

Hedge Trimmings

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25 Random Things

Earlier this year, a viral meme ran rampant through Facebook, the online social networking site. It was similar to many chain letters and similar pass-along questionnaires, but it was different in two ways: It was actually quite easy and fun to participate in—and it attracted the attention of the *New York Times*.

Most of the time, I find online questionnaires to be boring and a challenge to fill out. Having a set of questions that everyone is supposed to respond to can help you get to know your friends and family better, but they can also be stifling and limiting. This one, titled "25 Random Things About Me," was simpler—doesn't matter what the 25 things are; just make sure there are 25. Then send the list to 25 friends on Facebook and encourage them to make their own lists. The very lack of requirements makes the choice of things you reveal as interesting as the actual things you reveal.

The exercise made the Feb. 4, 2009, edition of the *New York Times*. Reporter Douglas Quenqua estimates that there are 35,700 pages containing contributions to the effort. A Facebook spokeswoman indicated that the activity might have doubled the previous week's note-creation average on the site to 5 million. That's a lot of 25 Random Things!

I was tagged by my wife and several friends to participate. What follows was my contribution. You are welcome to come up with your own list to share—in print or online.

1. I don't like paying people to cut my hair. I don't mind the *outcome*, and I love the accoutrements of the barbershop, but I could do without the whole going to the barber, getting my hair cut thing. I'd much prefer not have to cut my hair, to cut my own hair, or to cut my hair every four months or so—as I've done in recent years. That means I yo-yo between a borderline mad Einstein fro and close-cropped hair (especially if I give myself a buzz cut).

2. My whole life, I've gone largely without wearing jewelry. In junior high, some friends got into wearing necklaces—that didn't work for me. I got a class ring—that didn't work for me. I don't wear any jewelry. Except my wedding ring. I don't seem to mind that thing at all. Took to it surprisingly quickly, too.

3. If I could, I would subscribe to Vans Old Skool Skate Shoes. Right now, I have three pair in my closet—there was a sale—just waiting for my current pair to wear out. Finish one, start another.

4. I'm a legally ordained minister of the Universal Life Church.

5. I'm also a card-carrying minister of the Church of the Subgenius.

6. Sometimes, I dream about the town I grew up in, as well as the Janesville Mall. In both instances, there are parts of the town or mall missing, as well as extra parts of the town or mall that aren't really there (in reality). Those two settings recur in my dreamlife, and they almost always have a part missing or extra. I am sure that this means something.

7. I do not wake up to my alarm clock turning on, I wake up to my alarm clock *about* to turn on. I wake up just before the radio turns on and just before the CD starts playing. This frustrates me.

8. I firmly believe that everybody should sing their own songs, paint their own art, write their own books, and stage their own shows at least part of the time. Make some culture for every bit of culture you consume.

9. I met my wife on the Internet. Thank you Ben and Consumating.com!

10. I do not have any tattoos.

11. I'm born-again straight edge. That means I don't drink any more. I want to enhance and expand my awareness and perception, not dull it.

12. I'm a published poet. But I'm a published small-press poet, so it's not that big a deal.

13. I was featured in the *New York Times Magazine*. I was also featured in *Salon Today*. (Refer to No. 1.) Go figure.

14. It used to be that I would only wear blue jeans and didn't like to wear other kinds of pants. Now I almost only wear khakis (Gap khakis, preferably) and don't like to wear blue jeans. One summer when I was a kid, I wore jeans all summer long because I didn't even like to wear shorts. That's silly! Late last year, inspired by Andy Stefanovich, I bought a pair of Lucky Brand blue jeans. As far as jeans go, they're not bad. But they're not khakis.

15. The first record albums I ever bought were Kiss's *Destroyer* and *Dynasty* and a Peter Pan *Sounds to Make You Shiver* haunted house sound effects LP. The first cassette I ever bought was Quiet Riot's *Metal Health*. My mom actually bought that for me.

After I bought the J. Geils Band 45 for "Centerfold," my mom made me take it back to Kmart. Boy, was I embarrassed.

