

**Dither**  
may be Ross Chamberlain's fanzine  
for Apa V #11, Sept. 1994

Domicile: 2200 S. Ft. Apache Rd. #1227  
Las Vegas, NV 89117-5714 ☎ 228-2850

Now is the time of year when little children merrily trot off to the halls of academia, screaming their little hearts out outside your windows and complaining of tummy aches when tests are scheduled or their homework isn't done. Well, that's what I did when I was of grammar school age; didn't everybody? Of course the song, "See You in September," was truer then (whether or not it was yet written) than now—we got out for Summer Vacation near the end of May, I think, and reluctantly trudged back some time after Labor Day.

I didn't particularly like school (*quel surprise!*). It had to do in part with some particular teachers, in part with resentment of authority (including the Karmic Law: Life Isn't Fair), and in part

peer pressure. I understood that it was a law of life that school was not fun; it wasn't expected that one should like it. Hence it was a genuine surprise when

I learned that I had disappointed one of my teachers (Fourth Grade) when she asked me if I liked school and I'd said no. It was the stock reply; I'd assumed it was the expected one. That particular teacher was okay, so it kind of bothered me that I had disappointed her. But I didn't know what I was supposed to be able to do about it. If it ever even occurred to me that it was in my power to do anything about it. In the fourth grade, one does not have much of a franchise for anything.

This Bad Attitude of mine (and it was, in retrospect), did not prepare me well for life. It might surprise some of you to know that I never got to college. After high school, I went to a theater school in Boston—The Leland Powers School of Radio, Theater and Television. This didn't pan out, because I didn't have the self-discipline to do the work I needed to do to stay on, there. There were drinking parties and stuff; looking back, I'm grateful that my preference for vodka didn't develop into something more heavy.

I stayed on in Boston, and eventually (when my folks insisted) got my first "real" job, at \$40 a week, as a stock clerk with a silver wholesale outfit. I returned home to the Berkshires eventually after about a year of this. I had a job in New York for a while—another stock clerk job, with a jewelry wholesaler (junk jewelry). This didn't last too long, either. I stayed with my brother Hale and his new family in North Carolina for part of a summer, where I acquired my first car—a 1941 Dodge convertible; tan with leather seats. The 16-year-old car cost about \$50, ran great for quite a while (with the usual need for occasional repairs) and I look back on it with great nostalgia. I drove it back home to Massachusetts (achieving my first great tan) and

used it for another year or so as I commuted to from Monterey to Pittsfield (about 20 miles) where I went to Berkshire Business College (okay, from one point of view I lied about not going to college) to learn Speedwriting and how not to touch type. This lasted somewhat longer than the course was supposed to take, but I eventually got my Speedwriting certificate—and a good start on the novel I've been dilly-dallying at for the subsequent 35 years or so. I was working on that when I should have been practicing my touch typing.

Finally the engine block cracked on my convertible and it had to be "put away" in a junk yard. I went back to New York, got a job at a book wholesaler called Bookazine, where I met Mike McInerney and came into contact with fandom, and the rest is history. Or, well, maybe not, but to touch rapidly and tangentially on the Apa V theme one more time, my intent in returning to New York then was to try to get into the Art Students League. Never made it—never really put together the fees required, for one thing, but, after visiting the place, also never made the extra effort to apply.

My next brush with academia came with then girlfriend Marion Edmonds (met through fandom), who was a drama major at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, NY. She got me a part in a play her department was working on—one of a Noël Coward triplet of one-act plays from *Tonight at 8:30*. It was great fun, though I really, if reluctantly, learned there that I had no great future in theatre... But that's a subject for another time.

The main point is that I tend to cringe at walking within the walls and halls of a classroom atmosphere. In later, highly peripheral, visits to the world of academia, such as when voting at a nearby

high school gymnasium (as occasionally occurred in New York and Cleveland), I could hardly wait to get out of the building and off the grounds. More recently, when visiting Joy-Lynd's classes at Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University, much of that aspect fell away because she was having such a great time there that some of her positive feelings about it rubbed off on me. In retrospect, it's more the grade-school and high

school atmosphere that rankles, less so the advanced, collegiate environment. Perhaps it's the mutual respect between students and teachers I tended to see more of at Tri-C and CSU, as opposed to the almost military, authoritarian atmosphere of the primary/high school situations I ran into most of my life.

Too bad I didn't have some of that insight when it would have counted.

---

**Cover - Bill** Finish "Don"? He looks about done for already, poor fellow. I'd hate to rub him out when it looks like he's just hanging on by a ... hm... trail of ink.

**(Life is just a) Roll of the Dice - Peggy** "Elementary roller coaster physics states that the further back you sit, the more gravity pull you get and the faster the descents." Uh, huh. Then later you state regarding another assertion, "They actually believed me. Some people will believe anything, I guess." Pulling another one, are you?

**Implosion - Arnie** I think I remember **Sky Gunner**, or something that played much like your description of it. Surely there was a bell that rang or a flash or something that happened when you pulled the trigger successfully on contact with the dot on the plane. I have some sense that there was feedback of some kind, but it's been at least as long as you, if not longer, since I played it. I have no recollection of the names of the games I did play, back in the 40s in Texas, or who made them. I do remember I was good enough to get some free games occasionally, but not regularly. The little roadside store where I played most was called Hrdlika's—this name lent itself to jokes, but they didn't sell any hard liquor; they did sell beer because they were just outside of the town line (it being a college town, no alcohol at all could be sold within the town limits). They had a couple of regular pinball machines in the back and the coin-op "bowling" game in which one slid a heavy disc across a set of contacts and the flat "pins" flipped up out of sight when hit. I don't think I ever got many strikes on that machine, but got fairly good at converting

spares. This machine was around in different places I lived in over the years; I didn't like it as well as the pinballs at Hrdlika's, so more rarely played it there.

I don't think it gave me much help in real bowling, but I suspect it did help me playing shuffleboard many years later.

**Enjoy the Season - Marcy** I tend to get confused between the Tilt-A-Whirl and the Whip. They're essentially the same ride, I think, save that the Whip cars rode on rails that had a much milder vertical component (though I recall some wave to it) than the Tilt-A-Wheel's spider-like arms. I was a Whip fan...

**PowWow - Joyce** I tended more toward the ball-toss games at the carnivals and, later, fairs I went to. I forget the name of the classic ball-toss game in which one bowls a rubber ball up an incline into concentric circles with varying scores... I got fairly good at that one. Less so at tossing balls into holes or knocking down milk bottles. One arcade game I first saw at one of the last times I played any of these games was one in which once sprayed water into a receptacle in order to effect a race with other players. I tended to win that one, so naturally liked it better than the other games...

### Excuses, Excuses

**Karl**, sorry you're leaving. Stay in touch. **Tammy**, you have more fun than I do at amusement parks! **Tom**, Jean Shepherd's *A Christmas Story* is typical of his approach to nostalgia. Sorry this mailing comment section's not to par! **Belle**, are you saying Las Vegas is a crystalline growth, feeding on our money and time? **Eric**, we look for more. **Marc**, surreal. I don't think I'd make that choice. **All**... 'bye, now!

