

Burblings combined with
Elmurmurings

For the July 1947
FAPA Mailing

#1 A Burbee-Perdue Production

Elmer and I once dreamed up the idea for a super fapamag. We were riding from the Half World one night on the now-extinct (in Los Angeles) "sow-belly" center-entrance streetcars.

We dreamed up a mag that would surpass anything ever seen in fapa or anywhere else. It was a mag that would cause wonderful laughter. It was a mag that was full of pure Perdue and unalloyed Burbee. Now, you may wonder what the means, and for that matter, so do I right now. But at the time it seemed superb.

Of course this mag would have demanded more work than either of us is stupid enough to take on, so this mag is offered in its stead.

The "How It Began" sketches are Elmer's idea. An original idea which he sometimes admits stealing from some magazine that was published in the mid-twenties. Maybe he has improved on the germ idea, and maybe not. Maybe I have and maybe I haven't, too.

Since the sketches are his idea, he should have written the introduction, but since he just gave me his four-elite-typed stencils and I see no introductory paragraph anywhere, I suppose I will have to write the introduction.

It seems that according to the Elmurmurian Theory, all that has happened has already happened. That seems wrong, doesn't it? That is because it is wrong.

You get the idea, though. These sketches are the true stories of the origins of certain popular sayings now rampant in the language. We have all used these idiomatic expressions and perhaps wondered a little where they came from. Until now, no one could say for sure. And now Elmer and I have come along.

If you turn the page you will see the series staring you in the face. After Elmer's four pages I will take over with some sketches of my own. Maybe some of you have secret knowledge of how some sayings were started. If so, you ought to publish them in your own mags because if you send them to us we'll just lose them or throw them away.

The publishing of this series gives us an example of why it is more profitable to join fapa than to buy an Encyclopedia Britannica. Offhand, I can't think of any other examples.

Flip the page, then, and learn "How It Began"....

Once upon a time, there was a happy trio. Not too happy, tho; just two of the aforesaid trio were happy. Their names were Anthony and Cloopatra. The third was not altogether happy; his name was Caesar. Anthony and Cloo were happily schmooing on the banks of the Nile one day, when a more or less exhausted runner came scooting up to them and panted to the more or less exhausted Cloo, to wit:

"Mistress, the great Caesar cometh!"

At this, Cloo became very miffed. With a despairing cry, she seized an asp from a conveniently placed basket of fruit, and moaning in erotic pleasure, accepted the kiss of death. With an expanded sense of the moment to be captured, she fell into Anthony's outstretched arms, moaning in anguish as the poison seeped thru her no-doubt beautiful veins.

Anthony asked crushingly:

"Come, come, Cloo; what's biting you ~~is~~ now?"

--rewrite of an anecdote vaguely remembered from a 1925 Life.

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This gives one furiously to think. Was there indeed a great civilization at one time, a civilization whose sole artifacts now are the meaningless interjections found in polite conversation? Precisely as the "Jiminy Christmas" ~~is~~ and "By Jiminy" of the small boy may be traced back to the "By Gemini" oath used by the Roman soldier during the occupation of England? I am positive that it is so; I hear no voices yet, but in dreams comes the sense of omnipotence, and the thoro knowledge of the true origin of many phrases. Listen, and learn:

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A super spacoship was throbbing thru space, the master pilot unerringly finding the thin line of no-gravity between opposing planet masses. Mutan Mion, at the controls, was suddenly interrupted by a breathless S/2C, who shouted:

"Master, a ravoning Doro is on us in cell C41+!"

"Disintegrate him, fool!"

"We can't, master. We've already disintegrated him, and the ravoning electron-cloud, still possessed of intelligence, still assaileth the men."

"Hmmm," hurred Mutan Mion. "As you know, the so-called push between air and a vacuum is not a push at all, but a suction. I remember a voice I heard, from Richard S. Shaver, that assured me it was so. Go, slave; don a space suit, and open the porthole in cell C41+. The suction of space will draw out this degenerate Doro."

"I hear, O great Mutan Mion, and will obey."

The slave clapped two hands to his forehead, knelt, and ran toward the door.

"In other words," shouted Mutan Mion at his disappearing back, "Go and blow it out your hatch."

