

it at is just a place where late teens and early twenties go to dance, but I feel it there, probably because it is crowded and I feel a little bit out of place since I'm younger than most everybody there and legally I shouldn't be in there. For some reason, almost everybody with a moustache or beard seems bigger than me, even though, logically, I know there's not many who are. The situation of quiet fear isn't helped much by my friends telling me that I probably wouldn't stand much of a chance in a fight against anybody who's even done a little bit of it, and that my wrestling knowledge wouldn't help me at all; again, despite my size and strength. In my mind, I know that nobody's going to attack me at those places, but psychologically, I have a little bit of fear that it might happen. If you want to get Freudian about it, I suppose it comes from being picked on when I was a fat little kid.

I have a strange, but true, story to tell about puns. Early last June, I got a stack of HYPHENS from Bruce Pelz. This was practically the first fanwriting I'd read by Walt Willis or John Berry. After I read a few of them, I started to make puns more readily. I think I read about three issues in one day, and just for the hell of it, in school, I dropped a few of the puns from the zine into conversation. And somehow these got me going, and I made up more of my own, spontaneously.

That night, a couple of friends came over, one of whom had a small reputation in my circle as a punster. While the other one played ragtime piano, he and I played ping pong, but with a shuttlecock instead of a ball. I dropped in a few of the Willis, Berry, and Shaw puns. I made one of my own. Two minutes later, I made another. In the next half an hour, I must have made twenty puns, nearly all spontaneous; nearly all of them bad, too. But they were puns, and in my entire life, I'd never made so many. One a week was good, I'd thought up until then.

After that night, I was never as good, tho. I think I maybe made five good ones the next day. Pretty soon I finished most of the HYPHENS, and read the other ones at infrequent intervals. And my pun production dropped sharply off. I can make a few now and then, but the rate is little better than before (of course, the fact that during the summertime I am, because of my work situation, forced to associate with a bunch of near illiterates who wouldn't know a pun if they tripped over it, doesn't help matters. Once school starts and I start hanging around people who will recognize puns when they're dropped in, I should improve.) But I'll bet that if I went and reread those HYPHENS, like issues 16-20 or so, I'd start making them again. 'Pun my word as a gentlefan I would, indeed, suh.

I can only remember one of them, one which I thought was really good. "Taking a bath has really made you \_\_\_\_\_ of destinktion." I was visiting my nextdoor neighbors, and a cute little girl about three years younger than I mentioned taking a bath or shower recently. So I threw that one in; she got all offended and said "How do you know?!" I had to explain the damned thing to the entire bunch that was sitting out on the porch. I would have thought that the parents at least would get it, but evidently they didn't. I threw in about two or three more that night, and they didn't catch those either. It's maddening when that happens.

I enjoy spoonerisms. But it's not a form of humor which I understand well at all. My basic conception of one is just a reversal of the first two or so letters of the two words being played upon, but here in FANGLE and in an old PELF, there were rather more complex ones. I'll have to study those and see if I can get the idea of it. I'd be interested in reading any good books on puns and word play? Do you know of any? And while some people say it's the lowest form of humor, I can't agree with that. It is the people who can't make them that say that. Personally, as far as I'm concerned, any kind of humor can match any other. Even slapstick—if it's done well, as by the Marx Brothers

or Laurel and Hardy. It is only when humor is handled by the humorless that one can say one form is lower than another.

I've been trying like crazy to drop a pun into the last paragraph, but I can't seem to do it. Oh well. I'd intended to write more in the way of a loc, but it's getting late, and I have to get up very early tomorrow morning. Hope to hear from you soon.



Hmmm, okay... Got one in the last paragraph after all!

And you know what? It dawns on me that one of the reasons some people get annoyed at puns is that they amount to challenges of wit. They call for matching rebuttals, and one can't always think of a snappy play on words off the top of one's head. Grr! And when they're in print, there's no way to get back to the author with any kind of timely response. Hmph! It's like trying to take that extra step on the stairs—the one that isn't there! Ouch! Or, at least, there didn't used to be—nowadays, fast responses can sometimes be done online, under the right circumstances. One almost wonders at the once-upon-a-time popularity of the Feghoots... On the other hand, because they are best when fresh and unplanned, there is rarely so satisfying a conversational event as one in which both (or all) sides can pepper them out in punishing fusillades. (Hah! Thought I'd never get around to slipping one in there, huh!) Your experience after reading the Wills and Berry Fanzines suggests you know what I mean.

I'd say there are ups and downs within all kinds of humor, as there are in most endeavors, and tastes differ there as well. I never liked the Marx Bros.' and Laurel & Hardy's approach to slapstick as much as Buster Keaton's and Charlie Chaplin's, for example, and the Three Stooges' were definitely at the low end of the scale for me.

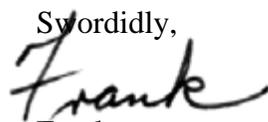
You liked the cover on Fangle #1 better than the one on #2, eh? Now if this were 30 years ago, I'd invite you and Jim Meadows III to discuss this, but it's a tad late for that now. But maybe the wrestling background might have made it an uneven match after all...

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FRANK DENTON

August 18, 1974 – Seattle, WA

I've been meaning to write you a real honest-to-Ghu loc, but it's not in the cards. We had a wedding (daughter) and lots of other stuff get in the way of fanac, so I determined tonight to just drop you a note and tell you how glad I was to see Fangle again. I read it through cover to cover and enjoyed every bit of it. Gee, you've got a run going now. Keep it up.

Swordidly,  
  
Frank

Thanks. This run thing is not all it's cracked up to be, though. Some might say slower than a teenager in a crosswalk... (I've just been waiting for a chance to use that simile.)

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D A V E P I P E R

13 August 74– Ruislip, Middx, England

[ed. Note: This entire letter was handwritten, with illustrations. I'll attempt to capture the spirit of it without reproducing it *per se*... Well, maybe *some* of it, as follows]