

THE BEAN HOME NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to the memory of our friend, Walter R. Brooks

Vol. 9, No. 3

Winter 2000

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Friends gather near Washington, DC

Freddyite attendees mug for the camera at the first-ever "Mid-Atlantic Mini-convention"—see story inside.

Bean Farm mail

Freddy books still current

I had a *great* time at the Freddy convention and plan to see you in 2000! Next time I'll plan to stay the *whole* time.

I have converted my long-standing BSRC (Before School Reading Club) to a Freddy the Pig club. We are looking forward to reading *Freddy the Cowboy*. The kids are enthusiastic fans of Freddy and as we completed *Freddy the Detective* I was once again struck by how *current* these books still are, as Freddy, having proven Jinx innocent of killing the crow, charges Simon with *perjury*. They had heard this word on the news recently, of course, and it was a timely reminder of what it meant in the context of Jinx's trial.

Thanks for all your efforts.

Sharon Moore (Salem, OR)

How much did Freddies cost?

I began reading Freddy books back in the late 1950s. The librarian at my school asked me if I had ever read a Freddy book. I told her that I hadn't. She gave me a copy of *Freddy and Mr. Camphor* to read. I loved it. I thought that Mr. Brooks wrote a great story. After that, I read almost all of the books that he had written.

In my twenties, I joined the Army and was stationed at Fort Lewis, near Tacoma and Seattle. There in Tacoma I met a bookseller. I told him that I was going up to Seattle, and he asked me to see if there was a book at the largest used bookstore there. I found the book for him.

While I was there, I remembered Freddy and wandered over to the children's section. There I found a copy of *Freddy the Detective*. It was a Junior Library first edition and cost only a dollar! But back then I didn't care about first editions. I was hooked and I began to look for Freddy books wherever I could. I am now missing only *The Clockwork Twin*.

Along the way, I bought a copy of *More To And Again*. It was a fifth edition with the yellow and red dustjacket. I never thought that I would find something like that.

When still missing four books, I joined the Friends of Freddy, hoping that I would be able to complete my collection through the club. I bought all the back issues and noticed that the name Fleischmann popped up a few times. My copy of *More To And Again* is inscribed: "To Burdie Fleischmann with love from her Aunt Joan, 1963." Does anyone know if this Fleischmann is related to the Fleischmann mentioned in the newsletter?

One the back inside of the dustjacket is an ad for *Freddy the Pied Piper* at a cost of \$2.50. I have never seen an article about what the original Freddy books cost. I think that would be an interesting tabulation. It would require those who are fortunate enough to own dustjacketed books to let me know.

I would be willing to compile such prices and share them with the Friends of Freddy. You can send them to me. Please supply the title, edition, and price of each book for which you have this information.

Hope to get to one of the conventions one of these years.

George Schaetzle (1220 Knob Creek Rd., #1, Johnson City, TN 37604)

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From Alger Hiss's son

Thank you for your nice note and rich packet of Freddy info. I *hadn't* heard of the club, and I *didn't* know about the forthcoming reprints, and I *am* enclosing my membership dues.

If you have a chance to look at my new book about my Dad, *The View from Alger's Window*, you'll see why Freddy was such a lifeline for me when my Dad was in jail, and I was trying to sort out a whole series of human-to-human as well as human-to-animal relationships.

Congratulations to you on making these lovely, supportive, funny, thoughtful, best-of-the-American-spirit books available to the next generation of American kids. I wrote Walter R. Brooks a couple of letters when I was a kid because his books, in their funny, off-hand way, had so much to say about how and why to get along with other people.

Tony Hiss (New York, NY)

(See also the news article on page 11 about Freddy mentions in The Washington Post—ed.)

A storyteller fan

I have just joined the Freddy List. This is my maiden posting, so to speak.

I'm a storyteller, and was invited as an "elder" to give a workshop in Halifax this summer for the Annual Conference of Storytellers of Canada/Conteurs du Canada.

I titled it "Under the Influence" and discussed some things that have influenced me over the years, including the Shaker hymn "Tis the Gift To Be Simple", and the Arthur Ransome "Swallows and Amazons" series.

But I also mentioned the Freddy the Pig series, and it got a lot of interest from the participants (who were storytellers from across Canada).

So, Freddy lives on, in sometimes strange surroundings. He was a good storyteller, so maybe not so strange after all.

Lorne Brown, Toronto, ONT, CANADA

lorbro@home.com

Book Donation Program Off to Great Start!

Connie Arnold, Secretary-Treasurer

Through the generosity of our members, the Friends of Freddy was able to launch our Freddy Book Donation Program for Needy Schools and Libraries in August.

More than \$1,300 has been donated to date by members. This, together with the \$2,000 contributed directly from the club treasury, gave us about \$3,300 to launch the program.

We have selected the Libri Foundation as our partner in this effort. This family foundation donates quality hardcover books to needy rural libraries. What a great match for the Friends of Freddy! There are 192 libraries that currently benefit from the Libri Foundation's program. We were able to select 100 of these with the funds currently available to us. Each of these 100 libraries has received two separate titles from the Overlook reissues. We've already received many heart-warming thank yous from many of the libraries – see the letters on page 12.

I hope that those Friends who remember childhood hours spent reading Freddy books in our local libraries will want to make this possible for a new generation.

I hope that those Friends of Freddy who remember childhood hours (or days and weeks, for many of us!) spent reading Freddy books in our local libraries will want to make this possible for a new generation of readers.

We have also asked the librarians to pass the word about the donation program to nearby schools, and if we receive enough member donations to cover our costs, we hope to send two additional books to these schools for their collections. (Overlook will keep a record of titles shipped, so that the local schools would receive different titles. This would help cross-pollinate readers between school and library – and perhaps help create future members of the Friends of Freddy!)

So if you'd like to make a your *tax-deductible* contribution, we'd love to play Santa Claus to more needy schools and libraries – starting with the remaining 92 schools that the Libri Foundation serves. Overlook Press has made available a very generous discount, so shipping two brand-new hardcover Freddies to each school or library costs only \$33. Serving all 92 schools would cost \$3,036, and we'll need a strong response from the members to do this!

Please mail the enclosed form or send your contribution (check made payable to Friends of Freddy and marked "Book Donation Program") to Friends of Freddy, P. O. Box 912, Greenbelt, MD, 20768-0912.

If you have any questions or comments about this program, contact me via email at connie_arnold@hotmail.com or by regular mail at the address in the club information box.

Changes at FoF HQ

There have been a lot of changes here at the Friends of Freddy. First off, our secretary-treasurer, Connie Arnold, packed up and moved to the North Woods last summer (actually Nova Scotia, but I try to get in Freddy references whenever possible).

With that have come a few changes. I (Kevin Parker) have taken over some of Connie's duties (particularly that of treasurer), while Alice Tracy has taken over most of my former duties as membership director (thank you, Alice!). Alice also continues to handle t-shirt orders as she has been doing. Little of this should affect you except that the official Friends of Freddy postal address has changed from Connie's home address. In fact, we now have our very own post office box, specifically:

Friends of Freddy
P.O. Box 912
Greenbelt, MD 20768-0912

Please use this address for all official FoF business, including memberships, gift memberships, renewals, donations, etc. (The only exception is t-shirt orders because those go directly to Alice, whose address is in the information box.)

