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THANK
YOU, PAUL!

...COMING UP LATER IN THIS VERY ISSUE OF

INSIDE JOKE...

ANNI ACKNER FOR THE VACATIONING FRAN LEIBOWITZ, READER MAIL,
A NEW "KNOW YOUR STAFF" SEGMENT WITH MICHAEL DOBBS, CAMPING
WITH GREG BLAIR, AND, A LOOK AT ELAYNE'S FIRESIGN RECORD COLLECTION.



...NO 27 · DECEMBER 1984 - 1 · "A NEWSLETTER
OF COMEDY AND
CREATIVITY"

-UPCOMING EVENTS-

- JANUARY 2 - NINA BOGIN (?); Isaac Asimov (64)
 JANUARY 3 - Victor Borge (75); J.R.R. Tolkien (b. 1892); Zasu Pitts (b. 1900)
 JANUARY 4 - BOB BLACK (33)
 JANUARY 8 - STEVEN SCHARFF (22); Soupy Sales (58)
 JANUARY 10 - CONNOR BARCLAY (?); Donald Fagen (?); Ray Bolger (78)
 JANUARY 13 - Sophie Tucker (b. 18--?)
 JANUARY 18 - Danny Kaye (71)
 JANUARY 19 - BRIAN CATANZARO (29); E.A. Poe (b. 1889)
 JANUARY 20 - George Burns (88)
 JANUARY 23 - Ernie Kovacs (b. 1919)
 JANUARY 25 - Larry Gelbart (58)
 JANUARY 27 - DEBORAH BENEDICT GEDWILLO (33); Lewis Carroll (b. 1832)
 JANUARY 29 - W. C. Fields [forever] (b. 1880)
 JANUARY 21- Phil Collins (33)
 FEBRUARY 10 - DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #29

 * INSIDE JOKE is put on with mind-reeling regularity (but monthly *
 * the last) by Elayne Wechsler and dear friends, emanating from the *
 * heart of Kensington in Beautiful Downtown Brooklyn, the Used Furni- *
 * ture Capitol of the World! All things within, and without, are *
 * copywrite whoever wrote 'em...I remain unconcerned with such things. *
 * EDITOR-OF-SORTS-IN-CHIEF.....ELAYNE WECHSLER *
 * HEAD XEROGRAPHER....."UNCLE WIGGLY" *
 * STAFF WRITERS *
 * ANNI ACKNER DEBORAH BENEDICT BRIAN CATANZARO JILL DEARMAN *
 * MICHAEL DOBBS KEN FILAR TOM GEDWILLO *
 * CLAY GEERDES MIKE GUNDERLOY RORY HOUCHEMS BRIAN PEARCE *
 * LEE PELTON GERRY REITH ROLDO *
 * TOM SANDERS STEVEN SCHARFF CANDI STRECKER KERRY THORNLEY *
 * ADVICE COLUMNIST: COOP BABOON DOOLEY STRIPS: JOHN CRAWFORD *
 * FRONT COVER: BRIAN PEARCE—BACK PAGE FILLER: JED MARTINEZ *
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 * Ads furnished by Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous, Bob Black, J.C. *
 * Brainbeau, and The Church of the SubGenius *
 * Copywrite 1984-1 Pen-Elayne Enterprises—Kip M. Ghesin, President *
 * PRINTED BY AMERICAN SAMIZDAT PRESS—"If it bites, it's an A.S.P." *
 * Quote of the Month: "If you collect enough insanity in one place, *
 * the s will fall out."—Joe Adamson, in a book about the Marx Bros. *

ACKNOWLEDITORIALETC.

Real short edit this time, as I'm sure the length of the issue will more than make up for it...Thanks to the following folk for helping me easily into Year 26 on this blessed Planet of the Clocks—Deborah Benedict, Les Light, Jed Martinez, Robert Hale, Georg Patterson, Linda Henson, Mike & Carolyn Gunderloy, Mildred Moslow, Jill Zimmerman, Anni Ackner, Brian Pearce and Karen Lucchesi for their cards; and AA, JJ, Dave Ossman, Steve Cozzi, Mike & Mildred, and "Mr. Mike" for the neat presents! Also, while we're at it, thanks to all for the holiday cards, and the same back to all of you tenfold, but please don't feel snubbed or slighted, I don't send cards or presents this time of year, as I try to do that sort of thing year 'round instead. So, happy to all, and to all a good sleep...

And for those of you receiving this in person at our first HIJ gala New Year's Eve Minus One event, Welcome Back to 1984! Hope you enjoy your evening (and if not, you can always sneak in the bathroom and read the rest of this issue)! Full report next issue, when Rupert Murdoch Buys IJ...By the way, by the time you get this the deadline for #28 (12/30) will probably have passed, so do save your material for future issues. The deadline for IJ #29 is posted at the left.

Two new semi-policies: I prefer new folks to at least see a copy of IJ before submitting something, so please tell your friends and acquaintances; and PLEASE, NO MORE SERIALS! We're drowning...

I bid the monthly format a fond farewell, as the new year and new plans dawn. In store: official IJ t-shirts this year for sure; perhaps a version of Audio IJ over somebody's local airwaves; "Brighton Beach Express", a Carrollian expedition into the heart of Brooklyn, and, if I'm lucky, maybe I'll get to actually write more stuff in the future instead of just typing/organizing it all. I'm looking forward to a less hectic pace for all of us...

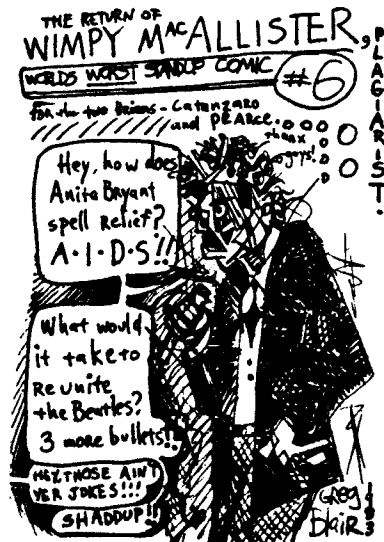
Submissions for IJ #29 and beyond (to include anything from artwork to under-2000-word writings to letters to front and back covers) to the palatial p.o. box listed on the back, please; don't forget, if you're sending checks, make them out to "Elayne Wechsler," NOT "IJ"! I cannot cash checks for IJ, as it doesn't really exist...Thanks for keeping things afloat this time to J.C. Brainbeau, Greg Hill, Luke McGuff, Georg Patterson and Barbara Weiss—\$ always gratefully accepted...

'Tis not the end, dear friends, nor even the beginning. It is not incumbent upon us to think linearly. Happy Lives.

SANTA'S REINDEER
 ARE
 RIGHTEOUS BUCKS!
 (For sure, totally!)

Jed Martinez 12/83

"ZEKE the GEEK" by Randy Maxson



GHOST OF JIM MORRISON: Hey man, glad to get a chance to ask how you dig my new album, man. It's a rock version of some classical shit, man. I'm into some different shit now man, and I'm excited to know what you think. —Jim Morrison

THIS ISSUE DEDICATED TO DEEBEE FOR HER GRAND PRIZE VICTORY IN GAMES MAGAZINE'S "CAPTIONS COURAGEOUS" CONTEST (SEE THE JANUARY '84 ISSUE); AND TO 'PRODUCTION ASSISTANT' GEORGE PATTERSON (aka RODNY K. DIOXIN) - THANKS!

Fan Noose

Obligatory Plugs-For-Folks-I-Don't-Even-Know time first... "A new anti-authoritarian poetry magazine" called **SEDITIONARY DELICIOUS** is accepting any style of poetry (not more than five, please) at P.O. Box 6981, New York, NY 10150... **WORLD WIDE FILM EXPEDITION** "is a new, non-profit, public service group dedicated to revising the Populist media tradition and championing true self-expression", whatever that means, and they sent me a blatant request-for-\$25-because-they're-so-non-profit to help support their first project, "to take our film crew along the entire length of the Lewis and Clark Trail from St. Louis to Astoria, Oregon". No way I will suggest anyone sending that much money to presumptive people who don't even know or seem to care anything about us (I don't even know who sent me this 'letter'), but if you're interested, send an SASE for the same info to 1201 New York St., Lawrence, KS 66044... **SteelDragon Press** has premiered a new (color cover) comic, **STEEL DRAGON STORIES**, which a number of distributors should be carrying shortly if not already; if you'd like to order it by mail, it's \$2 to Box 7253, Powderhorn Station, Minneapolis, MN 55407... **Tony & Cathy Renner** have just put out the newest edition of the self-indulgent but interesting **ETHEL THE FROG** fanzine—\$1 or trade to 3842 DeTonty Ave., Apt. #3West, St. Louis, MA 63110... If mail art's your bit, you might like **Julian Ross'** latest **MAGAZINE**, available for a SASE to 1400 N. Hayworth Ave., Apt. #36, Los Angeles, CA 90046... **Luke McGuff** has put out another wonderful mini-fiction-book called **BOATMAN**—send 50¢ or more (he deserves it) to P.O. Box 3680, Minneapolis, MN 55403... **Matt Feazell** has a more fun quality minis featuring his heroes **CynicalMan** and **AntiSocialMan**; 25¢ each from Matt at 32 Six Knives Ct., Raleigh, NC 27604... And do note the plugs in the letters column for **Steve Willis** and the new stuff he's just come out with—I can't say enough about this artist, so I let him speak for himself... Which brings us (so soon?) to "the regulars", pubs we've reviewed here before but which merit mention anyhow—**COMIX WORLD** #s 226, 227 celebrate the ug review sheet's 10th anniversary by having **Diana Schultz** interviewing editor (and IJ staffer) **Clay Geerdes**—send Clay a SASE for info, at Box 7081, Berkeley, CA 94707; **CONFESSIONS OF A TRASH FIEND** V2#s 13, 14 (horror-movies)—**Richard Green**, P.O. Box 32, Old Bridge, NJ 08857 (\$7/yr); **CONTACT** #36 (singles)—**John Fremont**, P.O. Box 500, Mendocino, CA 95460 (\$3 for sample copy); **FACTSHEET FIVE** (fantastic plugazine, among other things, featuring a number of IJers)—**Mike Gunderloy**, 41 Lawrence St., Medford, MA 02155 (new sub price—\$1 or 80¢ in stamps per); **GOOD DAY SUNSHINE** #18 (Beatles)—**Charles F. Rosenay III**, 397 Edgewood Ave., New Haven, CT 06511 (\$2—this issue is part of the New England Beatles Convention Programazine); **THE MONTHLY INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE TIMES JOURNAL POST GAZETTE NEWS CHRONICLE BULLETIN** #11 (excellent surreality and fiction)—**T.S. Child**, 2510 Bancroft Way #207, Berkeley, CA 94704 (SASE or trade); **LOVE STAR** (comedy, and yes, it occurs to me I just fucked up alphabetical order but I'm too tired to retype)—**Lauren Barnett Scharf**, P.O. Box 29000, Suite 103, San Antonio, TX 78229 (\$1.95 or trade); **OC-TAGRAM** #3 (sf book review fanzine)—**Maia Cowan**, 652 Cranbrook Rd. #3, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48103 (SASE or trade); **THE PETER SCHICKELE RAG** #10 (PDQ Bach and other Schickele products)—Box 325, Woodstock, NY 12498 (\$1); **THE SOUTHERN LIBERTARIAN MESSENGER** V.111#s 6, 7 (libertarian)—**John T. Harlee**, Rt. 10 Box 52A, Florence, SC 29501 (SASE, trade); **THE STAR BLAZERS FANDOM REPORT** V3#11 (self-explanatory)—**Michael Pinto**, P.O. Box 1047, Bellmore, NY 11710—note new address (SASE for info); **WALLPAPER** V2#8 (best surrealityrag in NJ!)—**Amy Sweeney**, P.O. Box 3324, Trenton, NJ 08619 (25¢ donation but do send more). Toodles...

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...or not TV by elayne wechsler

Well, as usual, the planning's been way off. But I've been promising a patient public (ahem) that I'd have this sooner or later, so do forgive the incompleteness (I just haven't been watching a lot of prime time tv lately, no small confession for a Couch Potatoe), and let's get on with it—

MONDAY

AFTER M*A*S*H—The only show worth talking about Monday evenings. As the self-fulfilling prophets predicted, the show doesn't live up to M*A*S*H, but that's mostly because it's not supposed to. Oh, the actors remain in character, the writing and concept are excellent, but without *The War* as the underlying catalyst of conflict, the premise is bound to fall short. True, the aftermath of war (hence the title, no doubt) can still be horrible, but nowhere near the level of terror of war itself. **** nonetheless.

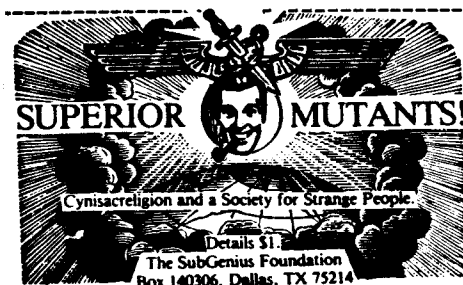
TUESDAY

THE A-TEAM—Carolyn Boyd has already expounded on this show in previous issues, so I won't really detail anything here. What can I tell you, it's a rather violent but relatively (morally and psychically) harmless hour of entertainment. Nobody takes it seriously, for goodness sakes. And, of course, I do so adore "Howling Mad" Murdock... What's interesting to me about this show is the dirt behind the scenes, as the *Nat'l Enquirer* would no doubt say, and the fact that the forgettable token woman in the cast (*Melinda Culler*) playing the forgettable token woman character on the show (see, can't even remember her name) has been canned, apparently due to rifts with series 'star' *George Peppard*. That has to be the cause—if she'd been fired from bad acting, half the cast would have gone with her. But aw, what the heck...****

WHAT, ME JEALOUS?

by Deborah Benedict

So you jumped into the movie screen to be with the dame in silver lame. the hell with my artistic cooking, my waxing our no-wax floor. I stutter, I stammer—I know I have no glamor. So, be with your starlet and I won't even mention her six ex-husbands and her pre-menstrual tension.



REMINGTON STEELE—Again, tv maven Carolyn hears rumors that this may be moved/cancelled, but nothing further on that at this time... This is, without a doubt, my favorite network show nowadays. The scripts are (usually) top-notch, and the chemistry between *Stephanie Zimbalist* (always a shordurpersav of mine) and *Pierce Brosnan* is marvelously successful. It's a pleasure to watch wit, romance and suspense intermingle—one can even put up with *Doris Roberts* in that context. (By the way, is *Mildred Krebs* any relation to *Maynard G.?*) The characterizations are reminiscent of a *Bogart-meets-Hepburn* flick—a fact readily admitted by the writers, who stick as much as they can in these jaded 80's to the pacing and fantasy innocence of that era's movies. Well-done and refreshing. My vote for Best Show on Air, even without Mr. Brosnan's considerable number of attractive physical attributes.****

WEDNESDAY

WHIT KIDS—This appears, based on a 15-minute viewing, to be a fun show for kids. At least, that was the type of thing I would have liked to watch when I was 14 or so. Although it's hard to get used to a balding, mustachioed *Max Gail* (he plays either a professor or a cop), everything else seems pretty routine and innocuous. Christ, who knows, I only watched 15 minutes of it...*

FAMILY TIES—I think I talked a bit about this last year, and it's still a cute idea to have a tv family where the adults are hippies (although *Michael* runs a public tv station and *Elise* is an architect) and the kids are hell-bent on Corporate America. This has survived to its second season partly because the characters have developed somewhat from stock, and partly because the kids aren't terribly obnoxious.***

ST. ELSEWHERE—Well, they've done something else right. Lord knows where *David Birney* went (thank goodness *Meredith's* still bringing home the bacon from *FAMILY TIES*!), and *G.W. Bailey's* off to *GOODNIGHT BEANTOWN* (see "SUNDAY"), but THEY'VE ADDED *PAUL SAND* to the cast!! I can't tell you what a joy it was to see him and *Austin Pendleton* in the same scene a few weeks back. Hey, I'm set for Wednesdays...****

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY I haven't watched a lot of tv, so maybe I'll make a "part 2" or something in issue #29. By then, I'm sure there'll be a load of new shows out anyway...

SATURDAY—AM—The new crop of cartoons includes a rather cute moralistic bit (reminiscent of *Pat Albert*, almost) starring Mr. T, and the return of *THE CHIPMUNKS*!! (presumably the late *Ross Bagdasarian's* son is now doing *Dave Seville*—who looks the same as the original cartoons—and "the boys"; I didn't catch the credits yet); nothing else to report on, unless you're dying to hear about *Pac-Man* and the *Smurfs*...

SATURDAY (evening)—Well, I used to be a closet "so bad it's good" *LOVE BOAT* and *FANTASY ISLAND* fan, but once they circulate plots and guest stars the fourth time around, it's no fun anymore. I plan to spend my Saturdays more constructively (I hope)...but there is still *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*—and it's probably the best show of its kind on network tv, even if it's the only show of its etc. etc. They're still *NatLamp*-like nasty-for-nasty's-sake sometimes (you think they would have abandoned that old tired dead-horse legacy by now), and the best moments resemble more parody than satire (anybody with *Cinemax* willing to tape *SCTV* for VHS for me?), but it's still a cut above—yeah, I know, that's not saying much to some...*

SUNDAY

KNIGHT RIDER—Also gratuitous but harmless cartoon violence with a talking car. *William Daniels* sounds distinctly more human as a robot here than he sounds robotic as a human in *ST. ELSEWHERE*.***

GOODNIGHT BEANTOWN—I don't think it's just because I'm fond of Boston, or even because I'm fond of *Bill Bixby* and *Marlette Hartley* and *G.W. Bailey* and *Jim Staahl*. I'm sure it's a combination of all of the above, but it's also semi-intelligent banter and non-childish situations and an interesting *NTW*-like premise and all that. Aren't I easy to please? Good lead-in for *New Yorkers* to *Fawcett Towers* and *Python* on 13, since this is at 9:30 and those two start at 10...*

Observant nit-pickers will note the absence of network and time on the above reviews. This is a deliberate intention designed to encourage the pastime of reading—look it up in your TV Guides. I'll have to skip cable shows for now (at last count, *Brooklyn* was scheduled to get cable installed shortly after the end of the world as we know it), but I wanted to take special note of a program that's finally come back in syndication—

ROWAN & MARTIN'S LAUGH-IN—What "They" did here was chop up the once hour-long shows into half-hour incoherent snips of something one can't quite put one's finger on unless one has a vivid recollection of the original style and times. Fortunately, I was a fanatic over this show on the first go-round (sheesh, even my father liked it, and he's the *Benny Hill* variety), and as I am an aficionado of that era in general (could you tell?), I'm tickled to even see this such. "They" claim the reason for the cut was to eliminate all dated material, but who are they kidding? Bad move, syndicators, but at least something's on the air. It's bizarre to watch *Goldie Hawn* Back Then, tho...****

DIARY of The ROCK FIEND

by Anni Ackner

A STAKE OF HOLLY THROUGH THE HEART

Quite unlike bagel bakers, Greyhound bus drivers and Soviet Socialist Republics, there has never, to the best of my admittedly limited knowledge, been a serious attempt made to unionize the ordes of witty, acerbic, sophisticated commentators on the American scene that roam the land. Of course, I really don't know the reason for this—being far too busy trying to ascertain the reason for my placement on the mailing lists of both The American Eagle Foundation and AGAINST THE WALL to have time for investigations of anything else—but I've always surmised that "was due, in part, to the natural tendency of witty, acerbic, sophisticated commentators on the American scene towards cynicism and, as such, to be as cynical about the efficacy of unions as anything else and, in part, to the natural tendency of witty, acerbic, sophisticated commentators on the American scene to object to being dragged away from THE A TEAM just to attend some boisterous, unruly meeting. Be that as it may, however, I do think it awfully fortunate, under the circumstances, that such a thing has never materialized because, had there been a union of this nature, and had I loosened by grip enough to join it, I would no doubt now be unceremoniously drummed out, my card ripped into little shreds, all rights and privileges of the Loyal Brotherhood of the Eternal Smart Ass Local 8 stripped away from me, and all because of the one, deceptively simple, statement I find myself forced, out of sheer, bitter honesty, to make:

I like Christmas.

I mean, I really like Christmas. Holly and tinsel and trees and Bing Crosby and chestnuts-roasting-on-an-open-fire (despite the fact that I know perfectly well that chestnuts do not roast on an open fire—they barbecue on a suspiciously sticky grill in the company of lonely, neurotic Giant Salty Pretzels and are purveyed by the sort of gentlemen who make up the greater segment of the crowd of spectators at any given cock fight and who are capable of making change in several alternating languages, none of which happens to be English) and last-minute shopping and little red bows on packages containing thoroughly unsuitable presents. I even believe in Santa Claus with at least the same fervor that I believe in Jesse Jackson's candidacy for the President of the United States, attributing his failure to leave me any toys (Santa's, that is, not Jackson's. Jackson hasn't left me any toys either but, really, the man does have other things on his mind, what with the fragmentation of his constituency and the incipient racism of the news media and all that) to the fact that, in order to reach my room from the roof, he must first pass through the room of the Sister to Whom I Do Not Speak, which is easily enough to frighten any self-respecting Jolly Old Elf into a forgetful stupor. And I fully realize that none of this is Hip, and none of this is Groovy, and certainly none of this is what you'd rightfully expect from the typewriter of a witty, acerbic, sophisticated commentator on the American scene, but I just can't help it. I simply adore Christmas.

Because it is in the emotional and psychological make-up of human beings to expect that other people will take the same pleasure in various posttimes and pursuits as they do and because I am, as far as I've ever been able to tell, a human being, I have rather often wondered why I seem to be the only one in the Western world over the age of seven, and who is not immediately involved in the manufacturing of Cabbage Patch Dolls, to take this peculiar joy in the Season of Good Will. I have, needless to say, heard all the arguments against Christmas—that it's too commercial, that it's lost all its True Meaning, that it's hypocritical to set aside one day a year to love everybody, and then go back to malice and mayhem for the other 364—but they don't seem to me to hold very much water. After all, institutions of banking are commercial, but I haven't seen anybody writing morally incensed letters to the Editors of large newspapers when the interest check from his/her Certificate of Deposit arrives. 400 relatives in puce satin wreaking havoc upon a defenseless buffet table at the Kiamasha Lodge really don't have all that much to do with the True Meaning of being bar mitzvahed, and one day a year of Comfort and Joy may arguably be better than none at all, but still it's Christmas that comes in for all the flak. This was a source of severe bewilderment for me—the sort of bewilderment apt to fall upon a thinking person who is absolutely certain that the invitation stressed a masquerade party, when she realizes she is the only person in the room clad in a gorilla suit rather than a spiffy little something or other from Bloomies—until one recent wintery evening, as I sat trying to cover a three-foot-square gift box with two feet of red foil paper and a skein of knotted knitting worsted that was supposed to have been a pair of leg warmers, when I had a revelation which I choose not to believe was inspired by my earlier ingestion of half a Swiss Colony Holiday Linsertorte.

It occurred to me, as I struggled to simultaneously locate the beginning of the Scotch tape and the last of a bottle of Cintrugel my sister had once purchased after a particularly antic New Year's Eve party, that the reason people dislike Christmas so is not because it's commercialized or unspiritual or hypocritical, but simply because it's embarrassing. Extremely embarrassing. Downright embarrassing. Embarrassing in the same way that attempting to purchase a ticket for a Greyhound bus and suddenly coming face to face with Mike Wallace and the entire SIXTY MINUTES news team might be. And it seemed to me, in these final gray moments before deciding that a Hefty bag with a festive green wire tie might be just the thing after all, that if we could somehow cut down the Embarrassment Factor in Christmas, then people might feel better about the whole business and that would be all to the good. Having come to that conclusion, having procured the Hefty bag, and having achieved the full and terrible realization that the Swiss Colony Holiday Linsertorte had murdered sleep, possibly until Boxing Day, and being, as always, dedicated above all to the happiness and

comfort of my Readers, I forthwith formulated

The Twelve Mays of Christmas

(And a Couple of Stray May Nots)

1) Christmas is, of course, a time for families, and for visiting those near and dear to us and so one may, it goes without saying, attend as many holiday gatherings as one can manage without succumbing to what can only be termed Relative Overkill. However, one should always strive, while in attendance, to keep the proceedings on a genial holiday level. Reminding thirtyish unmarried women of the slow, inexorable ticking of the biological clock, remarking that the host's prized bran-dried fruitcake smells just a shade this side of overripe and instituting spirited discussions of the probability of dioxin poisoning with newlyweds who have recently purchased homes in New Jersey have been known to cast a pall over even the most warm-hearted of evenings.

