



Self-Preservation

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ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING...

Innumerable times within the past couple of months (four or five times, at least) I have dragged out the remnants of my collection of stencils and started, fitfully and futilly, alas, to get a FAPA-zine into the works. Nothing came of these effects except more stencils to hang by the wall. And what with the 60-plus hour work weeks I've been indulging myself in lately, there just didn't seem to be enough time for fanac.

The mad mad whirl of work, sleep, coffee, work and sleep suddenly calmed down. There I stood confronted with an entire four-day week-end and only about two-weeks worth of odds and ends to catch up during it. I dashed out, bright and eager-eyed as a neophan, bought myself a whole two quires of fresh stencils and a new typewriter*, and here I am. Goshwow, indeed, I may yet be able to fulfil my mailing requirements and tenuously maintain my membership for another year. I hope...

*I trust you noticed my new face. It is not all lopsided and out of alignment like my old face. I think it is quite an improvement. This is a secondhand (or so) Underwood Electric. I picked it up at a reasonable but not exceptional price at the little typewriter shop around the corner. It has several features that the IBM lacked, notably a reasonable alignment of the face, and a 90-day warranty. Also, the typebars are not flying in all sorts of directions. I consider that to be its primary advantage over the IBM.

Besides I have sort of a soft spot in my head for Underwoods, having learnt on the Model 5 in the attic during my yout'.

I almost picked up a Model 4, sight unseen, the other day. One of the guys at work has one and he asked what I'd give him for it. I looked at a sample of the face and made him a modest offer. He was willing to accept it, but after thinking it over decided my offer was too low. So my career as a collector of junk typewriters was postponed until I obtained this machine. Now, the old IBM, sans "e" bar, is sitting on the floor and I am wondering what the hell to do with it. If IBM still stocks parts for that model (which the last repairman told me was obsolete) having a new typebar put in would cost about \$10-\$15. And when the next one will fatigue into typewriter-eternity is a matter of pure speculation.

31-May-63

For a while there I had all sorts of dreams of cluttering my cubby-hole of a home with assorted typewriters. A year or so back the company I slave for acquired three junkies: a Remington standard, a Remington Noiseless (both old and broken) and an IBM Exec of approximately the same vintage as my old IBM standard--early 1940's, which is in semi-functioning condition. All of these were stacked in precious storage space atop the file cabinets and ignored.

I made several offers to buy them, but was also ignored, so I finally gave up on that idea. Not that I really know what I'd do with an assortment of machines like that. Ghu knows, there is hardly anything more horrible than a Remington Noiseless, unless it is a portable Remington Noiseless. I had one of those once. My horse tried to eat it, but that is another story and I think I told it several years ago.

My ambition, now that I have a typewriter again, is a new (to me) duplicator. Not that there is anything malfunctioning about this Pilot. Silverberg, from whom I got it, estimates its age at about 12 years, which is the prime of life for these Speedy-types. But I am fascinated by the new development so many of you discovered years ago--the paste-ink duplicator.

For a while there I had visions of a multilith, but decided that is somewhat beyond my space limitations, and besides at the present I am a hard-shell letterpress printer and while we merely ignore mimeo as outside the field, we militantly deny the existence of that vile principle of reproduction known as offset...

If Ghu had meant man to print with wet rocks..."

This Underwood is a joy for interlineating. It had the automatic repeat on the - key, which the IBM didn't. Couple of other features the IBM lacked are a relatively standard keyboard: ' over the 8 and " over the 2 being prime examples. IBM had them on a key of their own at the right ' being lower case ", which made switching from it to the manual at work rough.

This also has a repeat on the back-space, which is nice, and a key for a forward space with a repeat feature, also surprisingly handy. A + and = complete the special goodies that my past machines have lacked.

Nothing exceptional--not like Rotsler's typer with the WR Monogram or such. But a bleeding improvement over its predecessor.