Also, we have registered our very own URL for our web site. We are now:

<http://www.freddythepig.org/>

Thanks to David Hodges for helping to make this possible. (The old URL—<http://www.outermost.com/freddy/>—now forwards visitors to the new URL and will remain valid for the foreseeable future.)

More Freddy news

FoF holds first-ever “Mid-Atlantic Mini-convention”

The Friends of Freddy held a “mid-Atlantic mini-convention” in Greenbelt, Maryland, on Saturday, August 7, inspired in part by the temporary presence of past president Aladdine Joroff, who was working as a White House intern over the summer. (Actually, she was working in the Old Executive Office Building across the street, but it reads better this way.)

Fifteen to twenty faithful Freddyites (depending on just when you counted heads) were in attendance. After informal discussion and introductions, Kevin Parker began the formal session by reading a short biography of Walter R. Brooks supplied by Michael Cart. By then it was already time for lunch, and the group repaired to a nearby Chinese restaurant for an informal lunchtime banquet. No pork was consumed during this meal.

After lunch, Alice Tracy led some of the group across the way to the historic Greenbelt Museum to see what life was like when many of the Freddy books were being written (late thirties to mid-forties). Upon their return, we resumed the formal part of the program with Alice talking about *Freddy and the Dragon*, taking a much more favorable view of it than a recent review in this newsletter. Aladdine Joroff then took the lectern and briefly discussed various topics related to the series.

The meeting broke up at that point, with some members departing, some staying to chat, and some buying t-shirts, Freddy float pens, or some of the books left over from the convention auction last year. All who commented said they enjoyed themselves very much, so I would encourage those in other parts of the country to hold a regional gathering. You won't realize until you do just how special Freddy fans are!

FoF Convention 2000

It's time to start thinking about getting to our millennial convention. For those of you who haven't attended one (I don't need to persuade the veterans), I encourage you to consider doing so. FoF conventions are a marvelous opportunity to get together with like-minded people, to learn a little more about the series and its author, to pick up some books, and to have a lot of fun. Freddyites are just such nice people! For us regulars, the convention is one of the highlights of our year, and we depart wondering how we can stand to wait for the next one.

Anyhow, down to the specifics. We will be returning to the charming Windham Arms Hotel in Windham, New York, from Friday, October 27, through Monday, October 30. (Windham is about a half-hour's drive from Roxbury, where Walter R. Brooks spent the latter part of his life.)

Activities will include the usual talks and get-togethers, our traditional Saturday night banquet, a pilgrimage to Roxbury on Monday morning, and sales and exchanges of Freddy-related books and other items.

You are encouraged to go ahead and claim a room at the Windham Arms. The rate is \$75/night over the weekend and \$55/night for additional weeknights. You can contact the hotel by phone at 518.734.4300, fax at 518.734.5732, or email at SkiWindm@aol.com. Be sure to mention the Friends of Freddy (group #299) to get our discounted room rate. (You can also visit their Web site at <http://www.skiwindham.com>.)

Hope to see you there!

Two more Freddie's!

Freddy the Pilot and *Freddy and the Baseball Team From Mars* are now available from Overlook Press. Members should have received a notice and order form directly from Overlook.

The next two books will be *The Story of Freginald* and the member-compiled *The Wit and Wisdom of Freddy the Pig*, which should be out shortly. The two after that are planned to be *Freddy and the Dragon* and *Freddy and Mr. Camphor*.

Some members have registered concern over the delays in publication. My understanding is that these are due to staffing changes at Overlook and not any lack of commitment on Overlook's part. Overlook would still like to reprint six Freddie's a year.

Freddy picked up by major book clubs

Several members have been good enough to write in with clippings from the notices of the Book-of-the-Month Club and the Quality Paperback Book Club, pointing out that these two major national book clubs are now offering three of the Freddy books (*Freddy the Detective*, *Freddy Goes to Florida*, and *Freddy and the Ignormus*) in \$14.95 softcover editions. This has to be considered a big boost for Freddy! 🎉

Freddy the Felon

by “Mr. Eha”

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Friends of Freddy, the editor, the members of the executive committee, or the mailman who delivers this newsletter.

An Abridged Transcript of
An Address Delivered to
The Ladies’ Literary Society of Centerboro
by Guest Speaker
Mr. Edward Henry Anderson
on Saturday, September 12, 1959

Good afternoon, ladies. I think most of you know me or know of me, but if you don’t, let me introduce myself. I’m Edward Henry Anderson, and I, like all of you, have been a lifelong resident of Centerboro. If you promise not to believe half of what you’ve heard about me, I’ll do the same for you! Now, today it’s my purpose to bring to light a very serious matter. Your president, Mrs. Humphrey Underdunk, has given me to understand that you’ve been reading and discussing some of the *Freddy* books by Walter R. Brooks. Knowing of my studies and research in the series, Mrs. Underdunk invited me here to address you on a topic of my choice which I have titled “An Egregious Degradation of the Law in the *Freddy the Pig* Series” or “How Ya Gonna Keep ‘Em Down on the Farm After They’ve Seen the Centerboro Jail?” Now, I don’t pretend to be a legal expert, but I do have a sense that the law is frequently given a careless treatment in the series, and it is my intention to expose this dangerous, socially subversive thread of lawlessness and moral turpitude that runs through so many of the *Freddy* books, which, as you must know, are based *very* loosely on people just like you and me and upon events in Centerboro.

Examples of lawlessness run through the series like a bad gastrointestinal bug!

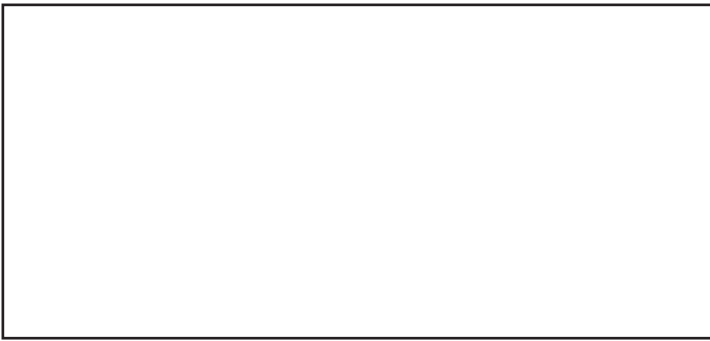
To begin then, what is law? *<Deleted here for the sake of brevity is a lengthy disquisition on natural and positive law, the Sumerian Code of Hammurabi, Mosaic law, Greek and Roman law, the Napoleonic Code, Norman law, and English common law.>* I then asked my cousin Dougal, a lawyer, for a down-to-earth definition of “law.” He said, “Laws are rules that keep us within the boundaries on the playing field of life.” I told him, “That’s very nice, Dougal, but could you be less poetic and more practical?” He then replied, “Well, when you get right down to it, Eddie, I suppose laws are what keep us from tearing each other’s throats out, stealing everybody else blind, and spitting on the sidewalk.” Now, Dougal may come across as a bit flippant, but when you think about it, he’s quite right. What he means is that laws keep us from injuring ourselves and harming or annoying others as might be our natural inclination if we were left to our biological