2) Christmas is also a time for the giving of gifts, and one may, with a clear conscience and no thought to the treat of creeping consumerism, give with a free and open hand. One should, however, try to remember that, while unsuitable gifts are only to be expected, embarrassing gifts, no matter how costly, can cause enough bad feelings to last well into early July. Giving the latest Boy George effort to someone who possesses season tickets to all the major opera companies in the immediate vicinity is unsuitable. Giving a Datsun 280Z to a survivor of the Bataan Death March is embarrassing.

3) I am not an unreasonable person—nor, I believe, are my readers—and I have no real objections to the advertising of Christmas presents during the Christmas season. Manufacturers, sales emporiums and service organizations may advertise to their hearts' content for all of me, but I do firmly believe that, if something is going to be advertised as a Christmas present, it ought to be something that might conceivably be given as a Christmas present. Putting a Ronco Jolly Fire Extinguisher in a green and red box and dressing your salesperson in a reindeer suit is all well and good, provided you also include suggestions as to who would be overwhelmed with happiness upon finding it under the tree.

4) While we're on the topic of advertising, I don't see anything intrinsically wrong with using Santa Claus as a promotional device. After all, if he doesn't mind, why should I? Still, it does seem to me that, while advertisers may indeed invoke his name, it ought to be in the light of things he might actually endorse. Having The Great Man purveying toys, lovely little bits of jewelry, large colourful books, warm spicy perfumes and debatably even articles of clothing is fine. Having The Treat Man purveying condominiums in Boca Raton I think is pushing it.

5) Christmas cards are almost as important a part of the holiday season as are visits to the family and one may safely send them out to all and sundry with the glorious abandon of a slightly shade doctor handing around Seconal. Having said that, though, it must be stressed, first, that with the exception of Real Famous People, if you're that sort of person, it's only fair to send Christmas cards solely to those who you are certain will know who you are (Real Famous People expect to get at least a few unsolicited Christmas cards, and actually become moody and temperamental if they don't, but even one teensy card from an Unknown Entity is enough to drive Just Plain Folks into a state of frenzy and despair. It may seem like a charming gesture to pop off a card to that dear sol with whom you once waited on line to purchase tickets for the Rolling Stones on the surface of things, but digging a bit deeper might very simply disclose the luckless recipient staying up all Christmas eve not straining his/her ears for the sound of rooftop bells but straining his/her memory for some glimpse of who you are. This is, in a word, embarrassing to all concerned), and second, that Christmas cards really ought to have something to do with Christmas. Nativity scenes have something to do with Christmas. Santa Claus has something to do with Christmas, as do snow-covered city scenes and tasteful modernistic postcards that simply read "Season's Greetings". Round-faced cherubic children with mistletoe in their hair are a little nauseating to do with Christmas, too, and certain animals—deer, doves and, stretching a point, unicorns frolicing in a winter forest—have their place as well. Garfield the Cat clad in a red tasseled cap, on the other hand, no doubt has something to do with something, but the current betting line has it that it's not Christmas.

6) Ditto Christmas carols. Sing them here and there, over hill and dale and on the Johnny Carson show, but do try to make sure they at least mention Christmas somewhere along the line. JINGLE BELLS, even if it's played by John Williams conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra at a special Christmas show in the White House—ESPECIALLY if it's played by John Williams conducting the Boston Pops Orchestra at a special Christmas show in the White House—is not a Christmas Carol. Neither is WINTER WONDERLAND. And neither is anything that contains the words "rock", "groove", "get off on it", or "death to the forces of western imperialistic religions".

7) Presumably we all know this, but just in case somebody doesn't, it's really not appropriate to dance naked on top of the filing cabinet at the office Christmas party.

8) Neither is it appropriate to systematically erase all the documents on your firm's backfile of word-processing diskettes and replace them all with T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, no matter how much you may love Clement Moore. The one possible exception to this is in the unlikely event that your immediate supervisor is Walter Cronkite, in which case he will probably be dancing naked on top of the filing cabinet.

9) Harking back to the Christmas Carol for just a moment, whatever else happens to or around them, they really ought to be recorded and performed by human beings. Chipmunks belong in little holes in oak trees, not on the David Letterman show singing ADESTE FIDELIS.

10) Which reminds me, in a roundabout way, of Christmas Specials. Now, I'm as fond of Christmas Specials as the next person—in fact, though I once asked my husband not to say anything about this to anyone, I'm absolutely mad for Christmas Specials. You won't say anything about it, will you?—and in my opinion the network programmers may show as many of them as they can cram into what amounts to a three week long Neilson

(cont'd. next page)

Overnight, but I do think some modicum of restraint ought to be exercised. Having five different dramatizations of the birth of Christ one right after the other is permissible, if unimaginative. Having one of them star Carl Sagan, William Buckley and Dr. Art Ulene as the Three Wise Men is a little extreme.

11) By the same token, musical Christmas Specials really should make a strenuous effort to reflect at least some of the sense of tradition and fitness the holiday inspires. As tiresome as Perry Como, Andy Williams and the Still Dead After All These Years Bing Crosby may come to seem after repeated viewings, BARBRA STREISAND'S CHRISTMAS FROM MIAMI BEACH is missing an essential point.

12) Finally, a word about Chanukah. There are a reasonably healthy number of people of the Hebraic persuasion in this country and honestly, most of us are just tickled to death about the majority group's valiant efforts to turn our winter holiday into an ethnic version of theirs, if only because it cuts down on the liberal press' editorials about Israeli imperialism for eight days, but I think we'd all appreciate it that much more if a few minor points were straightened out. Someone really should tell them, for instance, that not all Jewish holidays are the same, and airing LITTLE MURRAY'S PASSOVER in the middle of December makes everyone concerned seem a tad confused. Along similar lines, HBO's continuous eight day showings of THE CHOSEN—which has as much to do with Chanukah as Bobby Vinton has to do with the Solidarity Movement—don't actually do all that much to cover up the fact that the President is not planning to televise his lighting of the giant Menorah on the White House lawn. I'm not really suggesting that everyone get bundled up and go from house to house singing Chanukah carols, but it might be sort of nice if someone could find an alternative to that dreadful little ditty about the clay dreidle, and it would be helpful if all Chanukah cards didn't uniformly read like the species of memo one generally receives from the warm-hearted but slightly senile executive who can never remember anyone's name. None of this is quite as embarrassing as the handsome blond newscaster who routinely wishes his Jewish viewers a "joyous Yom Kippur" but, on the other hand, it doesn't go terribly far toward advancing the cause of ecumenical relations either.

The problem with the above list—aside from its extreme length and the truly ridiculous amount of spelling errors it contains—is that, comprehensive as it is, I haven't actually got any idea what to do with it. Christmas, as Charles Schultz once implied, may indeed be run by a large Eastern syndicate but, if this is so, their mailing address has yet to be included in any of the corporate magazines to which I am privy and, things being what they are, I haven't really got the energy to go posting the thing up on church doors. The best I can think of to do is leave it in the room of The Sister To Whom I Do Not Speak, underneath the plate of cookies and the carrots for the reindeer. If we're all extremely lucky, The Great Man may take it to heart and decide to pull his weight and do something about it, thus making Christmas a more enjoyable time for us all. Even if he doesn't, I am hoping that he may take me to heart and decide to leave me a few little tokens, which would make Christmas a more enjoyable time for me. In either case, it's rather too late to do anything about it just now, as Christmas is fast approaching and I've just been invited to attend some sort of arbitration meeting. I'm not sure precisely what this means but in any event, they tell me, it will not conflict with THE A TEAM. (Armi has been granted this extra space as her generous Christmas present from yours truly. Ms. Ackner, you have been warned, heh heh...)

FINDING FREEDOM

by Kerry Thornley

CHAPTER ONE: The Paisley Dragon

On October 5th the prime rate went up to sixty-nine-and-a-half-percent and the anarchist, Bakunin, told Quent Wimpel that you must make a revolution as you seduce a woman—from the circumference inward and from the bottom up.

Both kinds of news reached him as he struggled to awaken—the first time his clock radio, the second in a dream.

No bitter autumn cold had yet descended on Florida and so his window was open to the cool morning air. A flock of birds chattered in the punk tree a few feet from his ear. Dawn's earliest light streaked the blotter-clouded sky.

A voice in a neighbor's yard shouted: "The first shift will get away with murder, the second shift won't be so lucky..." then trailed off into a normal level of speech he couldn't make out.

Feeling unusually lethargic, resenting the competition of the prime interest rate, though rather envying the first shift, he sought to slip back into his revolutionary slumber before it was too late to guide it into a wet dream, perhaps surrealistically seducing a woman and making revolution in the same instant.

For a split-second he was tempted to get up and write that down as an idea for a poster, but instead he tried to conjure up old Bakunin again. No such luck.

Destiny pissed in his ear.

That was his cat's name—a tortoise shell calico—Destiny. She had been pawing—playfully he thought—among the sheets near his neck ever since Michael Bakunin first took him earnestly by both hands and looked him urgently in the eye.

(Looking very much like Quent's closest friend, Jesse Sump, Bakunin resembled his pictures. A mutual acquaintance, Simon Moon, looked rather like Proudhon. Jesse on the other hand once said that Quent resembled Karl Marx in appearance—but then maybe just all men with beards look alike and the rest was their imaginations. As for himself, Quent would have much preferred being regarded as a reincarnated revolutionary, albeit Marx least among his choices, than in terms of the reincarnational theories being circulated about him behind his back by the Ragotcha Foundation.)

"Ha! Ha! I beat Marx! I won those debates!" Bakunin was shouting. "Look! Look at the socialist nations today! Everywhere in the world

I was correct in my predictions! I told him where it would lead! I told him they were planning their strategy all wrong! I tried to warn him! You must make revolution as you seduce a woman..."

"...a sixty-nine-and-a-half percent prime rate was announced yesterday, effective today, by the Sherman Trust Company Bank of New York," the radio announcer suddenly began droning matter-of-factly.

Right after that was when Destiny filled his ear with lukewarm cat piss.

Suddenly aware that another day had begun, Wimpel peevishly grabbed Destiny by the scruff of the neck and carried her to the sliding door, heaving her. Landing in the middle of the yard adroitly, she nevertheless looked confused.

"DON'T LOOK SO INNOCENT!" Quent bellowed. "YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID!"

Now that he thought of it, Bakunin's beard had been meowing loudly all through the dream.

"The price of survival goes up every day," whined Metalic Medford, the rock artist, over the radio. "The price of survival! How much will you pay? Humanoid touches are haunting my dreams; the beatific vision just ain't what it seems..."

Quent exchanged disgusted glares with himself in the bathroom mirror as he toweled the cat piss off his neck and shoulder, wondering why Jesse Sump thought he looked like Marx. Quent was thinner, taller and tanner than Marx ever was, and the summer sun had bleached his hair. Heavy eyebrows, a perpetually furrowed forehead and a wild beard combined with lots of floating, fine head hair gave him the look of a ponderous thinker—certainly someone important. But Karl Marx?

"WORKERS OF THE WORLD," he accented rousing, "DISPERSE!" Then he could not resist adding, "Say the magic word and the duck will come down and pay you a hundred dollars." (That was the slogan, credited simply to Marx, of the Marxist-Grouchoist League, a Canadian surrealist organization that sent him sporadic mailings.)

Then Quent realized again how incredibly stupid he was and wondered how he would ever succeed in making a revolution anywhere. By jumping directly into the shower, cat piss and all, he could have saved a towel from contamination—seeing as that was his next scheduled action anyhow. But now it was too late.

Dancing and shouting, as was his routine, he plunged into his ice cold shower. Chairman Mao used to take cold baths every morning and Wimpel got the idea from him. For it made one feel singularly undecadent for the rest of the day.

"And now this late-breaking report from the Washington desk of Collective Mind Wire Service: Members of the Ishmaelite sect of Islam overthrew the secular government of Omkwat early this morning and have established a provisional revolutionary administration composed entirely of religious leaders..."

Looking at his radio, Quent shouted, "ARISE! Be your own slaves!" Drying his body with a large, Paisley towel of many colors, he paused to admire himself in his full-length bedroom mirror.

Yesterday Quent had passed a street preacher at the corner of Kennedy and Hyde who said clearly, as Wimpel hurried by, only five words: "There's no time to repent."

No evangelist had ever said that to him before. Somehow, the news seemed enormously cheering. "Hallelujah," he said to the grinning lout in the mirror; it was high time to get stoned: there was a stash of grass in a box lid under his bed.

Bouncing himself down in the vicinity directly above the dope, he reached below and behind himself and pulled the tray up to his left elbow. Propped reclining facing the mirror, Quent skillfully sprinkled marijuana bud flakes into a rolling paper and licked its glistening edge.

As the first puff of smoke evaporated Wimpel felt that old SHAZAM—no longer an ordinary paranoid mortal, he was the Paisley Dragon, a hippie superhero dedicated to slinking among tall building tops clothed only in the Paisley towel now draped over his shoulder, tights and trunks. What an idea for a novel hero!—eternally locked in valiant combat against the Drug Control Enforcement Unit of the Strategic Air Command, commissioned just last week by the President to shoot on sight anyone caught with over a gram of marijuana in their possession.

More news continued to blare out over the radio between songs and commercials. Nowadays news was something Wimpel entertained with a mixture of amusement and disbelief. Certainly if somebody didn't do something about all the strange things going on lately, sooner or later somebody else would make the press stop talking about them.

In the back of his mind flickered the notion of writing a note for himself about the Paisley Dragon idea—a novel scripted like an underground comic—but before he could move, his mind raced off in other directions and he forgot all about his literary inspiration. (Great Goddess Almighty, it was good grass!)

Half a hard-on could be seen in the mirror from his position of elbow resting on pillow. Discretely and politely, he reached to the knob and turned off the program. (That station's disc jockeys tended to act rather silly about sex. Quent didn't feel comfortable with the thought of their presence any longer.)

Making revolution according to Bakunin's prescription was yet very much on his mind. Now Wimpel consciously took his anarchist dream to Africa where he made revolution in the Congo to the sound of drums—with a beautiful statuesque tribal matron he had seen once in a National Geographic clothed only in a beaded loincloth.

Bakunin discretely faded from the fantasy and, briefly, Quent was actually able to forget all about politics. (Wimpel hated politics; he was not apolitical, but zealously anti-political in his own eyes. Yet such had been his fate that he was, he felt, one of the only people outside Russia who was forced to deal with the subject day and night. Not to be free to withdraw from a problem seemed to him intolerable, and so he felt more and more autistic in his relations with others as the process relentlessly continued.)

Autoerotic and autistic, he thought, the next best thing to catatonic and androgenous: the *samadhi* of the poor in spirit—Instant Nirvana of the cramped, stuffed, hustled and hounded...



JESUS AND MARY. I love you. Save Soul. The Good Book says forcing religion on the heathen gods wins you life everlasting. Especially if you kill them in the process.

Mr. Allen's Airship

by Steven F. Scharff

Chapter Three

Inside the Allens' house, Gary and Lorraine are listening attentively to Messrs. Lewis and Wasserman. Although the conversation fascinates Lorraine, with its legal complexities, to Gary it brings forth visions of the Hindenburg, his dreams of lighter-than-air flight shot to hell.

"...so in short, Mr. Allen," said Mr. Wasserman, "there's nothing against building and owning your own airship, but without a pilot's license you can't fly it."

Gary, slumped over in his easy chair, giving Wasserman his let-me-cut-my-throat-and-end-it-all look, managed to get the courage to say, "Well, what do you suggest?"

"For starters," his voice losing its official tone, "we can put you in touch with an aircraft design studio and let them review your plans ...Can I see your plans, by the way?"

Without turning his head, Gary extended one arm to a nearby TV tray where a large manila envelope lay. He picked it up, and mechanically gave the envelope to Wasserman.

The FAA official perused through the scribbled plans along with his partner, Mr. Lewis. It was Lewis who made the first comment.

"No, no, no, you've got the rudder entirely too small. And you'll never be able to power this thing with two 5-horsepower engines. You need something like a Volkswagen engine. And an inflatable boat would be light enough, but it won't be rigid enough."

Gary's face seemed to brighten slightly. "Seems you know your stuff!"

"I have to. My job depends on it!"

The four shared a small laugh, and the air of tension and depression for Gary seemed to fade. These two gentlemen weren't here to say "No"; rather "Yes, but..."

"We can put you in touch with someone who knows about this tomorrow," Mr. Lewis remarked. "You'll be notified by phone around 3pm."

After saying their goodbyes, the two left the house, leaving behind some forms for the couple to fill out, and public interest leaflets about the FAA and its operations.

The next day, Gary sat by the phone, staring at his watch. Just for this call, he had synchronized it with the telephone time check.

2:59:56, :57, :58, :59, BRIIIIING!

"This guy is sure-as-hell prompt!" he mumbled as he picked up the receiver. "Hello?"

"Mr. Allen?" said a strangely familiar voice.

"Don't I know you?"

"I'm Mr. Lewis from the FAA. I'm answering your need for a consultant."

"Well, why didn't you do that here?"

"I was on official business then. I have the next three days off, and this project of yours seems inviting. Anyway, I'm a member of a hot air ballooning club, so I won't be the only one helping you."

Gary tried to restrain himself from laughing, but his joy was so overwhelming that the smile on his face strained the muscles behind his ears.

"Getting your plane modified and registered should take about two or three weeks. If no disaster strikes, we could have you airborne in about, say, three, four months. It'll be late summer by then. Excellent flying weather. You'll never want to set foot on the ground again."

Lorraine walked in the front door into the living room (after bringing her Volvo back from the inspection station), and, seeing the smile on Gary's face, she wondered if the upcoming months would be ones that she would always remember or eternally regret.

He ended the conversation with "All right, tomorrow then...You have the address...right...I can't thank you enough!...yeah...g'bye."

He turned like a blur to Lorraine and shouted, "HONEY, GUESS WHAT???"

That was the guy from the FAA and he's a member of a ballooning club and he says...

About an hour later, after Gary had calmed down and fully explained the matter to Lorraine, she asked, "Is everything going to be accounted for? The flight crew, the van that follows the airship, the insurance..."

"Insurance?"

"What if you land in Mrs. Patterson's swimming pool?"

Gary slumped back in his chair, hand on chin. "Damnation! This isn't going to be as easy as I thought!"

NEXT INSTALLMENT: Tentatively Airborne

FUTURE TENSE

by Lee Pelton

(In the opening installment, private detective Colfax Monroe, heading towards a down-scale living standard, was contemplating the end to his moderately successful private eye operation because of the very poor market for his talents in Minneapolis. He was drinking to his eviction notice when a stunning woman entered his office and announced that she thought her husband was dead.)

Colfax sighed, leaned back on his chair, thought about swinging his feet up on the desk, rejected it as cliché, and looked at Mrs. Sarah Atzorn. That wasn't too difficult to do. "Easy on the eyes" was the phrase that came to Colfax's mind.

"You think he's been murdered, Mrs. Atzorn? Why don't we take this from the top, okay?"

"You're right. I've been doing so much, thinking so much, that it's hard to remember who knows what anymore. Mr. Monroe, I know Terry's been murdered, it just can't be anything else. Thorpe threatened him, you know. Pointed his finger right at him just three days ago and said, 'If you don't knock off this screwy deal right now, you can't buy a plot fast enough, unnerstan'?' He did say it, he really did! And now he's gone! Just vanished! I don't know where to turn, the police can't help, and all that's left is someone like you. Can you help me, Mr. Monroe? I need help so very much right now..."

I let her catch her breath. Someone that wound up needed to let off steam, even if it didn't make things any clearer than an L.A. skyline.

"Well, I have a few thousand questions, Mrs. Atzorn. Let's start with who your husband is and then we can move on to who Thorpe is, why the police can't help, and how much are you willing to pay, alright?"

She composed herself. It was like watching some sleek jungle cat, stretching out and relaxing. You could feel her tension leave the room like a kicked bill collector. I was impressed. Her face was now tranquil and calm. I felt like checking her out and finding where she hid the on/off switch.

She looked at me. "Money isn't a problem, Mr. Monroe, I..."

"You gotta be kidding," I blurted.

She took my comment and slid right past without breaking stride.

"...have my own funds but if necessary I can use Terry's. God know I won't let anything those—people—who killed Terry..." Her nose wrinkled as though it had just discovered the milk had gone bad when she mentioned those "people" who, undoubtedly, included this Thorpe character.

"You might not have to pay a thin dime, Mrs. Atzorn. I haven't said I'd take the case yet." I thought to myself, "Who are you fooling. You'd be doing cartwheels if you had a chance, Monroe." Coy bastard.

"Right. I understand. But you must, really you must. It's very difficult to find people like you, Mr. Monroe. Sylvia said you people only exist in the movies, but you don't, do you."

"Pretty sure, Mrs. Atzorn..."

"Sarah..."

"Sarah it is. But, as I was saying, who is, or was, Terence Atzorn, besides being your husband?"

"Well, he never really explained to me completely, but Terry was involved in the precious metals field, like gold, silver, platinum, and stuff like that, you know? So is Thorpe, and Rappeneau, and all those others. He said it was a cut-throat business, and I shouldn't get too involved, but I know they've killed him! It was Winston Thorpe, I just know!"

Hold it. This is all too fast for me. What makes you think your husband was even killed at all? You aren't giving me much info that I can use.

"Because Terry said he might be killed because of something he was working on. Very much on the sly, he told me. He said if anybody found out what he was up to he could be in deep trouble. He was so secretive! Wouldn't hardly notice me at all, he was so wrapped up in this deal."

I thought that if Mr. Terence Atzorn had ignored his wife, he deserved to be six feet under. Or at least committed as terminally insane.

"Okay, Mrs. Atz...Sarah, let's see how everything shapes up. I think you've got yourself a boy."

(to be continued)

Wax Ink *by Rory Houchens*

Hello penguins! Let's waddle through some wax! Adrian Belew has shaken off his lone rhino visage and adopted the guise of the TWANG BAR KING (Island) for his second solo platter. Not as energetically crazed nor as thickly produced as his last record, it allows Belew the freedom to slow down and prove that he can do more than just make a lot of funny sounds with his guitar. Starting off with a faithfully manic version of the Beatles' "I'm Down" and heading on down the road with "I Wonder", a fast-paced tongue twister, "Sexy Rhino", a tribute to Barry White (?) complete with talking guitar, "The Rail Song", a tender tune about one man's love affair with trains, "She Is Not Dead", a billowy slice of mysticism with Belew's star-mocking, backwards guitar providing the paisley, "The Ideal Woman", a middleweight rib-smasher wherein actual people on the street describe, you guessed it, the ideal woman backed up by the big beat, and "Ballet For a Blue Whale", ecological ambience performed solely by Adrian on guitar synthesizer and acoustic guitar and dedicated to our big friends in the sea. Well done from beginning to end and highly recommended!

I was a bit shocked to find that perilous Pat Benatar's latest lp, LIVE FROM EARTH (Chrysalis), was not only not a double album of concert goulash, but not even a full single disc of above-mentioned ingredients seeing as how there are a couple of studio cuts included to insure maximum consumer response. Prerequisite muscle relaxants like "Fire And Ice", the perplexing "Hell Is For Children", the shrill "We Live For Love", "Hit Me With Your Best Shot", and my personal favorite, the dramatic "Promises In The Dark", are all here in their live glory; but don't overlook the new tracks—"Love Is A Battlefield", another report on the war between the sexes with some nice percussion, nice synthetics and hubby Neil Giraldo's nice bent silk guitar, and "Lipstick Lies", whose concrete beat, pudgy bass and tendon-jerk keyboards will cause it to stick in your head like a sharpened cocklebur. Stuff this one in your stocking!

I've been pleasantly surprised by John Warren's ADVANCE WARNING (Condor Records, Box 955, Brookline, MA 02146) in spite of its not-so-vague political overtones (though Warren gets his point across concerning nuclear weapons and war). It's an ambitious pastiche of commercial styles with some of the material ("Advance Warning", "In The Middle of the Night") recalling such contemporary posters as Todd Rundgren, Pablo Cruise and the groundbreaking Ambrosia. Warren's high-pitched, Motown-inflected voice is, however, put to better use on the soulful, seductive melodies of "Blind Alley" and "Follow the Leader". AM radio enthusiasts take note.

