

Redd Boggs'
SPIROODNEGE

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FRACTIONAL WIT

Fanatics who are in the grip of trivialities are sometimes fascinating, often nearly insufferable. But most of us are fanatics of this breed in some facet of our intellectual life, whether it is about cats, Edward Gorey, or Objectivism. That is why I think most of us ought to look with a noble measure of tolerance upon phenomena of the sort: Bill Blackbeard, in his intense devotion to the films of W. C. Fields, and to the pulp yarns featuring heroes like the Spider; Dick Lupoff, in his varying loyalties to Captain Marvel and to John Carter; Bruce Pelz, in his exhaustive endeavors toward acquiring a complete fanzine collection; my own strange enthusiasms for Rover Boys and Jerry Todd books.

*Terry
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One would think that Tom Gilbert's rather inexplicable preoccupation with Apa L would be universally understood and condoned, and that however ludicrous it might be, Bruce Pelz, of all fans, ought to look upon it with sympathetic eyes. Of all people in the LASFS he and Tom are, in their pursuit of baubles, most closely magpies of a feather.

The alleged joke on Tom Gilbert at the LASFS picnic 23 May was unnecessarily cruel. The joke (if one can dignify it with that term) had already succeeded when Tom learned with a shock about the proposed fractional distribution to be produced at the picnic and -- according to the account in Nyet Vremia #32 -- "did everything but scream and run around in circles." Of course the rational response to this revelation should have been, "So what? Where's the potato salad and the Busch Bavarian?" But it wasn't, and at least it is to Tom's credit that from a cold start he managed to scrounge up a way of contributing to the unexpected distribution after all. The conspirators, having failed to outwit Tom, could only succeed in their "joke" by going to the extreme of simply wadding up and "disposing" of the master on which Tom had typed his contribution. When you can't outfox somebody, you hit him with a baseball bat. Some joke.

A few fans make a philosophy out of their belief that fandom is not a part of "real life." Henry Stine (of all people!) solemnly assured us in Apa L distribution #12 that "fandom is fun, but the real world is life" and that "The mundane world is the real world, and a hell of a good one" (!). On the contrary, it seems to me basically a fantasy to make-believe that fandom is not a part of real life. What kind of a world do these people inhabit, anyway? Whatever one may mean by saying "fandom is fun, but the real world is life," one should not imagine that events in fandom cannot cause real hurt, anguish, and despair. When such states of mind arise from acts of cruelty, antagonism, or indifference by others, in or out of fandom, they are real. I found it hard to

understand how some fans could ignore the Walter Breen affair on the grounds that it was "just a fannish hassel" and therefore was not worth bothering about -- as if the injustice involved were imaginary because it concerned fandom! And I found it even harder to understand how a few fans could think that the Breen matter was a huge joke on the grounds that it was part of a "fun thing" like fandom -- as if a man's own self-esteem were unimportant because it involved fandom!

Spirochete #9, last week, contained some comments on the supposed "joke" allegedly perpetrated by some Lloyd House people on a Caltech senior. (My apologies, by the way, to Fred Hollander for misremembering his name as "Holland.") One can be indignant about such childish goings-on, but after all, most of us aren't involved in such juvenile horseplay. Let the foolish little children have their fun. But a joke such as the fractional distribution, carried to the extremes reported in Bruce Pelz' account of the picnic, is a sobering matter because it involves fellow fans and fellow LASFS members.

Splashing turpentine on a stray dog's ass just to see him yelp and dash around in circles is not a very edifying deed. But many humane people stand ready to prevent such callous fun, and no halfway civilized person thinks such a thing is very funny anymore. But nobody notices acts of needless cruelty in fandom, and a lot of people think bugging a person beyond decent limits is howling good fun. I wonder if we shouldn't pull ourselves up short right now, and consider whether the sight of an earnest young fan made to "do everything but scream and run around in circles" is quite as amusing as it must have seemed at the time.

99 LARGE WALK-IN REFRIGERATORS CRAMMED TO THE BRIM

"We ought to send Bill Blackbeard some of these 'Horace and Doris' comic strips from Foremost milk cartons," I remarked to Gretchen the other day.

"You'd cut the comic strip out of the carton?" Gretchen asked incredulously. "But then it wouldn't be mint any more."

"That's so," I said, embarrassed at my lack of acumen. "But hold on! We couldn't just send the empty milk cartons to Bill."

"Of course not," Gretchen said. "Can you imagine Bill Blackbeard's collection of 'Horace and Doris' comic strips? You ask to examine it, and he leads you into a vast warehouse -- "

" -- where you discover 99 large walk-in refrigerators crammed to the brim with Foremost milk cartons full of milk!"

MUST-SEE MASTERPIECE

They showed "Billy Liar" at the Guild theater in Berkeley not long ago, on the same bill with "Kind Hearts and Coronets." We went to see the Alec Guinness film again, but we were both surprised and impressed with "Billy Liar": surprised that such a masterpiece could be overlooked and neglected, and impressed with this fantastically realistic treatment of the old "Walter Mitty" theme. When "real life" closes in on Billy -- played by Tom Courtenay -- he escapes to a private Coventry world, where he is an idealized hero. It is a funny, shocking film.