Freddy as Mr. Eha sees him

impulses. Law protects us from our lower selves that urge some of us to become “red in tooth and claw”! Not that *everyone* would be bad! Oh, no. I’m absolutely certain we could except the present company! But imagine for a moment what would happen if we suspended the law for a day or two and freed everyone from the consequences of criminal behavior. Can you just imagine the immediate increase in petty thievery, disturbing the peace, simple assault and battery, public drunkenness, sundry traffic violations?—and these are the *least* of it! Yes, ladies, couldn’t we sensibly anticipate an increase in murderous rampages, arson, and other felonies, if our species were allowed to roam about unrestrained by the law? Let’s agree then, that the law is a necessity, and that for civilization’s sake, it must be firmly in place and uniformly and neutrally administered by our duly elected servants! Is this the case in the *Freddy the Pig* books? I think *not*. Today we are going to take a broad look at how the concepts of the authority of the law and punishment are treated in the *Freddy* books. I am not going to explore any one book in depth, and I must assume you are familiar with the series. After that, I am going to list for you a number of examples of lawlessness and questionable conduct that run through the series like a bad gastrointestinal bug!

In Chapter 5 of *Freddy the Detective*, the animals determine to police their own and create their own jail, thereby instituting a simple system of justice among themselves. However, things do not go as planned, and soon the conditions in the animals’ version of jail foreshadow a similar resort-like atmosphere in the Centerboro Jail. A rabbit speaking to Freddy says, “And I wanted to go to jail—the animals there have such a good time, and don’t have to work, and they play games and sing songs all day long, and other animals are sorry for them and bring them lots of good things to eat. Oh, please, Mr. Freddy, take me to

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The “Hoho Club”

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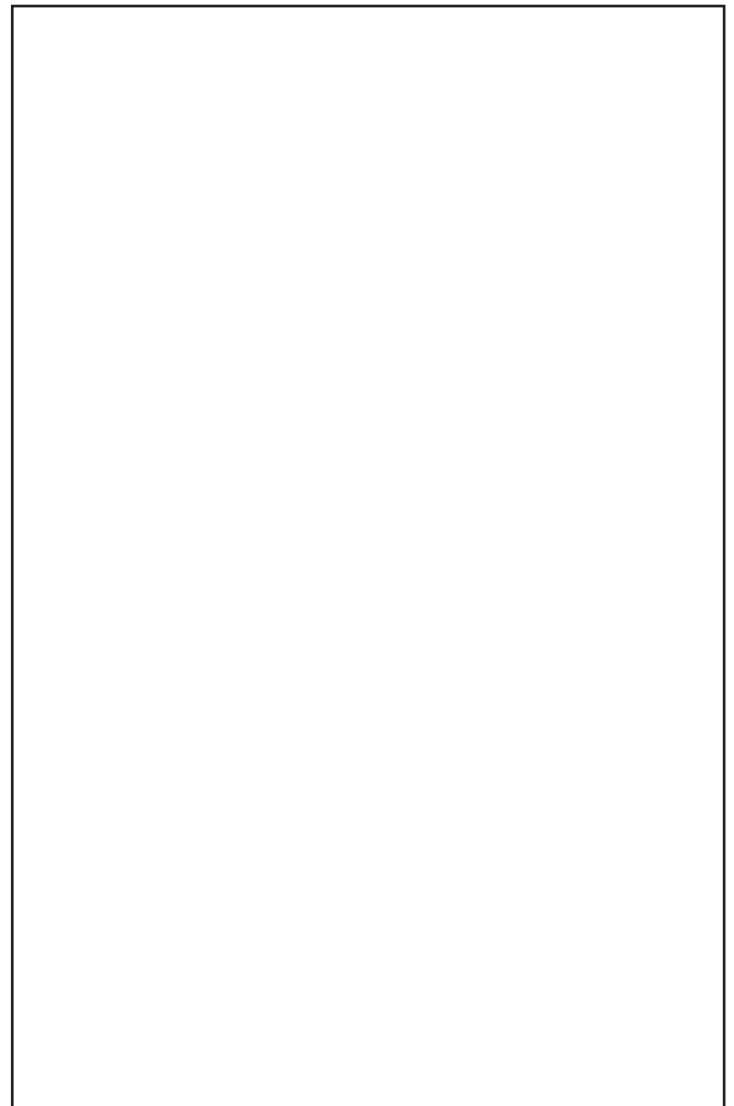
the judge and get me a good long sentence.” Jail is so much fun, indeed, that even the animals’ judge, Charles, contrives to sentence himself to a term. Elements of the animal population become so enthralled with the idea of enjoying the good life in jail that the “Hoho Club” is formed; that is, the “Hilarious Order of Habitual Offenders” whose members commit crimes solely to get into the jail. This caricature of the law and punishment insinuates itself into human affairs in *Freddy’s Cousin Weedly*.

In Chapter 3 of *Weedly*, the sheriff has stopped by to check on the Snedeckers who are staying at the Beans’ house while they tour Europe. At the end of their conversation, the sheriff tells Mr. Snedeker that he must get back to the jail because, “I just remembered I left the jail locked.” Snedeker replies: “Left it locked! Well, that’s all right, ain’t it, eh? Prisoners can’t get out.” The sheriff responds with this preposterous elaboration: “They can’t get *in*. Most of ‘em are out visiting their families tonight or at the movies, and they’re going to be good and sore if they come back and find they can’t get in.... It is a nice jail if I do say so. One of the most popular jails in the state. I have to make it nice, or I wouldn’t have any job. You see...we don’t have any crime in Centerboro, and if I didn’t keep a nice comfortable jail that people want to stay in, why I wouldn’t get any prisoners to look after, and where’d my job be? So I got the cells all fixed up with good beds, and we got a game room and tennis courts and so on, and we set a better table than the hotel does. Folks like to stay in my jail, so now and then they break a few unimportant laws so they can get sent there. I don’t say it’s right of ‘em, but it’s reasonable.” Reasonable to break “unimportant laws”?! Excuse me, but I’m sure you will agree that reason dictates we must obey laws for the sake of our society’s stability and security! Later in the book, we come across a description of the jail: “[It is] a large pleasant looking house, sitting back from the sidewalk, and surrounded by green lawns bordered with flower beds. Little tables with gaily striped umbrellas over them stood about, and at them sat the prisoners, talking and playing games. There were open boxes of candy on nearly all the tables, and at one, an ice cream freezer was being opened. In the middle of the lawn, several prisoners were planting red geraniums in a large flower bed. They were working very fast, because the flower bed was to be a surprise for the sheriff. They were arranging the flowers to spell out the motto: *THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE JAIL.*” How

very cozy and homey!

