
OFFLINE READER

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GRUMBLE

The investing situation had improved enough by June 30 that it looked like I might get out of the woods. Then it went entirely to hell. However my income is a lot better than it was at any time last year. A great deal better. Just because the prices per share go down on the MBS REITs doesn't mean their income and payout drops. <shrug> Just means that if I had cash or buying power, I could get enough (risky) income to not worry about a job any more. Oh well

Did lose money on some sales. Made more. Another year like this will eat up my huge capital gain loss carry forward.

And, to make matters more "interesting," one of my triple tax free "municipal" bonds (Puerto Rico) was called. Poof. The regular July interest showed up in my account plus the face value of the bond. Another small capital gain, the first "5 year" one I've had. Couldn't reinvest it at the same yield so I just dumped it all into my Georgia Tax Free Bond fund set to reinvest ... which promptly went way way nicely UP. Can't complain too much.

It's become obvious that CDC won't hire me. Supervisors won't give me interviews no matter how many "lists" I show up on. They then discontinued the online system that was shoving my name at them while the rest of the fed's are going online. I tracked down the number for the OPM (Office of Personnel Management) serving the Social Security Admin. where I'm on a register for my best possible job. It appears that they are not shoving the register down the throats of those doing the hiring. While my name (number) may come up, the hiring supervisors can simply ignore me.

That leaves going after the Tax Examining Assistant (not clerk) yearly temp jobs at IRS when they open testing and THAT register in August or September. This year I'll be first in, not last. <sigh> For that one, supervisors are pretty much forced to hire entire batches of people off the register. As the year goes on, most drop out/quit. Those who don't either come back the next year (with a possible promotion) or apply for a permanent job, since they're already "in house," and get it. I suspect none of that will come to pass.

My best shot now looks like getting my foot in the door with a 20 hour per week, no benefits, "non-merit" (not civil service), Volunteer Coordinator job for Dekalb County Library. I've actually worked for the person doing the hiring (ran the book table (can you say "huxters table?") at "Novel Affair" when no books showed up but I managed to actually scrounge some to sell -- at the door). I also helped bail them out at the silent auction (can you say "art auction cashier and checkout?") at the ALA con they were on the hook to furnish bodies to and some balls were dropped.

The way DCPL (DeKalb County Public Library) is set up, with the exception of the Special Etc. Lady, and the Director's Secretary, everyone except this job goes up the chain of command to an assistant director with whom Kay isn't on the best of terms. THIS job, however, goes to the one lady with a big job that reports straight to the head of the whole system. And THAT guy saw me at his pet project (big party with Georgia high class authors for BIG donors), pulling stuff out of thin air. Hmmmmmmm.....

And they actually PAY a "Volunteer Coordinator" who's also the assistant to the lady in charge of special events, "marketing," "friends of the library," and such like. Shows technology volunteers how to show library users how to use the computers to do stuff (resumes, net searches, etc. for homework projects). Duuuuhhhh.... What I do NOT know, yet, is if it pays at least \$12.50 an hour. We'll see.

There are also some "Senior Specialist" grade (highest below librarians with a degree) open, or at least the register for such. Kay wants me to apply and it's dicey but when the "Specialist" opens up, I should be able to get one and then get the next one up in due course. If I've not heard from Social Security Admin. by the time we come back from Kay's annual family deal at Kiawah Island, SC, August 5 or thereabouts, I'll try for this. But I'd MUCH rather play with the stuff that's like getting paid for doing what I do in fandom.

If you want the latest on my medical disaster (of course the doctors can't figure out what it is and are about to make it worse), you'll have to join

Myriad. They want to send me to "pain management" after the rheumatologist and all tests came up negative. But I can keep the pain and most other symptoms at bay by simply keeping my blood sugar steady. Like ... uh ... they're doing the wrong tests.

