

*Digger*  
may be Ross Chamberlain's fanzine  
for Apa V #10 August 1994

Okay, the topic is Amusement Parks. That narrows things down a bit.

I am, essentially, Not Crazy About Them.

As a kid ... [Forgive me a moment while I indulge, as I am increasingly wont to do (it's a Thing that Comes With Age), in History] ... As a kid, naturally, I thought I Was Crazy About Them. It had to do with Expectations.

[Digression 2: Why am I Overusing Capitals? It's

a Thing That Comes With Discussing Amusement Parks.]

Once upon a time, there Used to be Traveling Carnivals, with Rides and Side Shows and Games of Luck and Skill. Basically, I thought at the time, Carnivals were Circuses without the Clowns and Animal Acts (I had not then yet broadened my definition of 'Animal'—nor seen my First Circus). And then, when I heard about Amusement Parks, I thought they were Fixed Carnivals. The latter concept I've never wholly shaken. Or is that Wholly Shaken? Never mind.

The first amusement park I ever went to was Hermann Park in Houston, Texas. My sister was taking Nurse's Training (I thought of it in Capitals, too, those days, quite independently of Circuses and Carnivals, if not Amusement Parks, as is now being explained), at Hermann Hospital, and I assumed the park was somehow an adjunct of the hospital. Be that as it may, she took me there one time when I came to visit her.

Now, my life had not been totally deprived of Rides... The Ferris Wheel and Merry-go-Round and such were staples of the Travelling Carnivals, after all. I think I first experienced The Whip later on, but I liked the Ferris Wheel and, frankly, I liked the Merry-go-Round, too. And The Whip, later, for that matter. I never had any interest in The Hammer, have never ridden in one and, presumably, never shall.

But Hermann Park had a Roller Coaster. I had never been on one, unless maybe a Kiddie Koaster somewhere, and was Really Excited about riding on this one. I doubt me very much that it was anywhere near the class of those at Coney Island and other major parks of the day—we're talking nearly 50 years ago, folks; mid-to-late 1940s—but it Looked Like Fun and I was Ready to Ride.

I've guessed, over the years, at where I developed my mild acrophobia. Certainly if anywhere you'd think it might have shown itself on the Ferris Wheels. But, as I write this, my guess is that it got a good impetus on that Roller Coaster at Hermann Park. Not so much as we reached near the end of the first climb, but moments later, on the way down.

I believe I remember that I rode at the front of the front car. I don't know, now, for sure. I don't remember if I was thoroughly seat-belted—I'm not sure that was a requirement in those days. What I do remember is that *I Didn't Like It!* My clearest kinetic memory of the occasion was clinging for dear life to the railing in front of me and having my forehead bumping continuously against that rail. I had a bloody bruise there for the next couple of weeks, at least; it may have been longer. And the spot on my now much expanded forehead still itches when I think about it.

I've never been on a roller coaster since. I've thought about it, but never very seriously.

Not even (or perhaps especially) when, a few years later, I finally got to visit Coney Island. Amazingly enough, the recurrent screams of the riders on the—whatsit, the Cyclone? the famous big 'coaster there?—did not draw me to try it out. However, I have to say that when Cinerama came out and I got to see the first demonstration film of it at the Cinerama Theatre on Times Square, I did enjoy the demonstration of a roller coaster ride, which I recall as quite sufficiently effective. For one thing, there was no compul-

sion to beat my head against a rail.

For some odd reason, the next time I went on a Ferris Wheel, after the Hermann Park experience, I found myself failing to enjoy it, especially on the downside of the cycles, though not quite so vehemently. Haven't been up in one of those since, either.

Something about this tale reminds me of the classic "Tried it once. Didn't like it." story. If you don't know the one I mean, or even if you do, beware—I'm apt to tell it given a chance.

I don't have much time to put this together this month, so let's see if I can get some mailing comments done.

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**Cover art** - Bill Why is it I "hear" the fanfather speak with a

Yiddish accent instead of Italian? I think it has to do with the propeller beanie, which, above that very Mediterranean face, cries out "yarmulke"... What can I tell ya?

**PowWow #9** - Joyce We were not a large family

with its inevitable black sheep and uncloseted skeletons, collecting from time to time to create the kinds of memories you speak of. Not that we didn't have our hush hush tales, most of which I only heard about much later when I was old enough for such things to be discussed with me—I was, after all, the baby of the family, with 11 years between me and my sister, and my mother was 40 when I was born...and, for most of the early part of my life, her parents were living with us. By the time I did hear about those stories the subjects had settled into pretty mundane lives.

