

520 07 0328 -- 2125 Baxter Street 90039
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1969: the penultimate year of the decade

(Acknowledgement to Olive Rocklin Sherman, sister of Ross,
for two drawings found within)

TEN CASES OF CANNED CORN BEEF

(Or: 240 cans at 12 ounces each, produce of Uruguay)

This portion is the buildup to a manifesto. It should be included in bits and pieces so that the background upon which it be predicate will eventuate. 520 07 0328 was born in 1919; and a couple of years ago in a rare moment of truth he stated that if he had his choice of birth years he was content. He had memories of a depression and in his way was a bit of the debris from it. And he remembers going out with his mother distributing the church Christmas baskets to the needy.

Perdue's original plan for self-sufficiency was rather modest: sufficient stock investment in the various things he consumed that they'd self-equate. That is to say: the bill for natural gas runs about \$65 per year. Own enough shares of Pacific Gas and Electric so that the annual dividend will pay the bill. Maybe three municipal bonds to cover the bill for water and power.

And on other things, just obtain a lifetime supply. Assume a life expectancy of twenty years for easier figuring. Razor blades, say: rather than one share of stock, merely make a cash purchase based on two blades per month for two hundred forty months.

Well, the price on corned beef was right (Safeway price, 65 cents a can; my cost, 39 cents a can) I bought ten cases last month.

520 is more and more convinced that this planet has had it; that humanity has passed the point of no return. 1984 is less than two decades in the future, and humanity will survive past 1984. Little did I think, though, so recently as two years ago when I agreed that 1919 was a good year in which to be born, that a normal life span would see not only the lunar landing but also the death of mankind. Either from gasping for breath (which is the way I will go) or from starvation.

MATT WEINSTOCK

Died of cancer December, 1969. Matt was a local columnist who will be missed. There were appearances in his columns by more than a few local fans. In 1945 Ackerman and Tigrina were walking downtown and passed the neon-lit billboard for

UNION
PACIFIC

It was wartime: and some of the letters were cut. The message read:

UN
PAC

Weinstock printed it, moralizing that maybe the railroads were trying to tell us something.

Then, also in 1945, he was doing a weekly newsbroadcast for overseas release of happenings stateside. One such dealt with the LASFS. Himmel promoted the transcription on loan, which I dubbed. Whereabouts of dubbing unknown.

Of late, Fred Shroyer's wife Pat appeared three or four times a year with a well-turned couplet, from which I knew she was alive and well; Edith Ogutsch made his column several times.

Weinstock was perhaps most interested in ringing the changes on well-known phrases. Such as the story of how they kept throwing rocks at the gooney birds, trying to train them to keep off the runways, until finally they had left no tern unstoned.

On the intricate tale of the Chinese bear with oddly-shaped feet who was a chronic thief, which ended up "...boy-foot Bear with teak of Chan."

My favorite tale from his column, last calendar year, was about the triangle player who was at a rehearsal in Hollywood Bowl one early morning, and found that his instrument was a traifle sharp. It was early; and the triangle player decided that the addition of a slight bit of water would increase the reactant mass of the triangle, flattening it down to the concert A that the score demanded.

So the conductor missed him, and yelled to the tympanist, "Where's Charley?"

"Oh, he's over by the bushes, dewing his ting."

I have flown many times -- it has been at least fifty times I've fastened the seat belt for touchdown. I am familiar with the look of the atmosphere over the Los Angeles basin when we've settled down from the unlimited sight distance into the brown muck below the surrounding mountains. But last October, when I saw the same brown look over Denver when we dropped below 15,000 feet; and when in the wide prairies of Nebraska I detected a faint brown tinge to the distant hills, I realized the entire atmosphere had been poisoned.

The printing plant of the Herald-Examiner, on the east side of Georgia Street south of Hart's apartment. Probably the only major newspaper with a woman as City Editor. Agness Underwood. One night some joker was visiting on Baxter Street and Himmel dropped by. Himmel was on the night prowler car beat for the Herald, together with his photographer. This joker decided to cover the night beat with Himmel, and borrowed one of my neckties. It was a small thing, held on by an elastic, solid dark red sequins. Agness Underwood saw it. I never got the necktie back.