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FOR SFPA 228 -- MC's on 227

Richard D. in GAZETTE 76: On glasses. I now have a pair, again, for the first time since my cornea were sliced and diced so I didn't need any. Basically age got me. My father-in-law, the 81 year old Optometrist, ran some tests on me just as the main problem I had, went away all by itself. He gave me an ancient pair of 2X drugstore glasses he had laying about. This allows me to read fine print and/or in lower light levels than I otherwise would. Reading glasses due to old age, just as the eye surgeon said I'd eventually need. <shrug>

Enron shares, as you talk about, are basically good for wallpaper. Period. No if's, ands, or buts. If you but a 100 share certificate for \$10 and pay the "delivery fee," you've got a \$35 piece of wallpaper plus whatever legal stuff you get in the mail until they "cancel the shares." Polaroid, though, IIRC, was bought up by someone already (the entire company) so you're out of luck on that. The stockholders, IIRC, didn't get anything but wallpaper but the company itself is still in business under a new owner (not publicly traded). Enron ... well ... that was vapor and has returned to vapor.

Lottery tickets are not only cheaper, you'd have had a better chance of getting something. But -- the little tickets don't make good wallpaper.

No, Enron Stadium didn't go back to Astros' Stadium. I think it became SW Bell or some other company "stadium." Auction on the name.

On the MBS REITS, noone said you can't lose, so it is after all possible to win. All that was said was they make a mint for the high risk you take. It looks like as long as I don't have to sell anything for quite a while, I'll be fine.

On CP/M etc., remember I've still got my 1983 Actrix with Perfect Writer, and a lot of other stuff, which is even rarer (if these things ever go for "collectors") than Worldstar. It looks like 29 years hasn't been enough, so far, as I've found no one looking for any such, online.

On WTC. The separating point WAS where the planes hit. Period. My sister-in-law in Cincy was on the phone to her best friend who had stayed put when the idiots at first said "don't evacuate" in the second tower hit. He gave a blow by blow about why noone could get out ... until he lost phone power. Then he got on his cell phone and continued, to his wife, until he died. With their small daughter watching as the WTC collapsed. Sorry. Too many eye witnesses and ear witnesses. Theories be damned.

Yeah, the Eric Raymond you saw is the real guy. Just add an armful of books -- his own -- for sale as we walks around the con. Still a nice guy but then you know the type people I hang out with <grin>.

On "programmable" slide rules for which you could swap out components for different functions. Yeah, they had those. Fancy, expensive, for big time pro's. Not us students mostly. However, by the time those were getting a lot of use, Wangs (hardwired fancy "programmable" calculators) were coming in. One other factor. "Graphical solutions." That is, if you had a complicated function to calculate, it was usually easier to just do simple calculations for various data points on however many lines you needed to graph, plot the stuff, and get your answer from the graph. Or buy books of graph/charts. There were also machines to help do that, IIRC, and in CHEMICAL Engineering plus a batch of other disciplines, you pretty much HAD to do that. Where the mechanisms would come in, especially, was you'd have sensors on your chemical process or whatever and it would drive ink pens with all kinds of colors. You'd then do whatever you needed to do, based on the results and other graphical solutions.

GHLIII in MUNDI 189: Re job security working for the Fed's. Well, they've pretty much redone the buildings or made them harder to harm. OTOH, there have and continue to be layoffs due to reorganizations or whatever in large parts of the Fed's. Not Social Security though -- too many people getting old and/or disabled so claims must be processed.

No, the '05 NASFiC will be voted on in Toronto because they changed the rules after Atlanta got it "at a con where it was determined there would be a NASFiC." Now it's voted on the year afterwards. The other rule change that's never been used YET, is that if there's already a NASFiC in the year another NASFiC is chosen, then that NASFiC chooses/votes on the next one -- NOT the Worldcon. Thus, with Japan almost a certainty to beat Columbus, OH, for the 2007 Worldcon, the 2005 NASFiC would be the first in history to choose another NASFiC. You've got recent PB's like from MilPhil. It's all published ... or you can go to www.wsf.org and find the Bylaws/etc. pages.

And, while it won't give out Hugos -- as in choose them, since it's after (either Seattle or Charlotte) the Worldcon, some of them may show up and be given out (presented) to people who couldn't make Glasgow. Also, it DOES give out the Chesleys (ASFA art awards).

Steve H. in COMMENTS 14: On MCIT, I messed up big time. No way out of it. Sold just before the axe dropped on cancellation of the already announced div's. Lost a lot of money, period. The less I talk about that, the better. WCOM and MCIT are both gonners ... ultrabroadband and other changes in the environment/technology are going to kill most of the big telecoms with zillions of dollars invested in hard wire or microwave networks. AES, however (the other super high risk stock I've got -- the AES-prefC which is actually a disguised bond -- probably will survive and not bankrupt. The power plants are not that easy to replace and are busily selling electricity.