My mother had two younger sisters, Elisabeth and Bonnie (her real name was Miriam), both whom visited us, separately, maybe once a year. I got fussed over of course, so loved them as a couple of the neatest people I was privileged to know. Aunt Elisabeth, the youngest, was a musician, playing the violin and the piano... She'd have been in her early 30's when I first knew her. She brought interesting toys (not as gifts; they went back with her when she left), and introduced me to the original Mary Poppins books. She also brought along boy-

friends a couple of times, but this meant nothing to me at the time (and I'd've been shocked had anything been suggested—or maybe I'd just have been puzzled). She eventually got married; Uncle Bill was a geologist, teaching at Ohio University in Athens, and he was pretty neat; great sense of humor. He is still there, retired; she died about four years ago—the last of the three sisters.

Aunt Bonnie, closer to my mother's age, was warmer; she was a teacher and, for as long as I knew her, lived with another "old-maid school-teacher" in Dedham, Massachusetts (just outside of Boston), and later in Orleans, Mass., on the Cape. There was never a suggestion that it was more than a matter of convenience and good friendship...even when I got older and speculated about it myself

My father's sister, Esther, lived in Floral Park, Long Island, N.Y. She was married to a Cuban immigrant, Norman Braham, and like my other aunts, had adopted a strong local accent. (She pronounced "bottle" with a glottal stop in place of the t's; Aunt Bonnie would have said "pahk the cah in the bahn," had she been so inclined, and Aunt Elisabeth had a good Midwestern accent, not dissimilar to your own, Joyce...) Aunt Esther was not one of your leading intellectual lights; she liked books, but would never have been able to hold her own in a literary conversation. Of her two children, Cousin Richard and his wife Polly have retired in Florida, their son Rich working at Sea World; and Cousin Audrey passed away several years





ago, leaving three children, with whom we haven't stayed in touch. My sister, Elinor, never married, and is living in Prescott, Arizona; my brother, Hale, married twice (the second time last year, to Gail, his 20-year SO), lives in Fort Bragg, California. His son from the first marriage, Knight, lives in Lumberton, North Carolina; he's a newspaperman there—I think he recently made managing editor. Knight and his wife Sandy have three children, one hers from an earlier marriage. I used to babysit Knight, but I've never met his family...

And that's about it. A far cry from the *H.M.S. Pinafore's* Modern Major General, with his sisters and his cousins whom he reckoned by the dozens, and his aunts...

I remember July 4, 1976, watching the celebrations and fireworks with you folks atop the roof... I had a heavy sunburn from wandering along the closed off Expressway on the Brooklyn shoreline, shooting 8mm movie film of the Tall Ships and the holiday throngs.

**Implosion #9** - Arnie Despite the obvious humor, I felt uncomfortable when the Zuckers (or whoever) cast OJ Simpson as the ever unlucky Norberg in the *Police Squad* movies. Your evocation of the Impressed Hero suggests something of why I was uncomfortable about that, but in another way it's the discomfort I feel now whenever (as increasingly occurs) the villain of a popular movie is cast as a black man. Wesley Snipes in *Demolition Man* comes to mind immediately, but there have been enough others in the last few years that it almost seems like a part of a campaign, a racist backlash against the progress blacks made in the 60s and 70s (I've noticed a return to the use of the term Afro-American which also strikes me as retro). Only the *Star Trek* production teams seem to be continuing to make an effort to evoke a sense of positive equality between races—occasional black villains, yes, but right along with black heroes. I know, you're not that impressed with Avery Brooks as Commander Sisko, but everybody

liked Geordie LaForge... *n'est-ce pas?*

**Encumbrance #6** - Karl I've been in unions in a couple of jobs in New York. The first was for about ten years at a book wholesaler called Bookazine (they'd stopped handling magazines before I started with them in 1960), and the union was a Teamsters subsidiary. I've forgotten what it was called...the name, as I recall, didn't have much to do with the work we did.

We went through the contract negotiation process about every two years, but it never quite came to strike. The first time I went to a union meeting, I was quite naive about the whole thing, and thought all the rhetoric rather—well, not silly, but just...rhetorical. Blather. The meeting was called to take a strike vote. I didn't understand the significance of this, quite—it was basically a pro forma ritual, authorizing us to call a strike should it come to that if the negotiations should bog down.