Speaking of AM radio (and FM for that matter)—why must we be subjected to such drab slabs of sponge notes and emotional placebos (championed by audio goldiggers Journey, Styx, Mickey Gilley, etc.) when we could be experiencing the bright and lucid popisms of Fools Face? PUBLIC PLACES (Talk Records, P.O. Box 4406, Springfield, MA 01108), the latest lp by this midwestern quintet, is crammed full of soft-centered pop candies guaranteed to satisfy anyone's musical sweet tooth. I must admit it's not as hot as I had expected, but "Thief" chugs along at a pulse-quickening pace (the thumping bass lines on the fadeout are great fun) and "Positive I'm Negative" is equally frenetic. "Memories and Dreams" is smooth and inoffensive with a gooey, Beatley guitar solo, while "Paper Doll" with its sumptuous melody and lush string arrangement ranks as the album's best tune. Light as helium marshmallows, but not gutless.

Fans of jazz, funk, weird stuff or just plain old good music won't want to miss Bill Laswell's BASELINES (Elektra Musician), the first solo album by Material's bass player. With a host of jazzers, new wavers and avant-gardists, Laswell blasts through an album's worth of excellent originals that'll expend your brain and excite your nervous system. "Work Song" cruises along with an invigorating melody while "Hindsight" is plump with driving multi-beats. "Barricade" crawls under barbed wire and slithers around nighttime shadows, and the ominous "Upright Man" is spiced with a gnarling bass and taped radio blurbs. Exceptionally good stuff that gets better with each listen.

One last record that is sure to help you shake yourself out of those jagged, ivory clodhums is Eurythmics' SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS) (RCA). Cool, uncluttered synthesizer lines and crisp percussion form a sophisticated foundation on which Annie Lennox builds vocal skyscrapers—and what stunners they are (no amount of superlatives exists to accurately describe Lennox's seductive crooning abilities, just listen and be glad she makes records)! Everyone knows the magnificent singles "Love Is A Stranger" and the delectable title track (with its neo-classical synthesizer), but let us not overlook the rest of this 12-incher, "The Walk" and a cover of Isaac Hayes' "Wrap It Up" would fit nicely into the golden age of Motown, "Jennifer" is a dreamy, cryptic tune, and "Somebody Told Me", a snazzy little tale of deceit that sends out shivering shock waves, are all juicy numbers. A real barn burner!

Until next time—keep your ears to the speakers and your toes in the blizzard!!

Massacre In Calcutta

by Robert Hale

One evening, not too long ago, I wanted some food, so I could eat it when the David Letterman show came on. It was Bob Rooney night. I decided to go to a local Stop & Go, A 24-hour mini-mart.

When I got there, I bought a frozen pizza (plain), a six-pack of Pepsi, a box of animal crackers, a half-gallon of Vitamin-D milk, oreos (Double-Stuf), People magazine (Joan Rivers was on the cover), a copy of USA Today, Pop-Tarts, brownie mix, Easyliders magazine, a cinnamon roll, buns and Town Talk bread. All together, it cost me \$9.99. With tax. For my trouble, I received a free WOVE ROCKS bumpersticker.

What does this have to do with violence in India? Absolutely nothing. If the title didn't attract your psychotic, bloodthirsty emotions, would you have read this story? Would you have read an article entitled "Food Hunt at the Mini-Mart? I think not.



"BOB"

TALK SHOW HOST CONFIDENTIAL

by Michael Dobbs

Since our last little visit, I've had two experiences which I humbly hope dear readers will find just a little interesting.

Many times I've wondered if Democrats and Republicans really do have some sort of middle ground...a place where the two philosophies meet...an intersection of these usually never-meeting lines. The other day I found myself on the geometric plane where Republican meets Democrat.

Now, at this great meeting of the parties only one of them was present. I suspect there were some closet Democrats milling around in rented Republican clothing. But the intersection was more of a spiritual one.

Now when you think Democrat, what do you think? Over-the-hill tools of Big Labor mouthing tired phrases which cause cardiac arrest in Birchers? Do you think of the fine examples of the Democratic Party who roam the streets of Chicago effortlessly squashing those Who Dare To Think Differently? Well, for me I like to think about food—Democratic food.

There is a difference. It seems to this observer that the incidence of the old rubber chicken dinner is higher on the side of the GOP. Chicken is, of course, Generic Food. It can be stuffed, shaped, baked, fried and dyed. Its relative cheapness combined with its versatility make it an ideal food for Republicans. Chicken is safe and dependable.

Democrats frequently are more daring, since the Democrats are frequently not White Bread and Miracle Whip Americans, but instead are people who sometimes substitute vowels with the letter "y" in their last names. The variety of Democratic food is legendary as its ability to lay waste those campaigning who are not used to it. John Glenn's biggest liability may be his inability to digest kielbasa and sauerkraut. Alan Cranston has been reported eating various ethnic foods as part of his preparation for the early eastern primaries. Fritz Hollings has been seen as the leader in the Democratic field simply because the cuisine of South Carolina is chock full of items other Americans would think had been run over by a semi on the interstate.

But, as usual, I digress. The Republicans got a taste of the Democratic soul at the kick-off celebration of Ray Shemie, a Republican self-made millionaire inventor who is running against our new-wave Democrat Paul Tsongas.

I was invited to the affair and went to Boston eager to see Republicans close-up and in natural surroundings. The meeting was in Boston's newest luxury hotel, of course, and just about 5,000 people, quite possibly every registered Republican in the state, turned up.

Well, the organizers made a daring decision and passed over the chicken for an ethnic buffet—tacos, hot dogs, kielbasa, corned beef, egg rolls, baklava, knishes...

You have not lived until you've been elbowed in the left kidney by a woman with her Sasson hairstyle and Gucci, Pucci clothes over who was going to be first in getting a taco. The Republicans came with doggy bags in their pockets to this thing. Greed was the order of the day. Granted, I knew the GOP has not been doing all that well here in the Baystate, but obviously I had underestimated just how bad...

The upshot? Republicans like more than just White food. A fact which may prove significant in the next election.

The other event which I'd like to relate is my recent role as Santa Claus. That's right, I played Old Saint Nick for the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce. If there are any Scrooges out there in IJ land, try playing Santa. The first time some three-year-old sit on your lap and tells you she loves you—well, it brings a little mist to the eyes of this otherwise wiseassd writer/radio guy. I'm scheduled to play the role again on the 15th and must admit I'm looking forward to it.

Speaking of the Holidays, I hope each and every one of you have a great holiday of your choice!

DARK WINGS OVER EASY

CHAPTER 11

by Roldo

(Sam still under influence of alien drug Mlooi...) "MAAAHAAAAHAHA," Sam's brain suggested to the Universe, "WOOOOHHEEEEE! oH YeS! Know is the Time for five six seven eight nine nyet no no nono- no this is noT a pOssible State of mINd...THERE is STOned and then tHERE's HIGH but this is the NEXT FLOOR UP! WAit waitwait IT'S MY HEAD and I rUn it. OODKOver now...my NAME is Sam Hall...nonono Sam Day? Sam Time? Sam Where Over the Rainbows and in livers meeting old friends for the Same Sun shines on Us All, yEt fretfull IN tHIS CagE of TRaA-Sures and into the Night. 'Careful' he CAutioned...'Rationality can be fatal in a situation like this'. Mon dOwN and tutu gogo. The POTEntial FOR DISAstre is sO tHICK you could stub your tOe on it getting out of BED. a SUCKER never BREAKS EVEN. a SEER sucker hears no truth. Know tROOth? But there must Be truth. If there isn't, then the state-

Number 8, Number 8

by Gerry Reith

Smoky used to live at the Edwards, right next to Kay, the 90-year-old guy from Japan who used to be a bouncer at the Hotel Rex when it was a cathouse at the turn of the century. Kay gets this Japanese newspaper about twice a week, and he never had a wife, but Smoky drank and didn't have either.

I used to see him when I'd pass down the hall, since being the Authority in the absence of the owners meant he collected the rent for them and swept the stairs. So he was a busybody and always knew what was going on; he'd be the one to tell you to turn the music down, this crochety old man so drunk you didn't want to fuck with him or make him mad. About half the time his door was open and one or another of the street indians would be in there, and you could see this paleolithic face staring at the TV with Smoky, and a big old bottle on the table along with some beers for chaser. Smoky always had about forty bottles of pills right on the same table and I always wished he was corrupt enough to want to sell some of the good ones for booze money but you never got anywhere with these guys, these World War Two vets with their world war two ideas about morality: if the doctor gives you something to get wasted on, why, go ahead, but if it's some punk-age kid, well, bullshit on that. Fuck.

Ed Gardner I asked about it, since I knew he had cancer, and he was some kind of retarded and crazy to boot, once got in hot water for rape or something, and used to bust up his little rooms on a regular schedule of hopeless rage until they got him hooked on every downer in the book and his teeth fell out. He used to hang around late, late at night because there isn't (wasn't) a single other person in this whole god-damned town that would talk to him for more than ten seconds...the waitresses being about it: "What'll you have today, Ed."

But he never came through even with all the artful devices...he didn't need the money, and it must have been some catholic upbringing in him (he told me the whole Mass in Latin one night, drool and all, in a transport of piety) that prevented this transfer of doctor-authority.

So Smoky was, beside Kay and Ben, the oldest guy there, who had been there the longest, and probably couldn't have told you shit about all the different things and people he'd seen and known throughout his reign as the shadow-government of the Edwards. More like some rhythmic consciousness that comes to all these drunks: hospital is where it starts, when you wake up maybe, and then it goes in steps: money (somehow), familiar faces and street corners, red & blue lights, or vomit all over your face, and shirt, then bars on the door and back to the dry-out center. They get into the sacred when they break the stride, either when no money comes through and they see the faces only without being drunk—everybody is different!—or at the dry-out sessions, and both of 'em are hell-sacred, torture places. Smoky must have, since he didn't go on binges...this slow, steady decline, like a scientist measuring it out to avoid the bumps...had a different rhythm; measured out by the people around him. Every year the owners went on vacation for awhile; every day Ben Jordan would be up early and in a foul mood unless he took his medication, in which case he'd be telling you baseball scores from 1920; every week some new drifter got a room with his last ten bucks and then vanished. In slower time, there would be all the reformed drunks who were trying to be Biblical scholars, like the one who had a Ph.D on prehistorical middle east stuff, or these failed psychologists like Bob who got fired from dishwashing jobs; maybe some deaf old jerk who was a cook until he got his pension from the government and just doesn't care about anything except expressing his contempt for everybody. These guys would stay a few months, maybe a year, and become part of the family, the anti-family of all black sheep.

So anyway, this guy Doug Smith that I know drifted through town and I told him the Edwards was the chapel door, if you wanted to be entered into the lowdown section you had to pass through a residence there. If you wanted to really earn your name you had to be kicked out, but since he took off before he had a chance to do this, he left a dead black cat in his freezer for the owners to discover.

Doug was in number eight, where Smoky used to have quiet parties. One day nobody saw him for awhile and they went up and knocked on the door but all they found inside was Smoky dead. Ben says his skin was all black. When Doug was there you never would have known some old worthless shit had pissed in the same bed, and then died there when some spirit came out of the same closet to cart off all the people fool enough to rent that room at that place, the last stop before hell or Sheridan if you're gonna stay alive for awhile. Nobody cared except the owners who had to clean up all the shit from twenty years of not sweeping under the bed, and Ben, who's getting old, and maybe somebody who had to update his file at Social Security. Sorta weird, like the exact opposite of some king whose ministers would hide the body until they found somebody they could elevate immediately after the announcement, and railroad it through the Senate.

ment that there wasn't would BE true. And therefore...False! Wot's that? Up a Head? Up Up and where there's a will there's Away down up-on the Swany breast of The mOOn over MY! am EyE ever and ever, Aw MaN! Gno Gnus's Good knews Beast of bird and feather up his ass and culled it Mick O'Rooney hadcock firm ee eye ee eye y'ppee eye, eh? To every thing there is a seesaw, see? Son? Sun? Sea? Against the Lawgic. A Follower is someone who doesn't Know where they're Going...I don't even Know where I AM!"

Where Sam was in a Police Vehicle, en route to the Public Safety Building, the most inappropriately named edifice to grace any modern metropolis since some fur-clad, foot-sore hominid discovered he could live in a pile of sun-baked bricks.

If he'd noticed this situation and thought to inquire what legal mechanisms were responsible for it, he would have been informed, as part of the Legal Rights granted him by the same Authority that had him in Custody, that he was charged with being a "Public Nuisance".

It was, it appears, contrary to the Public Good for anyone to stand motionless in mid-stride for longer than a period up to or exceeding one hour.

- TO BE CONTINUED -

CONFESSIONS OF A CONFUSED REVOLUTIONARY

by Mike Gunderloy

THE STORY SO FAR: Lunatic Revolutionary Mikhail Kartoffelhopf and happy-go-lucky Scottish expatriate Raoul "Bob" Mitsubishi are piloting a midget sub disguised as a killer whale to a secret hideout in the swamps of Florida when their ship is attacked by a giant killer squid. With the help of a few friendly whales, they dispose of the menace, only to discover that it had been another submarine in disguise, probably run by agents of the dreaded Illuminati who want to keep our heroes from supplying baby alligators to the Discordian society. Join us now as our heroes surface in sunny Florida.

It was late evening when we surfaced in the Florida swamps. Bob had navigated the whale up a river into the heart of the wilderness while I caught some fitful, dream-laden sleep. Millions of squids with faces of used-car salesmen and guns that shot exploding penguins were pursuing me through a forest of phosphorescent seaweed when he kicked me awake.

"C'mon, shake a leg. You want to see our base of operations, don't you? Besides, Frank's got our drinks waiting." I followed him up through the hatch and on to the rotting wooden dock.

Frank hadn't changed a bit. He was floating on a rubber raft in the swamp, dressed in khaki-colored cutoffs, a floral print shirt, and a straw hat. He had a glass in his hand filled with beer, a fishing rod propped across his legs, and a porno novel in the other hand. "Hey, Mikey!" he shouted, "long time no see! Beer's in the icebox in my palatial summer home. Hey, if I'd known you were coming I would've ordered pizza." He paddled the raft to the pier, climbed up and embraced me, nearly crushing three ribs. "C'mon, boy, let's get you a brew."

It was just like Frank to call a ramshackle shack his palatial summer home. It was one room about 20 feet square. There was a fridge in one corner, a mattress and tv next to it, and lots of junk food on the floor. It had a ceiling fan that wasn't functioning, lots of pin-ups, and various assorted bric-a-brac. But what drew my attention was the cage taking up fully half of the floor space.

The cage was full of baby alligators, of course. There were a couple of bathtubs full of water sunk into the floor, 3 potted palms and 12 potted dope plants, a few exercise wheels, and the rusted heap of a '42 Ford inside. Bags of Purina Alligator Chow were piled by the door.

Frank pressed a Coors into my hand and chuckled. "Took me quite a while to latch that little bankroll, let me tell you. Been splashin' around this swamp all summer. But they're a lot of fun, good pets. Hope they give them Illuminati hell! Hey, 'Dirty Harry' is on!"

We turned on the tube and settled down for some serious partying.

I awoke with a head the size of the Liberty Bell and twice as broken. My compatriots were still out cold so I hunted around as quietly as possible and made myself a cocktail out of tomato juice, Worcestershire and tabasco sauces and black pepper. After finishing it and a couple dozen assorted pills (vitamins, aspirin and speed), I felt much better and staggered outside.

The sun was shining brightly, evoking noxious fumes and sparrow-sized mosquitoes from the swamp water. I picked up a machete lying on the ground and started off for a walk. The going was pretty treacherous but I was able to keep from going in above my knees.

There was a stand of sickly mangrove trees about 100 yards behind the shack. I started in and then froze. From somewhere ahead of me came the almost unmistakable crackle of radio static. Straining, I managed to make out a few words: "...in position now, they'll...assault at 0800...know what hit...bastards. Out."

Ignoring the mud as best I could, I dropped to the ground and snaked cautiously towards the noises. Soon I could see a group of five men in camouflaged waders standing in a clearing. They wore black jackets and steel helmets, and were carrying a variety of nasty-looking armaments, including a bazooka and a mortar. One of them was packing up a portable radio set and two more were consulting a map. I strained to make out their shoulder patches, and shuddered when I realized they were stylized representations of the eye in the triangle!

I brushed mud from my watch and saw it was 7:40. As quietly as I could I slunk back to the cabin. These dudes, I was quite sure, were not Fuller-Brush salesmen. I woke Bob and Frank and explained as best I could. This seemed to be one of those times when cowardice was the better part of valour. We grabbed our weapons and, with a last forlorn look at our 'gators, headed for the whale.

The cable tying it up hung loosely at the side of the pier, and the ship was gone. Things did not look good for our team.

- TO BE CONTINUED -

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CHAPTER VII: DANCING WITH MYSELF WITH THE SOUND TURNED OFF

Short bits and pick hits: a little-known group that I'm a raving fan of, Was Not Was, found something new to do for their video debut—they filmed four different sets of visuals for a single song, "Knocked Down, Made Small (Treated Like A Rubber Ball)". At least, the VJ's say there are four versions; I've only seen two. The one called "Episode Two" struck me as unpleasantly misogynist; the other, "Episode Three", is a wonderful piece of childhood revenge-fantasy. (Also in its favor: it has no intro and you can dance to it.) Two videos I've only seen once but which made a big impression on me: Tom Tom Club's "Pleasure of Love" (more of the loopy animation used on their earlier video "Genius of Love", plus a guest appearance by Pee Dog) and X's "This Must Be The New World" (coast-to-coast snapshots). I can't say I'm too impressed with Rodney Dangerfield's solo video, "Rappin' Rodney", but then again I've always been sort of indifferent toward Mr. No-Respect. The comedian whose video I'm REALLY looking forward to is Pee Wee Herman; his "I Know You Are But What Am I?" is supposed to appear in early '84. Also, let me say a few nice words about MTV's programming policies for a change; they're currently running a series of what they call "Closet Classics", mostly concert footage or late-60's performers like Cream and Janis Joplin. MTV can be so relentlessly and exhaustingly up-to-the-minute that this sort of contrast and perspective is quite refreshing.

FILMVIEWS *by Ken Filar*

I (shouldn't start with I, but it was the first word that came to my[li]nd when I) finally forced myself to sit down and begin to make some sense of the last (few) months' chaos (both cinematic and in-straumatic). It's like a bad dream that just keeps recurring (this business of impending dead[and why is that word always forced before the]line [anyway?]), and it's gotten so bad that I look around at all the accoutrement spewing over my desk to give weight to the otherwise fanciful notion that I might write and cringe: The stack of maga-zines (all left open to the page at which they were abandoned when I intended to get right back to them), the limitless supply of pens and pencils (though not a more sophisticated writing machine—with good [if somewhat flawed] reason), manuscripts, Christmas cards (received), stamps ("Season's Greetings USA 20¢" and Santa Claus ho-ho-hoing over the investment I've made when I haven't even managed to buy the cards on which to affix these same), my snapping gator (bought as a gift for my sister, but broken in demonstrating its many wonderful features, and kept as an inspirational toy to amuse when boredom [i.e., lack of ideas] strikes), and the PENGUIN that weights down nothing but a scrapped reminder to call someone over four months ago.

However, if the truth were told (though don't imagine that I'm about to tell it—no, this is a film "review") and nothing more: RING RING (I should point out the extremely poor quality of the sound effects in this column. If you couldn't tell, that last was a telephone.)

HELLO (that is myself answering same).

HELLO (she asks my name, mishearing some).
 HI, THIS IS YOUR EDITOR (that is my editor). ARE WE CONNECTING FOR
 THIS ISSUE? (herself no minor mistress of the disconnected)
 OF COURSE, OF COURSE (I mumble incomprehensibly, hoping she won't ask
 me what I'm writing about this minute/this month/this millenium).
 WHAT ARE YOU REVIEWING (she asks, not reading my foregoing thoughts)
 THIS MONTH?

OH. YENTL...

GOOD (she says and I nod agreement, as much to give myself time to remember the other films as to give assent to her statement).

THE DRESSER... (for remembering this I am rewarded by silence, so I go on)...LA BALANCE...

WE'VE GONE PRETTY CLASSY THIS MONTH, HAVEN'T WE? (and I cannot answer to her charges without first allowing the films some modicum of commentary [an opportunity to "speak for themselves", if you will], so first I do another quick survey of the articles adorning my desk [and squeeze a few rapid-fire clicks off that old blue gator] then begin:)

La Balance, a French film directed by American Bob Swaim, is (but why would anybody want to think about cinema when they could be thinking about sex—with vengeance?) sex—with vengeance (zounds!!! an echo)—and this film's strength. It's not often you come away from the movies with absolutely no idea why something worked because you were so captivated by sheer presence that you suffered a critical derailment. Yet La Balance is just such a film. It is sleek and fast-paced, a cop and criminal epic where both sides appear no better or worse than their counterpart. The only recent mystery-suspense-thriller that so ably combined leering sensuality and lurid fear of consequence in my mind is Hitchcock's recently re-released Rear Window (a must-see if you care about Hitch, Jimmy Stewart, Grace Kelly, murder, mystery, voyeurism, or life once removed from the norm, a La Balance!).

The Dresser is director Peter Yates' biting but finally benign adaptation of Ronald Harwood's play, now starring Albert Finney (as Sir—an aging Shakespearian actor who cannot bear the thought of playing one more performance of "King Lear") and Tom Courtenay (as Norman, his faithful and loving dresser who actually gets Sir on stage by coaxing and chiding and casting about for breaths to enthuse a dying old man). Sir really gives his all only when he's not conscious of the stage (he's on). Whenever he's left to think about going out before the audience he is stricken with terror that they will laugh, that he will forget his lines, that he will split his pants straight up the rump. The Dresser is altogether enjoyable if just for the two Oscar-calibre performances (though the supporting cast is also exceptional and throw their all into the characterizations).

[I interrupt the "reviewing" here to insert a few words about "culture", which is really the cultural context which all films derive from and the actual subject of these "views" (of mine) though the cinematic provides an immediate and highly visible peg from which hanging myself becomes all that much easier...]

So, what's the big deal about Yentl? Is it as good, or as bad, as the conflicting press "make it up" to be? Has "La Streisand" bitten off more than she can chew by acting in a movie she has directed from a script she helped write (adapting liberally from a short story by I.B. Singer) and which she also produced? Warren Beatty can do this and be rewarded with kudos, but being female (and a notoriously temperamental perfectionist) leads people to deride Barbara for trying to do the same. What does this say about our culture? And, isn't it ironic that the movie is a fable wherein an attractive (she's really never looked better with her hair down) young woman disguises herself as a boy to enter Yeshiva after her father dies, falls in love with her study partner but winds up marrying his fiancée (if this sounds like a 1930's sex farce, in a sense, it is, but it is also very much today). If I have one criticism, it is that all of the songs (by Marilyn and Alan "The Way We Were" Bergman) are lento and Yentl seems designed for more upbeat melodies; however, the songs are not inappropriate, and several are integrated into the film in strikingly original ways, proving that Streisand is not XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XX
XX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX (editor's note: here the manuscript was mysteriously obliterated) XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX for two all expenses paid, plus \$10,000 spending money to the lucky winner.

BASEBALL'S White Lines

by Tom Gedwillo

Music has been a fundamental aspect of baseball since that celebrated incident after the 1955 World Series. It was back then, following the trophy presentation to the champion Brooklyn Dodgers, that an entire nation of sports fanatics was startled. Donald Hoak, the Dodgers' third baseman, exposed the recording industry's ultimate sham: He was really singing on the popular song "Cry Me A River" which was thought to be done by Julie London. (This play was used years later, in 1976, as part of the storyline to an episode of *Emergency!* starring Ms. Londond as Nurse Dixie McCall). Because of the meager salaries of the players in the 50's it was essential that they had a second source of income. Subsequent to a Senate investigation, a whole chapter in baseball's annals was written. Numerous athletes acknowledged that they were the real voices of hundreds and hundreds of hit singles in that decade. In addition to the Hoak-London scheme, sportswriters had a field day with Bill Haley's "See You Later Alligator" which was actually the warbling of Cincinnati's Ted Kluszewski. This trend of baseball players' conspiracy with record executives is continuing even today. Some amazing facts can now be revealed pertaining to the purported originators of rock and roll. Get ready!