16. I really, really like heavy metal music sometimes. This is one of those times.

17. I am one of the most impressionable people you will ever meet. I am thankful that Caitlin is usually game to go along with my harebrained schemes. Like buying sugarcubes after we saw the Chantal Akerman movie *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. If that movie doesn't make you want sugarcubes, I don't know what will.

18. I would like to own my own photocopier or printing press or mimeograph machine some day. I would also like a Kindle. That kinda captures how I feel about media and publishing. But not totally.

19. I just contacted MUFON (the Mutual UFO Network) to see whether they had any data on UFO sightings near water or involving water—prompted by Dennis Crenshaw, publisher of the *Hollow Earth Insider*. I'm sure they have the data—they maintain a sightings database—I'm just not sure they can parse it meaningfully quantitatively or qualitatively.

20. I helped launch one of the very first online social networking services. Now the world's all Facebook and stuff. What I did back then looks pretty quaint by comparison.

21. I'm doing all I can these days not to buy a shortwave radio or police scanner. Some day I'd like my own ham radio or low-power broadcasting setup. Radio Free Heath!

22. I hope to live closer to my son some day.

23. I was born near where two rivers meet. I've lived on a Great Lake. And near two oceans. I can't imagine living somewhere that's land locked. OK, I can; I'm just not sure I'd like it.

24. When I was a very young boy, I used to think that an old family Bible we kept in the guest room closet was haunted. (I'd seen an apparition in that room while still in the crib.) Imagine my disappointment when, when older, I learned that it was in fact a dictionary. It's hard to imagine a dictionary being haunted, so that kinda deflates the whole thing.

25. In my 35th year, I've corresponded with more 70- and 80-year-olds than I think I've known my entire life. Know what? They're pretty damn cool.

That last item was in part inspired by my interactions with some of the people I've met through the AAPA and similar groups. I actually don't know how old most of the members I correspond with are, but I do know how some of them are "up there" in years. That doesn't mean I assume you're all in your 70s and 80s.

Regardless, I got a kick out of creating that list. Might be a fun writing exercise for you, too.

The Alarmist

...Continued from the previous issue

11. Meeting Ms. Margaret

OK. You got me. I shouldn't have glazed over her like that. You're right. That's her: Margaret. I didn't know I loved her then, but I did know one thing: She sure loved to drink coffee. One cup at a time. Later, when my heart had melted for her entirely, I sometimes wondered whether I was nervous with anticipation just to be in her presence, or if I was merely over-caffeinated. I like to think it was the coffee, but I'm not that strong. Get it? Strong coffee? Oh, never mind.

Later, when we were together, everything was perfect. She didn't mind my, shall we say, talent. She said it even made her feel safer. I protected her. That was nice. What I'd considered a handicap and something to hide for so much of my life, she considered a gift—something to be proud of. She was proud of me! What I wouldn't give just to hold her hand again.

12. The Lost Years of Peachpit Sebastian

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. It's irresponsible to give short shrift to more than 20 years of the life of Peach. Once he learned to control his outbursts, life with the Sebastians improved immensely. For the most part, he lived the normal life of an infant, a toddler, and a boy, in that order. But as he moved from his tweens to his teens, he began to pick up on things.

One, he realized that he couldn't just control his outbursts—what he came to call "flexing"—in terms of restraining himself, he could control them in terms of targeted assertions. And it wasn't just a way to make things shatter. Peach found that he could make a drinking glass merely wobble or an open window close. He could move matter—specific kinds of matter—by making them vibrate just shy of breakage. The fact that he could *flex* he tried his best to keep to himself, although there was a series of incidents in early high school in which one bully in particular kept finding that his Ray-Bans had broken yet again. That bully spent so much money on Ray-Bans one semester that he had to cut back on cigarettes and condoms.

