppards of a mile, don't. Commend yourself to the theory that the grotcher was full of birdseed and brickdust. In much this same connexion (I'm still talking to Mal, if the rest of you don't mind?) one of my customers was telling me of the time he and his helper were doing some welding in his shop late at night, trying to finish a rush job. Finally there came a harsh knocking at the door and they admitted a neighbour from a block away across a vacant lot. With considerable asperity, he demanded to know just when the blumfüzle they were going to shut off that §ßM?½%! welder so he could get some halfway decent reception on his wireless as it was producing more static interference than the human psyche might reasonably be expected to endure (I'm paraphrasing and bowdlerising heavily as I go here). Eddie (Siedschlag, the customer) asked if the guy was certain that it came from their welder and the complaining one affirmed that he was positive beyond reasonable doubt inasmuch as he could hear the set crackling in perfect synch with the flicker of the welder that he could see through the window. So Eddie invited him to come in and take a real good look at their welding rig. "I wish you could have seen that guy's face," Eddie concluded, "when he saw those tanks of oxygen and acetylene!"

Getting back to pneumatic devices, Mal, have you ever experimented with blow-guns? Until you do, you could hardly believe the power and accuracy that can be attained with these. There's no need to hollow out a reed in the Jivaro tradition. Your neighbourhood ironmonger's should have some sort of tubing that can be adapted to use as the gun proper. Certainly the American hardware store has ample assortments. My own blow-gun (which I've not found since we moved) is a six-foot length of 3/4-inch (O.D.) aluminium tubing which seems about right for a windy type such as I am. You can go as short as 3-4 feet and as slender as 5/16-inch (I.D.) and still get fairly good results...although the darts are harder to make.

The modus operandi for dart-making runneth like unto thus: go to a place selling supplies for model aeroplane making. Buy a few lengths of the heavy piano-wire they carry for landing-gear struts, in about

1/16th or 3/32nds inch diameter. Avail yourself of a powered rotary grindstone (else the process would be fearful tedious). Holding the end of the wire at a thin angle to the side of the stone (oh: wear glasses or something over your eyes!!) slowly rotate the wire as you grind until you have a nice slender (and, it is hoped, symmetrical) point on it. Then notch the wire about halfway through, about four inches back from the point and bend it gently a couple times till it breaks. The rear face of the wire should then be ground off square and flat. Now procure a supply of corks (dozen or so) that are just a bit larger in diameter than the bore of your blow-gun. Place one of these small-end-up and drill a hole slightly smaller than the diameter of the wire, straight down from the centre, about halfway through the cork (accuracy in this operation pays off--use a drill-press if you can). The rear of the steel dart is now shoved gently into the hole in the front of the cork (you may have to chamfer the edges very slightly to keep from tearing the sides of the hole). Now gently press the cork, point-foremost, into one end of the tube and square it up, leaving a portion protruding. Take a sharp razor blade and lightly score a line around the base of the cork, even with the edge of the tube. Remove cork; cut off the part behind the line. Tape a fair-sized piece of fine sandpapre to a board and very carefully drag the rear of the cork across this, turning it by the spike as you do so. This removes a small amount of the diameter of the rear end of the cork. Keep trying it in the tube as you work, until it fits with the least little bit of drag. You're trying to get maximum air-seal with minimum friction. When you have one dart so it fits, make some more if you like or try out the first one.

Slip the dart into the rear (or breech) of the blow-gun; it matters little which end you choose except that this is the end you blow from. You could fire a blow-gun by sucking from the front end and yanking your head out of the way real fast but this technique is not recommended.

The customary method is to take a deep breath, put your whole mouth around the end of the tube and exhale with a vigourous, half-cough effort. You will quickly pick up the trick of this although it is devilish difficult to describe with any pretense of accuracy. The first time you try it, you may ingloriously fail to even get the dart out the end of the tube. However, velocity comes quickly with practise and so does a surprising degree of accuracy. A conventional dart-board can be used to good effect and you should be able to roundly trounce the most skilled of dart-flingers within a very short time (though I doubt if you'd get many matches with a round of drinks as the stake). As for range and power--with a bit of lofting you can hit (?) a 20" circle at about 50 yards; a playing card most of the time at 30 feet...and you should be able to make the point of the dart emerge from the far side of a piece of pine board 3/4-inch thick.