"Seeded shoulders"

9 June 63

The time machine in the living room has developed a wonderful new quirk--it shows old movies from about 11:00 p.m. straight through to sometime like 5:00 or 6:00 or so in the a.m. Now, these are hardly my idea of ideal viewing hours since, even though I work a nutty shift, I do have to get up sometime before noon on weekdays. But the jimdandy thing about this new quirk is the type of movies it is showing...it has been holding sort of a Richard Arlen festival.

Among the classics with Richard Arlen and Andy Devine have been LEGION OF LOST FLIERS which is a masterpiece of pure pulp motion picture; DEVIL'S PIPELINE which was not an airplane picture, but still a fine pulp movie; an epic of the oval motor track, the name of which eludes me at the moment. It has also shown some not-so-classic R.A. films, like SUBMARINE ALERT, which is a real Saturday Matinee stinker from 1943, and something made immediately after the war which was an obvious attempt to make one of the old timey pulp movies, the name of which also eludes me. This was a long-haul trunking picture and had most of the elements, but somehow lacked the spirit.

Among the classics without Richard Arlen (and there were quite a few) was the 1936 pulp SPEED, also an epic of the automotive industry, with young Jim Stewart. This gorgeous fillum opened with shots of factory torture tests of the latest models. J.S. played the test-driver/seat-of-the-pants mechanic. I have forgotten who played the Educated Engineer who was his rival. It went something like this...

Chick-type arrives at factory to be new P.R. man, meets J.S. and also Educated Engineer. Both court her. J.S. is working on carburettor design, and she talks boss-types into making it a factory project, but they insist on putting E.E. on the job along with JS. EE adds improvement which makes carb pass tests, but JS doesn't trust it.

Factory builds Indy car for carburettor, since this new device has to be "proven" before they can put it on their cars, and after all, Indianapolis is the proving ground of modern American cars. It is there that new developments are tested and new ideas developed to make the average family car better and safer.

Although JS is not happy with the carburettor, he goes out (with riding mechanic) hellbent for leather. Due to a malfunction of the carb, he spins and racks it.

Well, it will be another year before there is another Indy 500, and the carb does have to be proven before it can be put on road cars, so the factory is finally talked into building a Land Speed car for it, and off goes JS to break the Bluebird's record.

He is making the first half of the run, when a line of somekind lets go and the cabin fills with fumes. He blacks out and the car bounds

over the desert and comes to a halt which does it very little damage, but which according to the crowd that gathers, severs JS's jugular vein. So Engineer, who isn't such a bad sort after all, fixes busted tubing, jumps in driver's seat and motors rapidly back to the nearest hospital with JS, meanwhile and incidentally, covering the return part of the run and breaking the Bluebird's record.

So the factory goes into production of the carb, and the chick who turns out to be the boss's daughter and due to inherit the factory some day, marries JS. The Engineer goes back to his old girl friend and they all live happily ever after.

It would have been a natural for Richard Arlen.

More classics lately have included the everpopular DAWN PATROL, which I think is still one of the finest Air-War films ever made, and FOUR FEATHERS (which loses a great deal on the small colorless screen but is a swinger in any case).

Then there was CASTLE ON THE HUDSON, which is a good example of its ilk--that grand climax where prison warden Pat O'Brien has had his faith in crooked-but-honest convict John Garfield vindicated, and JG marches off, head-high, to the electric chair in a noble gesture to protect the Woman He Loves,

Same ilk but not a very good movie by the best stretch of my imagination was BLACKWELL'S ISLAND. I think this may also have circulated as WELFARE ISLAND. This with Basil Rathbone as the prison commissioner who is cleaning up the graft and corruption, and John Garfield looking juvenile enough to have just arrived from the pre-East Side Kids, as the crusading reporter who gets himself sent to the Island.

Also rans included INVISIBLE STRIPES (1940) a cornball with Humphrey Bogart and young William Holden; DANTE'S INFERNO (1935) a strange one with curly-headed Spenser Tracy, and one I regret having missed: CLEOPATRA (1934) with Claudette Colbert. I hope this'll be back in time for the forthcoming Big Screen Spec on the same general theme.

