

# Ad Interim

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ELECTRONIC EDITION

## MY INTERIM

**T**HIS calcified front page represents my calcified attitude, as I have been rode hard and put up wet. If enthusiasm is the oxygen of amateur journalism, then a heavy foot on the breathing tube will suffocate someone. INTERIM is more than just a bunch of words sprayed on dead pine trees. The AAPA is my mommy and my computer is my daddy. I tried to play in a meritocratic work place, but without me, management by mendacity will turn MY INTERIM to acres (well, maybe square inches) of gray prose. When it comes to ethics, you have to choose a ditch to die in. Whew! Can't keep it up. My metaphor engine just blew a gasket. I have been reading the lengthy "MY TIMES" article by Howell Raines in the May "Atlantic". I couldn't help but extract some of the "color" to enliven Ad Interim, pretending it to be a national newspaper, from which I was just fired as managing editor. It is unfair to Raines to take his words out of context, but the temptation was too much for me.

### -E-Journals

The E-Journal experiments of J. Hill Hamon continue with the "publication" of the twelfth "E-WC12". The twelve electronic Whippoorwill Comments, plus a couple of experiments with "French Fold" Comments, make a fascinating corpus, so to speak. E-Comments 7 through 12 settle on the "landscape" format and the URL's (at this writing - April 6) are available on The Whippoorwill Press home page at <http://hometown.aol.com/hamonfrankfort/myhomepage/profile/html> The earlier E-WC's (2, 3, 4, plus those of Mike O'Connor, Philip Jarvis, and Hugh Singleton) may still be available at Bill Venrick's E-Journal Pages: <http://www.greenapple.com/~bvenrick/e-journals.htm> No doubt, J. Hill will continue to experiment - in fact he writes that all of his [many] contributions to the AAPA have been experimental in nature. It seems to me that an excellent format for composition and "publishing" of an E-Journal has been established by AAPA's innovator.

I have learned one thing: You can't depend on a trial e-journal, sent to yourself, to look exactly the same when it comes back as copies received by others. Server software is fickle. Perhaps, as this e-journal will show, another function of an "e-edition" is to give e-mail members an advance peek at what will be in the next bundle.

### Got a quote on that here, I think

**P**ERRY Mason pushed a button on his desk, and Della Street came in promptly with her steno pad, sat, crossed her legs, flipped the pad open to a blank page, and prepared to take dictation. "Flipped" is the key word. How did she do it? I have been using Gregg steno pads that I call "my day books" for note taking for years now, and when I want to look up something, I have to turn the pages slowly, one at a time. Flipping is beyond me.

I thought of a quote as appropriate for the beginning of this May Ad Interim, and it is in one of the eight pads on my desk, but which? And where? If not in one of these, there are seven more pads in the bookcase.

Already, I have forgotten what the quote was about. Oh well, maybe I can just flip - no, "page" - through the pads, and it will come to me. Most of the notes are hard to interpret, being little partial sketches of something or other; sometimes part of a machine, with no way to tell what part, or what kind of machine. Here are a few cog wheels with the number of teeth noted, and this must be my plan to use a little gadget for turning lights on and off on a schedule (since its main shaft turns once in 24 hours) to drive a train of wheels that indicate the phases of the moon. The moon goes through its phases in 29.530588 days. I see that with gear ratios of 49/7x84/10x113/75 and with 3 "moons" on the final disc, a phase of 29.530667 results, which is close enough. But gears are hard to cut. How about a two-gear setup of 11 and 16 teeth, with a "rocker" to move one tooth per rotation of a driver, and with 6 moons on the viewed output? With this I get a moon cycle of 29.33 days. Not quite right, but it's the ingenuity that counts. A neat note. Maybe I'll build a moon clock some day.

How about a cute garden shed from five sheets of plywood at a total cost of \$8.16? I dunno. Maybe plywood

costs a lot more today than it did 30 years ago. But that shed, which was cut out one day, and nailed together the next, probably still exists at our former campground in the woods near Shelton, WA.

Turning the pages, here are patterns for a cyclist's back pack. When I bought my first "ten speed", I passed a bicycle store on the "Ave" (the University district) in Seattle, went in and bought the first backpack I saw, which turned out to be the ideal size; not too small and not too large. Just right. Twenty years later, after it had carried an unimaginably diverse set of objects, from books to car jacks, delicate glassware to a head size boulder on a beach, it began to show the wear and tear, and I looked for a replacement. First in the bicycle stores, then in Sporting Goods stores. Every pack was too large, heavy, cluttered with needless straps and hardware, and impossible, even when empty. I finally decided the only solution was to make one, and I sent Connie out to buy the cloth for it. That's a woman's job and skill; buying cloth. I know that's a sexist attitude, but I'm not ashamed. Connie brought back a large sheet of yellow "Byrd cloth." Remember Admiral Byrd at the South Pole? This stuff is supposed to be what he invented to make his parkas out of. It looked too thin for strength to me, so I doubled the thickness, as I had a great quantity. I guess what Connie bought was a "running yard," the minimum amount for a sale. I ripped the seams of my tattered but still usable relic, and used the parts for [patterns. To make certain that I wouldn't forget how to put the pieces together, I made sketches of my relic at each stage of taking it apart. It is very important to get the attaching points just right for the straps that come from each lower corner, up over my shoulder, and anchored at a doubling in the upper center, in order to properly distribute the strains when the pack is carrying a cubic foot of scrap iron, for example. I did all the sewing by hand, but I couldn't figure out how to run a doubled finishing tape around the edges of the closing flap, so Connie said, Here, give it to me," and did the job in a minute on her sewing machine.

