



Burnhamish Actually Beats the Deadline!

Holiday issue sent before postal rate increases go into effect!

First and foremost, I wish my loyal readership (and even my royal leadership) a fine and dandy holiday season. The Season having begun sometime around Halloween, I must apologize for being late with my well-wishes. Perusing previous *Burnhamishes*, I have discovered a disturbing trend. In every issue since *Summer 1990*, I apologize for being late for something, more often than not the publication of *Burnhamish*. I'm sorry, I am not going to apologize this time.

Guess what? I moved again. And got a new job. In a new state. A new co-worker remarked that the three most stressful events in a person's life are getting a new job, moving, and leaving family and friends. Wheeeee! To bring everyone up to date, I left Kysor/Westran last July and took a position with Nippondenso America as a climate control engineer. I am responsible for designing air conditioning units (whoa, big career move), primarily for the automotive industry. Nippondenso's largest domestic customer for these units is Chrysler (we make them for the *Viper*, *Neon*, and *Grand Cherokee*, to name three). Sure, it sounds more glamorous than de-

signing for FedEx vans, but I will try to keep things in perspective.

My new company is located in Southfield, Michigan. This is the primary reason why I moved. Theoretically, or hypothetically (I can never remember which), I could have commuted from Rockford, IL to Southfield, MI, leaving a scant four hours each day to eat, sleep, and catch up on *Star Trek N. G.* reruns. Incidentally, this would have been a great excuse for not getting another *Burnhamish* out in the last year, but remember, I'm not apologizing. To save gas, I chose to live in Northville, a town on the outskirts of the Detroit suburbs, close enough to Southfield, far enough from De-

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This will be the last appearance of this column, for the obvious reason that I no longer call Rockford home. However, this doesn't prevent me from taking a jab at the "Forest City" from time to time (I still maintain a connection through Carolyn, who is still there but trying frantically to get *here*). Perhaps I can use this space to draw some comparisons between Rockford and the Detroit Metropolitan area.

From a climatical perspective, I seem to have made a lateral shift, only I get the weather a day later. From a temporal stance, I'm an hour ahead. I get all the same cable channels. The cost of living in general is higher, but living in a relatively safe part of the region, my rent is higher still. The speed limits are the



same, but most people drive much faster. This I don't mind. There is, however, some kind of electromagnetic phenomenon which causes the turn signals of many vehicles not to function. I frequently test mine to be sure they are working properly, though this seems to annoy the people driving behind me.

I'm a lot closer to Canada, now. Is this a good thing? I'm about as far from

Canada as Rockford is from Wisconsin. Both Canada and Wisconsin have casinos, but I don't gamble. People talk funny in both Canada and Wisconsin, but they talk funny in Minnesota, too. I digress.

When I first moved to Rockford in 1992, I was disappointed in the lack of good local radio stations, according to my personal tastes. Detroit was the same way until about a month ago, when a new station started broadcasting out of Windsor, Ontario. A good radio station is one you can stand to listen to for an extended period of time without channel-surfing, and none of whose DJs say "BAYEE-behhh!". I may fall back on NPR occasionally when a Tom Petty song comes

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...Rockford Files

on. Although I managed to move everything from Rockford to Northville, I could not move everybody. Carolyn does not as of this date have a solid job prospect in Detroit. However, there is a "network shuffle" happening with the local T.V. stations which may produce an opening in a desirable location (hopefully one close to me).

My first impression of Rockford was that it was a big dart-throwing town. I bought a dart board, thinking I would practice at home and join a local league. Needless to say, I got distracted, and the board

hung virtually unused on my living room wall. I find that my new co-workers at Nippondenso are somewhat competitive, whether it be golf, bowling, backgammon, or "Beavis and Butt-head" imitations. In no activity is the level of competitiveness higher, however, than in dart throwing. I am an average golfer and a less-than-average bowler. I can count my backgammon wins on one hand. I am a good skier, but it's hard to get in more than a few good runs during lunch. I seem to have become good at darts, though. So now I actually do practice at home, but only so I can beat the guys I work with.

There's probably less pressure in a league, though.

The Dog

New fiction by James F. Burnham

Scratch, scratch, scratch. That's all the dog did every day was scratch, scratch, scratch. Maybe he had an itch. I do not know. Only he would know. Is it some neurological dysfunction? Would it be interesting to a neurologist or a dermatologist, or maybe a veterinarian? I do not know. Maybe I'll never know. Maybe I could become rich by discovering a new disease that makes dogs itch! Maybe not.

Scratch, scratch, scratch.

He is still doing it. Could it be possible he is trying to communicate with me? Maybe the dog has been trying to communicate with me for a long time now and I never put the pieces together. Could he know the answer to life? Does he hold the key to time travel and planetary exploration? Does he think and dream like us? Does he wish he could communicate with humans and tell them how to solve our social and political problems? Could he just have fleas? God, I hope he doesn't have fleas! I don't know.

Scratch, scratch, scratch.

