

SWINGLINE FIVE

SWINGLINE #5: my ghod, if it weren't lettered up there, big as life (and courtesy of Arnie), I'd never believe there'd been that many... Amazing! And everyone of them done by Joyce Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6-B, Brooklyn, NY 11201. This one is meant for the fifth mailing of APA, which is due to be mailed out on July 1, 1972.

Well, I don't have much luck with plants, as I was telling you a month or so ago...but I do seem to have an attraction for Warm Blooded Things. One morning, a few weekends ago, Arnie and I were lying sleepily in our bed when I heard a terrific racket in the kitchen. Thinking The Worst, I crept on tippy toe, and arrived just in time to see a flash of grey dart across the floor, and leap onto the window sill. There, silently twitching, sat the most ratty-looking grey squirrel I've ever seen. I was just a little afraid of him... rabies, you know...and I stood in the doorway of the kitchen, first on one foot and then the other, harboring some secret fear that he would, any moment, dash across the floor and bite my toes. "You have to leave, Squirrel" I told him. He just twitched some more, and didn't move. "You can't stay," I said. Twitch-twitch. "Go away, squirrel." Finally he turned and darted up the fire escape. I went back to bed and forgot about it. Then, perhaps two weeks later, as I lay dreaming one Sunday morning, Arnie suddenly shook me awake. "Wake up" he whispered. "There's something in the kitchen." Somehow, I didn't connect it in my mind, and stomach churning, tiptoed beside Arnie to peer through the door. This time we caught the culprit in the act...rummaging through our garbage. He again turned and ran, and sat in the window quivering at us. "We'll have to feed him something" I told Arnie. "No--No" said Arnie. "Yes--Yes" I said, and put a roll on the window ledge. I did, to pacify Arnie, close the window...then we stood waiting to see if our new friend will come back. He did, of course, and stood on our ledge eating the bread... and then I put out a little dish of water for him... and later on, another piece of bread...

Anyhow, I guess we have a squirrel now. We've named him Tucker.

BILL You spoke of the justification for life... I suppose that we all wish for and hunt for a reason for life; particularly when things are going badly I find myself thinking that there's got to be some plan that would make all this worthwhile if I only knew it. And at one time or another, I've devised some fairly baroque schemes, trying to excuse the indignities of the day. But generally, when I'm content enough that I can tolerate the thought, I believe there's no Purpose. (I suppose it's a truism that, as discomfort increases, the desire for Purpose increases also. No one can ever quite face the belief that their own personal pains are simply the result of an unfeeling universe, and contain no more meaning or worth than the individual can extract from them himself. Considering the very human desire to dedicate our martyrdoms to Purpose, I sometimes wonder if the concept of religion can ever be removed from humanity.)

I think you've hit on a Great Truth, when you say it's better to have money than to have none. I've sampled both ends of that spectrum, as I suppose we all have, and I've discovered I'm a much more worthwhile person when I've eaten than when I've not...and I'm completely worthless as a person when I've got a toothache and can't afford a dentist... and the sight of a hungry kid totally destroys my capacity for looking at the beauty of

the world. I don't think I've actually made your Decision yet, or entered into that resolve to Make Money, and it's probably that (since I always tend to lack Resolve) I'll never make a great committment to that goal. But I have accepted the idea that it's possible to be a sensitive person without starving to death, and the sacrifices in freedom I make are worthwhile in order to guarantee my daily bread. I disagree with you, by the way...I don't think that having nothing is more completely free than having a lot. When you have nothing, so much of your energy and thought has to be devoted to getting something albeit only a few grains of rice or whatever the hip equivalent is, that there's little time left over for non-physical demands. While he doesn't have to take orders from anyone, I still think there's no one who's much less free than the guy who's scuffling for a living.

Why, Bill...the Victorians were famous for their decadence. Or, rather, if they were decadent at all, they usually went all out about it. (How's that for a generalization?) Actually, I think it's a great talent to really Let Go and be decadent, and it takes a great deal of effort and practice to really get the hang of it. I wouldn't say I had the routine down completely pat, yet...but I'm working on it and expect to make great strides as my future progresses. Admittedly, I'm handicapped somewhat by a tendency toward Accomplishment; but I hope to soon be able to overcome this unwholesome drive toward Goal for increasing amounts of time. So far, I'm unable to maintain a totally decadent life-style for over a few days at a time before ambition pulls me out of it; perhaps soon I'll be able to run the total up to a more lengthy span.

ROSS I think it's cheating to deliberately choose words of the correct length when justifying margins; you're supposed to be able to fit your first word choice into the justified pattern... Interesting how the rules of our compulsions Vary. In the past, when I was a little girl, I had a great compulsion that when I got out of the bathtub I had to be dried and dressed before all the water finished draining out and it was against the Rules for me to delay about pulling the plug...the plug must be pulled at the precise moment I stepped out of the tub. It was also against rules for me to put in more than my normal amount of water...