The corner of 12th Street and Toberman, where a girl friend had an apartment house which again is one with the snows of yesteryear.

There was also a streetcar line on 11th Street, the L car, which operated generally from Los Angeles High School along Olympic, Hoover Street, and 11th to Figueroa to downtown. It went out about 1939, the bus which replaced it operating along Olympic Boulevard direct. As is generally the case with former rail routes without bus substitute, rental values went to hell and second-hand book stores come into being. A copy of Cap'n Billy's Whiz-Bang came from such a store, north side of 11th Street immediately east of Georgia.

And that's all the fannishness that I can remember about this now-levelled and to be rebuilt section of maybe eight square blocks.

There is a limit to the number of people that this world will support. That point has been passed. Oh, I know full well that the Malthus projection indicated such point would be reached, in the United States, along about 1915 or so. That projection was correct. It did not include the development of the internal combustion engine to replace the horse.

As a youngster I watched them build a few houses in Casper, Wyoming. Almost all the homes there had full basements. They had a scoop device for earth moving, and the building would begin with the excavation of the basement. The man would click his tongue, the horse or the team of two would pull the scoop, and a half-yard or so would be pulled out with each passage. In a couple of working days, the house basement would be dug out, the excavated earth would have been spread around the construction site, and the carpenters would begin building the form for the concrete basement wall.

The rye or the bran or the hay has been diverted to human consumption or has gone to fattening steers; the population of working animals has damn near disappeared; and the gasoline engine now does the work. Thus has the Malthus projection gone awry for a bitty.

JULY 20, 1969

After the date had become a recognized fact, I resurrected my history of the future, a file of 3x5 cards about three feet long which bears in chronological order all events which had been dated by writers of science fiction in stories appearing in all science fiction magazines from 1926 to about 1948 or so (the cutoff date varies from magazine to magazine) plus all books read during the same period. 1969 was a lousy year for the first man on the moon. These are the sole entries from the card index:

1969 One Frithjof Haldgren takes off from Earth, destination the Moon; does not fall back or at least the wreckage is not found.

The Finding of Haldgren
Charles Willard Diffin
Astounding, April, 1932

November 29, 1969 Frederick Robbins and Hjalmar Swain, two young rocket enthusiasts, attempt a takeoff from an Adirondack plateau. Primitive Wellston cyclotrons explode, both being killed; rocket travels on into space, eventually falling into orbit about Eros.

The Worlds of Tomorrow
Edmond Hamilton
Captain Future, Spring, 1942.

1969 Space travel not yet achieved. In this year, the asteroid Juno, diverted from its normal orbit, hurtles toward Earth. Customary end-of-the-world scenes. On the 27th--month unknown--Earth's greatest genius crashes into Juno with his untried rocket ship and diverts it from its course.

Voyage of Sacrifice
George C. Wallis
Tales of Wonder, Spring, 1939

June 16, 1969 Series of atomic explosions rocks Earth; removal of atomic power generation station from Earth.

Atomic Station
Frank Belknap Long
Thrilling Wonder,
Winter, 1946

1969 Rocketryman Drivers makes circle tour of moon and safe return, without landing. Feted.

Planet Plane
John Beynon
Newnes, London, no date

PERDUE GOES TO A WEDDING

Perdue has two siblings: a younger sister, with two daughters; and the kid brother's firstborn was a daughter, followed by two sons. The first marriage of a niece or nephew occurred Saturday, October 4, in Stockville, Nebraska; presumably because Toni, sister's first daughter, is from the west coast and the groom is from Brooklyn. They may have decided to make it equally easy for relatives from either side.