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Many and varied are the tales relating to the life, the loves, and the exploits of one Conan, the Cimmerian. Reference is made to virtually any issue of Weird Tales, between 1931 and 1936 for further data on the Conan saga. An untold tale is that which relates to his passing; a tale that came to me through devious channels, and that is retale-ed to you for your pleasure and edification...

For Conan was an emperor. "Uneasy lieth the head that hath a crown," said one Jack shortly after a fabulous adventure he had with a maid known as Jill. And he was so right, baby! Thus too with Conan, in those uneasy days when life and living were treasures to be zealously clasped, as a lover enwraps his mistress...

And Conan, though he knew it not, had just cause for worry. A pretender to the throne had contrived about himself a group of spirators; between them they had dreamed up a modus operandi guaranteed to end in the death of Conan. Conan, you see, was the creation of a Southerner; and in consequence all his intimates, friends, mistresses, and concubines, were white Nordics. (Correction--one black woman, a girl from Koth). And unapproachable. The assassination had to be performed in another fashion--through the servant loophole.

Conan was the creation of a Southern author; Conan's servitors were all gigantic black men. And one of them--Dooji Wooji Washington by name--was sworn into the plot. Conan would sunbathe that afternoon, attended by his servants; practically alone and practically unguarded. Dooji Wooji would pick up a scimitar from the kitchen (where it was used as a carving knife--steers were steers in them days), steal onto the rooftop, and decapitate Conan.

All was in readiness. The conspirators were in a castle hard by the castle of Conan, sharing turns at the telescope (anachronism) as they watched the fascistic overlord napping, caressed by the sun's soft warmth and by a new skullery maid. D. W. Washington, the gigantic blackamoor, appeared through a trap-door, naked scimitar in hand.

The Prince, pretender to the throne, who had the telescope at the time, hissed happily to the others;

"Hot damn, boys! Sure looks like the jig's up with Conan now!"

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Under the spreading chestnut tree
Lay a drunken reporter for Hearst;
Screaming in shame,
"Communism's to blame!"
When he found that his gadget had burst.

--E. Benjamin Perdue.

Under the spreading chestnut tree
There lay the village Crozetti;
Ignoring the hump
Of fat on her rump
She was boasting of posing for Petty.

--J. Ashton Kepnor.

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So the great Caesar, chief of the Holy Roman Empire, had many, many irons in the fire. A pleasant pastime, that, considering that the fuel was free (the populace thinking it went to feed the sacred flame and to warm the little tootsies of the little vestal virgins) and that his chief industry was the manufacture of tallow candles. All the packinghouse fat, all the waste fats and oils so painstakingly gathered by the housewives, ended up at the great Caesar's tallow factory. Thither, too, went many corpses for a less legitimate industry; to furnish human fat for the witches and warlocks to use in making hands of glory.

The great Caesar returned sadly from the Nile, Hamletwise meditating on slings, on arrows, and on a sea of troubles. At his rear, six stalwart Nubians bore the bodies of faithless Anthony and faithless Cleopatra. That Caesar:

"...a candle shall be made...sympathetic magic...use it to light my way to love...better than stars that shine above...sympathetic...so i can't get rid of her huh...this'll make her faithless...lose her that way...good man Caesar, cave canum...yes, i'll have the candlemaker inscribe the base with in hoc signo vincos...and shall we make the hoc signo phallic...maybe..."

Leaving the mighty to his lecherous thots, and remembering that James Joyce did it oh so much better, the scene shifts to the factory, and to the foreman, who argues with Caesar:

"She's too beautiful! And to carve her up, to melt the fat, horrors, no! Such beauty, oh Caesar, should be preserved forever."

Caesar spoke. And having spoken, briefly, powerfully, laconically, violently, turned and left.

The candle was made; but thru an oversight, his parting words were incised:

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

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And have you ever heard the tale of how Fritz the Lang visited Forrest the J?

It's a sad tale indeed. For Forrest, as you know, was going steady with a damozel yecept Tigrina, a vivacious little minx whose oydentiy is a deep dark secret. And Fritzie walked in anticipating a pleasant evening talking books and stef and nonsense--a quite quiet evening devoted to the boosting of the already adequately inflated ego of one Lang.