Two, Peach learned that he could receive as well as transmit. What do I mean by that? Take the alarm clock as an example. Peach could sense when an alarm was going to go off, be it an alarm clock, a fire alarm, the telephone, or a crossing light. In

school, no matter how engrossing the lecture, Peach would have his textbooks neatly stacked just moments before the bell rang and classes changed over. A couple of times, Peach led his family out of a crowded movie theater or another public place just before a fire alarm began to clang. And he was always able to nose his car into an intersection just as the traffic lights changed.

For a short while, Peach even dabbled in softcore crime, using his skill to identify retail establishments and building entrances that were unprotected and unlocked. The furthest Peach went in this direction could be considered a crime only in the sense of breaking and entering or trespassing. He'd find a door he could open or force without triggering a siren, make his way into the building and walk around for awhile, absorbing the eerie stillness that comes when in someone else's space—or a public place when no one else is around. And then he'd leave the way he came.

When his interest in just going into places waned, Peach made his passive crime a game of sorts. Peach acquired a gross of small plastic frogs for less than \$10—a deal, but the kind of deal you question after the fact: What am I going to do with 144 plastic frogs? On his B&E runs, he'd leave a plastic frog behind in a conspicuous, noticeable place. If he'd worked his way into a locked-up liquor store, he'd leave a frog on the counter. A laundromat? Inside the catch of the soap dispenser machine. An accountant's office? In the very center of the ink-stained desk blotter.

Every evening, Peach would read the police blotter in the Libertyville newspaper, but his escapades were never reported. Part of him felt insulted. He realized that his crime was small beer but was concerned that his presents—the frogs—would go unnoticed. He considered leaving behind larger objects, say, a whole turkey. But then he decided against it. He'd be sure to be noticed lugging around a whole turkey. That's just silly talk.

To be continued...

Letters of Comment

Nothing I can express in this letter would do justice to the two issues of *Hedge Trimmings* in the January 2009 bundle—or for that matter, No. 1 in a previous bundle. I give you my sincerest compliments for an outstanding journal: both in appearance and in content. I wish we could have more journals of that quality in our bundles!

I suppose you noticed that the convention is to be in Columbus, Ohio, this coming August. I hope you will be able to make it; I would really enjoy

getting to meet you personally there. You are a credit and a boost to the AAPA, and we are so glad to have you among us!

Looking forward to future issues of *Hedge Trimmings*...

—Ivan Snyder

I appreciate the kind welcomes that everyone has given me. I still have some rough edges to smoothe in Hedge Trimmings in terms of its form and content, but it's been fun to put together for folks, and I am thankful for the comments and support.

Unfortunately, I will most likely not attend the convention this fall. I travel quite frequently to see my son, who lives on the west coast with his mother, so my travel funds are spoken for. That said, my wife and I hope to relocate ourselves later this year, so hopefully, I'll be more free to travel in future years. We'll meet at a convention some day, I'm sure.

In the meantime, I'll see you in the bundle. HR

My January bundle finally arrived, and it was notable for two reasons—a new member (you) had two papers enclosed, and a certain old member (me) had none. Both of these events could be classified as rarities.

It's not often a new AAPA member hits the ground running as you have. You seemed to catch on immediately just what we are all about. I understand you have a zine background... that probably accounts for it.

Some years ago while serving as 1st Vice President, I was in charge of recruiting and attempted to mine that source of recruits... I even subscribed to *Factsheet Five*. This attempt wasn't very successful I'm sorry to say.

I look forward to seeing [you] in the bundle as often as possible.

—Fred Liddle

I've been involved in self-publishing since 1988, mostly through zines and minicomics. I took some time off in the mid-'90s in order to focus more on blogging and other modes of online writing and publishing, but late last year, I decided to focus more on self-publishing and the small press in print. I review zines for Zine World. I review poetry for Small Press Review. I've been dabbling in writing poetry myself and have had several items published in various zines. And I've really been interested in amateur press associations.