Oh, mustn't forget THE MALTESE FALCON, which is still showing around in real movie houses at regular intervals.

Lot of other goodies, too, but that'll give you the general idea. It's a good season for post-midnight TV.

15 June, suddenly

P.S. Last night gives SIGN OF THE CROSS (1933) with Fred March, Claudette Colbert, assorted others and the WWII re-release prologue. Like, kicks.

6/26/63

NEW YORK IS A NUTTY TOWN:

As you probably know the climate is lousy. If you don't look sharp the lovely days of spring and autumn will evade you completely. The rents are atrocious. The struggle for parking spaces is a major war (for the four-wheel types, that is). City transit is fascinating, but somehow with a few very rare exceptions, the subway stations are always within walking distance, if you go in for the President's physical fitness program. The streets are extremely narrow, due to the quantity of trucks double-parked. The avenues are employed by an absolutely amazing assortment of motorists with obviously varied intentions. And the sidewalks...

The study of the life-forms indigenous to the sidewalks of New York is work for an anthropologist with a minor in abnormal psychology or else a zoologist with a similar minor, I'm not sure which.

First, like when one is on the way to work in the morning, there are the pedestrians. On such days as I take my constitutional over to the subway station, I observe one type in particular, which seems to be in the majority. Whoever coined the phrase "rush hour" or described the town as one of "hustle and bustle" obviously never visited it afoot (or in a car for that matter, but that is a different aspect of the situation).

There is a vast quantity of people in New York who seem compelled to meander along its sidewalks. They do not seem to be going anywhere in particular and are intent on maintaining a pace too slow to be considered as walking, but too fast to be a complete stop. In fact, there are only a few limited circumstances when they ever seem to stop this idle motion: at an intersection when the light is against them, they will usually walk out into the street at least to the center of the nearest lane before coming to a halt. There they will pose before oncoming traffic, blocking as much of it as possible, until such time as the light changes again. They then fall into that mesmerized amble and proceed across, sometimes managing to achieve the far curb before the light has changed again.

They also will stop immediately at the top of an up-escalator or bottom of a down-escalator, immediately upon stepping out of a revolving door and on the top step up from the subway. If there are two or more of them they may also stop in the middle of the sidewalk, but only if when doing so they manage to occupy the entire width of the sidewalk. There is a subspecies which devotes as much time as possible to blocking as much sidewalk (and street) as possible. This is the Theatre-Goer, a type given to congregating in front of theatres (not movie houses unless they are showing special Reservations only features) in outlandish costumes (the females in particular, tho the men get pretty gaudy at times) and making noises at passing occupied taxis.

I have found that the only way to get through one of these barricades effectively is to be as actively rude as its constituents are passively rude and attack with the elbows.

6/29/63

The electronic eyeball has been at it again. A couple of days ago it showed me Harold Lloyd in PROFESSOR BEWARE (1939). This is an oddly charming fillum. There is a swinging chase sequence where HL and the chick in a station wagon are fleeing two motorcycle cops played by Ward Bond and Guinn Williams. Lloyd's comedy seems to be a peculiar sort of physical slapstick with odd intellectual overtones. In this film, for instance, the resolution involves a certain amount of character development on the part of the protagonist so that he overcomes the grand obstacles by his own will.

Last night there was another Richard Arlen picture: MINESWEEPER (1943) a fairly late model, but in the tradition.

I have decided that there are four basic situations for the protagonist of the pulp movie (and, of course, variants):

1. The Hero Falsely Accused - wherein our Hero usually comes on the scene with a cloud hanging over him, his name somehow blackened, and must clear himself. LEGION OF LOST FLIERS is an excellent example.
2. The Hero Self-Accused - wherein the Hero has done something for which he has feelings of guilt, but since it isn't a cardinal sin, he can atone for it through valiant actions and eventually live happily ever after. Sometimes this sin't something he did himself, but a blot on the family escutcheon or such. Examples include SKY BRIDES and the Richard Barthlemess role in ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS. A variant on this is the Hero who is basically a Good Guy with some minor character flaw or problem which he must resolve in order to earn the right to Eternal Bliss, as for instance the smart-alecky hero in BOULDER DAM. See also a number of John Garfield pictures.
3. The Hero Justly Accused - wherein our Hero is basically a Good Guy but has done something unforgivable or has some irreparable character flaw, like the protagonist in MINESWEEPER who had a weakness for gambling and as a result had deserted the Navy shortly before the start of the film. For such there is no atonement but valiant

self-sacrifice. This sort can frequently be identified fairly early in the film by the fact that the chick already has a fiance who is really a nice, decent upright type.