Little did he know. Whenever he'd reach for a book from the case and begin skimming thru it, he'd find his hair ruffled from the rear, or his hat knocked off, by the aforesaid young lass. He'd lay a book down, go to the bath-room. When he returned, the book would coyly be hiding behind T. Or she'd interrupt a deep deep discussion on the relative genius of Kostkos and Winterbotham with a sad pout, wanting to know whether they still loved her. The Martini that Acky dished up for his guest--she'd sneaked so much salt into it while the J's wasn't looking, that Fritz couldn't finish the drink. All in all, as he later said, a most unsatisfactory evening.

Fritzie and I had a bit of a chat about it the next day, when he visited

me at Universal City where M., G., and M were filming my life story--the "Life and Times of E. Benjamin Perdue." (Don't miss it, by the way--Last Weekend can't compare). And you should have seen the lugubrious expression on his face as he sadly confided:

"You know, it could have been so nice. But really, you couldn't see the Forrest for the tease."

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Intrigue, warfare; battle, murder, and sudden death, with the sound of trumpets ringing in your ears...the place, Earth's empty womb, whence came the Moon eons ago. The dramatis personae, those familiar to you from the Moon Pool--Larry O'Keefe and Goodwin; Yolara, Lakla, Lugur; the Silent Ones and Nak, king of the Akka.

Great indeed was the batrachian Nak of the Akka. Strong and glorying in his strength; yet humble withal and so eager to be of service to those primates he loved. A character, this being; it is to be regretted that Marritt did not pull a Stapledon on him. But I digress.

The war was raging fast and furiously. The forces of Yolara and Lugur, under the aegis of the Shining One, were trampling down the weak opposition of the Silent Ones. While Lakla the handmaiden watched in horror, bare breast trembling as tho it wished to hide from the sight of the gore, Nak fell in the battle; bleeding torrents thru the raw ugly stump that used to be his left arm.

Larry O'Keefe stood gazing lustfully thru his vision-glasses at the beautiful figure of Yolara. His strong right arm encircled the waist of Lakla, his vicarion. She moaned softly:

"Larry, darlin', let me go to him."

"No, mavourneen," he replied. "I love you, I love only you; I could not stand the parting, Honey of the Wild Bees." He cursed mildly under his breath as Lugur moved before the gleaming black-haired beauty of Yolara.

"But, beloved, Nak is my friend; I know him when he was but a pollywog; we grow up together. Listen, can't you hear him calling me?"

And indeed, the booming voice of Nak of the Akka could be heard throbbing gutturally from the battlefield.

"Nay, thou whose eyes are like forest pools at dawn. I love you too much to let you take the risk." Under his breath he added, "Why doesn't the god damn bastard get out of the way? Jeez, what a piece!"

"Larry, darlin', beloved?" Thus Lakla the handmaiden. "May I not hear his last words, bear his message to his family?"

"The hell with him!" burst out Larry. "Let him croak."

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This space is just long enough to mention the Zamenhof banquet, where Perley Parker Christenson, Councilman of the 9th district, City of Los Angeles, told of singing "Silent Night, Holy Night" in Esperanto before the biggest department store here--and I burst out laughing from a memory of the magician with night-blindness--whose physician prescribed injections of prestidigitalis.

In the dim dawn cycles this scene repeat itself from even more shadowy vistas of the past, and will repeat itself again and again till the Bomb falls.

Forrest J. Ackerman, no period, was approaching the vicinity of the fabulous Garage, fantastically loaded with fantastic magazines and books. With him was Tigrina--no period either--burdened with similar esoteric literature.

Due to the non-polarized lenses of his zoot-shaped glasses, this Dawn-Ackerman did not see a small obstruction in his path. He struck it with his foot, so displacing his center of gravity that he crashed to the pavement, scattering escape literature over a great area.

Tigrina, a worried look on her face, cried "Forry, are you hurt?"

FJA, using only two puns in his reply, answered that he'd sustained not so much as a minor contusion.

"Oh, that's fine!" beamed T. "No skin off my Ack."

The baron was awaiting the birth of his child. His brother was helping him pass the nervous hours away. They chewed fingernails in shifts. The door would occasionally open and a midwife or doctor would pass through.

The baron was constantly speculating on the condition of his wife and the probable sex of the child. The baron's brother made the proper remarks.

At length, after the noises from the delivery room had subsided, there came a high, thin cry on the air.

"It's over!" signed the baron.

The baron's brother agreed that it must be.

Quite a time passed, and no one entered or left the room. Eager to see his child, the baron knocked and called out to see the baby. At length a doctor came, with the tiny squalling form in his arms, swaddled in a sheet.

