

# Hedge Trimmings

Vol. 2, No. 4 | February 2009

## The Alarmist

...Continued from the previous issue

### 8. On the Softness of Sheets

Clean sheets mean a lot. And the sheets on which—in which—Peach slept were awfully clean. They were cool. They were crisp. And they crackled. An inattentive nurse's aide had swaddled sweet, dear Peach, in his frowsy, drowsy sleep, in freshly opened sheets, fresh out of their plastic-wrapped package. They weren't starched. They hadn't been pressed. They also hadn't been depressed, knee-pressed, or repressed so they had that nappy, nap-time, sleep-tight feeling. To whit: They were rough as tree bark against his baby-soft skin.

Peach, being a baby, did what babies do. He cried. He clacked. He caterwauled. And, having been relocated to another location in the city, he caused another catastrophe: Every window, every glass, every bathtub, and every toilet within a radius of three miles was no more.

### 9. The Self-Education of a Young Man

It took all Peach's parents had to teach him to control his caterwaul, but teach Peach they tried. They spared no expense—in time or in money. But in the end, it wasn't the expensive Montessori day care workers or the eminently understanding and almost always nodding physicians and psychiatrists who helped Peach reign in his warble. It was Peach himself.

You see, there's nothing more important to a young child than the love of his mother, and it soon dawned on Peach that if he wanted some of those hugs and mother loving that he craved so strongly, he needed to not spend so much time around broken glass, cracked ceramics, and splintered figurines. Then it dawned on him that *he* might have something to do with the broken glass, cracked ceramics, and splintered figurines—as well as his parents' adhesive-banded feet and constant wearing of silicone earplugs around the house. Then, because Peach was a quick self-study even as an infant, it dawned on him that he was the one creating the broken glass, cracked ceramics, and splintered figurines. It was his voice—at first—that did so. He decided then and there that he

could make his voice *not* do so if he so in fact wished. Bring on the hugs!

One day, Peach's mother and father walked around the nursery as though on egg shells—it was, in fact, broken glass, which is somewhat more difficult to walk on than egg shells—and the next day, silence descended on their four-story walkup and a bag of broken glass rested gently on the curb below, waiting for the trash collectors. Cracked ceramics sat in another bag. And splintered figurines winked from yet another.

It was the happiest garbage day ever.

### 10. Regretting the Biological Clock

Peach sat across the small table from a friend. The light strains of a Stan Getz recording played over the café's sound system, and the two young adults both had books placed in front of them. He was reading a dog-eared science-fiction paperback, and she was midway through a collection of poetry by a dead woman from New England. Their knees almost touched, and his eyes lingered on her face as she glanced absent mindedly out the window.

"What were you saying?" She turned back toward him, grinning sweetly, and reached for her cup of coffee. She took a sip, eyes intent on him over the steaming rim.

"My alarm clock. It's worthless," he said, shaking his head as though to clear it. "I don't use the buzzer any more. I wake up to a CD—the same CD every morning. Too lazy to change it, but the thing really is, I don't actually wake up to the CD. So it doesn't matter what CD it is."

"What do you mean?"

"I wake up to its spinning. Or its *starting* to spin." Peach took a sip of his coffee. "Seconds before the alarm is set to go off, I wake up to the CD about to play. And I either hit Snooze or turn it off before the alarm even goes off."

"Have you tried it with the buzzer instead of the CD? I mean, if it's somehow important for you to actually hear your alarm?"

"Yeah. And I do the same thing. I wake up just before the alarm goes off. It's like I can sense it about to turn on."

"What I don't get, though, is why this bothers you. I mean, you still wake up at the right time, right?"

"Yeah. But the thing is, I worry about the alarm clock."

"You worry about the alarm clock?"

"Yeah. What if it doesn't get any fulfillment from its role in the world because it's never actually able to do what it was made to do?"

Peach's friend laughs with abandon, slapping her thighs sharply with surprise as she rocks back in her chair. Peach looks at her, crestfallen as she tosses her hair and shakes her head.

"What? What's so funny?"

"You're concerned that your alarm clock will take an ego hit because you don't let it do its job?"

"Well, yeah."

"You're weird, sir. Get me a refill?"

*To be continued...*

## Letters of Comment

**E**njoyed your *Hedge Trimmings* in the January AAPA bundle. Keep up the good work.  
—David George

*Thanks, Dave! I enjoyed your Retro Motors card. "Wun-lung Huffenpuffer," indeed! HR*

**I** have read with great interest your *Hedge Trimmings*—great stuff! Am particularly pleased that you've provided your personal reactions to the journals in the bundle. The bundle commentary should be helpful in stirring activity! As you'll see in the January *Gator Growl*, I had some too-short "capsule" critiques to try to assist in that direction, too.

One suggestion: Us oldtimers aren't used to be calling "Mr." in amateur journalism! Everybody's on a first-name basis, no matter how ancient. Having retired from the newsroom at *The Tampa Tribune* after 52 years, I was happy to be called "Leland" by the youngest newcomers. Guess it made me feel young again (when I started there, I was the youngest reporter in the place).

I'm amazed that you have been able to maintain a monthly schedule of separate journals in both AAPA and NAPA. That's great!

I can't tell you how delighted I am that you've placed *Hedge Trimmings* in the bundle on a regular basis. The content is wonderful, and the format is excellent, too. As I told a friend the other day, "There's life in the old hobby yet!"

