

[Facsimile of the first newsletter in the series. We had noticed that, in our efforts to keep the friends and kinfolk in Ontario and Ohio informed, we were often writing much the same thing to several different households. It occurred to us to write the core news just once in a duplicated newsletter. This first number was a mimeographed one-pager. Over the years, no one has complained that this approach is impersonal, and several have commented that it is a sensible way to keep in touch. This is not to say that all have appreciated everything that was written in these pages.]

NOTES FROM MIDAMERICA

Newsletter of facts, opinion and fantasy. Edited by C.K. Starr.

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We are living the straight life here in Kansas and have been doing so for some time. We go to work at a regular hour every morning, we brush our teeth, we own an automobile, we have short hair and do respectable things, we don't conduct or attend wild parties or consort with underworld characters, we have two dogs and live in a mobile home. In short, we are living the straight life, at least for the time being. We occasionally think weird thoughts, but not very often.

Aside from our two dogs, we have a cat named Rangoon. She is quite a strange cat with much personality, though she is by no means as strung out as the cat Jesus whom we had in Cleveland. In fact, she is rather healthy in body and mind, although she is a product of the straight life. Our two dogs, Heathcliffe and Gospel J. Hookworm (he once had hookworm, but he's all better now) are definite personality dogs. Gospel is a generalized hounddog and excessively curious about everything. Heathcliffe is some kind of spaniel and definitely very cute. He is a bit of a sycophant, but not enough of one to cause angst and distress. They both have the very bad characteristic of being scavenger dogs, and when we take them for walks in the country we are all the time having to take some dead bird or other creature out of their ravenous jaws. They are both also shore dogs, which is to say that they are like sandpipers and other shore birds that wade along the edges of ponds and lakes searching for snails and other eatables. They frequently engage in very fierce fights, great pitched battles in which they strain every muscle and nerve at least other in an effort to maim or sever critical arteries. The very seriousness of these squabbles is shown by the fact that there is a little kitten next door to us who occasionally wanders into our yard. They invariably pounce on her and chew on her fitfully and circle her whole body with their mouths in an earnest attempt to break her every bone. When they have done doing this, she gets up and provokes them into another round until they get tired of all this murder and pillage.

Since we've been here we have had visits from two Ontario people. Last month one of our old biology professors from Carleton, a fungus specialist, stopped by on his way to some professional meetings in Arizona. We had a morning excursion with into a nearby stretch of natural prairie, the first he had ever seen, to look at the plants and collect a few choice specimens. Then just a few days ago we had a brief visit from a wasp expert from the University of Toronto. There were long discussions with him, very satisfying discussions, as we agreed on all major points of controversy concerning the evolution of social wasps.

We are going to have half-time teaching jobs in our department this fall. AMS will be teaching an introductory biology lab, and CKS will be teaching an entomology lab.

We have been having an amazing dry and hot spell here in Kansas. It hasn't rained properly for a month or so, and everything is just drying up. The other day we went out for a morning drive, and we saw by the flashing sign on the bank that it was about 10 a.m. and already 102 degrees. Later that day it got up to 106 degrees. That isn't quite normal, but temperatures above 100 degrees are not at all uncommon these days. There is something of a difference of opinion about the weather. CKS thinks the desert heat is just glorious, while AMS thinks it is miserable. It's a good thing only CKS has to do any biology work outside of the lab.

One final note. We tried to get through to greet Annu on the phone on his birthday, but without success. Better late than never, though. HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ANNU.