"Well!" said the baron, "Let me see him! It is a boy, isn't it?"

The doctor nodded and hesitantly unwrapped the child.

It was different, to say the least. It was covered with a fine brown fur and sported a still-damp caudal appendage 12 inches long.

"Well I'll be a monkey's uncle," said the baron's brother.

It began with the eccentric man named Smith, who had recently been deprived of his father by the Dark Angel. In an excess of Smith-patriotism, he had a form letter printed and sent 5,000 copies of the news of his father's death to all the Smith's in the land, feeling that the clan should be aware that they numbered one less. The train that carried the bag loaded with the form letters was held up by a gang of bandits. They took all the mail bags with them to paw through at their leisure, after having gotten the main swag.

The bandit who was engaged in checking through the Smith bag opened and read some forty of the letters before it seeped into his

head that they were all the same. The general tone of the letters was extremely depressing and dampened his spirits quite a bit. As he pushed the bag aside he said, "That's a sad sack of chits."

He woke to an incredible sight, this man of the wonderful lost civilization whose remarks are preserved to this day in the speech of the man in the street---he was lying in a giant arena and a deadly game was being played there...he realized sickeningly that he had a terrible part in the game. He remembered it all now.

He'd jerked back from the microscope, amazed at what he had seen. Evidence of high intelligence in the lower forms of life! Organization! Scarlet arachnids, playing a game remarkably like soccer, with an aphid as the ball! He jerked back from that stupendous sight in astonished unbelief, and his head struck the switch of the new mass-reducer he'd invented but a half-hour previous--he saw the room, the fixtures, mounting toward the zenith with dizzying speed. He knew he was being shrunk; he fell across the table.

He woke to find himself in that grim arena, the playing-field of the scarlet arachnids. The aphid was dead now, a pulpy mess, discarded at the sidelines. As the opposing teams rushed down on him with blinding speed he knew he was the new ball! And before they savagely pounced on him he had just time to grunt out: "I'll be kicked to death by little red spiders!"

I had another one but I dunno, it might give you the right idea about me. You might think I have a dirty mind or something.

Lord, what lousy paper this is. I just ran off Elmer's stuff and the offset is so bad that I should have slipsheeted the pages. Some of that stuff is almost illegible. This is unforgivable.

It's time now for some more revelatory material about Al Ashley. I will bang out two or maybe three articles this time, depending (that word can be deciphered if you try) on how long they run.

Might as well start off with the first one, then. It is:

AL ASHLEY, ELFIN EDISON

Some of you may have heard of Al Ashley's hobby. As stated in a fan publication (which I published myself)--the Pacificon Combazine edition of Shangri-L'Affaires, Al Ashley's hobby, as stated by him, is "making things".

I believed this statement when I stenciled it from Sneary's manuscript. I believed it later on when Al Ashley told me the same thing with his mouth.

About 18 months ago this man told me of the mimeograph he had

designed. In his head, of course. It was to have the best features of all the mimeographs that have ever been built, plus a few ideas he'd added from his vast store of knowledge. All bad features were to be scientifically eliminated.

In fact, said Al, it will be the god damnedest mimeograph you ever saw. He wriggled with joy.

Will it have moving parts? I asked.

A startled look came into his eyes and for a time his brain lumbered on in silence, and then he finally said, Yes, I guess it will. Why, sure it will.

Well, then, I said, what is so special about this mimeograph?

It will have nothing but good features, said Al, warming up again. Seems to me it could be portable. Fold up into a little square no larger than a portable typewriter. That'd be a handy feature if you moved around a lot.

I looked at Al Ashley in amazement. I believed he meant it. I had faith in the man, much as you may have had---before you started reading this series.

Well, I said, I don't see how you're going to do that.

Al smiled tolerantly. Lots of technological developments have been made since before the war, he said. It's a simple matter of good engineering. I can design anything.

Yeah, I said, but will the finished machine work like the drawing says it should?

Why, sure, said Al.

But how, I said, are you going to iron out the bugs that crop up unless you build a model first?

All the bugs are taken out in the drafting stage, said Al. I once designed a gun that used dry ice as a propellant. That would've worked if I'd built it.

Perfectly, you mean, with no flaws anywhere? I asked.

That's right, said Al. Why not?