This burlesque of justice is continued in *Freddy and the Bean Home News*. In the seventh chapter of the book we read: “[Freddy] got to the jail safely, and walked right into the sheriff’s office, for the jail doors were never locked. The sheriff had explained this once to Freddy. ‘The prisoners don’t like it,’ he said, ‘and to tell you the truth I wouldn’t like it myself if I was a prisoner. I want ‘em to be happy here.’” In Chapter 9, the sheriff’s “well-known slackness” is criticized in an editorial in the Centerboro *Guardian*, but since the article has been composed by a “villain,” Herb Garble, it is clearly meant to be discounted as self-serving, though it is certainly accurate. In Chapter 11, Freddy, who is in custody for illegally running about Centerboro unaccompanied by his owner, is encouraged by the sheriff to escape from the jail: “Of course,” said the sheriff, “this is an awful easy jail to escape from....It would be a novelty, in a way. We ain’t ever had an escape in all the years I’ve had charge here. Trouble seems to be to get ‘em to go when their time’s up. One little escape wouldn’t be held against me.” Remember, the audience for these books is children with impressionable minds!

The prisoners being examined



In *Freddy and the Popinjay*, Chapter 13, we again encounter this selfsame easygoing permissiveness. The sheriff is chit-chatting with Freddy and Mrs. Church and invites them to the jail: “Well, you’d better come down there now, then, and have some ice cream. I told the prisoners to make a freezer full for supper.” He invites Mrs. Church, too: “They’d be proud and happy to have you join us, too, ma’am. Show ‘em your hat and have him sing for them. Kind of brightens up the day for them. It’s little entertainments like that that make my jail one of the most popular in the state.” The sheriff’s overt delinquency as an elected law official is further demonstrated in *Freddy the Pied Piper*. He’s revealed in Chapter 3 to be mostly image and no substance in the reference to the pistol handles he’s had sewn into his hip pocket. That’s right! The sheriff has only the appearance of a sidearm, and this signifies his lack of power and authority.

In Chapter 7 of *Freddy the Magician*, Red Mike, a recurrent jailbird character and the jail baseball team’s best pitcher, leaves the jail upon the expiration of his sentence. That very day he steals a chicken from Judge Willey who obligingly re-sentences him to another three months, just time enough to complete the baseball season. So much for discouraging recidivism and encouraging respect for the judiciary! A few pages later, Louie the Lout is discovered to be a pie thief. The sheriff says he’ll have to go. Freddy states, “My goodness, most of ‘em are here because they’re thieves, aren’t they?” As the sheriff hems and haws about this, Freddy helps him out: “He’s being punished for being a thief by being put in jail. But it’s against the rules, kind of, for him to go on being a thief while he’s being punished.” The sheriff says, “That’s right. If he’s allowed to go on stealing here, what becomes of the punishment?” Freddy grins and asks, “What becomes of it anyway in this jail?” This is certainly a question we all might ask!

The prisoners dress up for a dance at Tushville while Freddy and the sheriff conspire to foil the fictional “Mr. Eha” in Chapter 13 of *Freddy Goes Camping*. “Mr. Eha” has driven out the owner of the Lakeside Hotel, Mrs. Filmore, by “haunting” her property. Freddy and the sheriff discuss what to do. The sheriff says: “I dunno, Freddy. I’m sorry for that Mrs. Filmore; she’s a real nice woman. And I don’t like Anderson—never did. But we haven’t got enough against him to do anything legal. Of course, if you got something illegal in your mind, I might help you, as long as you don’t tell me what it is. I’m an officer of the law, you know; it wouldn’t look right if I was to go round committin’ crimes.” Indeed not!

This grotesque portrayal of the law is echoed in Chapter 11 of *Freddy Plays Football* when Freddy, who has stolen \$5,000 from the bank to protect Mr. and Mrs. Bean from the “false Doty,” is in turn protected by Mrs. Church and the sheriff: “Well, ma’m,” the sheriff says. “[Y]ou’re askin’ me about Freddy. You know it’s my duty to arrest him if I can find him.” Mrs. Church replies: “Yes. You needn’t be afraid I’m going to tell you where he is. Anyway, I don’t know. Not that I don’t think he’d be safer in the jail than out hiding somewhere.” Whatever Freddy’s intentions, he is still a felon, and winking at his crime is deplorable.

We see this same inexcusable laxness in *Freddy Rides Again* when the sheriff deliberately warns Freddy and Charles, who are being sought for attacking Mr. Margarine, to vanish. He

Freddy gets hauled off (again)

addresses Freddy: “I have to do my duty. If I was to see—and recognize—either of these animals, I’d have to take ‘em down to the jail. Hold ‘em for trial.” As he scrutinizes the arrest warrant, the sheriff tells Freddy, “Forgot my readin’ glasses, I can’t make out the descriptions of these criminals” and then offers this advice: “If they’re smart, they’ll take to the woods for a while. They’ll know that if I don’t catch ‘em today, I’m too busy a man to go chasing them.” Later, the fugitives Freddy and Charles hide out in the old Grimby place. Margarine has just been sworn in as a deputy, and the sheriff ruminates aloud to some sparrows sitting on a jail windowsill: “I’d like to warn that pig, bein’ he’s a friend of mine. But I’m the sheriff—I can’t do it.” Of course, the sparrows will. Respect for the law is further undermined when we hear for the first and not the last time of the unique windows bars of the Centerboro jail in this volume: “The sheriff was a kindly man, and once several years ago the prisoners had complained about the bars. They had said that iron bars made them feel shut in, made them nervous. ‘We have to have bars,’ the sheriff had said. ‘Every proper jail has bars. But we’ll fix ‘em.’ And he did. Now the frames, bars and all, swung out like a casement window. All you had to do was to push them and climb out.” Indeed, as the sheriff observes later in *Freddy and the Saucer Plans*, the jail is “easier to get out of than to get into,” so much so that a special ordinance is passed for shooting off fireworks in the city, an ordinance made to order for ex-prisoners who wish, for the cost of a ten dollar fine, to go back to jail for another ten days. The firecrackers are easy to obtain. The sheriff keeps a supply handy at the jail for just that purpose.

Going back for a moment to *Freddy Plays Football*, the sheriff offers an excuse for his slackness in the form of a flabby humanitarianism: “If you had to go to jail, Freddy thought, there certainly wasn’t a nicer jail to go to than the Centerboro one. It was just like staying at a hotel, only it was nicer than a hotel because you didn’t have to pay anything. Of course it was run differently than most jails. The sheriff let the prisoners