That Byrd Cloth wears like iron, and the yellow back pack has served even longer and for tougher jobs than the original, showing never a rip or open seam – though I’ve had to renew the straps. I don’t think a strap is made that can take the punishment that this backpack has experienced.

Well, I’m sure you don’t want to learn how to make your own back pack.

### Evolution

Walking up LOVR to the market (1 mile) or to the library (1.5 miles) as I do twice or more a week (partly for health’s sake) I am constantly amazed at finding myself the only pedestrian in sight, both ways. By the way, LOVR is Los Osos Valley Road, which has its beginnings in San Luis Obispo, and runs straight out toward the ocean, 12 miles, between what we call the “bean fields.” This valley once grew 70 percent of the sugar peas for the nation. Once a gravel country road, LOVR is now a much used artery, and the traffic throws out a sound like crashing surf from dawn to dark. Everywhere the wheels. No foot traffic. Except; the other day I was accompanied (on the other side of LOVR) by a horse and rider. The bike lanes on LOVR narrow considerably through the two blocks of stores, and I thought it was a marvel of training to see the horse placidly walking (just a bit faster than I was) with the noisy cars passing end to end almost within touch. I recall reading that in England, in 1917, motorists encountering a horse and wagon on a road were required to pull over, turn off their motor, and wait while the wagon driver got down and led his nervous horse past the evil smelling petrol wagon.

I was an inveterate huff and puff cyclist when I came to Los Osos, but unlike the horse, I was never able to put aside my nervousness at the intolerant rushing traffic, and my faithful old 21-speed now languishes, leaning against the wall in the carport. Why did I entitle this section “Evolution”? Well, that’s the quote I was looking for in my “daybooks” and didn’t find. Somewhere I read about the “Dolotta Theorem” which states that any evolutionary development (such as an extra digit perhaps) that proves to be impractical, and is discarded, will not be tried again. I see now that this is contrary to current

thought, because traces in the sedimentary layers of history have exposed evidence of a lizard that developed wings, abandoned them, developed wings again, and (if I remember rightly) abandoned them again. I would interpret the lesson here to be: given enough millions of years, Evolution will experiment with an “improvement” more than once.

Having my ears affronted by all this noisy wheeled traffic as I walk and ponder up LOVR, I can’t help asking myself the frivolous question, “Since the motor car has laboriously evolved this far from its crude beginnings, when will it make the next Natural step, and develop the more efficient and quiet legs?” I tried to think of reasons why wheels are inadequate for insects and spiders. I remembered that I have a note somewhere on a species of spider that evades predators by stiffening its eight legs like spokes in a wheel and cartwheeling out of danger. Truly, Seems that it would get tangled in its own safety line, but I’m sure I copied this from somewhere. I can vouch for the fact that there is a spider that uses a lariat to capture passing insects. It forms a sticky ball on the end of a thread, dangles the “bolas” from a claw and swings it to capture any insect that strays within the radius. There is a beetle called the “wheel bug” but only because it seems to have half of a cog wheel projecting from its back. Of course the dung beetle shaping a sphere of dung to make it roll, has performed the first step in the invention of a wheel, but from the time of the Pharaohs has never needed to invent the hub and the axle.

### How Do They Know?

Richard Hamming, a computer scientist, wrote a cogent essay entitled “We Would Know What They Thought When They Did It” which might be summarized as considering the fact that innovators of the past probably had many more and deeper thoughts than the written records make available to us.. Entomologists and Arachnologists find endless fascination in studies of insects and spiders as individuals and as societies. To paraphrase Hamming’s question, I Would Know How They Know How To Do It. It is probably inappropriate to ask “What do they think?” or “Does implanted instinct take the place of thinking?” A baby spider, floating in

on the breeze, is brushed against my shirt collar unnoticed, and when I look around, behold it has constructed a perfect little orb web between my collar and shoulder. How did it know how to do this? Scientists report that an ant can “memorize” a location. The proof is that when some large white cylinders near a food bait are moved, the returning ant will go first to the “wrong” location. But does the ant “see” locators, or does it have some other way of “noticing?”

As I sat on a folding chair in the woods near our Lake Trask campground, a wasp labored up with a heavy load and dropped it near my feet, returning, as these wasps do, to a site prepared for the booty, to make certain that parasitic flies haven’t discovered it. Out of curiosity, I picked up the prize, a paralyzed spider, and moved it two feet away. The wasp returned to the location, found no spider, and circled in larger spirals, finding the prey and picking it up for another yard of slow flight, then the wasp dropped it again and flew away (back for another site inspection). Again, I moved the booty to see what would happen. This time, when the wasp returned, it made one circle and then flew away – for good. I decided in my anthropomorphic way that the wasp was disgusted with any stung spider that didn’t stay stung, and had hustled off to find another spider. I am amused to learn that rats make excellent experimental animals, because they are intelligent and a “standard lab rat” can be trusted to give repeatable results in experiments with a “Standard Hampton Court Type” maze. I am equally amused to learn that while my friend the dung beetle is a candidate for the Endangered Species list, worms and flies will never make it for “uncharisma.”

### May 5 is CARTOONIST’S day

**E**ACH morning, when the early chores are done, I settle in my favorite arm chair with a cup of coffee and the newspaper, of which the last full page is the Comics Page. What a way to start the day, passing over all the dire happenings, local, national, international, to the world of make-believe. It is an election year, and the country, though most residents seem unaware, is at war. Where is Bill Mauldin when we need him?

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