



This is THE RAMBLING FAP 71 (special abbreviated edition prepared exclusively for this mailing) aimed for the November 1975 FAPA mailing, which should be the 153rd.

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As I type this (two days before deadline) I have no idea whether or not I am Vice President or merely a simple mortal. The way I understand it, there is going to be a re-election for the office. Now! The first truly contested FAPA office in how long?

One thing is certain! I'm not OE!

Thank you, Redd.

"PUT THE SCIENCE BACK INTO SCIENCE FICTION" DEPARTMENT

Remember the good old days when even though the characters were cardboard and the story line clumsy, at least with every story you got a good, solid dose of science and in that fashion even the shoddiest story couldn't have been counted a total waste? Alas, the New Wave arrived before I learned the difference between acetone and benzene, or even benzine for that matter.

For many years I've used an ABDick "flexible writing plate" on which are inscribed the words "wipe with a soft cloth moistened with benzine immediately after using." For many years, naturally, I've ignored these words as often as I've used the writing plate. Today I took a look at the pale blue-veined murky mass that was at one time a translucent white thing of clarity, and decided to Do Something About It. Now, of course I knew benzene was  $C_6H_6$  and a solvent for a good many things, but it turned out all we had in the garage was acetone, also a solvent for a good many things and  $(CH_3)_2CO$  as it turns out. Hmm, they both have C's and H's and so what's an O or two among friends?

So I tried it. Well, it took off some of the blue veins, all right, but eventually I noticed it was also taking off the stuff that made the plate translucent. Well, I don't mind a transparent plate but I was afraid of what it might do to the texture, which, after all, is what a writing plate is all about, so I stopped. The plate did not. It is now a writing roll, none too flexible, partly blue-veined translucent and partly white transparent. (Can something transparent be said to be white?) Thus proceeds the learning process.

Oh, yes. Benzine is a colorless, volatino, inflammable liquid, a mixture of various hydrocarbons, used in cleaning, etc... No formula given, obviously complex. No doubt with lots of spare O's abounding.

I must get some, sometime.

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Ski season fast approaches, and all systems are go. I took a five-month lease on a condominium last month and now we are trying to put a group together to share the costs. Last Saturday we went to the last great swap meet in the area, a big one in San Francisco's Civic Center. I bought what looks to be a practically new set of skis and bindings for the price of the bindings (new) alone, so I'm well satisfied there. I also bought a parka and pants outfit that was new but was missing the hood...\$70 versus a sticker price of \$113. Poles were \$7. For my



birthday (day before yesterday) I got a pair of ski gloves and a ski hat from my Charlotte, and my folks sent some money which I will spend on goggles. Now all I need to be the flashiest guy on the slopes are some boots. I've decided not to skimp there---I'm buying new Scott boots this weekend. They're the warmest, lightest and simplest boots on the market and will run around \$185, but they will last me indefinitely and I don't mind the cost so much.

Now if only I could ski!

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Gollywow-and-so-on, as I used to say in my SS/TWS letterhacking days, my sense of wonder is endlessly revived. I got a progress report from the Westercon in today's mail and there my name is, big as life. Fan GoH...who woulda thunk it?

When Bruce Pelz first mentioned this to me a year and a half ago, I sat right down and wrote a stirring GoH speech that almost had tears in my eyes, let alone yours. Unfortunately, I wrote the speech entirely in my mind, and now I find myself quite unprepared with the deadline right on top of me!

I mean, Westercon is less than 8 months away!

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Charlotte and I have been talking about building a house on some property she owns nearby in Walnut Creek. I don't think we'll qualify for the new construction standards that Governor Brown is allowing the hippies to build in Mendocino county (although I wish we did) but it's beginning to look like there may be some subsidy money or at least favorable financing if we build a house to use solar heating. Since we are all in favor of this idea, anyhow, this sounds very interesting. Not only would we like to get away from the ever increasing monthly fee to PG&E, I for one sincerely doubt if we'll continue to have unlimited amounts of natural gas to fuel our homes in the not-so-distant future. Solar heat, particularly in our climate, plus a windmill would make us pretty nearly self-sufficient as far as energy is concerned.

We both like modern structures and these are particularly well suited for solar energy systems. They are also well designed for hillside lots, which this is, and they are relatively simple and design and construction. Since we would like to build as much of it ourselves as we can, the latter is important.

We recently saw a house we really liked, particularly the towers. One was designed to be an observation room, with an entire wall and angled roof made out of glass --but think what a bedroom that would make! The moon and stars would drive you out of your mind! Another tower would be great for a library/music room/retreat. What a fantastic place, also, to sit and write, instead of a back bedroom or dark basement. The type of architecture we favor features lots and lots of natural light, windows, and views. To heat that type of space, we really need a cheap energy source. I suspect in another couple of decades you will find at least half of all new construction built to take advantage of solar heat.

And why not? Heinlein ran the whole transportation system that way.

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I don't intend doing four of these two-pagers a year, but I must admit they are sure lifesavers when you are down to the short strokes. No staples, even. But hopefully it'll be a regular TRF next mailing.

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