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have parties, and go to movies and ball games because, he said, 'I want to turn 'em into good citizens, and 'tain't any training for good citizenship if you're locked up in a little cell all the time with no other citizens to talk to.' The only trouble was that some of the prisoners didn't want to leave when their time was up." (By the way, this theme is paralleled in Boomschmidt's circus, as you may have noticed. For example, in *Freddy and the Men from Mars*, Boomschmidt's observation about his menagerie seems a veiled reference to the jail: "Animals aren't really wild except when they're shut up....You'd be wild yourself if you had to live in a cage.") Perhaps Walter Brooks had received some criticism and his editor asked him to provide at least some rationale for his persistent mockery of authority and jails. And yet in *Freddy the Cowboy*, he reverts to mocking the system again. Red Mike's sentence has once again expired and there has been a going-away party for "Centerboro's most popular prisoner." The sheriff speaks to the teary-eyed Mike: "Well, Mike, we are happy to have had you with us, and if you come back, we will have a big celebration. Of course, I can't ask you to try to come back, because that would be askin' you to commit another crime, and that would be a crime in itself—compoundin' a felony and bein' accessory before the fact and I don't know what all. Of course, they couldn't put me in jail for it, because I'm here already. But they might put me out of the jail, which would be worse. And I ought to tell you boys that there's been some criticism in town of the way I handle things here. (Is this Mr. Brooks's way of saying, "There's been some criticism of the way I write about the law"?) Folks say I'm too good to you boys, that lots of you do wrong just so you can get back here, and that I'm causin' a crime wave in these parts. So I'm askin' you when you're out around town, don't talk too much about the good times we have. Tell 'em I'm a hard man—rule you with an iron hand—that sort of thing." Later in Chapter 16, we're right back to the "little entertainments and parties to keep the prisoners contented and happy" that the sheriff thinks up.

Is it any wonder that in *Freddy and the Space Ship* this passage is found? "[T]he Centerboro jail was known throughout New York State as being a very happy jail; many criminals considered a stay there as a delightful vacation, and they had to be pushed out when they had served their sentences." And then in *Freddy and the Men from Mars*, there's another affront to our legal system in Red Mike's lecture on practical burgling in the jail's assembly hall. Now we might take this as a criticism of

Freddy and the sheriff

jails-as-schools-for-crime, but given the earlier treatment of the sheriff as a representative authority figure and the jail as a place of punishment, I don't think so.

So what kind of view of the legal system does Brooks present to the youth of America in his depiction of a jail to which prisoners have latchkeys and come and go as they please? where ice-cream sodas, striped umbrellas, candy pulls, and croquet are the order of the day? where prisoners like Bloody Mike "just live" for the time they're caught and sentenced to six months? where barred windows swing out freely so as to not have the prisoners feel "shut in" or "nervous"? where the apparently traitorous and felonious Freddy is put into a luxurious double room with a private bath, brass bed, desk, etc.? All resemblance to a place of incarceration and punishment end at the iron gates. In *Freddy and the Dragon*, Brooks goes so far as to presume the approval of the good people of Centerboro for the "most popular jail in New York State" where "[t]o be sentenced...was similar to being elected to an exclusive club" and where a stay is like a "long vacation at the seaside." According to the narrator of *Dragon*, "The Centerboro people were very proud of their jail. They often gave parties for the prisoners, who were always heartily welcomed at such things as church suppers and grange dances. Some of the prisoners who had children of their own at home always attended the P.T.A. meetings and made many useful suggestions." Dear me, this seems to stretch the most elastic of imaginations beyond the limits.

I am not the only one to have noticed and complained about Mr. Brooks's depiction of the law, consider this. Shortly after the publication of *Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans*, a review of it appeared in the October 15, 1957 volume of *Library Journal*. This comment was made: "Because of Freddy's large following, librarians will purchase this. Yet, Mr. Brooks's treatment of lawbreakers, jails, and spies in this and his previous books might foster unfortunate attitudes in children." Unfortunate indeed!

Now, the matters of the sheriff's lack of authority and the resort-like jail are certainly serious, but the "unfortunate attitudes" are further fostered by a host of felonies, misdemeanors, and just poor ethical behavior throughout the series. Let me list for you a smattering of examples from the stories, and you determine what kind of message is being sent. To wit...

In *Freddy Goes to Florida*, the animals appropriate half a bushel of gold pieces without making any serious inquiry as to whom the treasure may belong, and Mr. Bean receives this princely amount without asking a single question. Assume for a moment that Mr. Bean represents a kind of parent to the animals. Would a good parent allow such a thing?

In *Freddy Goes to the North Pole*, the animals attack the customs officials on the bridge over the St. Lawrence River. At the end of the book, Santa and the animals kidnap Constable Henry Snedeker after he arrests them for exceeding the Centerboro speed limit, disturbing the peace, operating a menageries without a license, and assault and battery. Santa then blackmails the judge to secure his and the animals' release. Santa!

In *The Clockwork Twin*, Freddy, Jinx, Ronald, Georgie, and Adoniram meet in Waterman, Dinkelstein & Co. and help themselves liberally to the goods. They leave the store with pockets "bulging with supplies." I quote further: "...Freddy

said he was sure the store people wouldn't mind if [Adoniram] outfitted himself with things that he really needed....” Later Freddy encourages Adoniram to run from the police and knocks an officer down. As if this were not bad enough, the police care for Adoniram until he is to be sent home and allow him to keep the things he has taken from the store. Later, the animals encourage Adoniram to run away from home and go with them to the Bean farm where the Beans simply accept his presence without question and make inquiries about adopting the boy. Mr. Bean says, “We mustn't get the wrong side of the law” with respect to keeping Adoniram—but he enjoins the animals to contrive a plan: “The law can't touch animals,” he says. In this same book one of the animals' own, the autocratic tyrant Uncle Wesley is said to have been kidnapped and deposited in the next county by an eagle confederate of the animals simply to get him out of the way.

In *Freddy and the Perilous Adventure*, the sheriff, ever a friend to Freddy, recognizes the balloon thief and fugitive Freddy in the scarecrow's clothes and warns him to stay away from home to avoid arrest. Those clothes, by the way, were stolen by Freddy. The farmer who reported the theft evidently never receives restitution in this book. Small potatoes, you say? I say it's a chipping away at the foundations of society!

In *Freddy and the Bean Home News*, the animals resort to a favorite trick to subdue their enemies. They keep Herb Garble awake so that he is unable to conduct a proper prosecution of Freddy. He fails to sum up to the jury because he has dozed off, and Whibley deliberately lies to Judge Willey to hurry the jury out for deliberations. Also in this book Freddy tricks Mrs. Underdunk into giving up the iron lawn deer given to her by her late husband and just happens to “find” a long heavy rope in Judge Willey's garage with which to haul the deer away.

In *Freddy and the Ignormus*, Freddy “borrows” Mr. Bean's shotgun. The suggestion is that under the circumstances, it is perfectly justified. Do the ends justify the means? Later in the book, Mrs. Bean exhibits a soft-heartedness when she finds a reason for the rats' poor behavior, a soft-heartedness previously exhibited by the sheriff and once by Freddy in *Detective* when he says, “Perhaps I shouldn't be a detective after all, Jinx. I shall always feel so sorry for the criminals when I find them that I'll probably let them go.” This moral flabbiness surfaces again in *Freddy and Mr. Camphor*, when Mr. Camphor chooses not to press charges against the Winches. Instead they're “sort of on probation...with a suspended jail sentence” and continue to work for him after having stolen from him. Camphor hopes the dirty-faced boy Horace can be salvaged if he is removed from the continuous influence of his father. How easy! Freddy cleans the boy up, gets him interested in painting, and everything is rosy! Even Mr. Winch becomes “less objectionable” according to Camphor. Simple solutions! Should we accept criminals who become “less objectionable”?