I think there are probably others in this apa who, by virtue of their long friendships with him, deserve the privilege of seconding the nomination of Dave Van Arnam much more than I do. Nonetheless, if that particular gap hasn't already been filled, I'd certainly be pleased to second him. If that's already been done, I'll certainly vote yes. Indeed, let's have him in, if he'll come.

Perhaps if I'd seen more of the surface of Manhattan Island, as you have, I'd have a better opinion of it; what I've seen, though, makes me think that \$24 was just about right. Oh, I'm being sarcastic, of course..it's not all that bad. But the disheartening thing about this end of NY State is its flatness, and that's what's wrong with Manhattan, too, or what I've seen of it. It's not as bad as Long Island, tho; I expect Long Island to be washed away by a good sized wave anytime; there don't seem to be any barriers against that eventuality.

I really enjoyed your explanation re your study of astrology. I think you hit on the exact thing about it that bothered me when I dabbled in it. It's so frequently proposed as an Exact Science, and my early contacts quickly dispelled any potential in me for believing its exactness. I got interested in it when I was in highschool, and checked a couple of books from the public library. The first one didn't seem bad, but when I started reading the second, I was immediately discomfited by a certain contradiction: the two authors disagreed about the number of planets. A quick check of my science book

reaffirmed my astronomical memories: both authors disagreed with my textbook. -- I thought about it a bit, and finally decided that astrology was one of the larger hoaxes ever perpetuated. -- I suppose I should now Do The Right Thing, and say something like "if it helps anyone understand himself, then it's good", but the fact is, I don't really believe that. If anyone is ever helped by astrology, then I think it's a case where he could have been helped by anything. And I think some people have turned to that particular crack-pot theory when they would have been better off to take their troubles to a more dependable source of help...and that's where the harm comes in. Too, I share with you and Arnie and Alice a dislike of being categorized; astrologists are particularly prone to do this, and also have an unfortunate tendency to feel that they somehow mystically "possess" you when they've studied your chart. At any rate, my very brief encounter with astrology in the mid-fifties made me unable to take it seriously when it became popular in the sixties. In its place, I've stuck with palmistry. Which is, as you know, an entire Other Thing.

You mentioned something that has been vaguely disturbing to me, when you were explaining to Bill about your reaction to rock. Thing is, as you said, you and I and Ted grew up through years where there were a great many diversified forms of music. I suppose my earliest (non-religious) musical memory is of short features at the movies of the big bands playing swing. Since then, of course, music has gone through convoluted stages, and our individual interests in musical history have determined how far into the past we've looked. Personally, I can be content spending an evening listening to almost any style of popular music that the last 100 years have produced. However, and here's where I find myself disturbed (and I do hope someone will prove that I'm wrong) it's seemed to me that most of the "rock generation" (hate that term) has little or no interest in anything prior to rock. Oh, a really good rock historian might go back, searching for roots, as far as rhythm and blues...but that's about the size of his interest; it's all rock-centered, with nothing left over for non-rock music styles. Any interest he has in anything prior to rock is purely academic and has nothing to do with real music appreciation. And, getting right down to Where It Is, wouldn't dream of ever listening to anything but rock. In some ways, it's like rock fans are to music what Trekkies are to science fiction. I like rock...course I do. But I'm not altogether certain I really like rock fans. And I really resent having to make apologetic noises anytime that I want to listen to anything but rock.

ARNIE: The thing that was so frightening to me about Krassner's speech at Lunacon, was that Krassner used to actually be an opinion-maker; he used to have some influence on how I thought. Now I'm wondering how many of the ideas that I've made part of my own political ideology stemmed from Krassner's paranoia and not from reality. I like to think that he used to be a fairly straight-thinking guy, and has only got so nutty recently. But now I'm uncertain...

I guess I'll go along with you, in your thought that the New York-Pittsburgh fans are rather strange. Their intense "family" relationship with one another, that excludes everyone else, is particularly hard to deal with, as is their rabid defense of one another any time some slight is felt (or imagined.) Well, actually, on that last part I guess it's not too hard to understand...I've seen you be very heated in defense of your friends. For example, it's funny the way you assume the warrior stance in defense of Dave each time there's a critical word spoken about him in Brooklyn, or written about him in Apa; you seem to have a special affection for him that makes listening to criticism of him very difficult for you. And, I suppose that I'm the self-appointed defender of a couple of people, too...I bristle in defense of Lesleigh and Seth. And I've noticed that the Katz/Komar/Kunkel combine unifies in phalanx phorm to keep the slings and arrows from Lane. And all of the Insurgents cluck like a mother hen at the mention of Alice's name... I

suppose when I think of all this, it's not so hard to understand the way the Pittsburgh fans defend one another. I suspect it's a common human reaction that applies to all groups of friends. (They do seem to have it rather strong, though.)

