



2009 - 20

PLANET FRED

December 23, 2009

zzzt "There's no business like show business,
but there are several businesses like accounting."
~ David Letterman

THROUGHOUT THE 'PLANET,' CLICKING
BOLD, DARK RED TYPE
OPENS A RELATED INTERNET LINK.

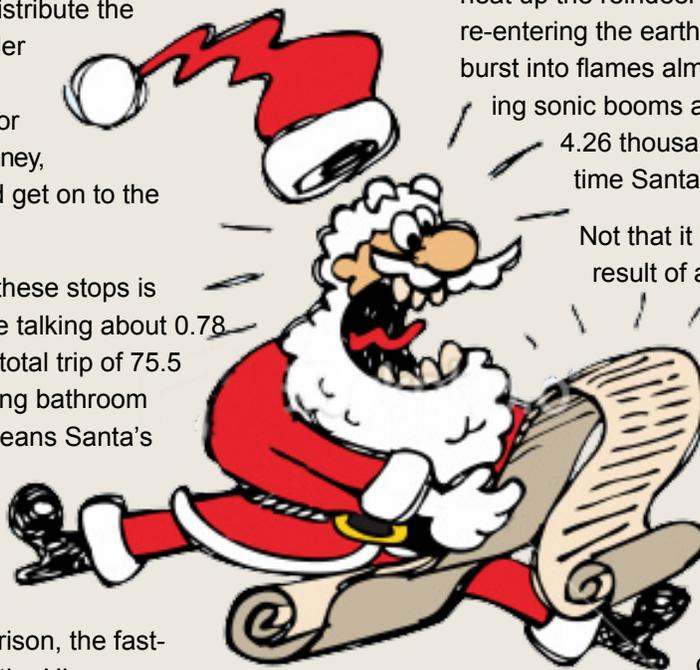
**YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A
SANTA CLAUS – BUT ...**

There are approximately two billion children in the world, but since Santa does not visit Muslim, Hindu, Jewish or Buddhist offspring, the workload for Christmas night is 15% of the total, or 378 million, and at an average rate of 3.5 children per household, that comes to 108 million homes, presuming that there is at least one good child in each.

Santa has about 31 hours of Christmas to work with thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, which works out to 967.7 visits per second – or for each Christian household with a good child, around 1/1000th of a second to park the sleigh, hop out, jump down the chimney, fill the stockings, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left for him, get back up the chimney, jump into the sleigh and get on to the next house.

Assuming that each of these stops is evenly distributed, we're talking about 0.78 miles per household; a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting bathroom stops or breaks. This means Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second or 3,000 times the speed of sound.

For purposes of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second and a conventional reindeer can run, at best, 15



miles per hour, so assuming that each child gets nothing more than a medium-sized 2-pound Lego set, the sleigh is carrying more than 500 thousand tons, not counting Santa himself.

On land, a conventional reindeer can pull no more than 300 pounds. Even granting that the "flying" reindeer could pull ten times the normal amount, the job can't be done with eight or even nine of them - Santa would need 360,000. This increases the payload, not counting the weight of the sleigh, another 54,000 tons, or roughly seven times the weight of the *Queen Elizabeth* (the ship, not the monarch), and 600,000 tons traveling at 650 miles per second would heat up the reindeer in the same fashion as a spacecraft re-entering the earth's atmosphere. In short, they would burst into flames almost instantaneously, creating deafening sonic booms and vaporizing the entire team within 4.26 thousandths of a second, or right about the time Santa reached the fifth house on his trip.

Not that it matters, however, since Santa, as a result of accelerating from a dead stop to 650 mps in .001 seconds, would be subjected to a centrifugal force of 17,500 gs, meaning that a 250-pound Santa would be pinned to the back of the sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds, instantly reducing him to a jolly old quivering blob of pinkish goo.

Therefore, dear Virginia, if Santa ever did exist -- he's long dead now.

"Sounds good-looking"
~ Announcer copy direction

OUR FRIEND, FRED

“Studio owner, engineer, producer and industry figure **Fred Jones** passed away on December 9, 2009 after suffering a stroke,” writes **George Petersen** in a **comprehensive article** chronicling Fred’s life for *Mix Magazine*. “He was the longtime husband to **Laurel Cash-Jones**, an audio author, and former AES Regional/International VP...”

(And here are my recollections intermixed with George’s memorium. Corrections are welcomed for the web post...)

I first met Fred in 1971 when he interviewed Proctor & Bergman as D.J. “General Bird Dog” at a station in Long Beach where he was also program director. In 1974, he moved from his family home in Downey to become a recording engineer with LA studios like Sound Services Inc. and Wally Heider Recording before creating his own Fred Jones Recording Services in a high-rise on Sunset in 1981 -- a one-room studio that soon was transformed into a “6,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art multi-room facility with services as diverse as 24-track audio for video post-production studios, and rooms specially designed for radio commercial production.”