Flew to Denver after work Thursday; slept, rented a car at the airport, drove to Stockville. Figured the saving of \$50 for the airplane from Denver to McCook and back would largely offset the rental expense. Was right. Wedding was for noon on Saturday. Forgot to take along alarm clock or to leave wakeup time at the motel where I stayed ten miles away. (Stockville, unincorporated, has a population of less than a hundred.) Was awakened in time for the wedding by a thunderstorm and rain on the roof. Central standard time is two hours early for my Pacific standard time metabolism.

Family gathering, maybe twenty in all, at Mother's home Saturday night. My sister had been there the preceding week and had held down piano practically every night to entertain the guests; was near played out. Kid brother played a couple of rags. Niece Cynthia, his firstborn, also played some rags and some pops. Then they forced Perdue to entertain.

Some years back Wally Lance was sitting in at a session at Phil Bronson's, doing the Big Noise from Winnetka. This is a string bass solo with the strings being tapped by the drumsticks of the adjoining drummer. And midway, without pause in the melody he's fingering, Wally sang a few bars of "They cut down the old pine tree." Amazing.

Well, says I, if Wally could do it so could I. And I chorded the blues in B flat and sang (in the key in which they were written) Old Pine Tree, Abdul the Bul-Bul Ameer, and Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes. The thinking was so hard that I couldn't listen to what they sounded like, but I looked over and saw my kid sister rolling around on the floor laughing. So I figured it was coming through as intended. Then the hit of the evening was Summertime on the piano in D natural, both hands upper and lower, and eight bars later starting off the vocal of Poor Butterfly, this in B flat. Damme I wish I had a tape of it so I'd know what it sounded like.

Next morning, up betimes, over to Mothers for breakfast and return to Denver. Mother smiles and said "Yesterday it was thunder and lightning. What woke you this morning?" To this I replied, "Hydrostatic pressure." A few moments later, Mother introduced me to one of her friends, and added: "Don't ask Elmer any questions unless you want to know the answer. He'll tell you."

5 MILLION
MORE!?



My niece Cynthia attends college in Denver; she had ridden to Stockville with other relatives in the back seat of a Mustang. She was happy to ride back with Uncle Elmer in the front seat of a Camero. She did most of the driving.

She was driving when we entered the first town in Colorado of any magnitude: Weed? Maybe twenty miles from the state border; population of perhaps five thousand. I see street names on East Third Street, which is route we are following: Filbert, followed by Elm. Say to my niece, "You've never seen Uncle Elmer in action. I don't remember ever passing through this town in my life. But the next street is going to be named Douglas. And if that is true, the next street is Cedar, and then Birch, and then (since this is Colorado) the main drag will come next and it will be named Aspen." Well, the next street was Douglass, with two esses. And then came Cedar and Birch and the founding fathers double-crossed me and the last street was named Ash.

How about that? I was fumbling to beat hell for the name of a tree and had a block against Date or Deodar and could only come up with Douglas Fir. So I blurted out Douglas and it was Douglass, whoever he was. So maybe ol' 520 doesn't know how powerful he really is...

Let us now think for a while about the ten-to-one concentration factor, which is an easy rule of thumb. It's not too soon to predict the disappearance of corn-fed hogs.

And the ten-to-one concentration factor is also applicable to DDT, from algae at the prime level to oysters or small fish at the 10^1 level to bigger fish at the 10^2 level to the fish-eating birds at about ten to the third power. Last summer local television showed a documentary on the plight of seagulls. It seems that DDT concentration has an inhibitory effect on the production of eggshells. And in this documentary, the cameramen seemed to be unable to find any unbroken egg on the off-shore island where the gulls nest. The weight of the bird breaks the shell -- and where endeth this break in the ecological chain?

HORROR STORY

I met him at Kepner's house one day about four or five years ago. He was a good looking joker in his strange way. It turned out that he was at liberty. He had worked as a hair dresser, and had been a makeup artist for MGM for a few months. Eventually he lost out there and did makeup for one of the larger mortuaries.