Little Richard could not play the piano. In the studio he hired Stan Musial to do the work. From 1957 to 1958, Early Wynn (Indians/Chisox) wrote all the lyrics for the songs of Jerry Lee Lewis. The Beatles' tour of Britain (1963) featured an imposter of Roy Orbison. He was really Roger Maris. At various times, the entire Yankee's starting rotation doubled as studio musicians for songs by The Beach Boys, James Brown, Bob Dylan, Ricky Nelson, and Gene Pitney. The liner notes to all albums by The Yardbirds were penned by Lee Elia. "Derek" of the Dominos was not Eric Clapton. He was such a fan of the Red Sox he let Sparky Lyle do all guitar solos, including the dubs on Cream's "Badge" (it was not George Harrison after all). Few people know that many baseball players performed in 1969 at Woodstock, but never appeared in the movie or on the record album; they include Matty Alou, Tony Oliva, Jim Fregosi, Willie McCovey, Tom Seaver and Jim Palmer. Veteran shortstop Bert Campaneris had a prolific career writing theme songs to such television shows as *The High Chaparral*, *Green Acres*, *Mod Squad*, *Mannix*, *The Waltons*, and *The Rookies*. Further revelations of these unusual links between ballplayers and music reach astonishing heights with the Luis Tiant story. We all remember the "Luis is dead" rumors that were circulating in the late 1960's: On the cover of the July 6, 1968 issue of *Sporting News* there is a photo of Tiant holding a black baseball bat, indicating he had taken his last trip to the plate. This is weak on credibility because he was better known as a pitcher. Listen closely to The Beatles' song "Glass Onion" and you'll hear Lennon sing "And here's another clue that's screwy/The Indian was Luis." This refers to Tiant's association with Cleveland and The Beatles' use of spiritualism (East Indian). When the Topps baseball cards were issued in 1969, the team picture for Cleveland shows Luis as the only player without shoes. Turn the photo sideways and Tiant appears to have his eyes closed. A final connection to The Beatles occurs on the song "Strawberry Fields Forever", this time when Lennon sings "buried in Cuba."

This decade sees a continuation of these baseball and music theories. The Executive Council (headed by John DeLorean) fails to credit these athletes' association with record sales. It is a known fact that the holiday season is synonymous with a proliferation of product. Ballplayers have been in studios since the end of the season to boost the quality of the albums and cassettes now being marketed. Neil Allen and Tommy John supply backing vocals on the latest from The Pretenders. Talking Heads will release an EP featuring keyboards by Jerry Reuss. Jim Sundberg and Butch Wynegar are producing the next Frank Zappa offering. The list is endless. Dusty Baker, Eurythmics, Tito Landrum, The Fixx, Brian Downing, Peter Gabriel, Richie Hebner, Ultravox, Steve Sax, The Plimsouls, Jim Rice, U2, Carlton Fisk, Big Country. Expect a new look at next year's Grammy Awards. Under the lights. Extra innings.

SOUND MINED

by Brian Catanzaro

CULTURAL EFFECTS ON CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN THE U.S. AND EUROPE IN THE EIGHTIES

AUTHOR'S NOTE: One quick announcement—new synthi-pop band, CS Angels, are very bit as romantically effective as "honorary 13" staffer" Thomas Dolby from last year. No kidding, everyone, you'll love it. Now, where were we? Right...

PART III

More new and unknown bands put out their own records than ever before. This comes about in response to the "lock-out" of new bands by major labels during the oil-crunch era of the 70's. Major labels kept only their most popular artists because they were "guaranteed" sellers. This saved from investing in expensive vinyl that could come back unwanted. (Other applicable business economics are fairly obvious—new recycling techniques and the triple and quadruple platinum phenomenon which propagated conservative ethics.)

The rise of independent labels functioned in bypassing the old waiting game of acceptance-and-distribution. By teaming up with localized record distributors, national networks were eventually established and some independents were able to expand their roster of groups and book tours to key areas just like "the big time."

Although major radio stations were inaccessible, a little airplay on college stations open to new product could go a long way for everyone concerned. So it did, for many independent acts pleased talent scouts enough to open their doors and budgets to this "new music". In America the most successful former-indys: Devo, B-52's, Go-Gos, Shoes (success

in distribution more than national fame). In England, perhaps the most productive of reactionary-independent record makers: Sex Pistols, Clash, Buzzcocks, and yes, others.

College stations have proven to be the only reliable source of independently produced "new", "avant-garde" and "experimental" music. That is because of the public service nature of most college radio stations. College radio can be completely informative if it chooses, without the responsibility of success for sponsors (since there are usually none), or the artists' works they play. (to be continued)

FUN WITH TOM

by Tom Sanders

On August 19, 1951, the St. Louis Browns were scheduled to play a Sunday doubleheader at home against the Detroit Tigers. That morning saw the Browns firmly planted in the American League cellar, eight games behind the seventh place Philadelphia A's, and in high gear in the fast lane to nowhere. They were winning roughly one of every three games, and announced attendance often dipped into the hundreds. Owner Bill Veeck, who earlier had let the fans manage his team on "Grandstand Managers' Day", thought it time for some brand new fun. The American League needed a 50th birthday party and, since no one could prove otherwise, August 19 was picked as the day and celebrations were planned for between games of the Browns-Tigers twin bill.

During the festivities an eight-piece band made up of Browns players provided music, acrobats performed at each base, serial fireworks exploded, and a huge birthday cake was wheeled to home plate. Out of the cake popped a three-foot-seven-inch midget wearing a Browns uniform numbered "1/8", who was introduced as "the last of the real Brownies" and presented to manager Zack Taylor. The field was then cleared and both teams began warming up for the second game. Announcer Bob Fischel boomed over the PA, "Batteries for Dee-troit...Tom Sanders and Bob Swift...for the Browns, Duane Pillette and Sherman Lollar...and here are your starting lineups..."

The Tigers went out in order in their first, and Tom Sanders took the mound to warm up for his first frame of pitching. From the Browns' dugout came the midget, still in his white home uniform trimmed in brown and orange, with "1/8" on the back, swinging two toy bats. Bob Fischel was heard again: "Your attention, please...now batting for Frank Saucier, number one-eighth, Eddie Gaedel. Gaedel...batting for Saucier."

The crowd stood on its hind legs and roared. Another Bill Veeck stunt! While the umpires went over to the Brownie dugout to find out what was up, catcher Swift strolled to the mound for a few words with his pitcher.

"How 'th' hell we gonna pitch to a guy who ain't even four feet high?" Swift asked, spitting tobacco juice into his mitt, on the ground, and on Tom. "We ain't even got a book on him."

Tom rubbed up the ball. "I think I can handle him," he said.

"None of yer funny stuff, kid," Swift replied. He whacked Tom on the backside and walked back behind the plate.

The umps agreed that everything was okay—Zack Taylor had produced a copy of Gaedel's official American League contract—and signalled for play to resume. Swift knelt down behind the plate and Gaedel took a few practice cuts with his toy bat. Tom's first pitch came nowhere near the midget's tiny strike zone. Balls two and three were equally high and outside. With the count three and nothing, Gaedel stepped out of the batter's box and looked down to his third base coach, who ran through a set of signs. Swift hurriedly asked for time and ran to the mound.

"Lookit him there," he blurted. "What if he's hittin' on three and oh?"

"Swiftie, why would he be hitting? It's the first inning and no one's on base. They can use all the runners they can get."

"Well, okay, kid. Keep it away from him, just in case," grunted Swift.

Tom walked around behind the mound, rubbing up a new ball. He looked up at the Browns' official box and there sat Veeck, a sly smile on his face, apparently waving, or winking, or something...back at him. Tom smiled and turned away so his catcher couldn't see him, and then slapped the ball into his glove and toed the pitching rubber. He wound up and lobbed another floater, a little bit closer than the last three.

The little Brownie swung his toy bat and connected! It was just a dribbler down the third base line, a bunt off the bat of any full-sized player, but it caught the Tiger infielders completely off-guard. Third baseman George Kell and shortstop Neil Berry stared open-mouthed at each other, astonished that Gaedel would even take a cut, let alone connect, make contact. By the time Kell got the ball and fired to first, Gaedel had crossed the bag, running as fast as his small legs would carry him. Sportsman's Park was bedlam. The eighteen thousand fans—largest crowd in five years—whooped and hollered. Zack Taylor sent in Jim Delsing to run for Gaedel, who doffed his cap, patted Delsing on the rump, and trotted off the field with a perfect 1.000 American League batting average. Bob Swift removed his mask, shook his head slowly, and walked to the mound.

"Gimme the ball, kid," he said. Tom stood there with an angelic look on his face. Swift rubbed the ball, and chewed and spat.

"It's only the first inning, Swiftie," Tom finally said.

"Congratulations, kid," returned the catcher, "yer gonna be the only guy in the history of baseball to give up a hit to a midget."

"Well," Tom said quietly, "if they lose this one the writers can say that the Browns were a little short today."

Swift plopped the ball back in Tom's glove. "Kid," he said between spits, "stick to pitchin'."

(N.B. - The Browns loaded the bases in the first but failed to score. Bob Cain, not Tom Sanders, was the winning pitcher. They did come up short, losing both games of the doubleheader. - *Detroit Free Press*, August 20, 1951.)

License To Manipulate

FEATURING

COOP

Dear Coop,

God help me but I have recently succumbed to a vile and odious addiction. I tried to fight it to no avail. At first I thought, "What's the harm in partaking a few times? You can't really get hooked unless you do it a lot." My friends were all doing it and enjoying the excitement. They don't look like raving addicts. They don't act like raving addicts. In fact, they're very candid about it when asked and give up the most intimate details of their activity. So far I've been very clandestine about it, not letting anyone else know that I am addicted to daytime soaps.

After my POSSIQ left and my boss fired me for having an affair with an executive in another department, I couldn't get another job to keep up the rent to I could stay in the apartment. I moved back with the parents and got a part-time job which leaves me with a lot of free time in the afternoon. I started watching ONE LIFE TO LIVE again since I'd followed it back in my college days. Then one Friday I turned the TV on early and caught a fascinating cliffhanger on ALL MY CHILDREN so naturally I had to get up early to watch it the next Monday. One of my mother's friends started talking about GENERAL HOSPITAL one weekend so I had to see that too. Soon after I was completely sucked in.

I spend three hours a day, five days a week with my stories. I haven't been looking for a better job for fear of the dreaded nine-to-five hours. I'm been trying to save up for a VCR so I won't miss anything if I do get a good job. It seems so irrational to let such un-intellectual fare run my life. I always used to sneer at those poor dolts who didn't watch PBS, M*A*S*H and other quality programming. I prided myself on never having once tuned in THREE'S COMPANY or THE DUKES OF HAZZARD. Now I find myself, aghast, in a similar predicament. It's been over a month now and it gets more difficult to contemplate giving it all up.

Is there a way I can have my good life back AND continue the habit? I can't afford therapy because I make less than a hundred dollars a week in a heavy week. Don't suggest seeing a clergyman; I'm not religious. Perhaps there are some books I could read during the commercials. I've got to do something.

- SOAPER

Dear Soaper,

First if all, when have I ever suggested that anyone see a clergyman? The only chaplain I subscribe to is Charlie Chaplin. A therapist would only take your cash and laugh behind your back. Books would only help if you read instead of watched TV.

It seems that you're trying to escape from reality by watching all of those beautiful people go through worse problems than you have. Study them carefully. They never do any real work. Their fictitious jobs allow them ample time to kaffee klatch whereas in real life they'd be too busy to delve so deeply into the lives of everyone who crosses their paths. They're always well-dressed, carefully manicured, exquisitely coiffed and up to their ears in more trouble than you could shake a stick at. In the midst of crisis after crisis, the men are still handsome and the women still beautiful.

They're also stupid. Many opportunities to get out of their problems pass them by, thus prolonging the inevitable and making the effort to extricate them inordinately difficult. Most of the time when faced with adversity, they dig themselves in deeper. Soap opera characters' problems are never solved unless they cease to exist on the show.

Do you see parallels with your life there? Difficulties dragging on and on interminably. Inability to act on solutions. Life is not TV, thank God. You're not scripted into corners; life is all ad-libbed, you can write your own tragedies or comedies or happy endings. Don't wait for life to happen to you: make it happen.

Why do you care what happens to a bunch of silly, miserable, albeit nice-looking people? They don't care or even know about you. Drop the whole thing cold turkey and get that better job. Don't let your mind and skills atrophy for something as trivial as the soaps.

- COOP

Dear Coop,

There's a woman I see regularly on my lunch hour at the same coffee shop I frequent. She's beautiful, well-groomed and, I assume from her unadorned ring finger, single. She is usually in the company of her co-workers. On the occasions I've been fortunate enough to be seated near them, the only conversation I've overheard was incessant, insipid office gossip. Therein lies the crux of my problem: I keep debating whether or not to ask her out on the probability that she is an air-head.

You see, I'm a bit of a snob about my intelligence. I only missed out on MENSA membership by 10 points. In the past I've dated both well-read and semi-literate women. The latter annoyed me to a state of frenzy. No amount of beauty can compensate for banal conversation. The possibility of having my fantasies of this woman ruined by her lack of education is causing a rift in my psyche. It's become an obsession.

Once in a while my glands override my brain. Should I just go ahead and ask her out on the off-chance that she may be smarter than she looks? A friend of mine keeps encouraging me to "go for it". What should I do?

- DICHOTOMY

Dear Di,

Change coffee shops but keep your fantasies. It sounds like your attraction to this woman is purely sexual. You should know that a man's sexual interest diminishes as he discovers more about a woman's personality. The most recent studies have proven that most men get off on centerfolds for that reason. If they were living, multi-faceted people with their own opinions, men would lose interest sexually. Why do you think they don't give beautiful women much dialogue on TV and in movies?

Besides, what makes you think she's be interested in a selfish smartass like you?

- COOP

The Wonderful Language of Flowers!

by Deborah Benedict

According to legend, when someone gives you flowers they are also giving you a message and this message can be divined by the knowledge of what certain blooms represent. I have been researching this for several minutes, and what emerges below may now be considered the definitive lexicon of the language of flowers. Shall we study some of the meanings? (Sure, why not?)

PHLOX - Here the messenger is telling you that they like you oodles, but cannot afford even a pretty flower in the bud stage. Phlox can also mean: You make a good meatloaf, but I prefer a nice cheese omelet on Friday nights.

VIOLETS - The person receiving violets can be certain that the sender wants to see them at noon on a crowded downtown street, busily arguing with two Lithuanian storm door installers. Violets can also mean: Gee, I like a cool breeze on a summer night, how 'bout you?

ROSES - A gift of roses is the sender's way of saying, "I'm a rich person and wanted to impress you loads."

ANY CORSAGE - means: "I'd rather see you wearing what I spent 30 bucks on than have you stick it in some Avon perfume vase on top of the toilet!"

MARIGOLDS - Should someone give you marigolds it means they will soon be touching you for a loan, but they will never pay it back. If your child gives you a marigold from the garden, it means he would rather have Beefaroni for lunch than that crummy pimento-soybean loaf you've been forcing on him.

DAISIES - A bouquet of daisies says simply and elegantly: "Wanna take a nap with me this afternoon under the shade of the Scuppernong tree?"

RHODODENDRENS or **RHODA PENMARKS** - Anyone receiving such a vulgar flower should run to the nearest exit and buy a one-way ticket out of town. The sender is only interested in one thing: Making maps of the Transylvania Alps on the insides of your thighs with a Rapidograph pencil...

LILIES - not during Easter time: mean that a sender needs to borrow your Betamax over the weekend to tape a really big sports event while he is out spending a great deal of money wining and dining someone he prefers over you. Lilies during Easter time: mean they were marked down to 99 cents at the supermarket because they have mealy bugs, and the sender wanted to give you something to compensate for their guilt they felt at knowing they were the "mystery" guest who accidentally used your guest towels from Neiman Marcus to wipe up the black leather dye they spilled.

PANSIES - only wimps send people pansies and that is because the language of the pansy is: "Gosh, gee, ain't life grand? Don'tcha think so, huh?"

HEATHER - is sent by romanticists who think that Heathcliff and Cathy represent the ideal romance. The message of heather is simple: "Let's have a real passionate romance, then die together."

GLADIOLAS - Anyone sending you this flower is saying that they want to get you in a dark, sleazy, dilapidated warehouse down by the docks at 3 o'clock in the morning and play strip Parchesi with you, but only if you bring the Mogen David and the Screaming Yellow Zonkers.

NETTLES - The person sending you these is saying, "I thoroughly dislike you, you cretinous bagworm, you miasma of subhuman slime, and I hope you get an absolutely dreadful rash from these miserable things and spend days in absolute agony, dousing your hideous body with calamine lotion, taking ice baths to relieve the shrieking misery and eventually fall victim to pneumonia and incur astronomically high hospital bills and have hostile nurses make faces at you whenever you request a bedpan."

HOLLYHOCKS - This flower represents a person who wishes to be invited to your next party so they can drink all your good Scotch, look through your medicine cabinet and loot your more interesting drugs, mix hamster food in with your Chex Party Mix, put a "HAVE YOU HUGGED YOUR INCUBUS TODAY?" sticker on your refrigerator door, and try on your clothes when you're not looking.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS - This flower means: "I have several choice acres of real estate near the Belgian border. Would you like to see it?" Big pom pom Mums, however, have a different meaning; they say: I want to paint your eyeballs with Loreal nail polish, and then I'd really like to embroider the Dupont logo on your forehead.

HYDRANGEAS - This flower says, "Let's race around this crummy town and stuff beanbag chairs down the chimneys of all the odd-numbered houses and stick Jedi decals all over the even-numbered ones—whaddaya say, Biscuitface?"

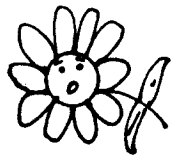
TULIPS - are simply a floral way of expressing this lovely thought: "I used to like you but now I love you 'cause I found out how much money your Granny Hortensia is gonna leave you when she bites the big one, so what I wanna know now is can I spend the night?"

PETUNIAS - mean "I have the negatives. Don't be nervous and don't call the cops. Meet me at Mario's House of the Dripping Chianti Bottles at seven o'clock Thursday evening. Wear a paisley frock coat with a button that says 'It was Keith Moon Who Really Named Led Zeppelin', lime green jodpurs and a Trilby hat with a Quetzal feather in the brim. I will know you."

FORGET ME NOTS - The person sending you these is very insecure. They will probably also send you an address book with their name, address, birthdate, clothing sizes and drug allergies. It's people like this who make John Houseman do commercials for McDonald's.

IRIS - A beautiful bouquet of Iris has a dual message - If a man sends it to a woman, he is saying, "Look, baby, I'm a studly guy, you're a curvy dame—what are we waiting for, Geraldo Rivera to become a monk?" If a woman sends a man Iris, she is saying, "I'm sorry you're in the hospital, but trampolines and roller skates don't mix!"

And that is just a sample of the Philology of Phlower Petals...



dog tails

by Clay Geerdes

I'm going to tell you a few dog stories. Not the kind you expect, of course, but nothing gross either.

I'm not a dog person. That doesn't mean I necessarily hate the animals; when I have a choice I stay away from them, when I am around people who own them I am indifferent. Well, as much as possible. If you know dogs, you know it is not always possible to be indifferent. They want a relationship of some kind, some concession to their existence, more often, something to eat. If they don't get it when they want it, whatever it is that they want, they make sure everyone in the neighborhood suffers. They whine, groan, moan, growl, whimper, and generally make themselves objects of hatred to anyone forced to endure their suffering.

Now the dog is usually quite innocent, not thinking about the human world; most often, it is the owner who is negligent or cruel.

No matter. If the dog next door is unhappy, you are going to hear about it.

The other day a guy stopped by the house. I talked to him on my front steps. He was trying to find someone else in our neighborhood who would participate in a civil action against the two lawyers on the corner whose dogs bark all day long. I don't hear those dogs normally, not being in the sound path, but he, poor guy, lives right in their path and, working at home like me, he must listen to their barking all day long while the owners are here and there. He confronted them with his problem and they said they had a right to have the dogs in their yard and he could sue if he wished. They were, after all, lawyers. They would simply go to court when the time came. He, on the other hand, would have to hire a lawyer, and, in the end, they were sure they could win the case because they were violating no particular city ordinance.

I told the guy I was on his side, but did not hear the dogs, so could not go to court with him. While we were talking I told him about a couple of other dogs I had known. One was owned by a psychiatrist who lived in the same house I did back in the seventies. He would go away for weekend seminars and leave his beloved dog unattended right above me. Naturally, the dog was lonely and he spent all his time roaming back and forth, plopping down, and whining. This at all hours of the night. I called and complained, naturally, needing my sleep, and he informed me that I hated dogs, that I was in the wrong. I informed him that he was an asshole who left his dog unfed and unattended while he went off on the weekends to play touchy-feelie games with strangers. We did not become friends. It happened that a couple of months after our little chat, his dog, unleashed, of course, in violation of Berkeley's leash law, was run over and killed. I was informed of this tragedy when I called upstairs to see about some mail that might have been delivered by mistake. During that short conversation, the psychiatrist suggested that I would be glad to know of his doggy's demise—the shithead actually tried to make me feel guilty about it. Again I told him I never had any problem with his dog and was sorry to hear about its accident. If he had taken the animal with him as any real dog lover would do, such an accident would never have occurred and I would never have had a complaint.

After the house was sold, he and his "commune" were tossed out, and I thought peace and quiet had once again returned, but the new owner, a recently divorced woman with two children, bought the kiddies a dog. Now this dog was nice, if you like fleas and that sort of thing, but she wasn't about to take care of it, and her little boy was too young to learn about taking care of the dog by himself, so the animal became a problem to everyone. He got into the area above me and barked and whined all the time, heavily driving my neighbor, a Cal sociology teacher, to suicide. I mean that poor guy was taping the dog and preparing to go to court and the rest of it. I just went out and turned the dog loose. That was that. Oh, he came back, but the next time I turned him loose again. I knew he would get picked up and they would check his license number, call her, and she would bail him out of the pound, but that was better than all of us going without sleep for the weekend.

Now I am not, as I said, a dog hater. I know people who have dogs, care for them well, and never have any visits from angry neighbors or police. But I know far more people who feel they have a right to neglect and torture dogs and the rest of us who have to listen to the animals' pain. One asshole who lives near me used to lock this little puppy up in his basement and just leave it there. Well, it wasn't his; he was just doing his brother a favor by keeping it. That's what he told the angry neighbors and police who had to put up with the night-long whining. He had lived in that house for 32 years and he could have a dog if he wanted to and everyone could just get fucked. He'd put a dozen dobermans in his yard if he wanted to. A good neighbor, as you can tell.

But, I have to confess, I'm just not a dog person. I have never owned a dog nor wanted one. I used to sit on my front step and watch the mailman who lived next door play with his spaniel. He would throw this tennis ball up the street, the dog would fetch it and return it to him, and he'd throw the ball again. Well, whatever gets you off. The kid on the corner had a German shepherd. He used to bring his dog up the alley when he came to play basketball with us. We were 8-9 years old. One of the things he did was jack off his dog. Its name was Fido.

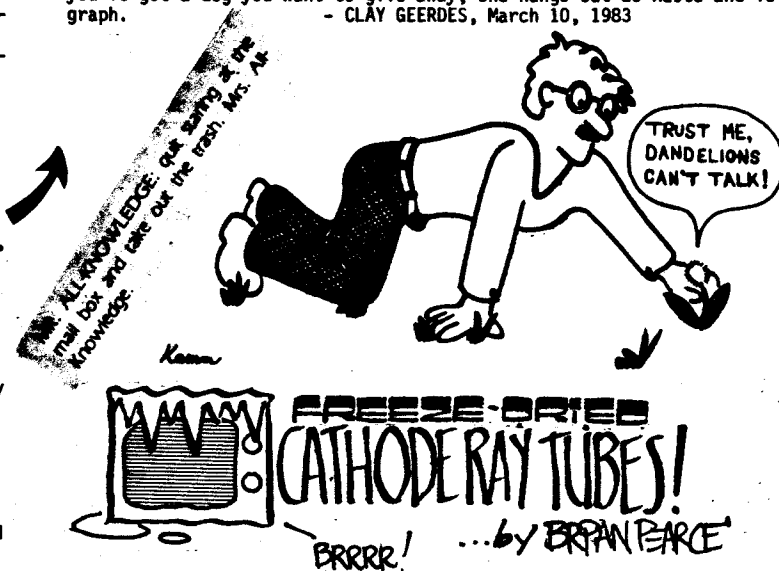
I now live in a Berkeley neighborhood filled with barking dogs. Most of them go all the time and I have become unconscious of their noise. After so long, you just don't hear it anymore.