He was also a pioneer in phone patch, satellite links and 2-track digital recording and over the years, I believe the facility became known as Sunset Recording and then Hollywood Recording Services.

“It is every man’s obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.”
~ **Albert Einstein**

CHAPTER 11

Ultimately, Fred sold his business to his general manager **Barry Skolnick** and with Laurel founded CJ Technology to promote a line of products for the audio/computer business; but during the NAB show in 1991, attendees



SOUND PARTNERS. Fred Jones with his wife Laurel Cash-Jones, above, and at Topanga Days Festival, below.

were shocked to hear that Fred and Laurel were victims of a violent home-invasion crime when they spent a weekend at Skolnick’s condo in Las Vegas. As they lay in bed, they were brutally shot in the face multiple times, ending Fred’s voice-over career and leading to many agonizing years of reconstructive surgeries and therapy. It was a bizarre crime, which culminated in Barry’s murder in 1996 on the parking roof of Fred’s former studios.

Investigators suspect that **Coleman Allen**, deceased president of a Huntington Beach finance company under scrutiny for strong-arm methods, orchestrated the murder, as 30-year-old Skolnick was deeply in debt to the company which also took out a \$2.5-million life insurance policy on him after Allen took control of the studio. Indeed, Fred long suspected that the Las Vegas hit was designed to warn Barry that his creditors meant business!

“For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple - and wrong.”
~ **H.L. Menken**

LIFE GOES ON

After several years of consulting to audio companies during his recuperation, Fred became product-marketing manager for Panasonic’s Pro Audio Division and then returned to his production roots as chief audio engineer for the leading game developer Electronic Arts; and in 2006, they semi-retired to Las Vegas, where he continued his consultancy practice.

Fred was a member of SAG, AFTRA and NARAS, received two Grammy nominations and was awarded numerous prestigious advertising honors, including IBAs, Beldings, Addys, BPMEs and 11 Clios.

He worked with Loggins & Messina, Manhattan Transfer, Rita Coolidge, The Chambers Bros., James Earl Jones, Don Dorsey, Robin Williams, Joan Rivers, Stan Freberg, Steve Allen, Ray Bradbury, Gary Owens and Roy Rogers, among others.



■ **CONTINUED**



FROM THE TOP. Fred Jones, right, meets (from left), Bergman, Proctor and Austin.v1
Photo: David 'Mr. Bonzai' Goggin

“But,” concludes Petersen, “Fred’s lasting legacy is the many classic albums he engineered and produced with The Firesign Theatre. He will be missed.”

Laurel says that a memorial service in the Los Angeles area is being planned for mid-January to coincide with the NAMM International Music Products Association show. We’ll keep you posted.

“[Our friend} has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us... know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”
~ Albert Einstein

AND FINALLY...

A personal remembrance from our friend, audio producer, on-air personality, actor and fellow Kentucky Colonel, **Richard Fish** who met Fred on the Otherworld production of WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS by Norman Corwin in 1991.

“He was running Sunset Recording (if I remember the name right) at the time, a complex of ten studios in a building on Sunset Boulevard. We used as many as five of them, simultaneously, to put together that program in the week between the recording of the voices (Dec. 9-10 in a Burbank studio) and the most incredible deadline ever: precisely one hour of satellite time at noon, on Friday

December 15, with every radio network in the United States, both public and commercial, plus the CBC and the BBC and maybe others, waiting to download what we sent.

“Fred was absolutely wonderful. His business and his building ran like the proverbial fine Swiss watch. He presided over the 24-track room where the program was assembled, calm, patient, meticulous, indefatigable. Problems and glitches were solved as they arose. Even when, as late as Wednesday, we discovered the program was 12 minutes overtime, Fred got busy preparing for adjustments with unruffled,

cheerful practicality...

“We had a 27-hour marathon at the end, putting everything together and mixing it down. The final mix (on reel-to-reel tape, in that primitive era) was ready just 40 minutes before the uplink was due to begin. The usual procedure was to transfer the two half-hour reels to a single one-hour DAT tape, and upload from that. But there was no time for this. No matter. Fred simply had two tape machines rolled into the room with the uplink, and we fed the program directly from those.

“I have never met a better audio engineer than Fred Jones, or a nicer guy either -- and never expect to. In 1991, he and his wife were still recovering from that horrible, vicious attack, and their courage and fortitude were a profound inspiration.

“His work with The Firesign Theatre remains, a flawless example of audio production skill which was fully up to the level of the creative genius blazing away at the other end of the microphone cable. I’m terribly sorry he’s gone. Hollywood is a little less competent than it was.”