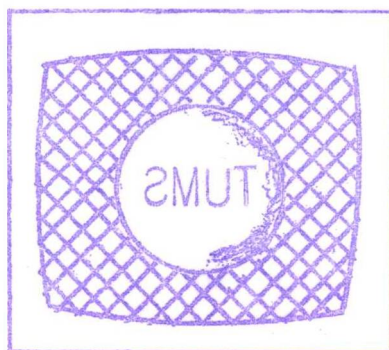
I congratulated him, having a vague knowledge of how much skill can be needed in fixing up the exposed area after death occurs in an automobile collision. I've seen a mess of morgue shots from the archives of the Los Angeles Police Department. Somewhere in the basement is a photo album that was used by a newspaper to see whether would-be legmen had a weak nausea threshold.

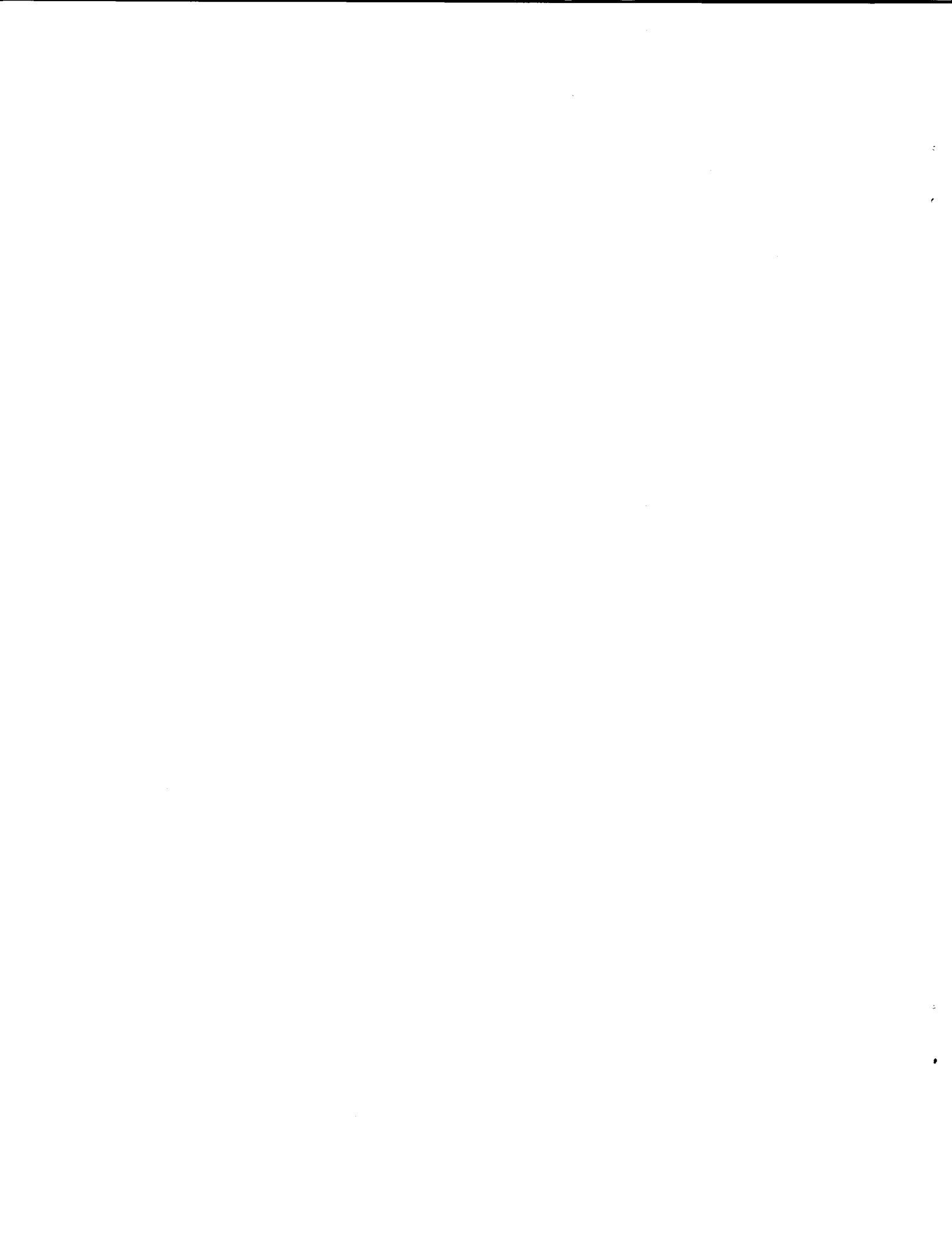
"Yeah, thanks-" he said, "but I had to give it up. One night I was alone, working on a stiff, and the bastard burped in my face."

