DOOR KNOB

April 1986

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reasonable to do), less than Big Hearted Howard's $700 a month pension.

It was barely enough, and some months it wasn't enough if something major happened to my car, or it was time to get some school clothes for the kids, or anything out of the ordinary came up. California is one of the costliest states in which to live and Sonoma County, being close to the Bay Area, has a fairly high cost of living. Rent is somewhat cheaper than in the Bay Area proper, but it is still well above national averages. I was fortunate in that I had cheap places to live, and also in that I was and am a vegetarian so that my grocery bills were lower than average.

I would agree with those who've said in their zines that you probably could make it on $700 a month if you had a house all paid for, a car all paid for and in reliable condition, and no major purchases to have to make periodically.

I could go into details about the specifics of what happened to me from time to time in my dealings with the welfare system, but I prefer to leave this article behind by saying, simply, that it was with considerable relief that I finally got a decent paying job and left the welfare system as a somewhat embarrassing period in my past.

CAROL BALLARD'S comments on diabetic tests reminded me of when I was in a chain drug store in Sonoma a few months ago on a Saturday morning doing part of my weekly shopping and ran into a group of nurses doing free testing for same. Since some distant relatives of mine have been diabetic, I have occasionally wondered about this for myownself and so I availed myself of the free test.

I should've been warned by the fact that the person in line in front of me got a relatively high reading, somewhere in the borderline area, and was concerned because he'd tested not all that long ago previously and was fine. When my turn came, they stuck me to draw some blood and then put it into their little computerized testing device. A minute later they were telling me that I was definitely a diabetic and had better see a doctor right away.

Well, I nearly passed out over the news. I couldn't believe it. A reaction I used to have to getting shots when I was young kicked in. I began feeling very warm, my head was spinning, and white light began happening. I had to sit down and while so doing I insisted that perhaps something was wrong with their machine. The man who'd been in line before me and was still hanging around expressed a similar concern.

One of the nurses came over and said that, although she couldn't really believe it, perhaps, just perhaps, something was wrong with their computerized testing device and if I wanted she would take another blood sample and run a manual test using the older, noncomputerized equipment they had on hand. Numbly, still dazed and shocked, I agreed and held out my hand. She poked my finger again and walked off with the blood that dribbled forth. A couple of minutes later, she announced that I was perfectly normal. The man who'd been in front of me in line had taken the test over again and he too retested normal.

Despite the nurses' apologies, it took me quite some time before I felt like pulling myself together and going on with my

shopping.

I guess the moral of this little occurrence, if one there be, is that "computer error" is just as common as "human error." I used to tell my sons when they wanted to do their math homework with a calculator, how are you going to know if the calculator is right if you don't learn how to check it. The poor little chips screw up, too.

Don't trust computers!

Some spotty and scattered mailing comments to finish off for this time around:

Harry Warner, Jr.: Your comments about old collections, specifically Earl Perry's, gives rise to thoughts of what about your collection? So far as I know, you appear to live by yourself, despite some mention in a fanzine a few years ago that implied you had a wife (in a letter in a Linda Blanchard fanzine, as I recall). I wonder what thought you, and other fans of advancing years, have given to the ultimate disposal of your fanzine collections? It would be a shame to have it all trashed should you pass on without leaving specific instructions.

Elinor Busby: I never saw "Duck Factory" but it sounds interesting from your description and I probably would've enjoyed it. I liked "Buffalo Bill" because I've been something of a fan of Dabney Coleman's since his role as the mayor of Fernwood on the old "Mary Hartman" shows. Unfortunately for his career, though, he always seems to be cast as a well-meaning asshole. // As for my kid arrangements: As you know, I have four boys. Two of them live with me and two with my ex-wife. Currently we live about 500 feet from one another in apartment complexes across the street from each other. The kids drift back and forth a lot, and occasionally spend nights away from their "permanent" rooms, but they do have definite places to stay. My ex and I are on pretty good terms so far as raising the kids is concerned, but she lets me know on a reasonably regular basis that this is not to be construed as any possibility of getting back together.

F.M. Busby: Agree with you 100% about cheap shoes. That was one of the occasionally annoying things about life on The Farm. I rectified it as best as possible by scouting out my own shoes and if they were available en masse, arranging for a mass buy for the community. (I was a dry goods buyer on a part-time basis for much of my time there.) My high point in that respect was once locating around 100 pair of men's Pro-Keds for $2 each. They were all either green or red, but I love green tennies and was in shoe heaven for a couple years until those pairs wore out. After that, I was in positions that required passable footwear (outside sales) and was able to take care of myself.

Nancy Rapp: Gift-type holidays on The Farm were always a little strange from my viewpoint. If you had generous relatives or could somehow save some money on the side, you could have a somewhat "traditional" (i.e., materialistic) holiday. Otherwise, no way. It made for some sad kids some years. Sad adults, too, for not being able to fix the kids up as one would wish.

Life continues apace for me. I'm still a legal secretary in downtown Santa Rosa and seem to be successful at it, despite getting into it with no previous training as a legal secretary per se. Everything else is basically fine, too...see you nextime.