However, I am way ahead, for the year, on what I've sold, and MUCH further ahead on what I'm now left owning, for high income. And, no cap gains tax this year due to big loss carry forward from last year. Oh, besides the MBS REITS, there's one other thing I've stuck my nose in - and just a nose until I've had it a year and see how it works.

Canadian Gas & Oil Royalty Trusts. Specifically PVX. They withhold 15% Canadian Tax, in most cases, and pay in US dollars at whatever the exchange rate is to Canadian when they pay, monthly. Unlike US RT's you don't have to worry about multiple state taxes and most other complications (special forms for depletion, etc.) but I'm not dead sure how it's going to work. I think they give a 1099 at the end of the year splitting what you got between "return ON capital" and "return OF capital."

Re allergy season. Are you sure you haven't developed a batch of new allergies rather than it just being peak of season?

JEFF C. in SKY (SFPA 57): On the NYT stories of the "above the line at WTC" phone calls. The ones who escaped must have got off their cell phones and gone through some walls of fire and smoke to get to down some stairs.

Meanwhile the OE of Myriad (Dan Taylor, pictured in last issue) had a heart attack, but unlike Bruce Pelz, he managed to drive to his office where his supervisor (also in Myriad) got him to the hospital. The collation, not long after, went off as scheduled except for being at 5pm instead of 2pm. He normally works night shift and since he was at home recovering, they could have it at a time more convenient to most. His daughter, Sara, also in the APA, however, did the physical work (binder gizmo) that Dan would normally have done. Dan was also forbidden by his family from eating the usual snacks, so he only got popcorn (without butter)

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ALSO ON THE DAY OF THE MYRIAD COLLATION,

At 1pm, plus or minus 5 minutes, I left my car in a shopping center parking lot while Kay went to a Chick-fil-a to get a meal while I went across the parking lot in the other direction to her hairdresser. (He's also a master barber and does my beard. Kay sometimes has me go to him and pays for it. OK <shrug>.) Her appointment was immediately after mine, which was at 1pm.

ALL the car doors and trunk were locked. Kay is totally absolutely PARANOID about that. She's got me, even, to the point I have to think hard to NOT lock doors behind me. There was a big white towel over the steering wheel and floor shift to keep the sun off. However, you could see her cell phone still plugged into the charger (which she usually does NOT leave) if you looked from the right window. She was only going to be gone a few minutes and would get it on her way back. VERY unusually (never seen such before) she left HER car keys laying in the cup holder between the front seats. THAT I pocketed as I left the car.

At about 1:35, just as I was done, she came in, going "my cell phone is NOT in the car anymore nor my keys!" I pulled her keys out and handed them to her, to her relief and went "the cell phone is SO in the car. It's under the towel so you can't see it." Argue argue. I then went -- "just get your hair done and I'll get the cell phone from the car."

Oops! I find the cell phone IS missing! I search the car with a mental fine tooth comb. MAYBE two bags in the back seat are now in different position -- one is my gym bag that lives there and nothing is missing. Thieves in the past have always stolen my gym shoes. MAYBE the towel was moved. Nothing missing from the trunk or glove compartment. (The only thing IN the trunk was a plastic gas can anyway. No registration or other paperwork in the glove compartment as I've had it stolen too often so it stays in my wallet.) MAYBE about 50cents in coins are missing from the change tray -- the pennies were still there. Her water bottle and a cup were not moved.

Hmmm. Am I sure that cell phone was in the car at all? Search, look, look. All the doors were still locked. Uh ... but the window on the drivers' side is now rolled down completely open. Uuuuuuuuu oooooooh! Yep, a thief got the cell phone 'cause I NEVER EVER EVER leave my car where rain or something can get in. I think the thief messed up leaving it open and blew a totally, otherwise, slick job of trying to confuse the owners into thinking the phone maybe wasn't gone.

I quickly walk back to the salon, tell Kay her paranoia was correct for once, get her cell phone number, and borrow a phone book and the special cordless phone the salon reserves for customer use. Call to Cingular (the Cell phone Company) HQ. Get a message saying "unless you want to listen to an adv, call Customer Service at 800-etc. for whatever you need." At 1:45pm, plus or minus 5 minutes, I am standing outside the salon where I can hear myself think (NOT on the noisy inside), reporting the stolen phone to have it cut off!