Attributing sex to Nixon is really stupid. Everyone knows that sex is part of the New Left...everytime you screw, you're helping the revolution. (Actually, I think sex is part of the Jewish Conspiracy...)

FRANK I was fascinated by the story of Icces, but there was one question that you didn't answer. I can understand that Icces had convinced people that he's God...but what does Icces think himself? I knew someone once that thought he was God...the Jehova Complex is the most interesting mania I know about. Unfortunately, so far as I know, a Jehova Complex almost never responds to treatment. Also, the way I understand it, a lot of times it eventually leads to the person becoming outraged at being mocked and visiting "the wrath of god" on some disbeliever. (A Messiah Complex is very similar, of course, but the outcome tends to be an attempt at self-martyrdom rather than murder. I suppose this makes a M.C. better to be around than a J.C.)

One bad thing about being closely associated with a paranoid schizophrenic is that even a perfectly sane person can become afflicted with secondary schizophrenia, and start exhibiting all the signs of...(one reason you should really pick your company carefully... life is full of these little pitfalls.) Of course, a case of secondary schizophrenia usually gives way to treatment very easily, once removed from the source of infection, or can actually even correct itself. The bad thing, though, about secondary schizophrenia when it's feeding off a Jehova Complex, is that the person will fight like the devil to stay with God, and has to be forceably separated. (I suppose that ultimately a basically healthy-minded person would begin to see the flaws in his godhead, and begin to doubt, and so heal himself.)

I suppose that Icces must be a fairly common-type phenomena these days; there seem to be ten-cent saviors popping up all over the country. I wonder if this has always been true, or is it in some way connected with the drug culture? (Does anyone know if that group in Boston is still thriving? And..what happened to the rest of the Manson family? Did they scatter and go their separate ways, or is the ranch still going?)

The flaw in your idea of leaving the door unlocked while smoking, so that if the heat came in it would be an illegal bust, is that it might not necessarily be the police that came in. It might be some hotel chambermaid who, properly shocked by what she had seen, would go back to the desk clerk and report the incident. Then the police could be summoned, and they'd come with a legal warrant. I always believe in putting as much distance and armor plating between me and Them as possible, since in my paranoid mind I'm certain that They are constantly searching for a way to get my fair white bod behind bars. -- I've managed to almost completely shed my paranoia about smoking at home, thank heavens; if I had to be as convulsed with worry in my own place as I am away from it, I'd probably give up smoking.

You know, I too have wondered about that question you raise, ie, why wouldn't NY water make Pepsi's taste bad, if it makes Cokes taste bad. But I've always thought it would be impolite to ask.

BRUCE I guess I'm going to have to give up and ask, since apparently you're not going to tell unless I do: What is the meaning of your title? I've never heard of a Bronx Rapid Transit.

Your pages were really fine stuff. I enjoyed them tremendously, particularly as they gave me a good opportunity to reflect on my own attitudes in re. Affairs. There is nothing even remotely similar to these shindigs in my background; the closest experience I had had was my senior prom..(which in fact was very nearly the same except that my prom was not a food function, the band was less aggressive, and the decorations were less tasteful). You notice I don't mention the religious ceremony as a point of conflict..in my mind the religious ceremony, whether it's a wedding or bar mitzvah, is far less impressive than the celebration following.

The first Affair I attended represented one of the larger cultural shocks I've had since coming to New York. It was a bas mitzvah (translation: a bar mitzvah is the coming-of-age religious ceremony for a young man; a bas mitzvah is for a young lady,) and was in fact the most elaborate affair that I've attended to date. The religious ceremony wasn't too hard to understand, and even though it was the first such I'd seen, it was easy to accept. I was a little thrown by the caterer setting up a bar in the lobby of the synagogue -- I was raised Baptist, you know, and the thought of taking Demon Rum into a House of God was startling -- but I was quick to get my emotional bearings, realizing that not all religions have such strong anti-alcohol tabus. Besides, by this time the caterer had cracked out the hors d'oeuvres..something else my background doesn't really include but that I could really get into. Dollar signs were flickering uneasily through my mind, as I vaguely realized that this must be costing the host-family quite a lot...but, hell, it's the little girl's Big Moment, I thought, and what's a few hundred dollars for such an occasion when the family can afford it.

And then the caterer opened the doors to the ballroom, and we were ushered in, and I began to realize just how limited my vision of the expenditure had been.