This same theme continues in *Freddy and the Popinjay* where Jimmy Witherspoon is cured of his cruelty to animals with a little attention, some cast-off clothes, a party invitation, and fun and games in the duck pond. Freddy thinks of Jimmy's good qualities as “buried treasure” and excuses the boy's poor behavior: “I think other people have always been bad to him, and he doesn't know how to act any different.” Mrs. Church,

Freddy and a conspirator

too, finds an excuse for Jimmy: “He's ashamed of looking so poor....” Brooks suggests that all we need to do is clean up the children and everything will be fine—a kind of baptismal ritual reflected in Horace's being scrubbed clean and Jimmy's being dunked in the duck pond. Can it be that simple? Life tells us otherwise.

In *Freddy the Pied Piper*, the animals hold Mrs. Guffin prisoner. They unlawfully restrain her while they decide how to escape with Leo, whom she had imprisoned, and leave her locked in her pantry as they depart from Tallmanville for home.

In *Freddy the Magician*, Freddy investigates Zingo. He enjoins his comrades Hank and Jinx to join in: “Look, are you two boys with me? I mean, it'll be burglary, sort of, and maybe trouble if we get caught, but—” Jinx chimes in with: “Burglary? Boy, I've always wanted to burgle. Runs in the blood....” Quite a poor example for the eight- to ten-year-olds who were the intended audience of these books!

In *Freddy Goes Camping*, where Brooks introduces a fictionalized version of me, “Mr. Eha” is harassed until he is forced to sign a spurious confession. The animals employ a favorite tactic—depriving “Mr. Eha” of sleep—and Freddy, Mr. Camphor, and Camphor's Aunt Minerva get the confession—but not before

Continued on page 10

Another example of vigilantism and “the ends justify the means” philosophy.

In *Freddy the Pilot*, although Sniffy Wilson does not feel right about it, the Wilsons and the Horribles burn down a barn and Condiment’s airplane within to put him out of commission. When the animals capture Condiment, they nail him under floorboards. Vigilantism again, as Freddy says, “The police can’t help us; we’ve got to do it all ourselves. Similarly to the incident involving Mr. Eha in *Camping*, a confession is forced out of Condiment after he meets up with the “Demon Woman.”

In *Freddy and the Space Ship*, another miscarriage of justice occurs when a bogus verdict of guilty is brought in against Ed Bismuth contrary to proper court procedure. The judge intervenes, but sentences Bismuth to two years for another crime for which he was not on trial. Preposterous!

In *Freddy and the Men from Mars*, the animals once again resort to illegal restraint when they padlock Simon in a parrot cage in the barn even though they have absolutely nothing on him with respect to the missing chickens. Later in the same book, there exists a distinctly suspect idea: Freddy asks the sheriff if there would be “trouble” if they threw the rats out of the Grimby house. The sheriff says that if there isn’t a law against something, you have a right to do it. Even though the animals do not exercise this “right,” the fact that the sheriff promulgates such a notion is wrong. Even more wrong is the burgling of the Underdunk house by Freddy and Red Mike who are looking for the kidnapped chickens. Another example of the lack of moral authority on the part of the sheriff emerges when Freddy explains to the sheriff a plan to capture Garble. The sheriff says, “Tain’t legal.” Jinx replies, “Oh, phooey! It’s fun, isn’t it? And justice, too. Well, go on back to your jail and be legal, then. If you don’t see it happen, you won’t know anything about it.” The sheriff, not wanting to miss out on the “fun” joins in, luring Garble to an ambush and helping to nail him in the crate that the Martians whisk away to Montana. This will not be the only time Garble is kidnapped by the animals though. In *Freddy and Simon the Dictator*, they kidnap Garble after a meeting of the revolutionaries and lock him in a cabin at the Oteseraga village where he is threatened with being burnt at the stake.

Isn’t it ironic then, in *Baseball Team*, that Freddy has the temerity to say of the Martians: “They sure are learning a fine American disrespect for anyone in authority.” Ironic,

Judge Willey presiding

Freddy visits the jail

Continued from page 9

Minerva murderously assaults “Mr. Eha” with an unjustified blow to the head with a heavy frying pan. All this poor and illegal behavior on the part of the “good guys” is supposedly justified by Mr. Eha’s dishonesty. Doesn’t that strike you as contrary to due process?

In *Freddy Plays Football*, Mrs. Church, a pillar of Centerboro society and a former Board of Trustee member of an orphanage, is in possession of stolen property. She agrees to hold the \$5,000 Freddy has stolen from the bank to prevent Mr. Bean from giving it to the false Aaron Doty. At first she even agrees to use it for Freddy’s bail, but to her partial credit, she doesn’t. She does bake it into a pie which she gives to Freddy to hide in the jail. Let me add that another thing that bothers me about *Football* is that Freddy, who has been arrested and is out on bail, is allowed to continue to be a member of the high school team, no doubt because of his critical usefulness. Later in the book when Freddy goes to trial, Brooks gives a nod in the direction of law and order: “Most of [the audience] knew Freddy and many of them were his friends, but the general opinion seemed to be that a robbery, even if committed with the best intentions, is not something that can be passed over with just a talking to.” However, the courtroom proceedings are undermined by fancy and questionable legal footwork by Whibley and a false alibi supplied by Freddy’s cousin Weedly. A travesty!

In *Freddy Rides Again*, the innocent young readers of the series are presented with this: “This was not the first time Freddy had had to go into hiding. Twice before not only the sheriff but the state troopers, had been after him; but on both those occasions he had been innocent. ‘This time,’ [Freddy] said, ‘I’m guilty, because I really did fire off my pistol. And so are you, Charles. You really pecked his nose and knocked off his hat.’” You will have no difficulty believing that everything turns out well for Freddy and Charles once again, as the fugitives from justice prevail by the book’s end. And what about Freddy’s kidnapping of Billy Margarine and his holding the boy against his will in the Grimby house for the safe return of Mrs. Wiggins.

too, is Freddy's editorial in the *Bean Home News* where he complains about the statewide thefts of jewelry: "What are our police doing? Do we pay them to stand idly by when our citizens are daily victimized by gangs of bold and insolent criminals who laugh and giggle contemptuously at the minions of the law?"

In the last book of the series, *Freddy and the Dragon*, Freddy is suspected of mischief once again, and once again the sheriff comes to his assistance. Mrs. Peppercorn and the sheriff conspire to have her swear out a warrant for Freddy J. Bean's arrest. The sheriff makes it a point to let Freddy know that this is an invalid warrant because there is no "J" in Freddy's name and warns Freddy that there are numerous warrants out without the "J." This, of course, gives Freddy time to assume a disguise and hide out.