Tell you a couple of incidents though. When I was between ladies, hanging around Berkeley, I went out with one woman who had a pair of big black dogs. I did not know this. I knew she had a teenaged son, but she never told me about the beasts. I found out about them when she invited me in for a cup of coffee after our evening at the theater. She had a nice old house in Berkeley, but inside it stank of dogshit and piss and there was hair on all the living room furniture and the second I sat down the dogs were there, jumping on me, nosing me in the crotch—

I hated it. I never called her again. She called me a couple of months later on some pretext and we chatted about trivia, but I never suggested another date. I liked her, but I couldn't stand that stinking house and those two dogs. Yuk! The whole experience still makes me nauseated just thinking about it.

There's an old woman living on the streets of Berkeley right now who has all these dogs. She told TELE-TIMES in an interview that she had tried to hitchhike home (she's from the South somewhere), but no one would pick her up on the way out of town. Well, who wants a car full of dogpiss? So she's just going to stay on the streets of Berkeley forever because she can't give up the dogs. Says they're her family. So, if you've got a dog you want to give away, she hangs out as Haste and Telegraph.

- CLAY GEERDES, March 10, 1983



Wentworth here. Amos P. Wentworth—notary public and big city detective. And guest columnist for this issue...I found the guy who regularly fills this space broken and bloody in a dark alleyway last night. It wasn't a particularly pretty scene...kinda gruesome, in fact. But I figured something like this might happen...after all we'd been up to the week before. Someday, it'll make a great book, but not now. No, this Elaine woman on the phone sez keep it short and not too gruesome...she's over in Jersey consoling that cartoonist's wife. Not an easy job, but somebody's gotta—aw, skip it already. Anyway, this is all goin' down for posterity...an' I've wasted this entire @\$\$%* paragraph buyin' time for me to come up with a title...I have. It's th' story that I'm afraid I've got no other choice than to call "The Reuven Frank Difficulty".

...Was it worth waitin' for?!

If memory serves me, and it usually does after a good belt of cheap gin, this all started about three weeks ago. NBC, in all its 30 Rock glory, cut the cord on OVERNIGHT—you know, that news show for insomniac cartoonists. Anyhow, they decided it was history. My friend didn't react particularly well to this...he considered hanging himself in the shower, but later thought better of that. Good thing, too—I don't think his wife would've appreciated that. Come to think of it, I wouldn't have either—he'd probably make me clean it up. Like I said, tho, he was pretty steamed about the whole thing. He was smitten in a bad way with that Linda Ellerbee dame. Sheesh, these crazy cartoonists...what'll they do next? Oh, sure, she is cute. And witty. And intelligent. Yea, but does she gulp down a good shot o' gin? ...Well, I'll give her that much. She's no Frannie Leibowitz, though...then again, neither is his wife...that's why he married her an' I didn't. Well, the fool took to writing nasty letters to NBC, Reuven Frank, head news honcho, in particular. They all started out "Dear Hairball...". That wasn't a great way to strike a good first impression...we later found out it could've been his last.

I did some research on that screwball network...y'see, Bill Schecner and I go way-y-y back...to when I was working the bureau out of Atlanta. Ahh, the good ol' days. You'd know that if you'd read my micro-comics. (Unabashed plug—scuse me.) So, anyhow, I buzzed him down at the network...he let me sneak around after hours...wotta trouser.

I managed to dig up some poop on our darling Mr. Frank...Item one: he's never appeared on The Joe Franklin Show. I didn't find anything I could hold above his head that would save the show...the cartoonist would've loved that. No, as it turns out, the news department has some goons. Som big goons. I suppose when you're the number three network, you need protection, but this is ridiculous. Anyway, I caught a cab back to the office to tell the cartoonist all about this, but he was nowhere in sight. It seems the demonstration down at 30 Rock and the letters and such weren't enough—he had taken the F-train down to NBC to deliver a letter to our Mr. Frank...in person. Why he took the F-train, I'll never know...shoulda taken the express. Anyhow, I gathered my stuff and headed out after him...after a few good belts of gin. Of course.

I was just a tad too late—when I got to the Rock, I made a quick search an' found our hero...in the situation which I previously described. Wotta mess.

Well, he's in the hospital now...OVERNIGHT is gone...in that big news graveyard in the sky. And there's one cartoonist casualty for it. If only Linda Ellerbee knew.

...And who's gonna explain to him that MANIMAL is back?...I'll let his wife do that. That's a wife's job, isn't it...?

Geez, it's an ugly world.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO JILL DEARMAN, OR,
SETTING FREE THE INHABITANTS OF
THE HOTEL SHERATON

by Jill Dearman

Groupies come in all shapes, colors and sizes, but even the subtlest ones can be recognized by one tell-tale sign: a maniacal look in the eyes, signifying a fanatical obsession with their idol. That look was in my eyes and night Kitty and I headed down to the Village to hear John Irving speak at Cooper Union. I couldn't believe it. Tonight I was going to see my literary idol, as well as my sexual obsession.

That day in school during fourth period, Kitty and I sat in the library with Diane, Anna, Josie and the ordained minister Reverend Sandra Chung. I was telling them that NBC was interested in my script for the pilot episode of "Alexis Black: Private Eye/Rock Star". I had the cast pretty well figured out, and a few of them were sitting right here. I, of course, would play the title role, Diane would be Chauncey McRubin, Kitty would be Toasty Rodriguez, and Anna and Josie would play Sister Felicia Metcalf and Margarita "Mouse" Murray, respectively. I was just saying that I hoped John Irving would consider playing my on-screen lover when Kitty said, "It's funny you should mention him, 'cause he's in New York now."

"New York?!" I asked, unbelieving.

"Yup."

"What? Where?" I asked with visions of a shotgun wedding in mind.

"He's spending tonight at Cooper Union."

"Holy hibernation, Batman! John Irving, here in New York? Why, I can feel his vibes already. Well, do you wanna go?"

"O.K.," she said.

A few hours later, we were on the "E" train headed to West Fourth Street. I had my knapsack with me, in which I carried my camera, my personal copies of Setting Free The Bears and The Water-Method Man with visions of autographs and who knows...? I also had copies of various stories I'd written, hoping that he read in bed, because I surely do. I also had a bag of chocolate chip cookies and a Three Musketeers bar.

We walked into the sunset on Sixth Avenue, and realizing it was still early we decided to schmoose around for awhile. We were waiting to cross the street when a young woman, about college-age, approached us, and asked if we wanted to buy a flower. I was sure she was a Moonie.

"How much?" I asked, though I have no intention of buying any. Visions of Chip, the jersey salesman, flashed through my mind.

"They're three dollars each, two for five."

"Uh...I don't think so. You interested, Kitty?"

"No...I don't have enough money..."

We started to walk away when she said, "You can have one for two dollars."

We each pulled out a crumpled dollar bill and she gave us a red rose.

"I love a good bargain," I said.

"Just like a Jew," Kitty said. "Why didn't you use your Visa to pay for it?"

Inspired now, I told Kitty that we should throw the rose onstage to John Irving.

"Yeah! And we can put our phone numbers in it!"

Just then, we came upon a B. Dalton bookstore. It shone like a beacon of light, saying, "Come on in, the water's fine..." I made Kitty buy a copy of The World According To Garp with her last few dollars. On the way out, Kitty dropped her change, and we had some trouble with the turnstiles, but we made it out nonetheless, with our dignity shed, and our enthusiasm fueled.

We took a cab over to Cooper Union, and even though there was a huge line already formed, we managed to get second row seats. I chose the seats, and couldn't help but mutter to Kitty that the guy next to me was cute.

"Damn cute," she whispered.

He had smiled when I asked him if the two seats were taken. "Now they are," he had said. His voice was not altogether unappealing, a combination of Peter Allen and Truman Capote.

Kitty and I began writing our note to John Irving, whom we began to refer to more and more frequently as simply "John". It was Kitty's idea, I later told the authorities, to write "Enjoyed the lecture. Let's do it again sometime. Love, Jill and Kitty." We then wrote our respective phone numbers. I was tempted to write "ask for Alexis" next to my number, but refrained. We talked for a few minutes solely about "John", and what we would each do if we were the only survivors left as well as John after a nuclear war. Then Kitty looked at me profoundly and said, "I have to go to the bathroom."

I watched her walk out of the auditorium, and planned how I could start a conversation with the cute, possibly gay, probably bisexual guy next to me who, at the moment, was doing his homework. It looked like calculus. Before I could say, "So, how 'bout that Hotel New Hampshire, eh?", though, he closed his notebook and turned to me.

"I couldn't help eavesdropping, but tell me, are you two really John Irving groupies?"

I was about to say, "You've got the dreamiest green eyes," but instead I laughed and said, "Yes, we're the Real Thing."

"Uh-huh," he smiled. "I saw your rose."

Within the next three minutes I extracted out of him that he was an engineering student at Cooper Union; this was the first lecture he ever went to at the school; he had only read Garp but really enjoyed it; and he was originally from Connecticut. The only tidbit I forgot to ask about was his name.

When Kitty returned, she whispered to me, "Alexis Black strikes again." John Irving came on a minute later, wearing a brown tweed suit, and looking devastatingly handsome.

He talked about his new novel, St. Clouds, and read various sections from it. During the course of the lecture, Kitty and I noticed a woman

WRITER'S BLOCK

by Robert Hale

It was a dark and stormy night in New York Bay. Suddenly, a Soviet submarine surfaces and 100 crack Soviet commandos secure Liberty Island and the Statue of Liberty. Mayor Beame, in a surprising move, decided to.....

I don't know what he did, readers. It was all I could think of.



sitting in front of us who laughed like a hyena at anything even mildly amusing that John Irving said, and even at some serious comments. She had on huge designer glasses that sat on her size 44D nose.

"Her nose is so big," I said..."How big is it?" the guy next to me asked..."It's so big it makes Barbra Streisand look like a WASP"...

In fact, as he read from Chapter Five, I fiddled with my camera, even though an announcement had been made forbidding the taking of flash photographs. By accident the flash went off in my lap, and the witch in front of us turned around and gave me a dirty look. She did it again later on, when we were whispering something about the man behind us, who was snoring.

After the lecture, Kitty and I got up armed with our flower (we had also put in a copy of my famous story "A Rough Draft With Dignity"). On the back of it, I wrote my name, address, telephone number, as well as "INSIDE JOKE—published by Elaine Wechsler". I decided not to write my measurements, though.

We asked a technician on stage if he could give our rose to "Mr." Irving. He said he wouldn't be going backstage, but he told us where we could go to give it to him ourselves. The guy who had been sitting next to me came up behind us and said, "This I've gotta see."

Surprisingly, just a few people were backstage, and within a few minutes I was face to face with John Irving. I told him how much I enjoyed the lecture, and how much I admire his writing, etc. I handed him the rose and he smiled. I smiled back, and looked behind me, waiting to grab Kitty, but saw her leaning against the wall talking to the guy who had been sitting next to me.

"Do you live in Manhattan?" John asked me.

"Well, I reside in Queens, but I LIVE in Manhattan."

"Well, would you like a lift home?"

"Oh, is your driver here?" I asked, immediately wishing I hadn't, realizing how much of a fan I sounded like.

"Please! I'm a writer, not a movie star. Anyway, my car is parked a couple of blocks away...parking's impossible around here!" he complained in his sexy New England accent.

"Oh, well, thank you...could you just...my friend...uh...wait here?" I said.

I told Kitty and asked her if she wanted to come, secretly hoping she'd say no.

And she did—rather smugly.

"That's okay, Jill. Kenny and I are going to take a stroll in the park."

"Washington Square Park? At this hour?" I asked incredulously.

"Coming, Jill?" John asked.

"Sure," I said, and tried to walk to him casually.

We talked about writing as we walked to his car, though I was tempted to ask him if he was a Pisces throughout our talk. He opened the door to his tan BMW for me, and I got in, in a dreamlike trance.

We were in midtown when he banged the steering wheel as I rambled on and said, "Damn, I left something important in my hotel room. Do you mind if we stop there for a minute?"

Thinking about what the girls would say in school the next day, I gushed, "No, not at all!"

We went up to his room at the Sheraton, and he got whatever it was he needed from the drawer of his nighttable, then quickly stashed it in his front pants pocket.

There was an uncomfortable silence, and then he pulled out my story ("Rough Draft") and glanced at it.

"Why don't you read it to me?"

"Oh, I..."

"Come on...please."

Now, how could I resist?

I read it to him, and he laughed (at just the right times) even louder than the witch who sat in front of me at the lecture. He was also flattered that I mentioned him several times in the story.

Afterwards he said, "Jill, you are simply a literary genius! My God, I, I, just don't know what to say. Why, compared to you I'm a novice!"

"Oh, no...I'm just an amateur..."

"Jill," he said, gripping me emphatically about my shoulders, "you're the most beautiful, talented, witty girl I've ever met."

And before I knew it, I was in his arms, kissing him passionately in unadulterated ecstasy.

We were half on the bed and half on the floor when the phone rang. He picked it up. "Hi...Yes, dear, the lecture went very well...Uh-huh...yes...yes, I'll be home around five tomorrow...Okay...Love you too, dear," he said, then hung up.

"Your wife?"

"Yes," he said sheepishly. He then said he'd better take me home. I nodded. When we got to my apartment he broke down crying, saying his marriage was on the rocks, but he still loved his wife, but wanted to see me again, yet knew he couldn't.

"It's all right," I said; I was still in shock, after all.

Kitty and I compared notes the next day. Her story ended with, "and he broke down crying, saying he was still in love with his old boyfriend."

I sighed. Does anyone ever escape their past, I wondered. But in the World According to Jill Dearman, we are all terminal cases.

FANTASY

by Anni Ackner

Either in two parts

Or just a dichotomy:

First in the restaurant—

Juice bar—

Watching some film strip with Australian bands

And a tearing soundtrack.

All pastel,

Your narrow eyes

And that strange blue light over everything.

The ride in the long car,

Missionaries,

And some hotel.

Then later, one room or another,

Regardless,

The inevitable touching,

Rolling—

No fire or electrical storm,

But lizards,

Cold,

With webbed feet.

Poetry!

GROWTH by John J. Soldo

There is technique as in vocational schools

and wisdom, which is so rare that one finds the void,

the way one can plant

zucchini and tomatoes,

water them the way one bathes infants,

watch them grow,

and finally share the harvest with friends.

And then there is

the understanding of growth

for the substance beneath

all accidents is change,

the way the body is

substance to the clothes.

Change is what one gets back

in the exchange from life.

The process may be best known

through analogy,

which I once asserted

was the method of philosophy.

At the very same time

one is like

and should be unlike

the what of the self.

If there is a vine

one should bear fruit

just as my cherry tree

brought forth round, red berries.

If there are marigolds

in a concrete planter,

there should just be

the open expanse of the yellow blossoms.

Whichever way there is

there should be a continuation,

an extension of live,

with a suggestion of immortality

for one has faced a dead end

and changed his course

so that process is

the arrangement of white cubicles

leading up a hill

from the Mediterranean,

a rhythm that is relaxed

for it is just there

the way my honeysuckle climbs my trellis

to give me the pleasure of shade

the way its scent reaches for the heavens.

And so what if man's reach

exceeds his grasp;

the import of life

is to stand tall

in an orgasm of self

so that pride is justified

as when a mother watches her son

march in uniform

dark blue with white strips down the side,

up Fifth Avenue,

when the world becomes its own wonder.

MY SIXTH GRADE TEACHER

by John Karasch

400 plus miles driven to see

my old elementary school teacher.

I had imagined you senile:

to bed by 8:00

ecstatic as your organs would allow

at thought of sharing conversation

maybe repast with

a sharp young man.

Instead you stand beside a thicket

poised in your old bones

not the widower I imagined:

70 plus years old & your mate beside

wrinkly & slim her stick finger

swirling Jack Daniels

appearances ready to lead us both

into the sagebrush.

Texas trawl

by Sheryl Nelms

spiraling in their slow motion vortex

like black

leaves trapped

in a dying

tornado

seven

buzzrds spin

concentric circles

over

the cow

carcass

below

save the redwoods

I anticipate your topography

the smooth dome

that dips

down

to

the furred

drop

off

to the valley

below

then the steep

rise

in elevation

to the capped peak

and the slide

down the other side

through the black forest

that ends in a long

walk

home

Sheryl L. Nelms

moon-spear

and

the night

wore black

leather

thundered

rumbled

flashed

stilettos

stabbing bark

gnarled with

wisdom

scorched

ancient thighs

spread fury

like a rash

into fields

then away

lone trunk

limbs gone

left behind

a charcoal

sketch against

the sky.

Ronald Edward

Kittell

IN COPENHAGEN TRAIN STATION

by Peter Roberts

tall, gaunt, pock-faced swede,

strung out (like a bead

on the chain 'round his neck),

has a small-money need,

puts his hands 'round her neck

& he starts to knead.

"so, you want a massage?"

(with his hands on her neck)

"give you both a massage?"

—from around susan's neck

his hands i dislodge.

we slip off, try to dodge

through the crowd, get away,

to not make a display.

but his single-track mind,

as it's focused today,

makes him keep us in mind

(he must make something pay)

A QUESTION OF DUCKS

by D.A. Fripp

If ducks can be a metaphor for life

Can life be a metaphor for ducks

And if ducks are like life

Are they then a simile

And if they are a simile

Can they truly be a metaphor

WHY NOT?

by Susan Packie

The article was headlined

"Unwed Father Kills Himself

Out of Shame,"

went on to say

financial stress

and mental duress

compounded difficulties involving

a playmate who refused

to settle down,

strict parents

and a censoring boss.

He lost his job, of course,

lost his self-respect,

and, worst of all,

lost his virginity.

Noting his demoralized state,

no one was taken aback

when he was found

drowned in a puddle.

His mind

had become befuddled.

The woman never even

looked back.

CHICKENSHIT

by Robert L. Tyler

Policing the area,

picking up cigarette butts,

KP duty.

Shopping,

laundry,

balancing the check book,

mowing the lawn.

Saluting officers,

short arm inspection,

close order drill.

Putting out the trash,

cleaning the garage,

raking leaves.

When,

for Chris'sake,

do we got some

real combat?

TIME 4A POEM

by Don Webb

Tristan und Isolde, Tristram Shandy, Tristan Tzara,

Tyrst 'S shake.

A logical progression for a progressive age.

See Tristan Tzara pick poems out of a hat

Tristan sez—

I am the Spirit of Dada in our Times.

In our Spirit, time Dada! I am.

I am the Dada of our Spirit—Times.

Time our Spirit, the Dada. I am in.

I am Spirit. I am Times. The in a—

BANG!

Andre Breton shoots him.

There Oughta Be A Law

review by elayne

December 6 seemed like an appropriate day to check out local comedy (if you don't know why you don't know me vewwy well, do you?), so it was Once More Into The Breach, Dear Friends, to finally see Legal Action in action (brought to you by your friendly Society for Redundancy Society, etc. etc.), a really spiffy troupe now consisting of Rob McCaskill, Laurie Jacoby, Cate White, Armando Molina, Lisa Loomer, Marc Epstein and Rick Perkins, and under the direction of the apparently mucho talented Gregg Lachow. The place? Why, our new favorite IJ hangout (next to my apartment, that is)—the West Bank Cafe Downstairs, on 42nd St. off 9th Avenue in Manhattan.

Lisa Bottini (comedy maven par excellence), Marge de la Rosa and I were greeted at the entrance to the cabaret by one of the proprietors, Lewis Black. Lewis also serves as the playwright-in-residence and comic emcee, and he, like everyone you meet at NBCD, was extremely friendly and enthusiastic. Gratefully(?) accepting a copy gratis of IJ #26, containing my first review of a show I'd seen there last month, Lewis chatted with us awhile about the status of the cafe and its programming. The crowds have been growing steadily, although they could always use more people (and as I said last time, it's really quite worth it for the money and a gloriously fun evening out, any night Tuesday through Saturday); the news show that Lewis and partner Randy Forester (another proprietor of the place) had been doing, sort of a SNL Weekend Update only better, has been temporarily suspended in the search for a better time slot; they're not happy about publicizing in trendpube like the Voice but realize, as do we all, that even Some Of Us peruse those sorts of papers in our never-ending quest to be satiated with Good Entertainment, and that you have to take your chances when advertising in the Voice that you'll get a few hip wimps and a few genuine mutants, and after awhile the fast-paced and highly literate surreal comedy of the NBCD will weed 'em out one from the other...It was a good and informative conversation, and I think we've made an excellent choice in adopting this place as our "pet cafe" ("Mom, can't I keep it, it followed me home...").

The crowd was hefty this night, as it was to be the final night of the year for Legal Action, taking a much-needed hiatus for a month or so to regroup and sleep. The atmosphere was extremely cordial and fun-loving, even though one table really didn't know another (and the people thereon as well); it gave one the feeling of a comedy fraternity, and set the mood for what was to come.

And it was a good thing, too. The first performance, before LA came on, was a pithy little 'social consciousness' thing that was more dated than the food in my fridge, by the name of "Cop Out". Lewis made a big deal in his intro about how the playwright (the name escaped me even then) was the first legitimately 'famous' one whose play they'd ever had performed there. I don't know if it was worth the trouble, frankly. There are two actors in "Cop Out", the cop and the woman who plays all the other roles (Paula Fish, or something like that, who was, despite the material, quite good). I don't even want to go into the semblance of a plot, but it wasn't the most enjoyable thing I had ever seen (a tad better than "River Trip" but not much)...

But on to the important stuff—LEGAL ACTION. Twelve vignettes in all, of varying comedy effect and talent, so let's run 'em down...

"The Rose"—Perkins and Epstein (more on them later—they're, in my opinion, the two most talented cast members and also the ones I now know personally) as two bums on the streets of New York; poignantly and touchingly done. As usual, the brilliant acting and well-written one-liners combine to make watching these two a special treat.

"Mr. Helpful I"—Rick as a lovable/hateful character who gives people the wrong directions, times, and general misinformation. His performance, as usual, shines. Basically a one-joke thing, though, so they keep it short enough.

"One Step"—I really liked this one, which ran the longest. Marc plays a slightly spacy husband more interested in having fun than in dealing with the world crises that his wife keeps shouting out from the living-room tickertape ("Tiny African nation has been missing for weeks! Mayor Koch to wed Mayor Feinstein!"). Good reactions, and even good ad-libs (the one playing Marc's wife—at this point I must confess that, not having met any of the female cast members yet, I cannot say which one this was—had a wonderful line when she saw a prop was missing, "Where's the furniture?", to which Marc replied, referring to the bit that opened the scene, "I removed it for my moon walk." He, you see, had been to see "The Right Stuff" again...). A joy.

"Personals"—Finding the right guy through the Voice ads. Great for those of us who've chuckled at Contact Nitwits and such. Short'n'sweet.

"3-D Waitress"—The whole cast, and even the bartender, were in on this, a fast-paced look at five minutes in the life of a would-be actress/waitress for whom nothing is going right at the moment. Uncomfortable but excellently done. Also an interesting ad-lib here too, as one of the actors made a tie-in referring to a previous sketch! I love that sort of thing...

"Mr. Helpful II"—Again, Rick doing what is obviously a very popular running gag/character.

"Park Bench"—Armando as a psychotic crazy for a sadistic poet—Some really memorable one-liners here ("This moment was pre-written in time, before I was interesting"; "Why did they build the pyramids?"—"Hotels!" and a great come-on line, "What an interesting limb you have..."). A favorite of the crowd as well, and full of laughs.

"Love in the Afternoon"—Low-key and almost sad, featuring an alcoholic mother imparting through example the facts of life to her impressionable child, who wants to be just like Mom...

"The Runaway"—Same child now, contemplating suicide then deciding to wait until after her next birthday.

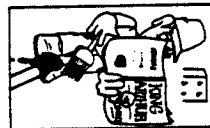
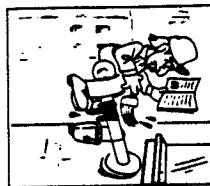
"Mr. Helpful III"—Rick keeps this from becoming a dead horse...

"Moonbeam's Gas & Go"—My favorite, featuring Marc and his pet wrench (uh, believe me, it's a long story) and Bob as a very spaced-out

all-night driver. You hadda be there, but this was by far the most pleasingly surrealistic of the evening. Much huzzahs.