Man's best friend. It would be crazy for me to think that he is intelligent.



Though he could be exercising his leg. Maybe he is preparing for something. Does he want to take over the world someday? Does he feel we have ruined his world enough and want to get rid of me? NO! I will not let this happen! No dog is going to deprive me of what is rightfully mine! I can only take so much of this! He looks at me. His cold look tears through my soul! He knows my weaknesses, of course, that is why he has been following me around. He knows how to destroy me, tear at my mind and break through my defenses! He knows someday he'll finally get to me and drive me insane! YOU DOG! Oh you dog! You cur! I've got to get a hold of myself! Settle down... Keep silent.

Scratch, scratch, scratch.

He looks at me again and his deep brown eyes look consoling, though he wants something. A dog biscuit maybe? A

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walk? A car ride? NO! He wants my life! My soul! He wants me out of the picture so he'll be free to take over the house! Damn you dog! Stop that! Stop that insidious scratching! My ears! My heart! My hands tremble at the sight of you! My legs shake! My head is spinning! Oh, God, leave me alone! Do it! Put me out of my misery! Do what you want, but put me at peace! He tortures me! He wants to see me die a slow death! He pants... he resembles a smiling devil. SATAN! The devil dog! The EVIL one! My soul, My soul, please do not steal my immortal soul! Wait! What is this? The scratching stops! Does he revel in my pain? Does he enjoy my agony? Now we stand face to nose... he licks my ear. Perhaps I was wrong... NO! YES! YES! I was wrong! He is not the evil entity I imagined. He is only an animal. He is a dog. Man's best friend.

Scratch, scratch, scratch.

James F. Burnham is a computer systems analyst (with a lot of time on his hands) for a large waste management company. Apparently he spends a lot of his free time reading Poe. He moonlights as a starving artist and is an occasional contributor to Burnhamish, beginning with this issue.

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Lead Story

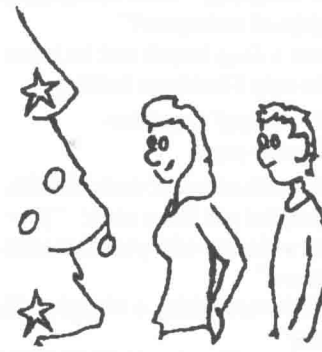
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troit. Some may claim you cannot get far enough from Detroit. That is beyond the scope of this forum.

I think I'm learning Japanese (I really think so). This is a direct result of working for a large Japanese company, largely staffed by Japanese people who speak mostly Japanese. Actually, it is more a direct result of signing up for Japanese language class. There is a real possibility I will have the chance to go to Japan for a training session, so a rudimentary knowledge of the language and culture couldn't hurt. We have already mastered important sentences such as "Does this train go as far as Osaka?", "Is the sushi fresh?", and "Bartender, another round for my friends and me". I like to practice what I've learned on my Japanese associates. They just giggle.

Often I am asked if my car is still running (perhaps because it has over 105,000 miles on it and is only five years old). Yes, it is running, and quite well. And I pay it off in January (woo-hoo!). The new head gasket I had installed in August of '93 is leaking oil, but hasn't failed (yet). I am not considering buying a new car for at least another year just to prove that I can actually *own* a car instead of *owe on* a car. If I can get away with two more years, I'll start going to church again, honest.

Comic Strip that Needs a Title...



Vital Statistics: John Edward Burnham

Occupation: Vehicular Climate Control Engineer.

Birthday: May 11, 1966.

Birthplace: Chicago, IL.

Current Home: Northville, MI

Marital Status: Single, spoken for.

Car: 1990 Beretta GTZ.

Working on: Japanese

The last good movie I saw: *Army of Darkness*.

I stay home to watch: The screen saver on my computer.

The book I've been reading: *Superstrings and the Search for The Theory of Everything* by F. David

Peat. It is the theory that states that everything in the universe consists of minuscule strings of ten dimensions, six of which are so tightly curled up that only four dimensions are visible to us. For light fare, I read *War and Peace*.

Personal heroes: Bill Watterson, Michael Feldman, Bruce Campbell.

People always think I'm: Not having a good time at a party.

I'm better than anyone else when it comes to: Spending money I don't have.

The worst part of my job: Sitting at my desk next to the window overlooking a grove of trees.

The one thing I can't stand: People who drive too slow in the left lane.

If I could change one thing about myself: I would have slightly shorter arms.

People who knew me in high school thought I was: Tall and skinny.

I knew I was grownup when I: Borrowed from a credit card to pay the rent.

Behind my back, my friends say: He folds his laundry a *certain* way.

If I weren't an engineer, I'd be: A frustrated cartoonist.

If I've learned one thing in life, It's: You cannot fly a kite on the sun- it will melt and there is no wind.

When people first meet me: They think I'm younger than I am.

Three words that describe me: Bachelor Who Cooks.



ELVIS TAUGHT ME TROMBONE

"This is hopeless," I think, as I stumble through the solo for the umpteenth time.