I doubt that, I said. (Some of my blind faith was ebbing away). I doubt it like hell. Oh well. When are you going to build this mimeograph?

One of these days, said Al. Any time now.

That was 18 months ago, or longer.

The other day he began to explain to me a complicated machine which had any number of gears, plus some relays. None of the gears seemed to mesh with any other gears (in the drawing he had made) and

none of the relays had connections of any sort.. The lettering work, though, was excellent. I naturally wanted to know what it was all about.

Well, said Al, it's a device I've designed to measure time.

You mean a clock. But that's been invented. By Joseph J Bulova, in 1703.

You bastard, said Al. Now look, don't be silly. This machine has a definite purpose, beyond that of a clock. You see, the subject sits here in front of it and I ask him a psychological question. Then he answers. Oh, something like a word association test. This machine measures the number of seconds and fractions of seconds that it takes him to answer. When he answers, I press a button and the machine records it.

God, Al, I said. You've got something stupendous here. I can see millions in it. In fact, somebody's already made the money. You've invented a stop watch. Somebody has already done this, Al.

This isn't a stop watch, said Al, after some thought. This is a machine for measuring short intervals of time. By using this machine people can learn to think faster.

Oh, I said.

It beats a stop watch, said Al, because it teaches people to think faster.

Well, I said, your results are going to be somewhat off the beam because with you pushing the button, the time intervals will be far too long.

Besides, I said, I saw a machine in a psychology class many years ago. A little magnetized disc rotated above another little magnetized disc. The subject, ordered to react to a given stimulus, pressed a button which stopped the discs. The stimulus, a light or a sound, energized the discs, which began to rotate at a given speed. The pressing of the button stopped them instantly. By looking at the position in which they stopped, you could read the time in hundredths of a second off the scribed lines on the discs. A super stop watch. That seems better than your machine, with you pushing the button.

That machine you describe is no good, said Al. It just measures short intervals of time. My machine teaches people to think faster.

Yes, Al, I said.

I'll show you another machine I made, said Al.

You mean you actually made it?

I mean the drawing, said Al. And he showed me a drawing of a very long rod on the end of which was a turntable like on a phono-

graph. It seemed to be powered by friction drive off a roller which took its motive force from a singularly stupid looking gear. Of bearings.

What the hell is this? I asked.

This is a machine to rotate spiral discs for the purpose of hypnosis. I am going to manufacture them and sell them to all the hypnotists in the city, said Al.

Well; Al, I said, somebody has beat you to the gun again.

What do you mean by again? said Al.

Well, this is a phonograph turntable such as may be found on a phonograph. You lay a disc, or record, on it and it rotates at 78 rpm's.

Oh no, said Al. This is entirely different, because it is built specially to play discs on.

Al, I said. You have some of these spiral discs, haven't you?

Sure, sure, said Al.

And where do you play them?

On the phonograph, said Al.

Well, then, I said.

Sure, sure, said Al, but this machine is especially designed for the purpose.

You mean it goes round and round, I said. Is that it?

No, no, said Al. For one thing, this machine will run vertically as well as horizontally.

And what else?

Well, that's all, but that's an exclusive feature.

You may have something there, I said. But a large mirror over a phonograph turntable at an angle of 45 degrees will give you a vertical image of the turntable.

That's no good, said Al.

Why not?

Why, said Al, suppose you have a disc on which the spirals go inside out. In the mirror that would be reversed. They would be going outside in.

No they won't, I said.

Yes they will, said Al.

Al, I said. Al. Listen to me, Al. An inside-out spiral will also be inside out in the mirror. The only difference will be in the direction of rotation. The phono turntable will be going clockwise and its reflection will go counter-clockwise.

Oh no it won't, said Al.

Oh yes it will.

So he sat there and thought and thought. At last he shook his head. No, he said. I don't visualize that. You may be right. Let it go.

You can prove it with a mirror right now, I said.

I don't have to, said Al. Besides, this machine I've designed eliminates the use of mirrors. You don't need mirrors with this machine because it's been specially built to operate vertically.

I said, What would happen if you were to turn a phonograph on its side? A small one, that is, like you have. You could turn a table model like that easy.

No, said Al. Their specifications do not call for that. What is needed is a special machine like the one I've designed.

Well, Al, I said. You may be right.