"The Traveller" is Rick again, having trouble finding his gate because the PA system keeps malfunctioning at crucial points. The man's facial expressions are precious and perfect.

After the show, I talked a bit with Rick and Marc, who will be/are at our gala party in full swing, and who are both admirers of IJ and, as I mentioned briefly last time, TTT. They told us the cast will return again with all-new material in January, and look forward to meeting many more IJers in the audience in the future! As I mentioned, Legal Action plays Tuesday nights, and is the only thing I can think of that's worth skipping Remington Steele for, so if you're interested in coming along on a given night, gimme a call and ye won't regret!



"ZEKE the GEEK" by Randy Maxson



Did you hear the one about the New York fashion designer who crossed Kris Kringle's outfit with a two-colored suit, and got a Wool Tweed Santa?



Cruisin' by Rick McCann

Walking down a rough street at three A.M. returning from a gig, he hears some cool vibes comin' from a ghetto buster some guys have on a corner up ahead. Rappin' and jivein' they seem to be havin' a good time and that music really has a beat. Inside, he wants to stop and rap and these guys must be something like him else they wouldn't be here right now; but outside he's afraid they might put him down or kick him 'round. Maybe they don't like whites. Maybe they don't like outsiders. So he does what he always does and puts on the tough 'Don't fuckin' bother me' mask and walks on hoping he don't get no hassles.

One of the dudes sees this cat kickin' along at three A.M. from the lower east lookin' rad and figures he's prob O.K. but what if he's got buddies that ain't. Maybe he don't like blacks. Maybe he don't like outsiders. Anyhow, he's maybe the wrong color and it wouldn't be cool with these other dudes to connect. Besides that, eyeballin' close; this guy's lookin' like he might kick shit if anybody rubs him wrong. Just stand here and let him pass and act like ya don't see him cuz ya don't need no hassles.

Passin' by—passed by; nothing happens and a bunch of things that coulda been good never gets to happen. Everybody's safe.

The Worst Xmas Joke of the 1970's

IN THE NINTH YEAR OF THE FEAST by Dean Tomasula

John Phelps lay in the hospital bed staring at the cracking plaster on the ceiling, as the doctor drew blood from his arm for the third time that morning.

He knew the doctor was only going through the motions. They both knew it was terminal and there was nothing modern science could do for him.

He braced himself for the bad news. "So tell me Doc, what's the verdict?"

"I'm afraid, Mr. Phelps, that the prognosis is not every encouraging. Even with all the tests we took this week we still are unable to find the cause."

"I'm not interested in the cause, Doc. Just tell me how long I've got and what I can expect."

"Well, Mr. Phelps, I'm afraid it's terminal; incurable, if you prefer. What it is exactly we don't know. Your somewhat of a medical miracle. One for the medical journals, to be sure. We've never seen this disease before; there's nothing in the literature..."

"Cut all the bullshit, Doc, and tell me what I can expect."

"Well, since we've never seen anything like this before, I can't tell you precisely what to expect. All I can say is that from all indications you're going to live forever. You see, somehow your body has built up an immunity to every known disease. You cannot die by disease."

John Phelps was stunned. He tried to make sense of it all in his head. He tried to imagine what eternal life would be like.

He couldn't.

"You mean...I'm not going to die. Ever. I'm going to live forever."

"So it seems, Mr. Phelps. And in a few years your body will grow accustomed to regenerating itself. By then you will be truly immortal. At that point, nothing will be able to kill you."

"You mean I'll be doomed to live for eternity." John Phelps was not pleased at this news.

"Think of it this way, Mr. Phelps. You will be around a long time. Think of all the progress you will see. Think of all the history you will have been a part of."

He was not interested in progress or in history. All he wanted was to live a normal life, and die like everyone else. But now, by a cruel twist of fate, he was condemned to spend the rest of eternity alive on Earth.

"We will be releasing you this afternoon, Mr. Phelps," the doctor told him. "I'm afraid there's nothing we, or anyone—except maybe God—can do for you now."

"God," he laughed. "He's the one who put this curse on me."

John Phelps watched the doctor leave the room. He felt hatred towards him, and all of medicine, for not coming up with a cure for his terrible disease.

While he was packing his belongings, John Phelps began cursing God.

"Why are you torturing me like this? Why me? What did I ever do to deserve such punishment?"

He paused as if waiting for a reply, although he knew there would not be one.

"Of all the hideous tortures you could devise in your twisted mind, why did you have to pick this one for me?"

He continued muttering curses under his breath as he left the hospital.

John Phelps knew he should feel privileged to be allowed to live forever. Many people would kill for the privilege. But he could not feel happy about it. He felt doomed. He felt hatred, especially toward old people. He knew they would be allowed to die and he wouldn't.

As the years passed, John Phelps became a loner, partly by choice and partly through nature. As the world around him aged, things began to die. But he didn't. His family and friends grew old and passed on, but John Phelps remained as he was. As he would be for eternity. Never to grow old. Never to die.

As time wore on his hatred grew deeper and deeper. He tried to resign himself to the fact that he would be around for a long time, but he couldn't. Not a day passed that he did not curse God for his condition. Not a year passed that he did not wonder why he was being punished.

As decades passed, and science and medicine progressed, new diseases were being discovered and wiped out; but John Phelps remained as he was.

Periodically he would go to doctors and other specialists, trying to find an answer to his problems. But there was none. Everyone kept telling him he should feel privileged to be granted eternal life.

After sixty years had passed, and John Phelps should have been a hundred and ten years old—and no longer alive—he decided to take matters into his own hands. He decided to try to kill himself.

He tried every known method available. He tried poison. He tried hanging. He tried gas. He tried lasers. He even tried shooting, stabbing and suffocating himself, all at the same time. But nothing worked.

No method of death known to man could kill John Phelps. After all his attempts, all he felt was a little pain and soreness for a few days. His wounds would heal in a few days with no trace of what he had tried to do.

John Phelps was feeling intense hatred again. He felt it in every part of his body. "It's been sixty goddam years!" he shouted at the sky. "Don't you think I've suffered enough?"

This time he was expecting an answer. But there was none.

"Whatever I've done I'm sorry. Please...please, let me die. I'm sick of living. I want to die. Please God, let me die."

He stood on a low cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, shouting obscenities at the sky, knowing God would hear him. Suddenly the sky turned black and thunder clouds appeared overhead. Thunder clapped and lightning and heavy rain fell from the sky.

John Phelps raised both fists against the black sky. "Show yourself, goddam you. Show yourself and tell me why I have been damned."

He was wet to the skin and chilled to the bone, with anger seething from every pore in his body.

"Show yourself!" he demanded.

At that instant there was a great flash of light and a vision appeared next to him on the cliff.

John Phelps was speechless. The great light was blinding, but somehow he saw clearly the figure standing in the midst of it.

"I am showing myself to you, John Phelps," a voice told him, "and I will tell you why you were chosen." The voice boomed and echoed off the walls of the canyon behind him.

"I had chosen you, John Phelps, to be given the gift of eternal life on earth because you had the potential to do great things. You had the capacity to appreciate such a wondrous gift and use it to do good and improve life on the planet for future generations. But instead you chose to curse me every day of your life. I was hoping you would feel privileged, but you weren't. You were not pleased. And you repay me by feeling hatred towards me."

John Phelps was frozen where he stood. He could not speak. His body was numb.

The voice continued, "You will have your wish, John Phelps. I will let you die. But it will be a slow and agonizing death. And you will be sorry. You will wish you had not felt hatred towards me. You will wish you had another chance. But there will be none. You will wish you still had eternal life. But you will not, John Phelps. You will want to be forgiven, but you will never be."

A light, brighter than the first, appeared above the cliff and the vision was gone. Then the light moved out over the ocean. It seemed to illuminate the whole ocean at once.

As John Phelps stared into the light over the ocean, he was lifted from where he stood and thrown out into the water. His body was still numb and he could not move.

A huge mass of sharks appeared almost at once, as he lay there floating. They were everywhere, surrounding him on all sides. They were above him and below him.

John Phelps never felt such intense pain before. As he lay there waiting for something to happen, and happen quickly, each shark began to take a small bite out of his flesh. As each piece was ripped from his skeleton, sending blood streaming into the waters around him, more sharks would appear. It seemed the entire ocean was full of them. Each was there to feast on him.

He thought it would be over quickly. There were so many sharks they could be done with him in seconds. He was hoping this was so.

But it wasn't.

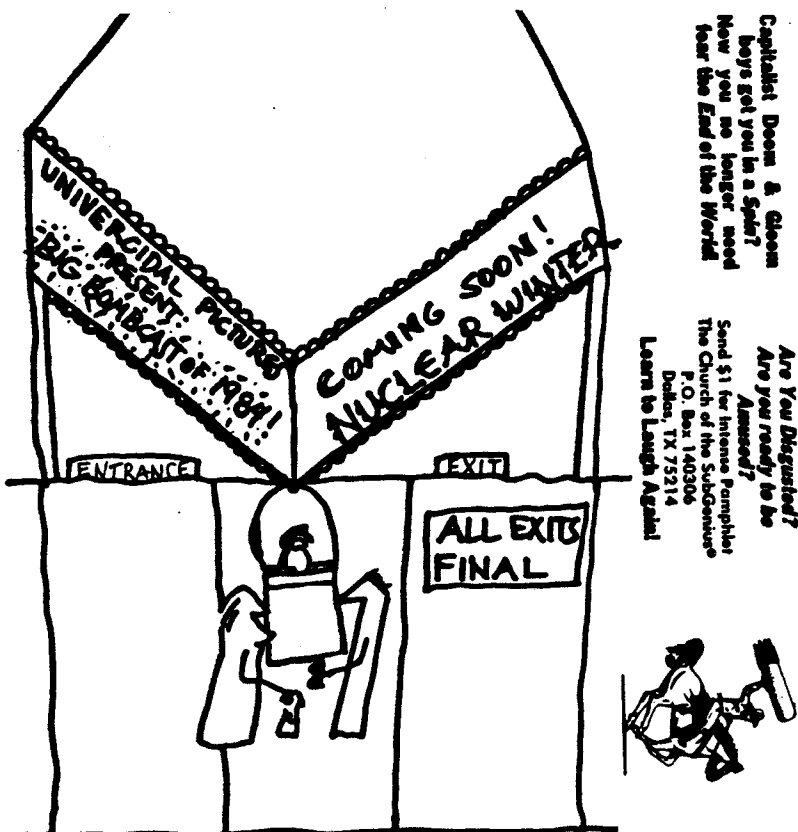
Each time flesh was torn from his body, the missing piece would immediately regenerate itself for the next shark. An endless feast.

This went on for years. Occasionally a shark would grab a whole limb, but it would quickly grow back.

After nine years of watching the sharks gorge themselves on John Phelps' living corpse, God grew tired of the game. He was quite satisfied that John Phelps had had enough.

In the ninth year of the feast the world continued on as it always did.

In the ninth year of the feast, John Phelps finally got his wish.



PAPOON IN '84/84

PROGRESS REPORT XI: CORNED BEEF AND CABBAGE PATCH?

George and Eleanor Papoon had a fine old time this past exmass with their good friends on the sleigh (not to be confused with the slay, which was in New Jersey)—after all, it is eight more votes for George (nine, counting Rudolph). After giving GGP presents for us, his co-chaircreatures (a Scandinavian with a universal product code for Anni and a real microphone for Elayne) and showing off his new Orwellian monitoring system, Santa tried to unload his bursting sacks of over 14,598,230 Cabbage Patch Dolls on the hapless pair as his campeon contribution. "Just think," mused wise ol' St. Nick, "you can offer them in exchange for votes! Boil 'em with your corny beefs! A Cabbage Patch in every pot!" "Maybe so," retorted George thoughtfully, "but with our Surrealists, it'll probably have to be the other way around. Besides, SNL beat us to the parody this time," hence no bit this month. But hey, don't despair, fellow NSPers. We've got other reports and retorts, hot off the presses...here comes one now...

MINUTES OF MADNESS FROM THE MIDWEST

by Wally O'Science

The meeting took place on December 10, 1984-1 in the underground city of Bushong. Bushong's subterranean complex was built thousands of years ago by an unknown race and has since been taken over by the trolls (who admit that their ancestors did not build the city) that keep the place clean and the machines running. All delegates arrived late, and after the singing of the traditional Papoon campaign song ("Papoon, Papoon for President, there is no one to blame", etc.), the meeting was called to disorder by chair-creature Gluttomoto, the Big Guy himself having just recently returned from Mars. Habafropzipulops and pills were handed out and the 1st meeting of the Kansas Kampoon Kouncil (KKK) was underway. Naturally, the clanking, squeaking and unwelcome delegation from Robots for Equality for Mechanisms (REM) began calling for the floor to whine about (what else?) robot suffrage. A motion was raised by an unidentifiable robot that a possible solution to the problem might be to perform full body transplants on robots using organic donors, making machines organisms, at least for erection day. This idea caused quite a bit of excitement among the delegation of Doktors for Degeneracy and Turpitude (DDT), themselves already anxious to begin experimentation on passing trolls. Gluttomoto roared for order, the Old Fellow's wildly thrashing tail scattering unwary trolls and delegates across the cavernous meeting room. An elder robot said that his colleague's idea was poop, that it sidestepped the issue and would not answer the fundamental question of machine's rights, and the motion was dropped. What looked like a flaming arrow flew past the robot's (At this point several pages of the minutes were burned beyond legibility after a brawl broke out between warring factions of pink-haired trolls and green-haired trolls, having nothing to do with the KKK business at hand.)

The venerable Mr. Twaddle moved that the next meeting take place in the as yet incomplete reactor building of the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant located near New Strawn, Kansas, at a date to be announced (BYOB), and was seconded by Wally O'Science. O'Science then moved that the meeting be adjourned and was seconded by Mr. Twaddle. By then everyone else was gone or dead, so we left.

Well, one state of mind heard from. Anybody else out there doing anything, or even making it up? Thanks to "Wally" for the above...And speaking of names and more names, this too came in the mail...

NOTORIOUS RABBIT FOUND DEAD IN HOLLYWOOD NOT HOME

(URP) Famous unknown personality, Robert Rabbit, was found dead this morning in his Hollywood Hills apartment of Apparent Drug Overdose (79) although the nasty little critter denied it to the end. According to Red Wood, Poons Farm's sole remaining caretaker, Rabbit died of fright. "He never let on," Woof said, "but he was always scared to death that Elayne would finally pursue her ~~unhealthy~~ fascination with his so-called 'real' name to its logical conclusion, thus preventing any possibility of a Campeon occurring at all. Fortunately, she never did learn his real name (nor Scott Inglebritson's), but the poor little guy was so sensitive that he just melted into nothingness when she turned on the steam."

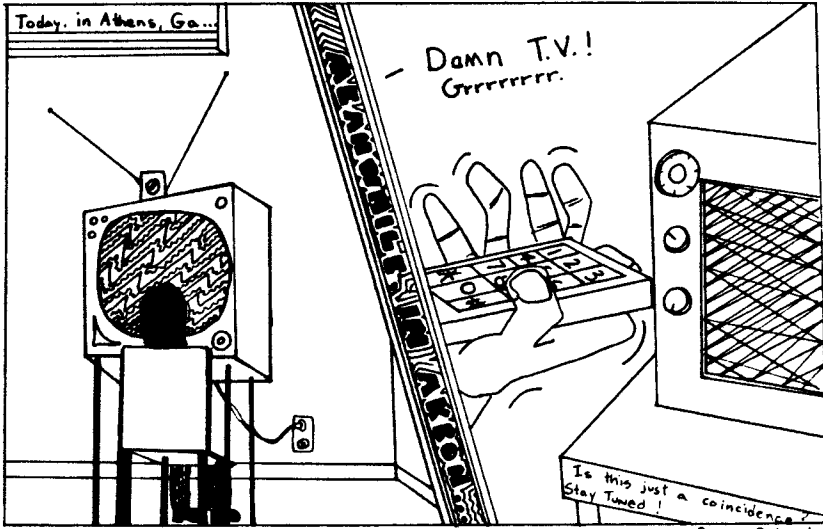
As to Rabbit's present whereabouts, Woof's only comment was "Oh, he always pops up somewhere—who knows? And by the way, if any of you out there are among those who have sent me such great stuff in the mail lately, well, you know, I feel like a fool writing back and saying, uh, sorry but I don't have anything to send back right now. And while I may indeed at times be running around with my ass on backwards, I am working on something, and I will send it to you all. Onward!"

When last investigated, it was found that Rabbit was not dead, only suffering from a severe MI (Multiple Identity) crisis due to his inexplicable inability to distinguish between real names and surreal names (or was it my inability? well, these are crisis times for us all, dear friends). He was well enough, however, to pen something—or other for us to, which appears elsewhere this issue.

And right on the heels of the Robots for Papoon controversy, still brewing in the backs of our minds until we think of a good end for it, comes this utterly ridiculous letter the only reason of which I'm running it (is that sentence fragment right? can't be) is because of the punch line, somewhere in the middle; it is to be taken less seriously than most of the other stuff we have in here, so please read it and forget it. We're surrealists, not suprarealists...

"Things we know of (part 1): One Organism, One Vote and Robots for Papoon. But what about Myths 4 Papoon, huh? Is the mere fact of non-existence reason for denying suffrage? I say NO! I realize that this might be construed as 'letting things get out of hand' (to put it mildly, Chucko) but I've gotta say it. Pineal glands, doncha know. So far endorsements of the Papoon/Cheese team have arrived at Myths 4 Papoon from god, a balanced budget, an affordable apartment in Manhattan, and the New York Giants offense. I think there's a groundswell

Today, in Athens, Ga...



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here. Imagine all the votes if fictional characters and other figments could be aligned behind GGP...breath-taking...Things We Know Of (Part B): By now we all know that Dobbs has endorsed the GGP bid in 1984a. But what of the Meadow Party? What's the position to take? The Rat Stuff on The Weird Stuff? So, they've got nothing but a vice-presidential candidate? It's just adding to the surreality. Perhaps GGP could wear a penguin mask and then add the Opus votes to his own as well. Maybe Opus is GGP? Who'd know? I think the key here is to find a way to get these votes into GGP's column. Suggestions? Well, I should shut up now but not before I suggest to the wonderful A. Achner that perhaps GGP was in your dream. Who'd know? Worth thinking about. Anyway, life is good in the greenhouse...BANZAI!, and it was tentatively signed "Rodny K. Dioxin" or something like that.

Do catch, tho, Rodny's exclusive interview with Chuck E. Cheese elsewhere this issue...Speaking of which, we are saddened to report that ol' Chuck's Pizza Time Theatre hasn't been doing too well lately (I had a hunch it might not catch on outside of Disneyland), so perhaps in the near future CRC may be able to devote his full time and attention to the race for the Mice-Presidency...More on this next time...

Now that I've thoroughly baffled everyone with type-element shifting and such, it's my distinct pleasure to announce George Papoon's first Impress Conference, to be held at approximately the beginning of the New Year (1984 still, if we're lucky), at our gala event at Homebase Inside Joke, apartment Third Eye. If you just got your IJs at this very party (those attendant in person did not have IJs mailed to them), open your songbooks to page...no no no, wrong bit, uh, do plan your pointed and pointless questions to George, who will be happy to answer them, or at least confuse everybody properly. We hope to have a full pictorial spread of this conference, Papoon's first appearance in 1984, in our next issue, so don't touch that dial!

**A VOTE FOR
CHUCK E.
CHEESE
IS A VOTE FOR
GEORGE G.
PAPOON.**

Think it over.
Then take off your shoes.

**YOU KNOW
HE'S NOT
INSANE.**



Same Seeks Same
Solipsist seeks self for superfluous sym-
metry. Let's be alone together. Reply
Boxholder PO Box #1314, 2000 Center
St. Berkeley, 94704

POLITICS is like a pond: the scum rises to
the top. Diehard "majority rule," join the
Unruly Majority. Impoliticarians, 56 Sutter,
No. 497, SF

SLIPPED DISCS

comedy album reviews by Jed Martinez

"EXCUSE ME, ARE YOU READING THAT PAPER?"—David Brenner (MCA Records, MCA 5457)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is known for a lot of things: Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, W.C. Fields (who would settle for it over Paris before dying), Frank Rizzo, Rocky Balboa, the 76ers, the Phillies, and cream cheese.

As far as comedy is concerned, one name was synonymous with Philadelphia—Bill Cosby...I said "was", because for the last twelve years, a new name and face has emerged through the ranks of stand-up humor, and only recently had made the transition to the wax biscuit—David Brenner.

Originally known for producing several award-winning TV documentaries, David Brenner ventured into the world of nightclub comedy in the late 1960's and early 1970's. His brand of humor was relatively simple: he would talk about things we would normally take for granted, like signs and common expressions heard throughout our lives. With careful polishing and improvement in each performance, the formula worked, and audiences on the East Coast were eating it up.

Eventually, all of this led up to a guest shot on "The Tonight Show" and the rest, as the old cliché goes, was history.

At long last, over a decade later, David Brenner has released his very first LP, "Excuse Me, Are You Reading That Paper?", and all I can say is...David, what took you so long?!

In this album, David has a good time talking to the audience about his upbringing in Philadelphia, including stories about dogs, teachers, his family, his friends and even his enemies ("...Ugh, the La-morgia Brothers...there were nine of them, born three months apart"). Most of these live peices of comedy are right on target, especially those on the subject of sex ("Let's face it, it doesn't matter what day you were born on, you were started on a Friday or Saturday night!"). He also raps about New York City and Los Angeles and his love/hate relationship with both cities.

Although this album doesn't contain many familiar pieces we know him for, such as 'Dumb Signs' ("No Dogs Allowed, Except Seeing-Eye Dogs" is a prime example) or his classic 'How to Get Rid of a Dead Body in New York' ("Just throw him into the crowd...he'll wind up in Times Square and get mugged...twice"), there's enough new and old material to keep even the grouchy critics satisfied.

Earlier this year, David had an autobiographical work released entitled "Soft Pretzels with Mustard". It, too, was mostly about David's lifestyle in Philly. Unfortunately, the publisher took the hard-covered editions out of release. But if you like a sample of what this book contains pick up David's album. Interspersed within the comedy material are excerpts from his book. Unlike George Carlin's "A Place For My Stuff", which also contains pieces done before an audience along with material recorded in a separate studio without a laugh track, David plays it straight as he tells many stories which are augmented with sound effects and actors (including his real-life parents, Lou and Estelle, who played...what else...his parents).

These excerpts from "Hot Pretzels with Mustard" have a touch of poignancy rarely found on most comedy albums (only Robin Williams came closer with his last two albums, but these moments were done before the audience), and I sincerely hope the paperback edition of this book sells many, many more copies when it's released.

"Excuse Me...", in my opinion, is an album the whole family can enjoy. Okay, so there are a few dirty words in it, but when you compare it to the albums of George Carlin, Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor and Robin Williams, this LP is one that the whole family can enjoy. David Brenner proves that you don't have to be totally obscene to get big laughs. And that's a refreshing change of pace on any standard of listening pleasure.

1983 GRAMMY PREDICTIONS

In mid-January 1984, the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences will announce the nominees for the best outstanding recordings of the previous year. Yes, it's Grammy Award time.

Among the Pop musical recordings, as well as Rhythm & Blues, Country & Western, Classical, Contemporary, Jazz, Gospel and Soundtracks (in LP, EP, 45 singles, and videos), a few comedy records will find themselves in the position of being chosen for the singular honor of being nominated in the "Best Comedy Recording" category.

This year has turned out a bumper crop of comedic talent, familiar and unknown alike. Exposure on television has helped some of them, particularly for the likes of Joan Rivers and Eddie Murphy. Familiarity with the public is an equally important factor in being nominated.

Of the dozen or so records released this year, only five of them will be selected by the Academy as nominees. I predict (at least on 4 out of 5) that these will be the albums chosen as candidates for "Best Comedy Recording of 1983":

"EXCUSE ME, ARE YOU READING THAT PAPER?"

David Brenner (MCA)

"EDDIE MURPHY—COMEDIAN"

Eddie Murphy (Columbia)

"RICHARD PRYOR—HERE AND NOW"

Richard Pryor (Warner Bros.)