4. The Hero Not Really Involved - wherein our protagonist doesn't have a personal problem to overcome, but just goes about routing the villains and putting an end to evil because he is a Hero. This type picture frequently isn't worth bothering with.

There are a multitude of gradations and variations and exceptions, but I think that covers the basics. Type 2, which maybe should be sub-divided more carefully, is probably the most important. The masterpiece of the pure type-2 is FOUR FEATHERS.

Thinking in the stick, I feel I should specify a sub-type 2, or 2a, wherein the hero isn't displaying any particular feelings of guilt about his shortcomings to begin with, but Has A Lesson To Learn. His guilt-feelings manifest themselves around the Moment Of Truth, when he Learns His Lesson and goes out to Perform His Act of Heroism. It is a fairly important distinction: in type-2 the feelings of guilt are motivation and in 2-a are development toward solution.

Some more thought should go into type-4, too, I suspect. At least I have made an overly-blanket condemnation up there. There were a fistful of pretty enjoyable Crusading Reporter, etc., type fillums where the Hero's character doesn't undergo much of anything. Sometimes, though, these are borderline cases which lean toward 2-a.

My favorite Max Brand plot is a type 2-a: the hero in the beginning is almost inevitably a potentially superior individual who, in the course of the action, has to mature and realize his potentialities. And he does.

Type 3 was especially common, as I recall, during the early years of WWII -- the Wise-Guy, the Petty Crook or the Good Guy With A Blot on His Past, who got involved in the war and discovered that his Country was Worth Dying For.

I have finally worked my way up, by leaps and sgriggles, to HERODOTUS. This is the Penguin edition translated by Aubrey de Selincourt. It swings. This is my first attack on Herodotus HISTORIES in some 15 or so years and I haven't the vaguest idea whose translation I was tackling then but that try was unsuccessful.

Now I am wondering what other worthwhile volumes de Selincourt may have translated (aside from the LIVY which is plugged on the bacover of H) and to what extent the readability of the H is due to the skill of the translator.

I have several times tried to wade unsuccessfully through the Rouse translations of Homer. They disturb me. And, eventually, bore me.

Well, I almost racked up the bike the other day. I was blasting up Third Avenue on my way to work, a little faster than I should have been going. This is a sports bike and the engine isn't really happy in the morning until it has been wound up a bit, so I usually start out revving up through first and second and keeping it wound for a while. I had upshifted into third and was still accelerating when a taxi made a left turn across the lane rather close in front of me.

I whomped down on both binders. Unfortunately, I am somewhat heavy-footed in a panic stop. It is a bad habit and one I have been working to cure myself of, but I think it is a natural inclination. In the braking the weight transfer is muchly to the front which is hand-braked. The main purpose of the rear brake in a sharp stop is to slow the rear end sufficiently to keep it from passing the front.

So, like, I hit both binders and broke the rear end loose. I didn't hit the taxi but I fish-tailed all over a lot of Third Avenue and for a long instant had the very distinct feeling that I was going to drop the bike.

But this Yamaha is a remarkably stable machine. I've had several adventures on it wherein the rear end was making better time from side to side than forward. It sways and the foot-pegs batter at my shins but then suddenly it rights itself and rolls rapidly forward again, completely in hand.

So I didn't drop it and I motored quietly in to work. But my right calf blossomed into a glorious blaze of bruise. I think I need either sponge rubber footpegs or horsehide jackboots.

If it weren't for Ritz crackers how could I eat my soup with chopsticks



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