“A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.”
~ George Bernard Shaw

MAN/WO/MAN SAME THING

Being gay is not natural. Real Americans always reject unnatural things like eyeglasses, polyester, and air conditioning. Gay marriage will encourage people to be gay, in the same way that hanging around straight people encourages gay people to be straight.

Gay marriage will change the foundation of society; we could never adapt to new social norms. Just like we haven't adapted to cars, the service-sector economy, or longer life spans. Straight marriage has been around a long time and hasn't changed at all; women are still property, blacks still can't marry whites, and divorce is still illegal.

Straight marriage will be less meaningful if gay marriage were allowed; the sanctity of Britney Spears' 55-hour just-for-fun marriage would be destroyed.

Straight marriages are valid because they produce children. Gay couples, infertile couples, and old people shouldn't be allowed to marry because our orphanages aren't full yet, and the world needs more children.

Gay parents will raise gay children, since straight parents only raise straight children. Gay marriage is not supported by religion. In a theocracy like ours, the values of one religion are imposed on the entire country. That's why we have only one religion in America.

Children can never succeed without a male and a female role model at home. That's why we as a society expressly forbid single parents to raise children. Legalizing gay marriage will open the door to all kinds of crazy behavior. People may even wish to marry their pets because a dog has legal standing and can sign a marriage contract.

Now just tell this to Mexico City...

*It was just announced
that Tiger will be
changing his name to 'Cheetah.'
~ Phil's Phunny Phacts*

THE OLD SWITCHEROO

Tom Gedwillo and artist Phil Fountain have just launched an online "magazine" version of "It's Just This Little Chromium Switch Here," a **webzine** devoted to The Firesign Theatre. The first issue is available for **free down-**



load as a special "tease" in hopes of getting all the Seekers out there (we hear you never give one an even break) to purchase a yearly subscription at a mere \$20 for 4 or 5 issues. Numero Uno features an exclusive interview with the one and only Philip Proctor! They also cornered renowned artist William ("In The Next World You're On Your Own") Stout and coerced him into telling us all about his time working with The Firesigners. Plus, there's news and notes, a profile on Peter Bergman and his solo shows, an original David Ossman collage poem, Letters to the Editor, a Philbert's Phire-sign Phunnies and a lot more! It's

24-pages of Firesign-centric fun! Check it out! And buy a subscription! **"Click" on the Cover Boy.**

*"Where there's a bill,
there's a pay!"
~Steven Allen Green*

SURRENDER DOROTHY

The United States Senate today unveiled details of its health care plan, tentatively called CompromiseCare™:

- People with no coverage will be allowed to keep their current plan.
- Medicare will be extended to 55-year-olds as soon as they turn 65.
- You will have access to cheap Canadian drugs if you live in Canada.
- States whose names contain vowels will be allowed to opt out of the plan.

FST Live!

Firesign Theatre will be appearing at Whidbey Island Center for the Arts

JANUARY 8 and 9, 2010

See you in Seattle!

CLICK FOR MORE INFO

■ CONTINUED

- You get to choose which doctor you cannot afford to see.
- You will not have to be pre-certified to qualify for cremation.
- A patient will be considered “pre-existing” if he or she already exists.
- You’ll be free to choose between medications and heating fuel.
- Patients can access quality health care if they can prove their name is “Lieberman.”
- You will have access to natural remedies, such as death.

HOOHO

Thanks to Jim Reynolds, M.C. Gwynne, Jon Gwynne, Tom Kane, Kenneth Wilhite, Jr., Sky McDougall, Nick Oliva, Will Durst, Robert Riddle, Jayne Stahl, Bob Joles, Mack Dryden, Amy Walker, and Victor Kopcewich. And Happy Fish-mas to All!

Watching government in action
is watching government inaction.
~ Phil's Phunny Phacts

(Thanks to Andy Borowitz and The Borowitz Report.)

INTER PLANETARY LAUNCH PAD



HEIGHOHO

HOHONO	DOGGY TREETIME	MINDPONG
NONONO	PUSH	SNC
LIVER	F*CK XMAS	TOP/BOTTOM
KIDS	MESSY MONKS	SIMS
SILENT MONKS	PLATES	

**CLICK THE WORD
TO GO TO THE SITE**

"What we have in this country
is socialism for the rich
and free enterprise for the poor."
~ Gore Vidal

"Female voice. American.
Sultry, like drinking chocolate
from the back of a moose."
~ Interactive Game direction

One kiss under the mistletoe burns 26 calories ~ Phil's Phunny Phacts

FIRESIGN CDs: <http://www.laugh.com>
BEARWHIZ BEER <http://www.eagletshirts.com>

FUNNY TIMES: <http://www.funnytimes.com>
FST: <http://www.FiresignTheatre.com>