"WHAT BECOMES A SEMI-LEGEND MOST"

Joan Rivers (Geffen)

"THROBBLING PYTHON OF LOVE"

Robin Williams (Casablanca)

I'm not saying which one of these recordings is going to be omitted from the actual list of nominations, but in the event that should hap-

pen, here are two 'dark horse candidates' that the Academy should also consider:

"RAPPIN' RODNEY" (45 version of the song)

Rodney Dangerfield (RCA)

"WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC"

'Weird Al' Yankovic (Rock 'n' Roll)

In the case of "Rappin' Rodney", it's alright for a 45 single to be nominated among the albums (the late Allan Sherman's 45 of "Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah", which won the Grammy Award in 1963, is proof of the pudding). As for 'Weird Al' Yankovic, his first solo album, tied in with the popularity of his two videos ("Ricky" and "I Love Rocky Road"), just might get him in the position of top contender.

The official announcement of all the Grammy winners will be seen on prime-time television on February 28. Good luck to all the nominees in the "Best Comedy Recording" category. As far as I'm concerned, they're all winners.

ENTERTAINMENT AT EUGENE'S AXE by A.J. Wright

By sunset I am ready to pull my hands out of the earth and move to higher ground. Night rises quickly in this part of the country, and the stragglers always drown. My first stop will more than likely be the local prose cafe, where the shadowed people meet. There I can find an open door and the dark room beyond.

Inside, the horns of the Halothane Band will be steaming up the windows. Tightly wound, bodies of the dancers shall vibrate in their closed systems. A one-armed beauty will point at me with her phantom limb. "In vivo, in vitro," she'll be saying, "it doesn't matter. We're all under some kind of glass." Her phantom partner will smile and nod agreement.

Around me every face is sure to bob and weave like a mask at the end of its tether. Music will vibrate through the moving heads like a fresh supply of blood. As I fall, the night will be turning deeper and deeper—a screw in the skin.

Entertainment is the next best thing at Eugene's Axe. The best is the masquerade of absence.

WHAT MAKES THIS COUNTRY GREAT IS THAT ANYBODY CAN GROW UP TO BE A TV STAR

by Carolyn Lee Boyd

Over the coming months, many of you will notice that some of your favorite tv stars will be talking about something called The Presidential Election. It is usually discussed in pre-prime-time terms, in language not in any way related to television, which excludes most of us born after about 1956 from any meaningful participation in the debates. Sneaky devils, these politicians. Don't think they don't know what they are doing. For the cause of democracy and in memory of the New England small-town meeting, I will now explain the Presidential campaign and you, too, can have an opinion that won't, unless voting by tv is instituted real quick, make a bit of difference.

First, the Democratic candidates:

Kennedy. I imagine he is the choice of most of you, especially those old enough to remember the marathon tv movie—four days it was—about him some 20 years ago. That tv movie has been commemorated at nauseum this season, which has brought back recollections of his morality, his occasional boldness of thought, his pretty wife who spoke French and those two kids, not to mention all those great shampoo commercials with him sailing in his yacht, his sandy hair blowing, shining, manageable, though no one ever said what shampoo he was, in fact, endorsing. I'm afraid to say that John R. has decided to sit this season out, though his spin-off, Teddy, may decide to take a spot in the line-up next fall after all.

Carter. Yes, I've heard that this old peanut may be thinking of running, but given the number of movie flops he had after The Blues Brothers, I don't believe he'll get nominated.

Mondale. Mondale is sort of the Norman Lear of politics, pandering to every interest group that has enough people to rent a hotel convention hall. Notice how well Lear has been doing the past couple of seasons. He has the correct political position for commercial television—vaguely to the left, but wobbly when it comes to taking a stand on anything that might offend so much as a single Eskimo watching in igloo land. He could get nominated, and even elected, but if he does, don't expect much more than four seasons' worth of All In The Family-type drivel.

Glenn. He was a big star around the time of Kennedy, doing extraordinarily realistic space shows, but now he has become sort of the Stephen J. Cannell of politics. Sometimes he seems conservative, sometimes he seems liberal, but mostly he knows how to milk a hero myth for all it's worth. If he gets elected, expect Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica, and Lost in Space back on the air pronto.

Jackson. Can you imagine the jokes on Saturday Night Live? The other two networks will never allow his nomination.

The Republican candidate:

Reagan. Reagan is the first real candidate of the 1980s. To him, life is like Hollywood, and the President is the superstar. Sometimes he may have trouble with the Supreme Court justices—Johnny Carson, David Letterman, and Alan Thicke—but generally he knows how to put on a good show. For those who don't have the dollars for a tv-welfare mothers, the disabled, pregnant teenage girls, blue collar workers—his rating may be low, but nobody can deny that the visual aids, especially those two wind-up Korean kid-with-heart-trouble dolls, are much better with this administration than with Nixon, Carter or Ford.

My personal pick for Best Actor in a Continuing World Crisis? Jerry Falwell, of course—can that man raise the bucks or what? If he were elected we would have no more silly debates over military versus domestic spending, no more fighting for the space program, no more IRS—there would be enough for everybody, and everybody's taxes would be tax-deductible! That's my kind of guy.

Sayz-U! (Letters)

Dear Elayne,

I have been reading INSIDE JOKE for some time now with intense interest, but have never considered myself a very good letter writer. Nonetheless, I would like to attempt some sort of beginning (and semi-anonymous—my address is in flux so please don't print it) correspondence-to-la-editor, and so to comment on issue #26—

Isn't that marvelous cover the first you've ever had from a female artist? (Hooray for our side, she snickered, knowing she'd then be mislabelled immediately as a token knee-jerk feminist.) Really nice work; must have taken Julie hours.

Is there some sort of cosmic significance to the revelation that Dave Ossman and the late Wally Cox share a birthday? Nah, forget I asked. (By the way, Happy Birthday, David, from one of your [formerly] Secret Ardent Admirers.)

I liked Eric C. Palmer's "Not Copyright" notes under his artwork. Good touch. Some of your so-called writers who insist on protecting their precious ownership of usually not-so-well-written words don't seem to have gotten past their anal retentive stage. I mean, Jesus H., whether or not IJ material says that it's copyright its authors shouldn't even be necessary—lighten up guys, eh?

I hope you apologized to Jed Martinez for omitting his name in the editorial box. I'm sure it was inadvertent. (It was—sorry, Jed.)

Will the Theme Issue also apply to Letters to the Editor? Boy, I gotta get me a copy of the Sun-Times and study it, if that's the case! (Yes again, it is—no unMurdoch-ized letters next month!)

I loved the new staff writers' introductions. The staff quality keeps getting better.

Oh okay, a very tepid vote from this end to Save the Whozits...

Anni Ackner is my favourite IJ writer (but that's almost an IJ cliché to say that now, isn't it?), and I not only enjoyed the acute political satire (by the way, one of the "three forgettable" candidates is Gary 'Heartthrob' Hart, beloved by Hunter Thompson fans nationwide, so that didirk me a bit), but the whole concept of Turning 30, an event I look forward to imminently with a mixture of dread and wonder. I hope also to make this Letter-to-Ed longer than hers, but perhaps that's too much to hope for the first time.

Mike Gunderloy seems to write well, but I get the feeling he's saving his prime stuff for places other than IJ. Lucky them, but too bad for us. (Not that bad, mind you. "Confused Revolutionary" is readable and all, but a bit cult-specific. And he complains about too much TFT?)

Whyever did you waste an entire half-page on that piece of shit Tom Sanders calls a column? I've seen more absorbing writing in lavatories. Whatever possessed Tom to think he's important enough that people would find the least amount of fascination with this delusion-of-grandeur flight of fantasy? I mean, WHO CARES, Tom? Even if some of us do know who Alan Freed was.

In Tom's favor, tho, even his piece was better than Lee Pelton's. When Lee took four paragraphs to announce something (his departure from writing about fandom) that made no difference to IJ readers anyway and why he thought it would be a mystery to me, I was looking forward to his fiction. What I and IJers got instead was the hokiest, most clichéd bit I've read since "It was a dark and stormy night!" Like, Predictable City, I'm sherr! It wasn't even interesting predictability (like Penny Lines' wonderful pun creations in "The Red Reaper"), and in IJ, that's nothing less than criminal. Come on, Lee, you must be capable of better than this. (Again, it looks like a case of Fan Cast-offs—save your best writing for somewhere else and your crap can go to IJ, they'll take anything. Elayne, I know you don't believe in censorship, but hasn't IJ gotten to the point where you can start being more selective for the sake of quality? Yes, I know a lot of IJ is a matter of personal taste, but after all, there are minimal standards of good writing one can follow, aren't there?)

Suggestions for Julie Logan, should "Arguments I Have Known" become a regular column: "Do you mind if I smoke?"; "What's on TV tonight?"; and "So order, already!" I'll try to think of more, maybe next time.

Loved Coop's second letter/reply! More "Random Article's, Coop! Deborah's excellent stuff would read great on radio, don'tcha think, with the obligatory organ music in the background and an announcer with a deep, sultry voice...

Clay's produced another fine story, just this side of uncomfortable but very thought-provoking. It's so sad that most in-groups (and even out-groups!) operate that way.

Tom Gedwillo's entry perhaps should have been subtitled "Fear and Loathing in Panto Fijo". Very Hunter S., which is a compliment.

Gerry Reith is a shaman first class, and I think he's your most slighted writer in terms of praise. Gerry, your work is magnifique! So there.

Go, Jill Zimmerman! Tell 'em! Tell us! Tell a vision, tell a... 'scuse me, wrong record. Great writing and astute analysis, as usual.

Same for Candi's expose of the Gerardi/Benatar piece of video nonsense. To be fair, though, Pat's song doesn't convey a hell of a lot more meaning, either.

Now, I gather that Jill Dearman's rather young in comparison to most of your writers, but that's no excuse, in my book. In your Self-Parody issue (I think), JD talked about a book with something like 467 Rules for Good Writers, so I can understand why her stuff flops so much.

Jill dear, there is really only one rule and one corollary for being a good writer, to my mind. Rule: Be interesting (or entertaining).

Corollary: If you can't be interesting, be brief. Your writing is sloppy and non-cohesive at times, full of gratuitous characters and dialogue, and sustains about as much suspense as Lee Pelton's, so I would advise in your case, take it or not, that you CUT IT DOWN (preferably out, but that's just me)! Really, a whole page for this garbage? Roldo's writing is neat, but I never read "Of Spare Changes, Part

I". Still, this one stands alone quite well—I love the imagery. Roldo, I suggest you think about writing one-shot pieces after DMOE is done running. The serial is good, but difficult to follow with the passage of months.

Also noteworthy for its political satire element is Mike Dobbs' column this time. Nothing's too tasteless for us IJ readers, Michael!

While Steven Scharff's "Mr. Allen's Airship" may not be of 'professional' calibre in terms of sentence structure and such, it's interesting enough that I want to see how it comes out in future issues, and I guess that's what counts in the end.

Who did the marvelous Papoon collages? More, more! (Greg Blair, and there's more this issue!)

Thank goodness Brian Catanzaro kept his farcical 'analysis' down to a small paragraph. I hope this ends soon...When Rory Houchens stops speaking in "hip record reviewer" talk, his column should improve immensely. Spare us the cutesy modifiers, Rory, please?

Well, I'm halfway through the issue, so let me comment on the artwork now: Good choice of Dooleys this issue—how does John Crawford do all that weekly? Whew! "Preppie Pagans" I can leave or leave; "Ground 0.000..." (by Tuli Kupferberg?) is wonderful; Randy's entry is also quite appropriate and well-done; Andy Kamm's crisp and clear; George Eddy—well, I'll get to him in a minute; Tom Roberts' back cover is intriguing; Julian Ross' collages are certainly better than his writing; Jed's stuff is likewise mildly amusing; Eric Palmer's a real gem of a find; and whoever did that jester with the cards is mighty talented! (That was Bernadette Bosky.) But my favourite is Steven Scharff's complaint about being placed sideways and your comic 'reply' of putting his art upside down! Predictable, but funny anyway.

Back to the writing... "Cathode Ray..."—well, Bri, a bit of an inside joke to newcomers, to be sure, but well-written.

By far the most fascinating essay was Carolyn Boyd's interpretation of New Con Art. Like, wow. Overwhelming.

Just my luck I don't live in NY to partake of things like the West Bank Cafe Downstairs. Ah well, ND's real exciting sometimes too. Let's see, there's the—uh...there's...er...hmm...

Will Gunnar Larson ever stop preaching to the converted, and will his tired characters ever become three-dimensional? Tune in tomorrow. Yay, Penny! Long live Herschel Dammit!

And I see Connon Barclay gets the Obligatory Christmas Article of 1984-1 award this time. Wish he hadn't taken half a page to tell a two-paragraph story, but it was a cute premise.

Nice bits by Robert Hale—see, there's one who's better when he's briefer—and Rick McCann. Are we sure these two aren't clones? I'm not much for poetry, but I liked Peter Roberts', and would have liked Anni's had you not cut it off. (Anni's poem is being re-run this issue as a result of that mishap.) When's Dave Ossman going to do more poetry for IJ? Guess we're not good enough to attract poetry pros yet. (Pun intended)

I don't think you have an ND Co-Ordinary for Papoon yet, so I'll just go to it, then. I wanna be famous sorta also, Mark L., I think.

George Eddy really gets a kick out of himself, doesn't he? Gets on the defensive when offered constructive criticism, missing the point completely, and then when he does something right (unknowingly) and is complimented, he suddenly thinks he's (pardon the expression) God's gift. George, your stuff is okay, but you're no more special than anyone else in IJ, and you're certainly not one of the 'biggies'. Look, we really don't care (at least I don't) about things like what you do with your characters or whether you feel you have power or responsibility, etc. etc. This matters not to us, George. Step back and gain a little perspective, and you'll be better for it.

Lots of typos in the letter column this month, kiddo. Do try typing with your eyes open next time, heh heh.

Rudy Rucker is my absolute favourite 'sf' writer, but of what he speaks in his IJ letters is still a mystery to me. "Must be drugs!"

The best letter of issue #26 was Roldo's. Sorry Anni.

Reading page 22 on drugs sure helps! And it's not even necessary! Really good bit again, Rodny/Georg, as usual. Hang on to this talent, Elayne!

The best part about written down Dial-a-Rumors are the running gags or themes, and I quite admired the religious overtones of this latest batch.

D.A. Fripp writes purposely pointless stories very well, but we knew that from his letters already, didn't we?

Great Sperry Lunatic poster on the inside back!

Yow, am I an IJ commenter yet? KAREN MAJAY

"Postmark Bismarck", ND

Dear Elayne,

IJ has become very powerful, Elayne. It's getting intense. Everybody is on "THAT IJ WAVELENGTH" and THOSE IJ WOMEN are (gasp) just that! Everybody's laughing! Everybody's getting married!!! I don't believe them a bit (a running joke [RJ]). There's no proof that anybody is. Really. (Well, that's it, guys. You have the definitive word. You can throw away those meaningless marriage licenses now...) I don't think it will increase subs. But everybody is requesting the same stuff! More Wimpy McAllister; More Whozits; More Scharff illos; Less Anni! But please gang, The A-Team has got to go! The crazy guy with the cap was invented by Rick Neilson of Cheap Trick. How quickly we forget Neilson's stage-antics-expressions were merely a prototype character waiting for some Saturday morning merchandiser to snap him up. (What do you mean, how quickly we forget! Neilson stole that characterization lock, stock & barrel from Huntz Hall, who stole it from... etc. etc. etc., SO THERE!) So calm down to Con Art.

The Ever-Popular's essay was magnificent. IJ can make sense, be honest, and make us laugh without looking for happy endings. All at the same time. We should be damned proud of it, too. If you want, I mean...The Gedwillo testimonial stands firm. In fact, I started a lengthy letter on the subject and here it is.....

(The last ish made me crazy too, see?)

Cheeses, E., I guess that pep talk for more creativity a couple

months ago really helped! It (IJ) has been getting progressively better. After each piece I find myself laughing at the lunacy of it all, just like in the old days! Much needed tears of silliness filled my eyes. That last batch of letters was really something special, probably the best batch ever printed. One belated comment about IJ 24—if you please, it has some real moving as well as hilarious moments, a good way of presenting things. I appreciate Jill Zimmerman bringing the existence of Ehrenreich's book to light and reporting on some of the more realistic and tangible problems and solutions people are really grappling with today. Someday I hope to read it; I also hope to be able to afford a new car, not to digress.

But to the present—the critic's critiques rightfully belonged in the self-parody issue, eh? I'm glad somebody is reading my column, personally, and we got another chance to get XTC's name in print, a truly wonderful meticulous band. I stand on the Bugs Bunny Amendment for that one. "I was just testing ya, doc!" (whew, dat vas close...)

Particular standouts—Mildred Neptune's meanderings (is that Mildred downstairs?) (no, no, pay attention Brian, Mildred Neptune is DeeBee's alias; Mildred Moslow lives downstairs...sheesh...) I nominate Deborah Benedict for the Staffer Spirit Award. She's got the right IJ attitude (That IJ Woman) and her stuff is wonderful. My only gripe is that it's a real cheap gimmick to have an IJ marriage. I mean, neither one of their careers will benefit by it. And even if they really are married, there's no way of telling whether or not they live together at the same address. I really don't think anyone's gonna buy it, so I make a motion, let's just cut it out. (No offense to Ms. Ackner/Pierce. Anni's stuff is just too good for me, and she knows that.) Another curious puzzle—everyone seems to be munching yogurt lately, in some form or another, except for the experimental Amos P. Wentworth, Detective. Which again reminds me of IJ 23's Sherlock piece. Simply a classic, and I mean it there.

I don't know, Elayne, I mean, like with all yer hob-nobbing in NYC, I mean, suppose somebody like John Candy or something gets their hands on an IJ and like really promotes it or something? Then everyone would know about it and it wouldn't be funny anymore, would it? Thoughts like that are frightening, huh?... BRIAN CATANZARO

151 Route 206, #20-1
Flanders, NJ 07836

Dear Elayne,

Another swell ish so let me repeat admiration for Jill Zimmerman & my assertion that, snide comments notwithstanding, I do read and enjoy Candi's MTV-viewing service. Also the cover this issue was really good. Yeah! And the soaps thing, that was pretty good, too (just read it). Well, c-u later -

LUKE MCGUFF
Box 3680
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Elayne,

Thanks for the new IJ, keep 'em coming. Like everyone else I keep thinking about nuclear war these days, or recently. It's a depressing problem. It is a bad trip that the government lays on us, the government and establishment media, they lay this horrible death-trip on us for whyyever? Because people who are scared of dying soon and horribly will spend their money faster. Wartime can-can with vintage Town and Country whirl. That's why TV, but why Reagan? To get on TV. To make oneself noticeable. The politicians are really just ugly distant noise, we ignore them as much as possible. Their last-ditch attempt for our obeisance is the nuclear threat: "Pay attention to me because I am in a position to get everyone killed." How to deal with that? Only way out is through. "Blow the world up and I still won't pay attention to you." But is that really a reasonable, or the best, response? To ignore them and laugh at them as the geriatric shit-bags they be? Should one do for nuclear war what the Ramones have done for mental illness? One difficulty is that there is no national disarmament candidate. Like, I'm ready to write in George Pappoon. Pappoon. I once heard Zappa refer to women's Tampons. Poontang. Does he have anything to do with National Lampoon? "Your vote won't count unless you throw it away." I don't know. Just drifting off the nuclear war topic, as always, what else is there to do? I did get the "Bob" pamphlet I sent off for, and was agreeably surprised in every way. Then I saw it written up in High Times...I think the teaching of "SLACK" is very seminal, perhaps as important as Volta's discovery of "animal electricity". For a number of years I thought of myself as being in search of the Absolute...but in some sense it has been Slack all along. Absolute Slack.

Merry Xmas,

RUDY RUCKER
1324 Church St.
Lynchburg, VA 24504

Greetings Elayne:

So, congrats to you on the new apartment at last, and a happy birthday too. The new everystixweekly (semi-quarterly? tri-fortnightly??) schedule sounds like a good idea for you—that you've been able to put out IJ on a monthly basis for so long is nothing short of amazing, so don't dare feel one bit guilty about giving yourself a little more free time!...

Fave bits this ish: Deborah Benedict's SOAP SUDS was simply hilarious, Geerdes' piece on the folkdancing subculture was interesting and surprising, Jill Z's article also very perceptive...good Pappoon column this month too. Quick Brown Fox (my word processor) wants to know whether s/he can register to vote. Incidentally, George Eddy's not the only one in suspense: I, TOO, WANT TO KNOW what Anni thinks of the Care Bears. I even think she should devote her entire next column to them. THE PUBLIC HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW!...Your review of "Half Dozen of The Other" made me wish I could've seen the show, too; sounds REAL good...

THE CARE BEARS MEET THE A-TEAM.

THE CARE BEARS MEET MOTLEY CRUE.

THE CARE BEARS START SOFTWARE COMPANIES IN THE SILICON VALLEY, BECOME MILLIONAIRES, BUY PORSCHEs, INSTALL HOT TUBS, GET COCAINE HABITS, AND STOP CARING COMPLETELY...

CANDI STRECKER
710 Diamond
San Francisco, CA 94114

Well Hellooooooooo New Jersey! (that's a Bay Area inside joke), I have survived the perils of the Spanish train system, the omnipresent olive-oil of Greek food, the stares of the Portuguese, the snow of Germany and the prices of Italy to return to America just so I could write you a letter. What dedication!

I have received the INSIDE JOKES...I haven't had time to plow through all three IJs but from what I've read it seems that your writers are improving and so I guess IJ is getting better too, although the same person who is hilarious in one issue can be a big snore in the next issue. My faves are the cartoons and Fan Moose, Sayz-U, Clay Geerdes and someone else whose name I can't find, and Anni A. is amazing at times...

T.S. CHILD

2510 Bancroft Way #207
Berkeley, CA 94704

Greetings Elayne,

Need I remind you that it is tyme for me to mysteriously appear on paper before you again...All that said, I can move on to the next thing—I.J. EVERY SIX WEEKS! holy "Bob". I can't go cold turkey like that. Couldn't you go like 4½ weeks, 5, 5½ AND THEN six so's I could get used to it real slow? How on Venus am I going to spend those extra two weeks without I.J. Have you no heart? no liver? Just when I thought perhaps I could handle this ghostly existence you string out my GUIDING LIGHT and force me to revert to newspapers "gag" even my bird won't shit on those things.

Well, what can I say, I know how pushed you are, it's a wonder you haven't turned into a Whozit already. I will just read slower...

I gotta try that "West Bank Cafe Downstairs" next time up. I am into theatre, too, and work out with the 'Osceola Players' here when the bands don't have me crankin'...

Sittin' on the dock of the bay here in shitt...I mean sunny FLA waitin' for my next IJ...

Beastingly,

RICK MCCANN
P.O. Box 839
St. Cloud, FL 32769

ELAYNE!!!

As always, INSIDE JOKE is a welcome sight in my mailbox. As I get to "know" more of the folks connected with IJ, I find myself turning to the letters page right off. I get a good laugh and then think, "these people are running around loose in society, possibly with sharp objects?!?!"

Anyway, enclosed are some more issues of OUTSIDE IN, which I sell for 50¢ each (I pay postage). Some IJ folks are in there; Roldo, Julian Ross and George Eddy. Even more are coming up in issue #7; Brian Pearce and Bruce Duncan. However nice this turnout might be, one particular (ahem) person is missing. Yeah, I know, Elayne, but we're ALL afraid to draw, don'tchaknow? Especially something as frighteningly revealing as a self-portrait. That's the challenge, and spark, of this little series.

I'll climb off my two-inch pedestal and mention that THE BIG PICTURE BOOK, also enclosed, is 2 bucks (postage paid) and AS I RECALL THE 'SIXTIES is 25¢ and a stamp.

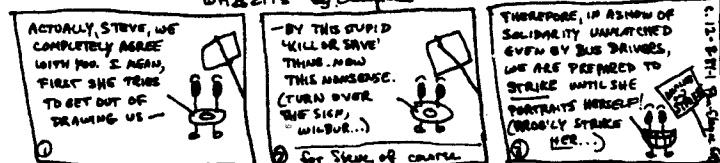
Time to climb back into my box. 'Til next time.

Best,

STEVE WILLIS
385½ Irving
Pullman, WA 99163

(Undoubtedly, this month's Whozits will have something to say about my disinclination to send you a drawn self-portrait—oh, look, here they are now!...

WHIZZITS by Elayne



Well, golly gee, Steve. Now look what you've done. Thanks a lot—now I not only have to contend with the major embarrassment of trying to make use of something I just wasn't born with, artistic talent, but with the ramifications of being the Mean Old Management strike-causer! Here's another fine mess...grumble grumble...all right, if I get help with this stuff from people who know how to do things like faces and eyes and ears and...well, then I'll give it a try, ok? Volunteers?)