In conclusion, I'm sure that some of you think that I am overstating my case, and that the basic themes of the Freddy books—courage, friendship, fair play, and so on and so forth—far overshadow the motifs of moral vagueness and lawlessness. There might be some truth to that view; however, my case must be stated because it is too obvious to ignore and too important to simply shrug off. I think the distinguished jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., would agree with me. He said: "The law is the witness and external deposit of our moral life. Its history is the history of the moral development of the race." If the law is treated indifferently and not given the proper respect—especially in a children's book series!—what can we hope for in the future other than a gradual coarsening of morals and behavior in public and private matters? I wonder today what the years leading to the next millenium will bring! Thank you very much for your kind attention. I'll be going to the table by the front entrance now to chat with you and sign copies of *My True Story: The Centerboro Flying Saucer* which you may purchase at a ten percent discount.

"Mr. Eha" is known to Freddyites on the Internet as the persona of a follower of the books with a rather odd sense of humor but with a very entertaining Web site based on that persona. Comments on this article are welcome. 🐷🐷

Jinx and Mr. Eha



Mentions of Freddy in the Washington Post

Washington, DC, should be considered a special place by Freddyites, since it's where Brooks wrote the first Freddy book during one hot summer (does DC have any other kind?) in the early twenties. And the *Washington Post* has had a couple of mentions recently.

The first started out as a sin of omission. The *Washington Post Magazine* had an article on children's books (April 4), especially ones with talking animals, and somehow managed never to mention Freddy. FoF member John Chastain (Annandale, VA) gently takes the editors to task (May 30):

Before there was Babe, before Wilbur of *Charlotte's Web*, before George Orwell's ham-hocked Bolsheviks, probably even before Porky, there was Freddy the Pig. Freddy starred in a wide variety of roles in more than two dozen books written from 1927 through 1958 by Walter R. Brooks.

Those of us fortunate enough to meet Freddy in childhood consider him the American Pooh. On the principle that "it's never too late to have a happy childhood," I strongly recommend that you check out Freddy and his friends.

The omnivorous bibliophiles among us might know that the son of Cold War figure Alger Hiss, Tony, recently published a memoir, *The View From Alger's Window*. What you might not know is that Hiss *fil*s is a Freddy the Pig fan. We found out ourselves in the June 20-26 *Washington Post Book World*, where Tony Hiss takes his turn in a guest column entitled "The Writing Life" and describes his life at the age of nine:

I had mastered long division; I was fond of the Freddy the Pig books; and I knew all about spy charges, a hollow pumpkin filled with rolls of film, and an antique typewriter that might or might not have belonged to my family.

Connie Arnold, ever determined, led the charge to track down Tony and see if he knew about the Friends of Freddy and wanted to join. Helped by a FoFer who went to school with him, we were able to find him, and you can read his letter at the top of the letters section in this issue. 🐷🐷

Pigs Across America: This shows the location of just a few of hundred-plus libraries that the Friends of Freddy has donated reprinted Freddy books to. See a sampling of the thank-yous below.

Thanks so much for the Freddy books. Our small library is in a rural, low-income area and almost all of our books are donated, so we do appreciate new books. We have limited hours and all our helpers are volunteers, but we have an increasing readership, so I know this library is an asset to Bell.

Shirley Frey
Friends of the Library
Bell, FL

I want to personally thank you and your members for donating two “Freddy the Pig” books to our library. Sharon Moore, a volunteer at our school, is a Friend of Freddy. Because of Ms. Moore’s efforts, a large number of our students are familiar with these books and have learned to love them as personal friends.

Julie Thomas
Auburn Elementary School
Salem, OR

Thank you for the recent donation from the Friends of Freddy. The books have been processed and are now available to our readers whom, I am sure, will find them enjoyable. These books are a very nice addition to our collection, and we appreciate your interest in, and support of, the Marlow Public Library.

Lois Bannister
Marlow Public Library
Marlow, OK

Thank you for your book donation. We are sure the young people in our small farming town will enjoy reading both books, along with some of our older patrons. You would be surprised at the number of adults who never had the time or reading material during their growing-up years to read books and spend many hours playing catch-up now. Each day we check out books that were awarded to us by a grant from the Libri Foundation, and we will add two more books to our collection and watch, with joy, their circulation.

Connie Taylor and Bobbie Ragan
Geraldine Public Library
Geraldine, AL

We received the “Freddy the Pig” books that you donated to our library. It is wonderful what your group is doing to promote the series of books and making them available to young readers today.

Tommi Myers
Llano County Library System
Llano TX

Thank you for the two “Freddy” books. We are very appreciative of such nice books. Our budget is very limiting and these certainly help make our library better.

Mary Ferwenda
Centerville Library
Centerville, SD

We do thank you for the two gift Freddy books that you sent to our small library. We have two other Freddy books from earlier years and are sure the two new books will be appreciated.

Mary V. Spaulding
Avoca Free Library
Avoca, NY

We at the Lucas Public Library thank you very much for your donation of two "Freddy the Pig" books. They will make a welcome addition to our children's shelves and, I am sure, will be read often and with pleasure.

Carolyn W. Ihde
Lucas Public Library
Lucas, KS

Thank you very much for your gift of two Freddy books. They have been received and will have gift book plates acknowledging your gift. Thanks to your generosity, the Concord Free Public Library will be able to introduce new readers to the joys of Freddy's adventures. Please extend our thanks to all of your members.

Karen Ahearn
Concord Free Public Library
Concord, MA

Thank you very much for the two books you donated to our children's collection in partnership with the Libri Foundation. I'm sure children in our town will enjoy reading them.

Paula Huckaby
Ranger City Library
Ranger, TX

We were so surprised and pleased to receive the two Freddy stories. These look like delightful books, and I'm sure they will be appreciated by our patrons for many years.

Sue Huff
Corunna Public Library
Corunna, MI 🐷

Letters

Continued from page 2

Freddy a closet "head?"

I was happy to see the "Freddy Drops Acid?" piece in *The Bean Home Newsletter*. I am the culprit who told the editor of *MAPS* that Freddy was a greater influence on my liberated political views than acid. I have been a subscriber of your newsletter for a number of years. My neighbor, Rick Doblin, the editor of *MAPS*, is also a subscriber.

Rick is working on his doctorate at Harvard's Kennedy School. He is currently writing his thesis on the politics of our current laws on psychedelics. He met recently at the medical school with Harvard faculty doing research on psychedelics. Several had heard of Freddy. A Brit, who is here for a year, was a special fan. So evidently Freddy is well known in the academic psychedelic research community.

In the present political climate I would suspect that relatively few of your subscribers who have an interest in psychedelic issues, academic or otherwise, would declare themselves openly. Certainly academics in the field are publishing their own works in obscure journals and are not giving interviews with the popular press. If the animals at the Bean Farm were dropping acid, I am sure Freddy would advise them to keep very, very quiet about it.

Henry Bass (Belmont, MA) 🐷

The Bean Home Newsletter is published quarterly by the Friends of Freddy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the writings of Walter R. Brooks and his literary alter ego, Freddy the Pig. Two-year memberships are \$15 (US funds only, please). All overseas members please add \$12 additional for airmail delivery. Please make your check or money order payable to Friends of Freddy and send it to the official address given below.

Address changes and t-shirt orders should be sent to Alice Tracy at the address below.

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FoF web site: <http://www.freddythepig.org/>.

FoF postal address: Friends of Freddy, P. O. Box 912, Greenbelt, MD 20768-0912 USA.