(I blush to write it, but earlier that day I had refused a cornbeef sandwich for lunch, because I figured we'd probably get a nice buffet of cold cuts for our dinner. Arnie teased me quite a lot about that.)

All through the afternoon, as the band played continuously, the food just kept being served, the drinks just kept being poured, I quivered with the knowledge that this little celebration was costing more money than Arnie and I will earn together this year. More money than my mother has had to live on for the past five years put together. Enough money to feed and clothe an entire village of Apaches for a couple or three years. I couldn't deny that it was pleasurable...but I couldn't decide whether it was moral to enjoy the fun.

I still haven't really decided whether giving a huge Affair is moral or not. Basically, I guess what the real question is, is "is it moral for some people to be wealthy when others aren't." (Do you realize that I used is three times straight in a row in that last sentence?) I don't really think it's right for some people to be wealthy when other people are starving; I think that a basic amount of food-clothing-shelter-medicine is due to every living person. But, the redistribution of wealth, and how to accomplish it, is an enormous subject, and one that I couldn't decide or solve on the afternoon of my first bas mitzvah.

I suppose the solution that I came up with is that, whether it's right or wrong, some people are wealthy. And if they want to spend their money on fancy parties, that's their privilege. And, if I attend one of these super-colossal, vulgar, ostentatious, completely fantastic Affairs, it would be rude of me not to take the pleasures that it offers in the spirit that they're given. Of a matter of fact, having done all that Heavy Thinking about the subject, I enjoy these parties tremendously. When we attend a family function of this

type, we're always seated with Arnie's brother and his fiance...two people I really like... and it's very much indeed like a senior prom. The atmosphere of Perfumed Artificial Elegance is a very heady one for a girl from the Ozarks...my life is hardly made up of fancy balls, and these Affairs remind me greatly of what my little-girl dreams were of where the princess would go to live after her prince had come. They're wonderfully frothy and make-believe, and I like them on that basis alone, without even starting on the headier raptures of the family reunion connected with the Affair.

TERRY Even though you hinted that Lesleigh's opinion would be the most valid, I'm still going to throw in my unpopular two-cents worth. I honest to god think that there are legitimate differences between the male and female roles. While it's more than certain that society pushes a lot of crap off on women, and forces women to exhibit some characteristics that are unreal, I believe that if you raised two children (one of each) side by side, identically, you'd be able to tell the difference when you were through. --- Which subject reminds me of something I was going to ask Lesleigh: There's something I've been meaning to mention, Lesleigh..of all the females in apa, you're the most heated about women's lib. Yet you're the only one of us who doesn't have her own apazine. Why is this, sister?

Yeah, and before they said all Columbia fanzines look alike, they said all Brooklyn zines look alike. And before that, all St. Louis zines looked alike. And it seems to me I even recall vague murmurings, way back when, that all NY zines looked alike. Probably, to a non-fan, all fanzines look alike. And to a person who can't read, all printing looks alike. I guess it all comes down to how much attention the watcher is giving.

You know, you're right. I really shouldn't have given the impression that we're all that upset over Ross not smoking pot...particularly since that's not actually the case (as Ross well knows.) But, you know how it is, gang...this is a subject of Some Depth, and since this apa is supposed to Smile on things of Depth, it seemed a better idea than it really was. My apologies to you, and to Frank, and to anyone else that felt I was trying to force Ross down some primrose path. Certainly didn't mean to upset you like that. I won't apologize to Ross, however, since I already know that he didn't take it that way.

You played basketball?..weird. Personally I was about the most unsportive person I know; I didn't even skip rope properly. The one thing I did do a lot of was swimming...and I particularly enjoyed distance swimming. I used to live in the water..maybe five-six hours a day, every day from May 1 through Sept. 1. Mostly I swam in the Poplar Bluff pool, but with lots of excursions to rivers, ponds, lakes, etc. My longest swim was across a cove of Lake Wappapella; it was moderately lengthy. But..no more. It's been years and years since I've done any heavy swimming, and I suspect my wind is gone. I'd love a chance to find out, though.

Well...here I am at the tail-end of my stencil on Saturday morning of Mailing Day...so I guess I'll address my last ten lines to:

LESLEIGH Gee, I sure do want to register my disagreement with something you said... I figure American men must really be getting insecure, these days, what with being told so frequently that they're (sexually) No Good. I mean, first they have to adjust to the notion that (according to women's lib and other authorities) women aren't turned on by intercourse. Then they get told repeatedly that they can't begin to compete with another woman; that lesbian activities are, by their nature, certain to be more pleasurable to a woman. Now you come along and say that masturbation is better than men. Wow, how bad that must make men feel.... And I have a lot more to say to you, and to the rest of the people in apa...but this is line 62...so I'll have to save it for next time. See you then!