*Phwup phwup thath-tat-tat-toopff toopff too-
doomph fwaaaah.*

I need to rest for a minute, my lips are practically bleeding. Not only is the Christmas concert tomorrow afternoon, but I have to work at the library in the morning. This is my last chance to get the part down.

*Phwup phwup thath-tat-tat-toopff toopff too-
doomph fwaaaapp (gurgle).*

Damn that spit valve! Utterly dejected, I slump in the corner of the practice room and ponder the events that led up to tonight. I had two final exams today, one in astropsychofarmacology, the other in pocket billiards. I pulled three consecutive double shifts in the Classics Library this week alone, and to top it all off, my doctor called. The test results were positive.

I sit for a moment longer, and decide to release my tension vocally. I feel a little better, but not much. I get up off the floor and, taking up my trombone, return to the passage I had been practicing. OK, I tell myself, relax, breath from your diaphragm, and get it right. Before I can release the first note, there is a knock at the door.

"OCCUPIED!" I blurt out, as if I am in a public bathroom stall. Not much bigger, actually. I hear another knock, and the door slowly opens.

"Having a bit of trouble? I thought I heard a dejected, if not desperate and frustrated scream," a faceless voice says from the other side of the door. The voice is familiar, somehow. I can't place it.

Like I need this right now. I'm not in the mood for a confrontation. I'm not the confrontational type, anyway. "Just having a little trouble with this solo, that's all," I say, hoping this person will move on.

"Perhaps I can be of assistance," Elvis says, now all the way through the door.

I blink once, twice, and then close my eyes for a few seconds, thinking I'm hallucinating. Opening my eyes, I see no one standing in front of me, and the door is closed. I must be more stressed out than I thought.

"Are you having trouble with your contacts?" Elvis says, now standing behind me.

"N-no, no," I stutter. I decide I must have passed out when I slumped in the corner, and this I'm dreaming. What the heck, it couldn't hurt. "You said you could be of assistance?"

Elvis smiles and tells me to take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Next he asks me to play the solo I had been battling.

*Phwup phwup thath-tat-tat-toopff toopff too-
doomph fwaaaah pupp-pupp.*

"I see the problem, son" he says with a kind of cocked smile, like half his upper lip wants to quiver, but not like a sneer. "Your stance is all wrong- you need to form a triangle with your forearms and spread your feet apart a little more."

A triangle? How could I tell if I was making a triangle? "I think I need to see myself in a mirror."

Fiction by John E. Burnham

Elvis reaches behind him and fumbles with his cape. Removing it, he takes the corner and cracks it like a whip. He holds up the cape, now rigid and shiny, and tacks it on the wall. A perfect reflection. "Now stand solidly with your feet about shoulders' width apart. Form the triangle. Actually, it's more like an upside-down "V", or an "A" without the horizontal part-"

"I get the picture, thank you." This all seems kind silly.

"OK, now play."

I take a deep breath, and-

*Phwup phwup thath-tat-tat-toopff toopff too-
doomph fwaaaah.*

This is hopeless, I conclude once more. I think I'm endangering my health.

"Here, let me demonstrate," says The King, taking my horn and making the triangle, or upside-down "V", with his arms. "Where's that pesky passage?"

I cannot believe what I'm hearing- or hallucinating, as the case may be- for from my trombone are coming the most perfect notes that horn had ever produced, so round, so firm, so fully packed!

*Toot toot toot toodly-oot tah bop bop wah wah
doot doot diddy daddy waddum shoo!*

I look at Elvis as he hands me back the trombone. He is hyperventilating. No, wait, I'm hyperventilating. I sit in the chair, or what I think is a chair, which is actually nothing, and flop to the floor.

"I'll take that as a compliment," he says, handing me, once again, my horn.

"Nice catch." I think I have it now, let me think. Feet apart, arms in a triangle, solid stance, deep breath, and-

*Toot toot toot toodly-oot tah bop bop wah wah
doot doot diddy daddy waddum shoop!*

What the hell was that at the end? Oops, forgot to thrust my pelvis.

*Toot toot toot toodly-oot tah bop bop wah wah
doot doot diddy daddy waddum shoo!*

It's like music to my ears. Well, it is music to my ears. I try again, just to be sure.

*Toot toot toot toodly-oot tah bop bop wah wah
doot doot diddy daddy waddum shoo!*

Yes! I can't believe I finally mastered the solo! "I had no idea you could play trombone, and so expertly," I say, shaking Elvis' hand vigorously.

"Well, I've had a lot of free time lately, being dead and everything. I throw a pretty mean dart now, too."

Gathering his cape, he nods, winks, and, after swaggering through the doorway, shuts the door. I close my eyes for a moment. I open them. Yes, he is still not here.

I try the solo a few more times, satisfied that I would blow them away at the concert tomorrow. Looking at my watch, it's still early. I think I'll go down to the bar and get in a few games of cricket.

The End