When the votes were counted, there was one "No" vote, and cries of "Traitor" rose among the gathering. Everybody was pissed and looking at everyone else suspiciously. I was shocked at the reaction. It was reminiscent of the recent McCarthy era. My feeling was, and remains, if you take a vote, it's an opportunity to express opinion. I, uh, never confessed...

The benefits and raises that were negotiated there were generally worth the effort, and I have to acknowledge they probably would never have been voluntarily offered by the management. So I've had mixed feelings about unions since then, recognizing that there were times when they were desperately needed. But the excesses and the featherbedding of some unions, especially in the entertainment industry but also in many other areas, has generally pushed me away from them. Two or three New York newspapers folded as a result of strikes, and a couple more nearly did, during my years there. My memory fails at this point as to which ones; probably Arnie remembers their names.

## Enjoy the Season - Marcy

An excellent evocation of a pivotal point in your life. I have nothing, exactly, with which to try to match it. No "Rite of Passage," as it were. I wrote last time about my experiences with swimming class, and why I pretty much got turned off to the concept. I do recall the test laps and dives we had to take, and being unhappy about having to take them; I was not a good swimmer, nor retained (or developed) any aspiration to be. In some ways, looking back, I'm sorry about that. I did, over the years, go swimming from time to time, but it was entirely a case of joining friends in an activity—I'd have fun, but had it been up to me I'd just as soon have gone bowling.

## Sercon-Navigation 3 - Tom

When Texas A&M was not yet acknowledged a university (and quite possibly for long afterwards—for all I know, right to the present day), the Aggies' traditional Thanksgiving football game against the "Tea-Sippers"—Texas University's Longhorns—was preceded by a giant bonfire, held in the drill field in the middle of the campus. (All students—Aggies—were in the ROTC in the 1940s; hence a drill field.) The woodpile was built in a cone-shaped (or teepee) form to 20 or 30 feet high, I think, perhaps higher—I'm guessing from memory. It was also traditional for them to steal an outhouse and place it at the top of the pile. Possibly (I don't remember this, just sort of speculating) there was an effigy representing a Tea Sipper in it. This also meant somebody off somewhere in the highly rural surroundings of Brazos County was really pissed off at them (so to speak). I never really heard how these conflicts were resolved. But everybody went to the bonfire, sitting around the perimeter, singing the rally songs and cheering the rally cheers.

My father joined me at least one time, which was kind of a rare thing, though I guess he was probably usually home for Thanksgiving. Much later, I saw something he'd written about the

occasion; he was impressed by an observation I'd made. The shadows from the fire stretched out into the darkness, and I'd said something about how the "shadows turn into night." I suppose it sounds a little poetic, but it didn't (and doesn't) seem all that marvelous a remark, even for a nine- or ten-year-old. But it was a neat kind of egoboo to have one's father proud of one for something, even if only that... (He'd have then been slightly younger than I am now. \*sigh\*)

## Untitled #2 - Ben

I'm sorry, but—Patronizium? Is this meant to be Patriotism? I'm not joking about it; this just strikes me as an interesting way for you to have heard the word in your head. It reminds me a little bit of the classic hymn, "Gladly the Crosseyed Bear." Or possibly the "Cheese and crackers got all muddy" story (that was the response when the boy dropped the bag of groceries and a passing lady asked him to repeat what he'd just said).

Your inquiries on the meaning of the Fourth of July and freedom were interesting and thought-provoking. Freedom is a much misused term, primarily by people who want it to mean freedom without responsibility. But where patriotism and bigotry divide is a good question, and your added phrase "as we practice it" puts yet another spin on the question. I think lots of us, unfortunately, confuse the two. That was especially true 20 years ago ( $\pm$  a few) when this country was divided between the hawks and the doves. Who was it that said "Extremism in the cause of patriotism is no extremism"? (Or something like that.) But it's also true (today or whenever) when organizations like the KKK and the skinheads think they're being patriotic. But I think anyone who wants to see the country live up to its stated ideals is being patriotic, regardless of how they go about trying to support that effort, whether or not the means they use may seem bigoted to others.