Part of that interest stems from my interest in forms of grassroots media that parallel zines but are wholly other. APAs are an example of that. Big Mail—one way to think of that might be grassroots direct marketing or junk mail—is another. In any event, I'm focusing most of my energy on APAs this year, publishing a handful of APAzines for as many APAs. I'm especially interested

in the AAPA and NAPA given their histories and longevity.

I would agree that my background in zinemaking has helped me find legs in the AAPA. There are some differences, but there are more similarities. I've been enjoying bridging the two worlds. And I hope to be a strong advocate for APAs in the zine community.

Your presence in the AAPA bundle is a welcome sight! "Games People Play" reminds me of Bunco with three-plus dice played on Wheeling Island in the middle 1940s. Glad to have you aboard.

—Bill Venrick

I'd never heard of Bunco before, and it appears it's still around! Made by a company in Bakersfield, California, Bunco is supposedly America's favorite dice game. (I would have guessed Yahtzee.) According to the World Bunco Association, the game dates back to the 1800s, was originally called Eight-Dice Cloth, and is played primarily by women, children, and couples.

A social game, it's recommended for 12 players, three groups of four—and two teams per group. The goal is to roll ones, but you can also earn points by rolling multiples of other numbers. A three of a kind is a Bunco. I've never played but would like to. Any active Bunco players in the APA? HR

I also heard from: Kent Chamberlain

E-Journal Comments

To date in the pages of *Hedge Trimmings*, I've neglected commenting on the e-journals that are announced in the AAPA Alert emails and available for download online. For the most part, it's because they're slightly outside the AAPA experience; they're not included or mentioned in the bundles, and you have to make a point of going to get them yourself if you're interested. I make *HT* available in print as well as as an e-journal, I fully support AAPA members who publish e-journals, and I pledge to better comment on others' e-journals within the pages of this APazine. This column address the last few months of e-journal activity.

While I am all for greater cooperation between the AAPA and NAPA, I wonder whether there are smaller steps that could be taken before a joint convention. Perhaps an annual bundle exchange in which members publish enough copies to satisfy the memberships of both groups? Joint action to promote and preserve the ajay hobby? Smaller regional or local gatherings that might not be as challenging logistically? It's unclear in Mr. Bossler's *Ohio e-Views*—and other material I've read on the topic—whether the goal is a joint convention or

greater collaboration between the AAPA and NAPA. I'm not sure the former is a necessary first step toward the latter. That said, I wouldn't worry about the coffeemaker. I do the same thing, and I'm half your age.

Hugh Singleton's memory-oriented contributions in *Things in Motion...* #50-51 were enjoyable, especially his writing about his father.

Even though William S. Warner's "Night of Sighs" in *Whippoorwill E-Comment* #76 could have been edited a little for length and clarity, it was an interesting study in trust—trust in the prostitutes who tried to help him and trust in the mechanic who stayed behind. Shannon Adams's "A Christmas Eve Story" in #75 reminded me of my sister's work in elderly care. The holiday shift is indeed an important shift. I can think of few things more disheartening than holidays in an institution of any kind (prison, hospital, etc.). Staff who work holiday shifts are making a real sacrifice on behalf of their clients and patients.

The Windswept Journal #62's "Walk Like a Man" offered an interesting look at male role models. Luckily, those of my generation and cohort were a little more wide ranging and nuanced. And "Balloon" in #62 was a fun diversion. I got a kick out of the newspaper headlines at the end.

There's a lot of interest and worth in the e-journals. Maybe PDF has a secondary meaning: "Please Don't Forget (to Read Them)."

Have *you* read an e-journal lately?

A Conversation with the Bundle

Given Mr. Liddle's loc in this issue of *HT*, It's good to see *Flimsie Excuse* back in the bundle. His granddaughter's questionnaire reminded me of a viral meme that made its way through Facebook recently. I'll include an item on that in this edition of *HT*.