A COMMERCIAL BACKFIRES

Since the lunar landing there has been -- well, not exactly a plethora, but entirely too many commercials with space tie-ins. My aspirin will continue to be monoacetic acid ester of salicylic acid and not Bayer, regardless of what they took to the moon. And the schlock merchandise now looms up slowly from a dead black background, sometimes star-spangled, such as the way Parliament with its recessed filter does.

My favorite of these messes, though, is made by an advertising agency which is blissfully unaware that my television set is left-handed. Up from the black background comes a disk, which slowly rotates from a disk to an edge-on to a crescent to a circle, cross-lighted, with the last letter of the brand name being illumined first. On your set that's the right hand edge; but on my set as the voice extols the merit of this wondrous medication for settling upset stomachs the next morning, in a few seconds on my set the complete visual impact happens:





WESTERCON

SANTA MONICA

JULY, 1969



I'D RATHER
HAVE A GOOSE!

This event was to me highlighted by Mr. Ellison's outlining the pilot and theme of a series which he hoped to sell, based on a man from the future, four centuries away, who had taken the one-way path back to now to prevent the final war. Prevent the final war by changing the present.

Strang, protagonist, is half-human, half alien; marked by an unbelievable empathy. Strang is aided by a temporal extrapolator computer (TEX for short) which projects proposed changes in the now and their effect on armageddon.

As I listened (Strang, incidentally, is visualized as Leonard Nimoy) I idly computed that five generations to a century which is 2 to the 5th which is close to the square root of 10 to the 3rd so make it a thousand per two centuries. That means a million of Strang's direct ancestors (on his human side) walking around Earth as of today when he's busy changing the present to prevent the disastrous future.

And one day as Strang is out on one of his missions he nudges the arm of a stranger. And Strang returns to home base, mission accomplished; but by a simple camera trick he's foreshortened to five feet two, wearing drag, and singing I enjoy being a girl. And TEX, who has been endowed with humanoid characteristics, speaks out and says "oh hell now I've got my next mission assigned which is to get that elbow unjogged and bring back my masculine master."

There is a limit to the number of people that this world will support. That point has been passed. It was evident to Perdue about 1965 that at some time during the administration of the president who would be elected in calendar 1968, it would be needful for him to pick and choose which nation or nations would continue to receive food export, and deliberately to choose which nations would starve. For food is limited. And my heart chilled when Bobby Kennedy decided to run for that office.

Suppose he had been elected? What would be the world-wide effect when this man says to the prime minister or whatever of some have-not country: "There is no more to spare. Unless you perfect and follow some method to limit your population, we must stop all food export to your nation." This, from a man who has fathered ten of his own?

I voiced these fears to others, prior to the assassination, who said, "Elmer, you miss the point. He can afford to support ten kids." I was not yet then firm in my convictions, which now tell me: at our American standard of living, somewhere in the world, many more will die of starvation in order that these extra eight may live.

It is now time for Perdue to put his money where his mouth is. The world is gang agley: there is something strange and something weird and something most insane about a nation exporting food when its people at home die of hunger.

Among these nations are those of South America. And one wonders, then, under what logic Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay export corned beef.

Perdue has a wonderful recipe. It calls for a #2 1/2 can of tomatoes, a #2 can of dark red kidney beans, and 12 ounces of corned beef. A dash of Worcester and a spoonful of sugar helps. Eat with crackers or spread over a slice of bread.