A few more refinements will suggest themselves to you in the matter of dart-making. Balsa fins on the rear of the cork will stabilise it in flight and will also serve to keep the spike aligned with the axis of the tube for better accuracy. Simply take 1/16th-inch balsa sheeting, cut into strips the diameter of the tube, chop off in lengths an inch long or so, cut out slots halfway through the centre

and cross-lap, fastening to the rear of the cork with a touch of model aeroplane cement or whatever. It is a good idea to paint the fletching (or corkwork) with vivid colours calculated to stand out against grass. It is an even better idea not to shoot the fiendish little things where they can get lost in the grass. You've no idea how nerve-wracking it is to cut grass with a power lawnmower, knowing that four inches of ultra-sharp tempered steel spike is lurking somewhere about. I would counsel against use of the blowgun on game. To my way of thinking, it would be extremely inhumane for the job. No, I will not print the curare formula...

I'm writing the Great American Novel and I need all the butcher's wrapping-paper I can get.

The Little World of Rand-McNally Dept.

One of the not-so-minor pleasures of life in southern Wisconsin is the "Green Sheet" of the daily Milwaukee Journal. I have been addicted to this particular flower in the garden of journalism since the days when they carried a comic-strip called "The Bungles" (that would have been Late Pleistocene, I b'leev)(and hewwo dehh, damon knight!). The Green Sheet of 1963 runs the gamut (or, as we Milwaukeeans say, gamutlicheit) all the way from a stark nadir of "Country Parson" all the way up to Gerald Kloss twice a week. The Country Parson is a little one-column squib depicting an austere looking bloke who resembles a cross between Charles Bickford and Barry Goldwater topped off with Fiorello LaGuardia's hat; each day he delivers some smarmy little homily (Today's: "Don't ridicule failure---one man's failure may lead another to success."). It is sad to report, but "Sam's Strip" languished for a while in the Milwaukee Sentinel (recently sold by the Hearst people to the Journal Company) and passed beyond our ken (Does anyone know if this is still being produced?) however, the Country Parson pontificates (if that's the verb I want) on and on and on & onnnn. But that's newspaper biz.

Gerald Kloss, however, is an able practicioner at that all-but-vanished artform, the Humorous Essay. A recent opus of his dealt rather hilariously with the discomfiture of having to go into a dime-store to purchase several tubes of model airplane cement for his nephew (who had received several model kits sans glue for his birthday). What with all the sensational spreads on the evils of glue-sniffing, he made quite a piece of it. Unfortunately, that particular copy is long-lost so we can't quote from it. However, Mr. Kloss is no mean versifier. One of his specialties is plucking an odd item from the news to write a poem about, much as Len Norris does for his cartoons in the Vancouver Sun. There is a sample in today's paper which is fairly typical:

Fallen Archers

Bows and arrows have been outlawed as dangerous in the schools of Nottinghamshire, where Robin Hood roamed.
--News Item

((continued))

Where Robin drew his feathered shaft
  And sped it whistling to the clout,
The schools have barred the archer's craft
  And ruled the bow and arrow out.

The leafy glades of Sherwood forest,
  Where merry men once romped and sang
No longer hear a bull's-eye chorused
  Nor echo to the bowstring's twang.

The breed grows soft: They ban the bow
  For safety's sake and danger's terror;
How Robin would have hooted, though,
  To find the arrow blamed for error!

The column--called "Slightly Kloss-eyed"--has recently been occupied with compiling new collective nouns (we all recall how Randy Garrett debated long and hard whether to settle upon "a flourish of strumpets," or "an anthology of pro's"). Suggestions by readers printed today include: a rip of tailors; a drip of plumbers; a beg of canvassers and a crutch of skiers. Yorkle-yorkle.

§§§§§§§§§§§§

At the risk of precipitating yet another atrocity upon the world, here are a few things that have been moiling about the editorial dustbin for ever so long now. For want of a better term, I call them "Spoonitions." Exempli gratiae:

Putton: What some people are a for glunishment.