—Leland Hawes

*People have really responded well to the mailing comments I include in each issue. I hadn't realized that they were so uncommon—or that people were so hungry for them! My self-publishing background is mostly in zine reviewing and small-press criticism, so the mailing*

*comments are a no brainer. Rather than review items critically, however, I'm trying to share impressions on and reactions to people's APazines.*

*My hope is that the mailing comments and letter columns encourage others to include them in their APazines, as well. Some of the APAs I'm in—more genre-oriented APAs—are much more comment-driven than the AAPA, and I think a middle ground is worth exploring.*

*Meanwhile, my use of titles such as Mr. when addressing fellow members is purely a formal eccentricity—or eccentric formality. I'm not necessarily writing with any particular voice in terms of penning as a character, but I've enjoyed the formality of address so far. I'll reconsider, if you think it's offputting. To me, it feels rather old fashioned and kind of comfortable. HR*

**I** have enjoyed your issues of *Hedge Trimmings* in the recent AAPA bundles. I am a long-time AAPA member who publishes an e-journal on an irregular schedule. Check out the e-journals on the AAPA Web site where you will find the best writing in the association—particularly by Dave Griffin and Hugh Singleton. I invite you to join us in publishing your journal as an e-journal—as a PDF, which gives you total freedom in production, no production costs, and you can include color photographs in your journals.

Good luck with your writing and publishing. Count me as one of your admirers.

—J. Hill Hamon

*As of Jan. 29, HT is now available as an e-journal as well as in print, thanks to Dave Tribby. I plan to make the e-journal available after the print bundles have arrived, so primacy is given the print form. Part of my participation in the AAPA is a retreat from writing online, which I've done aggressively for the last eight years in my blog, Media Diet. It's also an exercise in constraints—how the physical limitations of the printed page (page count, word count, type size, margins, etc.) impacts my writing. So I'll do both, but the print edition will come first. That said, I've been neglecting the e-journals in my mailing comments and will try to better include them in that section. HR*

**I also heard from:** Al Hutchinson.

## Music to My Eyes

**O**ne of my projects early this year was to better organize our record collection. So far, the record albums have been alphabetized and intermingled (C. and I got married last fall, and we're still merging belongings in some cases.). Over Martin Luther King Day, I

finished alphabetizing and intermingling our compact discs. That was a bigger task than you might think, but as a former radio DJ, record reviewer, and musician—as well as someone who just really likes music—I have many, many records and CDs. Thousands.

The CDs were already somewhat alphabetized because I've been transferring them to Univenture Viewpaks, poly or vinyl sleeves that take up about a quarter of the space filled by a traditional jewelcase. We store those in CD boxes purchased from Bags Unlimited, and I had maybe 10 different alphabetized subsections that needed to be merged. So merge I did.

Once I was done, I labeled the boxes using my Brother P-Touch label maker, and voila. *Organized*. Seems a simple thing, no, alphabetizing ones music collection? I had no idea how much it would improve our lives.

One, we're listening to more music. If we feel like listening to something, anything, we can quickly check to see whether we have any on hand. It's easy to find stuff, and it's more quickly put away. Before, when there were multiple alphabetized sections, CDs usually didn't make their way back into the boxes because there was no one place it made sense to put them. We've been averaging about one CD a night this past week, and our music wall is much tidier than it's ever been.

We're also listening to music we haven't heard in awhile. We're digging deeper into the stacks to find things we remember but might not have sought out specifically otherwise—like Mary's Danish or the Scottish band Yatsura. Excellent listens, but not necessarily obvious selections. We're benefitting from better browsing, as well. Sometimes we'll go in wanting something else but decide that if we don't actually have it, we'll choose something else from that box. You can do that when things are randomly organized, but there's a little more logic to it when the alphabet's been applied.

And finally, we realize that we'll be benefitting from this for the rest of our lives. Once you organize something this way, unless you totally gut the system, it stays organized. When we move, the alphabetized boxes will move with us. You can mix up the boxes, but the CDs stay together within them. That's not bad a bad outcome for a weekend of reliving songs gone by.

Next up: Our books. We have even more books than we have CDs and records, much less cassettes. Organizing our library feels a little more daunting. First of all, we need to choose the right organization scheme. Strict alphabetization by author? The Dewey Decimal system? A topical scheme of our own design? Another mode entirely?

# A Conversation with the Bundle

It was an honor and somewhat unsettling to be featured so prominently in the *American Amateur Journalist*. What an introduction to the AAPA! I know I wrote that biographical sketch myself, but it was interesting to reread it just before John Louis Woods's obituary. I hope that my participation in the group tips hat to pre-Internet ajoy activity, as well as helps usher the AAPA into a more networked world. I'd like to welcome fellow newbies Ron Hylton, Jan Hipp, Elizabeth Lindsey, Ken Locke, Catherine Celani, and Glenda Zahller. I look forward to seeing your APazines!

Mr. Justice of Copper Beech Press sure knows how to trim a tree!

Kudos to Mr. Hawes for including "Capsule Commentary" in *The Gator Growl* #138. Mr. Robins, is Charligroup hiring?

*Hedge Trimmings* #2-3? No comment.

I was surprised by how delighted I was by *Nicks Up* #19. That little item had a big impact—brief, to the point, yet eminently friendly.

*Morningbird Press* #105 also caught my fancy. As might be indicated by my essay on H.P. Lovecraft in the first issue of this journal, I'm also fond of Lord Dunsany; I'll have to see how easy to find my copies of his books are or whether this story is in one of them. I also appreciated Mr. Fوسفeld's connection of the tale to current events. Lastly, if you drive up and down the west coast of California, you can see somewhat similar towers right here in the United States.

## Illustrators?

The Manuscript Bureau connects writers with publishers, but does the APA have a service for people looking for *illustrators*? I'd like to include more artwork in *HT*.

## Colophon

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