President and Newsletter Editor: Kevin W. Parker, 3-E Ridge Rd., Greenbelt, MD 20770-1900 USA.

Vice-president: Dave Carley, 4 Sherbourne St. N., #304, Toronto, ONT M4W 2T1 CANADA.

Secretary-Treasurer: Connie Arnold, P.O. Box 232, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia B0S 1A0 CANADA.

Membership Director: Alice Tracy, 8300 Cypress St., Laurel, MD 20707 USA.

Past President: Dan Josslin, 59 La Perla, Foothill Ranch, CA 92610 USA.

Convention Coordinator: Aladdine Joroff, 181 Lexington Rd., Concord, MA 01742 USA. ♻️



Back to the Bean Farm: Rereading the
Freddy Books
Freddy the Pilot
by Kevin W. Parker

WARNING: These articles are written with the assumption that the reader has already read the story in question. Don't read this article if you want any surprises to be preserved for you.

All right, let's go to *Freddy the Pilot* since it's now back in print. I wanted to start out with some summary of my evaluation, but I'm not sure I can just yet, so I'll just go straight into the details.

What impressed me most with this book was the sheer density of ideas. I can think of no other book that better demonstrates Brooks' inventiveness. There are two major continuity elements to start off with: the Horrible Ten (introduced two books ago) and the Boomschmidt Circus. On top of that, there are major threads weaving through this book involving Robin Hood, comic books and their characters, Freddy becoming a pilot, and Uncle Ben and his bombsight that turns out to be a crackerjack metal detector. Then you have little, almost throwaway bits, like the incident that Alice Tracy celebrated in her article on the Boomschmidt circus with Mrs. Wogus jumping over the elephant. It's quite extraordinary.

But on to the plot. It begins with Freddy reading about Robin Hood and explaining him to Sniffy Wilson, the aptly-named (as always) skunk. Then the Boomschmidt Circus shows up with a dilemma (or quandary). We don't immediately find out what the problem is until Freddy and some of the other animals attend the circus performance. After a brief interruption by a lawyer named Newsome (or "Nuisance," as the sheriff accurately puts it), the show is interrupted by an airplane buzzing the tent. The likely culprit is one Watson P. Condiment, who wants to marry Mademoiselle Rose and has threatened to disrupt the circus if he can't.

Freddy goes off to take flying lessons so he can use a plane to track down the base of the other plane. Meanwhile, Uncle

Ben shows up with his bombsight, which is extremely accurate as long as you know where you should really be aiming it. (There's an interesting visit by a host of military bigwigs that shows Brooks' gift for satire at its best.)

Next Freddy goes into town, in disguise as a woman, and encounters Mr. Condiment trying to get the local bookstore proprietor to stock his comic books. Serendipitously, Freddy manages to get Willy the Boomschmidt Circus snake to frighten Mr. Condiment just as he's saying that the "Great Serpent" monster in one of his comic books is totally fantastical. Freddy then introduces himself with the same name as one of the other characters, Lorna del Pardo (otherwise known as the Leopard Woman).

Freddy returns to the farm and discovers the metal-detecting capabilities of the bombsight, then takes off in his plane and tracks the other plane some distance to the north after it bombs the circus with bags of flour.

Then Freddy resumes his Lorna disguise and, with the help of Harrison the leopard, pretends to turn into a leopard for the benefit of Mr. Condiment, who is of course terrified that one of his comic book characters has come to life.

Freddy eventually tracks the plane to its home base and, after some conflict between the skunks (who have adopted Robin Hood wholeheartedly) and the Horribles, parachute some of each onto the base. There is then a bit of a breathing space as Freddy takes each of the Beans for a ride, the military men find out about the alternate function of the bombsight and fight over it, and Newsome pays another visit to the circus.

Things pick up again as we move to the secret air strip, where the skunks and Horribles burn up the airplane used to terrorize the circus. Freddy then shows up in his plane but is quickly captured, and Condiment's assistants take his plane as Condiment and Newsome continue to plot. The skunks and the Horribles manage to turn the tables, driving Newsome away and capturing Condiment. However, the assistants return after stealing the bombsight, which they use to find and then release Mr. Condiment. A pitched battle for the house ensues and ends in a stalemate with Condiment guarding the outside of the house and Jackson, his crony, going for assistance.

Then the cavalry comes over the hill in the form of Mrs. Wiggins, in disguise as Condiment's comic-book Demon Woman,

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The Kids' Page

Freddy the Pilot

1. What book was Freddy reading at the beginning of this story?

2. Circle the answers.

a. What's the name of the muskrat?

Muskie Lyman Krat

b. Who are two of Sniffy Wilson's daughters?

Petunia Pepper Violet

c. Who was *not* a passenger in Freddy's airplane?

Mr. Bean Jinx Mrs. Bean Mr. Condiment Leo

3. Cows.

a. Match the cow to what she is known for.

MRS. WIGGINS	TRACK WORK
MRS. WOGUS	BEING DUMB
MRS. WURZBURGER	FREDDY'S PARTNER

b. Which one is the middle sister?

4. What is the name of Mr. Boomschmidt's horse?

5. How many children does Sniffy Wilson have?

1. Robin Hood. 2a. Lyman. 2b. Petunia, Violet. 2c. Mr. Condiment. 3a. Mrs. Wiggins-Freddy's partner, Mrs. Wogus-track work, Mrs. Wurzbürger-being dumb. 3b. Mrs. Wurzbürger. 4. Rod. 5. Seven.

and her chauffeur Uncle Ben, who frighten Jackson away. Then Condiment, confronted by yet one more character from his comic books, basically gives up and signs a confession.

Then we come to a sort of epilogue, where Boomschmidt has to be told by Condiment that Rose is in love with him and wants him to ask her to marry him. (Have I gotten all the pronouns right there?) Condiment is given his freedom as a reward for this revelation, and the wedding is held at the Bean Farm. And all is well.

Whew! I have a feeling that's the longest I've taken to summarize a plot, just because there's so much going on. I haven't even mentioned things like the cows laughing hysterically at the (supposedly horrifying) comic books and other little throwaway bits that are in here. So it's quite a feast.

On the other hand, the ending seems a bit contrived. Condiment seems to give up rather easily, though admittedly I don't know what it would be like to be faced with Mrs. Wiggins in full makeup. And the whole business with Rose and Mr. Boomschmidt seems out of character for the books, as others have noted, wondering if perhaps Mrs. Brooks or someone else suggested that plot point.

I think also that the characters are so busy that we don't get as much of a feel for them as characters, except for the occasional fun bits like Mr. and Mrs. Bean getting their plane rides and the cows laughing at the comic books.

Still, on a chapter-by-chapter basis, this has to be one of the most inventive and entertaining of the Freddy books. I suppose in conclusion that I'd put it a notch below the very best of the Freddy books, but still well up there. 🐄🐄

Next issue

Alice Tracy returns to these pages with a defense of Freddy and the Dragon. Plus, we'll have the latest from Overlook Press and more about our upcoming convention. Stay tuned! 🐄

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