Corned beef keeps forever. In 1938 Perdue spent a couple of weeks drifting down the Platte River from Casper to Guernsey, Wyo., in a homemade skow with two high-school friends. Meals included canned corn beef, war surplus from the War to End All Wars. It tasted wonderful.

If, indeed, the world is overpopulated; and there is stuff on the shelves available for any one with money to purchase; then Perdue is at fault if he does not transfer this stuff from the shelves to his basement. And if Perdue is right, an estate which consists of many, many cans of high protein corned beef would be much more welcome to his heirs in a hungry world than would a sum of money.

Besides, 39 cents a can is a price which Perdue last saw on corned beef on open shelves, about 1950.

Therefore: Perdue should buy out the entire stock, or one can a day for twenty years, whichever comes first.

SAINT LOUIS, SEPTEMBER, 1969

Three ever-lovin' blue-eyed weeks of vacation available: take one week prior to Labor Day and two weeks after. Taxi to airport maybe on Tuesday. See Ellison in bookstall; he recommends EARTHBLOOD as one which is not completely without any merit whatsoever. Buy same. Read some on way. Host city has a nice thing in that cars are meeting arrivals at airport. No room at the inn but there are rooms available at another hotel across the way one block distant. 1400 attendees are too damn many. Conventions have now reached critical mass. Have brought along FAPA mailing and read; learn about Silverburg's fire. Condolences. Spend much much time in room alone relaxing and recovering strength for next session. Many nice people. Get copy of ALL OUR YESTERDAYS. Read. Good. Can not comment now -- passed on copy to Burbee and have not yet replaced. Clear up one minor point: ask John J. Millard about report that he quit his job and went to Denver. John J. Millard says this is correct as reported in fan press of the time, but that it didn't actually happen.

Met Mr. and Mrs. Coulson happy to have met you. Sorry not to have seen Milty or Walter Breen or Harry Warner. Always swarms underfoot -- one need go at least three blocks from the hotel before the blank suit lapels outnumber the convention badges. 1400 is too damn big a number. Sadness about the unwinding time after convention end.

Was in the hospital the night of the command banquet for the astronauts. Watched with dismay the overwhelming number of white faces. Also was amazed that our field -- without which there would have been none -- was completely ignored. Not even Mrs. Ley or Clarke or Heinlein. Sounded out some people about a vote of censure from the convention for the administration ignoring the sci-fi field; got positive response, and then slept through the resolution session.

Many thanks to Madle, Tarr, the Minneapolis and the Cincinnati boys for pleasant times spent sitting and talking. A sober convention for me; and no poker game found where I could fold a winning hand to some poor attendee.

From my hotel saw the unmistakable contour line of streetcar curve connection and switch point contour. Track down rails after at least ~~fo~~ three decades. This is the home of the St. Louis Car Company -- there must have been a mighty poor lobby or some mighty strong economic reasoning which resulted in the home base of street car manufacturing giving up its own streetcar system. Or do they still exist? I didn't get to the downtown area.

Strange traffic signs found three blocks north of the hotel -- 45° diagonal parking, right rear wheel to the curb, 8 to 12 noon Sunday mornings only. What would the Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering think about that?

Thence to Chattanooga;
thence Nebraska; thence home.

MANIFESTO FOR THE LIVING

I am alive. I enjoy the life processes. I have an approximate life expectancy of about twenty years. I do not expect to end my life in starvation.

As far as I am concerned, my right to continued and happy existence is superior to any right of an unborn child. Strike that. My right is superior to any right of an unconceived child to be conceived.

Or, my right to live is superior to your right to copulate.

Also: my right to live is inferior to the right of the human race to continued existence.

Every human being, once born, has the right to enjoy an uncropped and total life span. That right may be abridged only for cause. Every human being has the right to reproduce. Once. This right can not be expanded to a right for unlimited reproduction when such freedom abridges my right to a full life.

A compulsory limit of two offspring is proposed; and, should a parent desire a third, this should be granted: provided that the parent immediately thereafter totally eliminates self as a competitor for the limited foodstuff for mankind.

In this space next time: a completely vicious attack on apple pie.