Nins: What some people are on, and peedles.

Pince: What Mark Twain wrote a book about, and a Prauper.

Ploon: Best kind for picnics are the spastic ones.

Uhhh...y'getta idear, nu?

§§§§§§§§§§§§

It well may be that I am the sole member of this august organization who shares a house with a tomcat who subscribes to Life. Every Thursday comes a copy addressed to Asmodeus Grennell. He lets us read it though. He prefers television. He doesn't watch the screen but leaps lithely to the top where it is warm and cozy for his catly meditations. He has long ago discovered that automobiles are sometimes warm atop the hood so, come winter (which he always regards as an exceptionally dirty trick played upon him, personally) he stalks around outdoors occasionally leaping atop the hood of some hapless car where he prowls around in search of a suitable spot for foot-warming. Since his feet are the size of cupcakes and usually muddy, this is not an endearing trait.

Noted on the "Humor" shelf of a local bookstore: "The Destruction of San Francisco by Earthquake & Fire, with Horrors of Vesuvius Eruption."

Doubtless by this time, the Swiftie, as an artform, is thoroughly passé (differing from newsreels, which are Pathé). However, Eugene DeWeese and I have have compiled an ecch of Swifties which, unless you skip rapidly forward by a few pages, are about to be dumped upon your cringing headbones.

§§§§§§§§§§§§

"I've just landed on Jupiter," said Tom, heavily.

"But I'm enjoying it," he added jovially.

"J.Arthur," cried Rank-conscious Tom.

"Cinchona," barked Tom. Bitterly.

"Touché!" said Tom, piercingly.

"I've just discovered a new tomb," said Tom, cryptically.

"I just finished the latest Nero Wolfe book," declardd Tom, stoutly.

"I've just written a brief play," confided Tom, skittishly.

"Bah," cried Tom, sheepishly.

"But I like hot dogs!" admitted Tom, frankly.

"Here, let me stop that bleeding," cried Tom, staunchly.

"Nutmeg!" grated Tom, spicily.

"I just dyed my hair," said Tom, mordantly.

"Everything's coming up roses," sang Tom, morosely.

"A bottle of Old Overholt," ordered Tom, wryly.

"That's the lake where they used to hold the Olympic Games, observed Tom, placidly.

"My Gran'ma died when I wasn't but only three," said Tom, ungrammatically.

"What fools these hockey-players be," quasi-quoted Tom, puckishly.

"I've been laying sewer-pipes all day," said Tom, trenchently.

"If I was War Minister you wouldn't catch me muckin' abaht wif no Party Girl," said Tom, tartly.

"There's no one quite like Hemingway," sighed Tom, Ernestly.

"I've just discovered Heinlein," said Tom, profoundly.

"Hey, there's a real party up on the 18th floor in Sturgeon's room," said Tom, condescendingly.

"Pratt & Whitney," said Tom, waspishly.

"I fear my mom and dad have been hypnotized," said Tom, transparently.

"My favorite fanzine was always '/'," declared Tom, obliquely.

"Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia, Terpsichore, Thalia and Urania," mused Tom.

"Come here, Guinevere," said Launcelot, knightly.

"But I never published anything pornographic," protested Freedom-loving Shaver.

((Did someone cry "Uncle" back there?))

And then there was the cannibal mother who fed her baby strained relations...

Does Willie Rotsler, I wonder, still collect cartoon gags? Here's a smirk of them anyhow:

Two workers in a cybernetics lab; one snarls, "For goodness sakes, can't you sing anything but 'Tanks for the Memories'?"

Sexy-looking babe is leaning in doorway, talking to authorish looking chap at typer, says, "That's nothing, I made my first professional sale at the age of 12!"

Battle ship in duck-pond; disgruntled-looking onlooker says, "It's hard to compete with these rich hunters!"

One prisoner in cell to the other: "They got me on a Fish Act rap --caught me transporting mackerel for immoral porpoises."

Beat type, looking at Pentagon building: "Maan, dig that crazy bus-token!"