On the way back to the salon I had been thinking "why would a crook want a couple dollars cell phone instrument you can buy in every corner store?" Uh ... oh ... they must have had a reason ... especially the slick way the crook tried to make it look like maybe I'd forgot something. (Nope. Ut uh. Wrong victim. Had that done to me on a credit card once. Besides, the slick crook blew this one.) OH! To run up \$1000zillion in phone calls before the owner reports it!

Yeah, right. It was cut off within 50 minutes! So much for that crook.

There WAS a slight Chinese fire drill while Kay, still in the chair having her hair done while an annoyed hair dresser rolled his eyes at screaming child running about the room and other problems besides us, went through a security routine with Cingular to get me put on the account. They otherwise wouldn't talk to me.

There was also a problem because I couldn't get the Customer Service guy to give me what I considered a straight answer about being sure the INSTRUMENT was cut off ... even if he'd rigged Kay's account so it couldn't be charged. He gave me a song and dance about changing electronic registration numbers supposedly specific to the instrument. But he claimed the records showed Kay had a Nokia phone while it was a Motorola and NOT the original (the original had been smashed upon being dropped and been replaced for \$35 as she pays \$4 per month insurance). Anyway, he gave me the 888 number for the insurance company, said he'd done all kinds of things to our number due to the theft report, and we should just tell the insurance company the theft had been reported to him already.

At that point I went back in to try and find the non-emergency police phone number for that shopping center. Of course, no one around knew which jurisdiction it was in. I expected, based on past experience, to be bounced around three times. Wrong. The number I called was either correct or, since it answered "Fulton County Emergency Communications" despite being simply the blue pages number listed for the local precinct, maybe they've got a central system no matter what number you call. They said they'd send an officer to take a report. OK. Gee. Good deal ... and I said I'd wait about an hour.

I haven't mentioned it yet, but the second bag in the back seat of the car had some fan stuff and all the copies of my Myriad APA zine for the collation to be held circa 5pm. Anyway, at about 3:20pm, since Kay wanted to go to a Cingular store and replace her phone immediately, I called the police, got the same lady, and was basically told I could either cancel the call entirely as an officer was on the way, or stay there indefinitely. Since this was a small, non-emergency call, and the insurance company had already waived the police report (yeah, I'd gotten instructions from them already -- "call us from a Cingular store using instructions you'll get there), I canceled the Police call.

We got to the store, and for \$35, they replaced the phone with a better one and also, to my surprise, replaced the cigarette car charger adapter, which had cost Kay \$20 at a drug store or someplace.

Still the same phone number! But now the lady at the store mostly explained the deal about electronic registration number. The guy at customer service had switched the one going used with Kay's telephone number and presumably done something to attempt to kill whatever went to whatever instrument had previously gone to that number. (Keep reading ... I got part 3 of this later that PM).

Anyway, as the store closed at 5pm we were off to the fan gathering to merge fanzines, etc. I'd already called, from the store, telling them I'd be late.

After we'd done the 'zines, I of course had to ramble about all this. We're talking really hard core fans! Of course they knew, as I did, how the crook got in the car while leaving NO trace on the locks. (Vibrator gizmo, hand pick, or slim jim ... remember I'm also in MWA and Mystery Fiction "fan" groups -- we have speakers who have told us all sorts of stuff.)

"Yeah," says James Young, "I SELL locks and slim jims." He and John Campbell (my ex-roommate, not the late editor) then proceeded to hold forth about how electronic registrations go to the board in each cell phone. Therefore the one for that instrument board could no longer be used with our account. I sigh in relief.

They then explain that while it's now useless for what is a major industry (stolen cell phone air time), the instrument CAN, "in theory," be used with some other account. However, as a practical matter, it's now a chunk of junk they can't make any money off of. Yes, I was told, if they'd been really slick, they could take the board out of the phone and ... yadda, yadda, techie talk ... but they'd probably trashcan the whole thing.

The local experts also reached consensus that the crook had left the window open on purpose to make me think I'd done it and forgotten.

Nyah.