Having said all that, I went to look the word up in the dictionary, and here's what I find:



**bigot** (big'ət) *n.* [Fr. < OFr., a term of insult used of Normans, apparently a Norman oath < ? ME. *bi god*, by God] **1.** a person who holds blindly and intolerantly to a particular creed, opinion, etc. **2.** a narrow-minded, prejudiced person —*SYN.* see ZEALOT—**big'ot'ed** *adj.*—**big'ot-ed·ly** *adv.*

**bigotry** (big'ə trē) *n., pl. -ries* [Fr. *bigoterie*] the behavior, attitude, or beliefs of a bigot; intolerance; prejudice

— Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd Collegiate Ed.

(I just did all that to show off.)

So, anyway, one can be patriotic without being bigoted about it, is what it all boils down to.

## Bostonian Americana - Woody - I

lived in the Back Bay area of Boston in the late '50s, on St. Stephens St., behind Symphony Hall, where, coincidentally, Joy-Lynd worked as paymaster to the Boston Symphony in the late '70s. The red light district was an area called Sculley Square, where the Government Center is now located. There was a burlesque theatre there called the Casino, where I illegally (I was 17) saw a few of the remaining classic ecdysiasts

(stripteasers) of the day, like Tempest Storm. I worked as a stock clerk at a place called K. Murphy Jewelers (my first real job) on Washington St., not too far from Filene's, the big department store, and what was then the big theatre district. Last time I looked, the area had severely deteriorated.

The new John Hancock Building was built at about the time Joy-Lynd was there, and was known as The Plywood Tower because on several occasions the interior air pressure blew out glass panes from the upper stories, to the considerable concern and endangerment of people below, and these window areas were temporarily patched with plywood.

## Carnival Promises - Belle Augusta

Full circle, almost to the topic of this distribution, and to what I led off with, back a few pages. You do capture the initial delight and subsequent disillusion that are what I recollect Carnivals to be...

*Ross*

## Pepper . . . and Salt

### Hold the Drinks

Our coffee table holds a vase

Of silken fleur-de-lis.

An illustrated book of art  
Is there for all to see.

A crystal bowl from Venice  
sits,

Replete with mints and tof-  
fee.

The table gets a lot of use—  
However, not for coffee.

—Howard Kaufman.



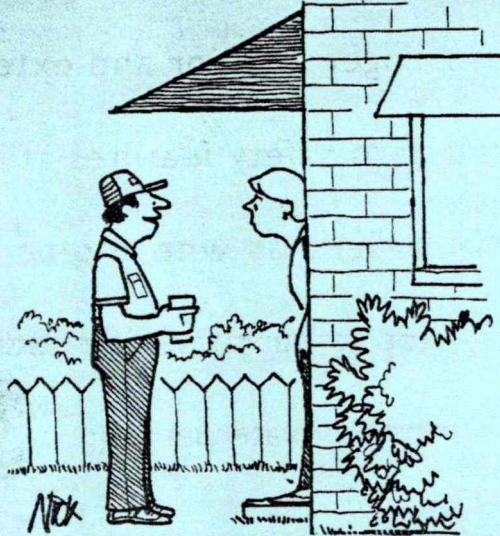
“Unfortunately the dinosaur thing has run its course.”

## Pepper . . . and Salt

### Road Masters

Car names ignite the ma-  
cho taste  
With titles male and brac-  
ing;  
A Firebird or Probe can  
start  
Their fantasies to racing.  
Behind the wheel a man  
can feel  
His Regal role in driving:  
When seeing this Legend  
folks will say,  
"Le Baron is arriving!"  
A Grand Voyager this Cav-  
alier  
Whose Cutlass is his motto,  
A Ranger seeking end-  
lessly  
The treasured El Dorado.  
As such is the prevailing  
view,  
What, ladies, can we do for  
you?  
—Howard Kaufman.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"I'm collecting for the people of Jupiter following their disaster."

WSJ 7/21/94

WSJ 7/27/94

## Asides

### Justice for Homer and Marge

And Bart and Lisa and Maggie. Given the long catalog of injustices in the world, the one the Emmy Awards have committed for the second year in a row may not attract much notice. It should. Once again "The Simpsons"—America's first television family—has been snubbed, deprived of a nomina-

tion as an Outstanding Comedy Series. Something, as Principal Skinner might say, is rotten here. It is hard not to admire a show capable of packing into the same half-hour its own hilarious rendering of "A Streetcar Named Desire" and a visit to the Ayn Rand Nursery Center, where tots are instructed in the importance of ambition and the evils of sharing.