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Shite: They used to go around in nining armor.

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Sage, friendly, well-meaning advice for one Richard. W. Brown Dept. ((Oh yeh, I just found the Mayling under a case of empty chotgun chells.)) Rich, ole truffle-shoot, you are just naturally going to have to wahtch that stuff a little closer. You are, I realize, a comparative newcomer to FAPA, having floated to the surface of the waiting-list within the past decade or so and it is obvious that it is time someone told you about the facks of life here in the Fantasy Amachure Press Association (or ambochure, as Gertrude used to say). Rich, it is time somebody told you about Tucker and I guess I might just's well play dutch uncle as anybody else. (Gather 'round, you other new faplings, you might as well hear this too).

Rich, when you started runnin' with the Fapa herd, you may not have known it but you was penned right up in the same corral with this here Tucker. Everything you distribute through Fapa, he gets to look at, whether you like it or not. Now you heard a lot of stories about this Tucker and the helluvit is, most of them's stark ravin' true; understatements, if anything. You've heard things like his name used to be Gilgamesh and how him an' his buddy (forget the name he went by then but nowadays he calls hisself Robert Bloch; he's the guy made Alfie Hitchcock famous) played this real fiendish dirty trick on this ole Egyptian goddess name of Ishtar and, well, jus' take my spoken word for't; he been around a lonnngg time, that boy.

You know what his favorite pastime is, irredoubtless...hwhahh?...oh no, not any more, hardly...well, no, I mean one of the others...the one I mean is where he goes over all the other fan's magazines with an uncouth comb (no, not fine-tooth; this'n used to belong to Bloch) looking for some sort of little off-beat typo or minor gaucherie like that-there. He not only scrutinizes 'em, but he reads 'em real careful on top of that.

Well, when this Tucker cat does manage to find a typo in some poor helpless little neo's fanzine, he beats his chest and he r'ars back his head like a dawg jus' befoh' bayin' at the moon and he holler "Rosebud!" real loud. Now don't go askin' me tell you 'bout this Rosebud business (criminey fella, not here!) --'countin' it all bound up with secret societies and the 10 of clubs and phallic thimbles and like that there. Soo-fice to say, Rich, that when Tucker holler "Rosebud," you know he tickled about something and what it mean is that now nex' time he publish something, he can quote this poor helpless well-meanin' li'l ole typo right out for ever'body to see and run some sort of smart-alecky New Yorkerish punchline under it.

Givya a f'rinstance: Like here in POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC 15, on page 20 you got this little parenthetical aside run like so:

(Resiliant might be an even better word.)

Now you know, and I know that you meant to write resilient and gosh knows, anybody can hit the wrong key on a typer because for every right key, a typer's got something like 40 or 45 wrong keys. So you hit a clinker, so what? Big deal. So this. You know what Tucker will do, provided he stay sober long enough to find that typo? Just as sure as Heinlein made little green Venusians, he'll do it up something along the lines of:

"(Resiliant might be an even better word.)"
--Rich Brown, POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC 15
(And resilient might be better still!)
--Hoy Ping Pong, VANDY 19

So there---you see what I mean? Every time you hit a typer key, you got to tell yourself, Tucker he gonna scruhtinize this here fanzine, lookin' for typo's. And you gotta be sure it's right, to 19 decimals, else you pays the penalty. Doan fohget now, heah?

Viva Bill Holden!

A propos of all that, there have been a few double features at the theaters here lately which might bear listing for the benefit of the aforesaid Wilson Arthur "Fighting Bob" Tucker and any other motion picture projectionists in the audience.

A Child Is Waiting/To Kill a Mockingbird

Who's Got the Action?/A Girl Named Tamiko

The Lovemakers/Carry On Regardless

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This is a good spot to note that the address to use is Box 949, Milwaukee 1, Wisconsin (ZIP Code No. 53201). Please do not send anything to me "in care of" anybody else in town. We will be changing addresses before snow flies, doubtless, but will keep the rent on the box paid, meanwhile. My present business associates are not, and have never been, remotely connected with Fapa.

"I hope Janke's in the August Mailing," snapped Tom, Curtly.