This has been a brief glimpse into the life and times of a busy inventor as he dredges up old and new laws of Nature and twists them expertly into novel and bizarre machines such as stop watches, mimeographs and turntables that go round and round.

But Elmer did write an introduction to the series. I didn't see it.

AL ASHLEY, DISTINGUISHED NOVELIST

It began when Jack Wiedenbeck started a novel. He began it some time ago and has been hammering away at it daily for a couple of months. He has piled up a tremendous stack of mss.

When I exclaimed at this example of industry and zeal, Al Ashley looked at me closely. He said, in a confidential sort of way: I'm writing a novel too.

What kind of novel, I asked.

Oh, a novel.

Is it that one about the psychological invasion?

Oh, no, said Al.

Is it the one where all six murderers are exposed and it turns

out in the end that they're all innocent?

Oh, no, said Al.

Well, what's it about?

It's something new, said Al.

But what's the plot? Is it a fantasy? A historical romance? A whodunit? A Western?

No, no, said Al.

Hell, Al, I said. You're not writing a novel. You're just saying that because Jack Wiedenbeck is writing a novel. You're just trying to steal the spotlight from him, that's all.

No, said Al. I'm really writing a novel.

Well, if you are, I said, it's just because Jack Wiedenbeck is writing a novel. It's just a case of monkey see monkey do.

Oh no, said Al. I had this idea a long time ago, long before Jack ever got the idea he would write a novel.

It's just a case of monkey see monkey do, Al, I said.

No, it isn't said Al. I had this idea a long time ago.

It's a case of monkey see monkey do.

No, said Al, and perhaps there was a wee spark of ire in his eyes behind his bifocals as he said it. No, he said, it is an idea I had a long time ago. In fact, I've got it finished, which is more than you can say for Jack's novel.

Incredulous, I asked, You mean, it's all down on paper?

Oh, no, said Al. I mean I've got it all finished. Plotted. Written out. It's in my head. All I need to do is transfer it to paper.

Oh, I said. You've finished it. All the hard part is done. The rest is just a matter of copying.

Well, I might rewrite a little as I put it on paper, said Al.

So you are now claiming priority in this matter over Jack Wiedenbeck on these grounds.

Why sure, said Al. After all, I had this idea first. In fact, I might have mentioned it to Jack and that might have given him the idea.

I see, I said.

A few months later I asked him about the novel. I asked how it was coming along. There was a long pause while his brain got

into gear on the subject. He made some sort of noncommittal answer that I can't remember now. It was obvious that the subject no longer held any interest for him. Having written the novel--in his head--he lost his enthusiasm for the matter. I imagine he went through the whole publishing process, also in his head. Yes, I guess he did.

Al Ashley, then, has written a novel. It is either in its third million or just rounding off its second million copies. It is being spiritedly bid for by five major motion picture companies and will soon sell to one of them for a sum in excess of a half million dollars. It has been translated into fifty-four languages, with special editions in Braille. This single novel has made Al Ashley rich, famous, and distinguished. The literary world is at his feet.

But none of this has changed him a bit. He is still the same sweet simple fellow we all knew and loved.

Al Ashley claims activity credit for the use of his name in this series.

YOU BASTARD, SAID AL ASHLEY

You bastard, said Al Ashley. These words of his, so much at variance with his generally genial attitude, ring in my head like a mad doorbell. At odd hours during the day I seem to hear his soft voice saying: You bastard. He says it with a smile because he has a sense of humor (in spite of what people may say) and often knows what is going on even if it sometimes seems that his brain is four measures behind. He is forced by the propriety of self-esteem, to vocalize himself in this dreadful epithet.

He always has a distinct and excellent reason for expressing himself thus. It is not to be thought that Al Ashley greets people at his door with this expression or that he can be depended upon to repeat it at odd intervals in a normal conversation. I have merely stripped the phrase of its context. As such it cannot stand alone and have anything but an esoteric meaning. So in the following pages I will outline a few of the many situations and remarks that have caused Al Ashley to give rise to this epithet.

For a time it was a humorous thing from Al Ashley's point of view to bring out "falsies" and wear them around the house outside of his shirt while visitors were present. The falsies and Al's elfish smile would naturally, as he expected, rouse comment from the onlookers. My God, Al, someone would be sure to say, what the hell are those? And Al would answer smilingly say, Can't you see? And someone would say: Yeah, but whose are they? And Al would eagerly say: Oh, they belong to E-----. This was his punch line, because E-----'s homosexual tendencies are well known in the inner circle.