The Gator Growl #139 included a couple of interesting items. I'm curious what Mr. Hutchison's "make-believe radio programs" are like. I quite enjoy old-time radio and radio theater, myself. I was flattered and kind of embarrassed by "Heath Row, Dynamo Newcomer." Mr. Hawes had let me know it was coming, and I had forgotten! Actually, I was not named for either of my grandfathers, but for a Ewing Heath Row several generations back on my father's side. We have a framed photograph of him still in the family, but I know little about him. Additionally, I have received the box of *American Amateur Journalist* back issues and will spend some time with them before sending them to DePaul University. I've been donating materials to their

Chicago Great Lakes Underground Press Collection since the mid-'90s, and the lot will make a wonderful complement to the other materials.

Hedge Trimmings #4? No comment.

Mr. Scott's *Nicks Up* was short and to the point. I can understand his challenges keeping up with his reading, but I encourage fellow members to read and comment on the e-journals if they're able. The news item on the Bald Head Club was a delight. Quel scandal!

The 54th issue of *Oregon* was the best-printed item in the bundle. Kudos to Mr. Rea. The illustrations of Roy Paul are a real treat.

Kathleen DesHotel's *Pensees avec Cafeau Lait* was worth reading and begs rereading. I'll have to return to it to fully absorb the piece "Murmurings."

Shasta Ramblings #449 makes me want to learn more about the history of the World's Fair. I attended the fair in 1982 in Tennessee but am largely unaware of its more recent incarnations.

Thank you, Nancy Karp, for the Valentine.

Rolls 'Em Right Dice Shaker Upper

By Bill Venrick

Editor's Note: *After an email exchange, fellow AAPA member Bill Venrick sent me a contraption he'd made so my wife and I could better play On the Rocks, mentioned in a previous number. What follows is his description of the device—and plans so you can make your own.*

Rolls 'Em Right! Everyone rolls the dice right. Everyone has been accused—or accused someone—of not rolling the dice right. That argument is done away with by my ingenious (blow blow blow, gag gag gag) device. Well, it is a good idea!

When you drop the dice into the upper opening, they *clatter* through the inside angles and make a snare drum-like sound and *clatter* out the bottom. Lots of fun and excitement. At least I think so!

I was going to sell this idea to some game company and retire with the profits, but I had to work for a living and put this project up on the shelf. This dice tosser is just one of several dozen ideas I have made—some are like a Rube Goldberg contraption, but all work. I have become a signature stool maker and have enjoyed woodwork immensely.

I *always* have a project either in my mind or unfinished, or sketched on paper. As you can well guess, I am *never* bored. The resources for most of my projects are what the professional world has

left over from their real work—they call it cast offs; some even call it trash. Don't be fooled, though, when I get done, anything I work up looks very good. I enjoy making something out of nothing—it is almost a spiritual trip for me. Seriously.

I have made up a working sketch, which any typical woodworker could interpret into a finished piece. I have not given *every* detail simply because most would end up doing it the way they have material with which to work, and techniques may vary. I used an arch opening through which the dice are delivered—it looks better than my original plain square opening. Also, as you can see, I "finished" the *top* giving it a smarter look with a circular "hole" into which to toss the dice. I used *screws* to attach the *top* and the *back* just in case of a jamb-up of dice, which I honestly doubt will happen, but it does answer the need if it ever occurs; the back and the top can be easily removed "for service" shall we say?

Materials: I used poplar for the "sides" of the box and *whatever* I had on hand for the front and back. In this specific box I used some nice *oak* plywood (¼" approximately) for the *front*, and I used some fancy masonite for the *back*; but any typical ¼" plywood would be suitable for either, maybe even some thin solid wood would be fine. I like the *sound* which is combined with two different kinds of material—it gives it a two-note sound with two different kinds of stock. I glued up the sides about eight years ago, and if someone wanted to really see how the box was done they could easily unscrew the back and top. This is the kind of project I enjoy doing. The *top* is a fine piece of ¼" *cherry* wood, and it looks a bit better than just a mere square opening.

Dice: The ones I use are close to *bone* in type, but any harder dice will work well, I am sure.

Have fun using it—I think the rat-tat-tat sound as the dice are delivered makes the game exciting!

Colophon

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