One evening, as Al Ashley was sporting these things around in view of a half dozen or more people, I said, Al, why are you wearing

those crazy things--are they yours? Hell no, he said, they belong to E----- Well, I said, I'm inclined to doubt that. You say they belong to him but I've never seen him wearing them. On the other hand I've seen you with them on a dozen times. You wear them so much, Al, I think they're yours.

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

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Al Ashley's researches into the sex lives of the various fans he knows is something amounting to a passion. Al has a long list (in his head) of all the homos in local fandom and suspects at least 90% of the rest. With very little encouragement he can be brought out on the subject, declaiming this person and that person, and declaring others under a cloud of suspicion. His theme is that nearly everybody is queer and he's pretty disgusted with them all.

At one of these declamatory sessions somebody remarked that Al seemed pretty sure of his facts. They asked him how he could be so sure that nearly everybody was queer. I have definite proof, said Al. And then the redoubtable F Towner Laney said I think you say people are queer just out of spite. You're trying to get even with them because you can't get into their pants.

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

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Al Ashley's attitude toward work is the usual one. He hates it. But instead of going ahead and working anyhow he simply does not work at all. Al Ashley has been out of work since November 1946. People are always discussing this, since it is obvious that he is not living on the income from a trust fund. Some people are even mad about it because there he is, sitting serenely in absolute idleness, yet plentifully supplied with the good things of life, which, to Al, are food, coffee, a roof over the head (under which to drink coffee), and plenty of restful, innocent slumber (such as comes to infants and saints) after which one may drink much coffee. In vain we recount to him the sad story of the grasshopper and the ant, out of our great smugness. Al Ashley likes to listen to the story because it is a fantasy, what with insects talking and all. But that is as far as it goes. Remarks on his idle state bring a pleasant smile to his genial face as he sits there like an idol carved from steak. But once F Towner Laney said to him: Al, you've been out of work nine months--now either give birth to that baby or get a job.

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

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Once he was demonstrating how hard it was for two people to pull his clenched hands apart. Condra on one side and Wiedenbeck on the other were pulling with most of their strength, with no success. When they had given up, Condra remarked that Al Ashley, for his size, was deceptively strong. As Al swelled up I said: He ought to be strong, he's been saving his strength for the last nine months.

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

Since he prides himself on his bargaining ability and his flair for finding bargains, it was not surprising to find him at his home one evening going around to each and every visitor, calling attention to his new brown sweater and telling them how he'd bought this high class piece of merchandise for only 98c. The visitor, bound by the rigid rules of hospitality, would make some polite remark. Al would move to the next victim and repeat the spiel. When he came to me and went through his formula I looked closely at the sweater, felt the material and said sagely: But Al, what did you do with the potatoes that came in it?

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

About ten minutes later he was telling a new victim about the wonderful Ashley flair for finding bargains. I insinuated myself into the conversation by remarking: Why, that's the very sweater I gave last week to the Salvation Army!

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

Another time, Al Ashley and others sat drearily contemplating each other in the LASFS clubroom just after the regular Thursday night meeting. It is always difficult to tell when a meeting is in session or not, since nothing happens in either circumstance. Laney, on his way out, turned at the door and said: Good night, people. And goodnight, Al. Though this is a standard phrase around the Half World, and often was used on Kepner, thus: Hello men, and you too, Kepner--Al Ashley was somehow moved to utter the now classic phrase: You bastard.

Perhaps the chief joy of Al Ashley's life is retelling the story of how he defended his battered honor against the unsubtle blandishments of his friend E----- (owner of the falsies). One evening he was, as usual, telling the story, and we were all listening, as usual, with great personal joy. So, said Al, he asked me to give it to him this way. When I said no, he asked if he could do it to me. Then he said he didn't like it this other way very much but would be willing to do it that way if I insisted. I said no. So he argued with me. He said how did I know I wouldn't like it if I hadn't tried it? He said if I tried it, just once, I might find out how wonderful it was. He said it was glorious between two men and I certainly was missing a lot if I'd never tried it. He said I owed it to myself to give it a try.

Al, I said, he used the wrong approach. He used the argumentative approach. The intellectual approach. He should have just quietly taken you into his arms and kissed all your fears away.

You bastard, said Al Ashley.