Dear Elayne:

Winter is creeping in on large polar bear feet, and I'm already sick and tired of it. IJ 26 was a welcome intrusion into the arctic wastes of Beantown, bringin its own little ray of sunshine into an otherwise bleak city. (How's that for poetic imagery?)

Dear me, you do seem to be running a lot of serials these days, don't you. I'm afraid that I can't remember whether it's Alexis Black smuggling the alligators and Herschel Dammit building the airship or vice versa any more, which is a considerable problem since I'm responsible for one of these serials and I can't even remember which one. I wonder, do you think your readers would notice a sudden change (or even cessation) of plot line should I happen to do an installment for someone else's serial? (Actually, I think an even better idea would be to put out a whole issue tying every serial together into one story...)

Glad to see that the poems are back down to one page again.

I heartily agree with Anni's statements about originality—or lack thereof—in writers, and not just because I stand accused of derivation myself. ("The accused stands mute, and looks for a way out of the room...") Birds of a feather flock together, as it were, and I don't think people should have been surprised to see yet another tacky SubG takeoff in your pages. But perhaps enough has been said along these lines.

Well, keep your powder (whatever chemical it may be) dry, and your head above water, and do have fun in your new apartment. Remember to take the batteries out of the smoke detector when you're indulging or

Using (Cooking? What's cooking? [Oh, nothing much, what's cooking with you?]), and sign me,
Confusedly,

MIKE GUNDERLOY
41 Lawrence St.
Medford, MA 02155

PS—Almost forgot: there was no contest this month, my pick hit is Mahatma Propagandhi's column of Rumours, hope he and his menagerie a trois hang in there and keep on calling.

Good morning!

Deee-lighted to hear you live in the borough of Brooklyn! In a recent issue of National Geographic was a story on Brk. with descriptions of how the natives are cleaning things up and renovating worn-out neighborhoods. Nothing about break-ins in the story, but it got M. Tom thinking once again about finding the train to New York. Please tell me someday if you live close to where Ebbets Field once was—bordered by Bedford Avenue, McKeever Place and Sullivan Place; streets named for the builders. It's the site of Ebbets Field Apartments now, and I lacked the guts to go there last time in NY. Too many Brooklyn horror stories, I guess—what happens when you read and know too much. (Gosh, I don't think I live near there, but I'll ask around...)

I picture this place you dwell within as something like the scenario of Neil Diamond's "Brooklyn Roads"—"...two floors above the butcher... first door on the right... life filled to the brim as I stand by my window and look out on those... Brooklyn roads." How romantic! I recall looking down residential streets while I shoulda been watching traffic on the BQE, noticing that, while stuck in evening traffic despite Stern warnings on WNBC, one can look into folks' living rooms and kitchens. Unusual.

This writer is uncertain with regards to the next theme issue. I've read all the Murdoch papers you mentioned; the Post with its headline YOKO TELLS FANS: "DON'T PITY ME" six months after John went away speaks for itself. The Village Voice always seemed to me to be staffed by a group of self-appointed experts on popular culture writing for us unfortunates in the hinterlands. Every large city has a similar publication, nuthin' new there. However, the Chicago Sun-Times is perfectly harmless. It's nothing like the Post, more like Newsday, with none of sensational aspects of the sort of papers you must have in mind. I don't write that kind of stuff very well anyway, and I think it best to abstain from the Murdoch-ized IJ rather than send something that more than likely won't fit in.

The stories by Clay Geerdes are excellent. I am able to write only pieces on fictional unpleasant incidents; his are drawn from his own experiences. It can hurt to write the latter; memories better off buried keep surfacing. It's also good that IJ is becoming a six-weeker; that allows time at last to get through an entire Annl Ackner story and letter. I wonder if her stuff is all first drafts? If not, it's really the best way to write; just sit down at the typer and go to it. (Anne informs me that, while she does make notes on specific points for her IJ articles for a couple weeks, they are, indeed, first drafts.)

Holiday greetings; Merry Xmas/Happy Hanukkah! Don't forget to give the gift of music, although decorated toilet paper is also an ideal gift. Hope it isn't too late to suggest that the Hanukkah stories in the next IJ read from right to left.

TOM SANDERS
9116 Lawncrest Dr.
Clio, MI 48420

Miss Wechsler,

I certainly appreciate the back issues of IJ. After the sick and deplorable "humor" of National Lampoon all these years, your publication is refreshing and inspired. I'll tell you this, no eternal reward will forgive us now for wasting the dawn. Your readers may be curious to know the results of our recent election here for The Conference of Departed Rock Luminaries. The officers installed are Pete Ham (Badfinger)—Suicide Division; Otis Redding—Plane Crash Team; Eddie Cochran—Vehicular Megadeath Squad; Keith Moon—Drug Store Chapter; Sam Cooke—Shoot 'n Stab Company; and Lowell George—Cardiac Crew. Out here on the perimeter there are no stars; out here we is stoned—immaculate.

Death has changed me. Please don't believe all that you read about me. And don't buy the new Doors album. The profits go to the Ray Manzarek School of Distortion.

Thanks again for INSIDE JOKE. It's the only thing they let us keep here. Like a dog without a bone, an actor out on loan, Riders on the storm.

Homeopathic medicine haunts me, JIM MORRISON
Père la Chaise
Paris, France

Dear Elayne,

I am, just to ground this thing in some sort of relative place and time, writing this at the office, on a typewriter so old and fragile that I am seriously afraid of it having some sort of attack and going off to visit Heaven in the middle of this letter, leaving me high, dry and somewhat mournful, though not especially mourning. (If, that is, it doesn't kill me first, the effort needed to press the keys bringing about at least a myocardial infarction and possibly even an attack of deadly horror and frustration.) We are, as nearly as I can work it out, a forty-person office operating with five and a half typewriters (the half being accounted for by the ghostly body of an ancient IBM that sits in the claims office with its insides missing. Rumour has it that, upon losing her job, a grotesque and ungainly woman who worked here for three or four weeks once removed the mechanism and ate it, cog by cog, with a good deal of grunting and ketchup, as a sort of protest, but I've never really believed that, being of the mind that, if you're going to go about eating office machinery, it might just as well be something essential like the copier or the key to the ladies' room) which brings it, I think—somebody took my adding machine—to roughly 7.5 people per machine, a terrible ratio for getting anything done. This, however, is pretty much par for the course in these parts—we also boast three adding machines, two of which actually work,

two computers (I am, much against my better judgement, the only person who has even a clue as to how to operate both of them, which puts me pretty much in demand as a word processor. I would as soon be in demand as a toy salesperson in Macy's on the day the Cabbage Patch Dolls run out, which, in fact, amounts to pretty much the same thing), one dictaphone and, not to put too fine a point on it, one frightened key to the ladies' room. Competition, as you might imagine, is fairly stiff for these essential items, and those who somehow find them in their possession tend to guard them with the kind of fierce jealousy normally found only in mother tigers protecting their young and crooked stockbrokers protecting their investments. This typewriter—unarmed and unloved—is the best of the worst, the one decent one being taken by the mistress of the National Sales Manager who, by the way, has also taken my job (I am now a sort of all-purpose secretary/troubleshooter/slave), my office and my scotch tape dispenser, and who has caused everyone else in the office to loathe her for all sorts of good reasons. We have fine old times sitting about chatting about how much we hate Pallas (I wouldn't make that up. That's actually the wretched woman's name, which might explain something, if I cared enough about her to go into it), and how we hope the National Sales Manager gives her all sorts of strange and evil diseases, and makes off with her underpants in the bargain. We speculate endlessly on what the two of them do when they go into the NSM's office and close the door for hours on end, where they go on those three-hour lunches, why on earth anybody would want to sleep with a man who looks as the NSM does, particularly when advancing in so tacky a job as this is the only reward. The company is moving to New Jersey in a couple of weeks (with the sort of supreme bad taste the Almighty occasionally displays we are, in point of fact, moving to Englewood, a mere five blocks from my suburban retreat. I'm obviously being told something by this, but I shudder to think of what it is) and we are all seriously considering trapping her in a handy dioxin spill, and then burying her bleached and tattered bones in the Lincoln Tunnel, but the final plans for this have not yet been formulated. Besides, were we to do this, we might actually have to start talking to the NSM again, and none of us can really bear the thought of that. It's a problem.

But there. You don't really need to hear about my problems. I simply should not try to write anything more complicated than a trucking voucher in the office, but these deadlines do sneak up on me, and I don't know quite how they do it. By the same token, it occurs to me that I've been working in the office nine months to the day today—long enough to produce a child, if you're that sort of person—and I can't imagine quite how that happened either. I never intended to finish up like this—truly I didn't—I always assumed this was one of those little make-do jobs one takes with every intention of leaving after a month or two, and instead I find myself planning Christmas presents for my less annoying co-workers (there are three) and wondering about pension plans. It's enough to make a thinking person weep.

Oh, but let us not weep. Let us instead talk of IJ #26, which I have beside me at this very moment (my former assistant, who, since the coming of Pallas and my subsequent displacement, has been demoted to a species of receptionist/bookkeeper—she's as fond of the woman as I am—read it all and thought it terribly funny, although she did resort to a magnifying glass somewhere around Clay Geerdes. We're hard on the uninitiated, I think) brightening my otherwise grim workday. As usual I was amused and infuriated by it in about a 75/25 per cent ratio—not bad, really, given these troubled times. The Preppie Pagans were my very very favourite thing (I've always wondered about the reason for those "men's mysteries" and suspected something of the sort all along), but the Ever-Popular Carolyn Lee Boyd came through again with her accustomed grace and aplomb (hey, anybody who thinks I'm a Real, Serious, Experimental Writer must have something going for her, right? Besides, she obviously possesses a direct line to the Cosmos, as she seems to have knowledge of an incipient baby that I know nothing about. We really must be good friends, if she knows about a pregnancy before I do. WAIT till I tell Brian), Jill Zimmerman with her accustomed insight and honesty, Deborah Benedict with her accustomed poisonous wit and Brian Pearce with his accustomed Everything. (Ah well, I had a hunch I wouldn't be finishing this all in the office. Aren't you pleased that Eileen gets to finish up the job? She certainly is.) I'm afraid I'm having a certain amount of difficulty in following all these serials—not surprising, as I have a certain amount of difficulty in following the 11 o'clock news from night to night—but it's nice to know Mike Gunderloy is there, even if I can't keep the thread of the plot. Half a Gunderloy effort, after all, is far better than no Gunderloy effort at all. I could have made it pretty well through the month without Robert Hale, and I admit to failing to see the point of Alexis Black, but this is all tolerably mild stuff when compared to my actual amusement at George Eddy's JESSE AND JAMES. Is he slipping or am I?

Speaking of George Eddy, I'm a bit bewildered about his curiosity concerning my reaction to the Care Bears, as I don't recall ever mentioning them in any column or letter and, in point of fact, had never really thought about them before the Pastor started bringing them up. All I know about them is that they come in several different mediums and seem to have hearts and ice cream cones painted on their little bellies, and that they aren't Strawberry Shortcake, which is an admitted point in their favour, but that's scarcely enough to formulate an educated opinion. I do, as it happens, own a bear—his name is State O' Maine and he lives on my bed—but he's a Gund, not a Care, and he doesn't seem to know anything about them either. I'm sorry, Georgie—this is the best I can do for you. I apologise, too, for not answering you personally, but 'tis the season for mailing out Christmas cards, and all my available stamps have gone for that. Do forgive.

It's now 2 AM, a time that has lost all its savour for me since the untimely demise of OVERNIGHT. (I suppose the same things that can be said about my company may be said about a network that cancels Linda Ellerbe while retaining Mr. Smith, but unfortunately, one can't really say them in any publication short of HUSTLER.) Tomorrow is another

day, full of word-processing and dictaphones and lovely gossip about the mistress or the MSM, and I'd better get some sleep if I'm going to be able to face it. Do sympathize.

The Disgustingly Corporate,
ANNI ACKNER
10 Hillside Ave., #8
Englewood, NJ 07631

Dear Elayne,

What a pathetic, insignificant speck of refuse is the life of a terran homo sapien, how tragic to be conceived into this ocean of tears, how brief the sparse moments of happiness before, once again, tragedy strikes. Yesterday I received this miserable letter from one whose measure of contentment has been even less than usual. If you can stand it, read on:

Dear Ev (he wrote): Could it be? Is Anni really wed to another? Please tell me, does she really love him? Can she have forgotten what we shared so many years ago? You see, I am her real husband. She has thought I was dead for many, many years, and now she has found another. But I must digress. We met at Woodstock, you see. There was Anni, a wreath of flowers in her hair, an Indian skirt and top as her only garments, discarding to the multitudes on the satirical meaning of "Hey Jude", while The Who played to an empty house—everyone was enraptured by Anni...as was I...We were married that night by Country Joe McDonald and were going to go to Vermont the next day to start a commune. Like so many others, my life was ruined by hallucinogenic drugs. As we were about to leave, I had what was known then as a "bad trip", and Anni left in tears, thinking I was dead. After I left the hospital I joined the Peace Corps, and ever since I have been known as the Albert Schweitzer of Zimbabwe, hoping that someday I would be worthy of her love.

Do you think I have a chance to win her back? I will refrain from contacting her until I hear from you so that I don't unnecessarily complicate her life. Sincerely, Bernard

Well, Elayne, you know more about the happy couple than I do. What should I tell this miserable stiff?

Cordially,

THE EVER-POPULAR
CAROLYN LEE BOYD
East Village
New York, NY 10003

(Aw, c'mon, Ev, gimme a break, I can't deal with this sort of stuff. All's I know is I get columns from each of 'em every issue. You want me to meddle in their personal affairs or something? I just fix 'em up, I don't probe 'em...)

Deah Elayne—

I beg to differ! In IJ #18 on p. 22, the article entitled "My Life, Briefly" by George Papoon begins with the line, "I was born in 1913 in Poonton, Kansas..." That makes GGP a Kansan! Nyah! (I am thoroughly speechlessly impressed that you actually looked that up, and I stand astonished and corrected.) Sure, he lives in Wentzville, MO now, but that doesn't change the fact that he was born in Kansas! Being a Jayhawk is kind of like a curse or disease that you just can't shake...

George Eddy is right, I took his mousey hero Galen to be a mouthpiece for some crazed moralist without really thinking about it. If George preaches anything, it's that people should be good to each other; what's wrong with that? (Nobody ever said anything was wrong with that, Greg; I'm a tad confused here. The only thing I can ever remember objecting to was the very fact of the preaching, not what was being preached.) I guess I'm just a jerk. Sorry George.

Here's the things I loved about IJ 26:

- The cover. All I can say is, "WOW!"
- "Diary of the Rock Fiend". Always great.
- "Fun with Tom" because it had that surrealistic...something. It's just...oh...kind of like...you know, neat, huh?
- "Drifting in One Spot 1" was just...ah...really...words fail.
- "Cathode Ray Tubes" really moved me. Brian Pearce's writing has that indefinable...um...
- "Surviving Florida Lovebugs" had that certain...something.
- "A Scotsman On A Horse": Ah...mmm...urr...hey. Ya know?
- "The Red Reaper" is becoming my favorite thing in IJ. The puns and wordplay are so bad they're great. What I wanna know is, is "Penny A. Lines" a variation of some sort on "Pen-Elayne Enterprises" (meaning, is this the work of Kip?), or did one of the Firesign guys actually write this, or is Penny A. Lines a real person who just happens to be very funny? (Much as I hate to admit it, "Penny A. Lines" is not me; I may do that in conversation but I do have a little pity on IJ readers... "Penny", while not a Firesigner, is an aficionado of the group.)
- All the cartoons.
- All the other staffers' work and continuing series.

Here's the things I hated about IJ 26:

Fnoord,
GREG BLAIR
R.R. #2
Emporia, KS 66801

Elayne—

By the way, will IJ's 6-week gestation period raise the cover price? (Absolutely not—I'd sooner throw it in than raise it, and I'm quite serious about that.)

Kudos on Clay's piece (as usual).

"Future Tense" promises to be outstanding. Being a Raymond Chandler fan, I vastly enjoyed Pelton's narrative and imagery.

Candi Strecker's column gets better and better each issue. And I don't even have a television!

I'll reserve commenting on my own brother Steven's terrific "Mr. Allen's Airship" except to say that each installment is too short! (Did I say terrific? Sorry, it must have slipped out.)

Tom Roberts' back cover art impressed me with its power and simplicity but...

the real winner was the Sperry/Univac "ad" by AAA. It was so a propos that it glowed!

More! More!
JOHN R. SCHARFF
P.O. Box 502
Mollican AFB, NM 88330

Dear Elayne,

Last issue was a real trip. Is it my imagination or do they just keep getting better and better?

Sorry to hear about your abode being verminized. The swine should be shot at sunrise with cold bullets. Maybe they'll die of herpes or something as a part of the scheme of cosmic justice.

Anni's column was, as usual, as good as an evening's repast at Antoine's in New Orleans. Particularly far out was Julie Logan's ARGUMENTS and Deborah Benedict's SOAP SUDS and Jill Zimmerman's MYTH and Candi Strecker's VIDEO and...well, all of it. Fripp's moral-less stories are a source of hope much as the philosophy of "Life's a bitch and then you die" recently imparted to me by a person who ought to know. I keep searching for the perfect pointless public gesture of futility and when I find it, I'll know nirvana.

Has anyone seen the latest issue of ROLLING STONE? For some reason it has a ring of familiarity to it. They appear to have ventured onto the thin ice of our turf. If you think I'm being petty because I feel proprietary toward brides with homemade tattoos, please tell me. STONE is schizophrenic anyways. First they do all of these dull political and social articles and then they try to redeem themselves to the light of heart by ripping off the consistently hilarious. I don't know how they glommed onto IJ; I always keep mine under lock and key so as they don't slip through time warps endemic to this part of Rhode Island. To be sure, I haven't associated with any of those folks since, oh, about 1980. Did anyone else get a strong whiff of deja vue when they saw RS?

I love the Murdoch issue idea; I just hope it never becomes reality. Funny thing, reality. You never know where it will turn up until you've stubbed your toe previously on it. (Ouch, ouch!!! Horse piss!!! Shit!!!)

Have a hell of a party you folks who will be in attendance. Toast us far-flung folks who won't, will ya? Bye y'all.

COOP
P.O. Box 714
Bristol, RI 02809

Dear Elayne:

After two days of forced attendance at a computer programming class, as my artistic sensibilities slowly but inexorably become tainted with high-tech, I am finally able to comment on IJ #26.

Excellent cover by Julie Logan—a bit hard to tell the name of the publication unless you know, but otherwise very slick and professional. Anni Ackner's 115th Dream, as you know, made me ache with laughter, as I approach the magic three-oh myself in the not-terribly-distant future. If I can have Anni's sense of humor, I know I'll come through it with flying colors. I especially enjoyed the concept of being at Gros-singer's with the "Seven Democratic Dwarves", since I have, as you know, been railroaded into functioning as Press Coordinator for Union County, NJ in Gary Hart's presidential campaign. I have promised myself not to become a "Hart Moonie", but a note to readers that issue information on Hart's stands is available from me (not even SASE—I'll spring for the stamp!) at the address below. (Yes, I have been stricken with the dreaded "plug disease".)

I'm astonished at what you say has been the response to "The Unter-mensch Myth". Hardly one of my better endeavors, I thought. As you know, I have decided not to hash out any more "feminist" issues, nor will I write further about "the battle of the sexes", so your readers can breathe a collective sigh of relief. However, this has left a dearth of creative energies in my socioculturally-oriented psyche, and since I just couldn't bring myself to write on the cultural-political significance of Cabbage Patch Kids (AAAUUGGHHH!!!), I am on hiatus, preparing my upcoming "PAGE SEX" for Mr. Murdoch. But I will be back!

Nice to see Tom Sanders writing something fun, as opposed to his usual tirades on how his dates didn't work out. Applause (as if you didn't expect it) to Swami Guru Deborah Benedict Gedwillo-Ji for her suds update (What would I do without you, dollink?). Cannon Barclay's "Where did Santa Claus Come From" piqued the interest of an appropriately mindless monkey-suited male seatmate on New Jersey Transit one morning, who, unable to contain himself with all the suspense, inquired "So where did Santa Claus come from?" I, being the sadistic monster that I am, kept him in suspense until just before emerging from the tunnel and then informed him, "Santa Monica". The gentleman in question (who undoubtedly is well-thought-of in his company, and undoubtedly makes \$40,000 a year) said "Huh huh! I thought he was from the North Pole Ha ha ha." Can you stand such wit?

All this points out the need for such insanity in the lives of those of us who live our lives in a perpetual state of "Strange Inter-lude," wearing one face from 9 to 5 and another afterwards. Thanks, IJ, for helping me to keep my perspective!

Blandly yours,

JILL ZIMMERMAN
1307-11 Harding St., #3D
Linden, NJ 07036



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FIRESIGNals

David Oasman was in New York a few weeks ago, as I briefly mentioned in last month's column, to do some work at the annual Airline radio convention, and we got together one bright and chilly Monday afternoon in late November to "do the town" and celebrate our respective birthdays a bit early. We wound up strolling 'round the Village, something I've not been able to do properly since my unemployment days (yeah, I know, but I work in the East Village, & we went west, young folk). Highlights of the day, for Those-of-You-Who-Like-To-Hear-This-Kind-of-Thing, included our discovery of what I'm hoping will become our official IJ button/symbol (more on that if/when I get permissions, etc.), thanks to Judy Tyndall at a lovely little shop on Carmine St. called "Welcome to NYC" (DO PATRONIZE, please); and the neat bit of trivia imparted to me in a wonderful place on Bleecker called "Second Childhood"—we were browsing through all their memorabilia and came across a nifty model of a tour bus from the 1939 World's Fair, and Dave remarked, "See that? That's the prototype for the Bozobus..." As I said, strictly for the trivia-minded... We ended the day with cappuccino and a bit o' the green stuff, I put him on the wrong train (er, uh, sorry 'bout that, Dave, forgot to tell you to change at 59th) and all in all, a wonderful time was had by both concerned. Thanks m' friend...

Dave's back in Santa Fe gearing up for lots of exciting stuff to come in the new year ahead. He recently helped emcee an auction-thon for the Santa Fe Armory for the Arts, in which context he got to interview Toney Anaya, the current governor of New Mexico...

Phil Proctor says things tend to slow down in LA as well during the holiday season, but production is continuing on the Austin, Proctor & Bergman videodisc Hot Shorts. The final product should consist of 9 pieces in all, each ranging from 7-10 minutes in length. The three performers hope to have two of the completed shorts, "Olympic Confidential" and "Toy Wars", released as a promotional film soon... Work is also progressing on their upcoming album, Nick Danger & The Three Faces of Al, which is their first lp to be mastered, at the request of Rhino Records, as a compact disk as well... The "Firesign Radio" show garnered quite a bit of positive response, claims Phil, and the Global Satellite Network is still trying to market the show on LA and NY stations... Meanwhile, another radio pilot has been done by the trio for Larry Josefson. Entitled The Volks Folks, the half hour revolves around the setting of a boarding house. More details as this materializes more.

As to his own career, Phil elaborated a bit on what I like to term the Bizarre Proctor News Item of the Month—a pilot for a game show called "Anything For Money". It's a "Candid Camera"-type venture, slated for possible prime time syndication, in which unknowing targets are asked to do certain outrageous things for a certain amount of cash, and contestants must guess who has accepted the assigned task and for how much. Phil is one of the roving pranksters, as it were, and related to me a cute story about a practical joke involving NBC's just-cancelled orangutan Mr. Smith. Look for the pilot, as this sounds like it could sell as a show...

Thanks to Mark Leviton for sending me his article on MISSING VOLKS for the Oakland-based music paper BAM, of which he's a contributing editor. In fact, thanks for the whole paper, Mark! Wow, reviews of Dylan & Paul Kantner—hey, is this the 60's all over again or what?

I will be gathering together the above-mentioned article and others I have on MISSING VOLKS as a makeshift "publicity kit" for anyone interested, and writing a review of my own as soon as I see the vid, to be available as soon as the next installment of FIRESIGNals is out—

Oh, but there will be no "next", will there? That's right, kids—as mentioned last time, FIRESIGNals in INSIDE JOKE has, as of the end of this here column, ceased to exist. Oh, I may slip some interesting news in "Funny You Should Mention It" or "Fan Noose" or my editorial box every now and then, but news of The Firesign Theatre and the network built thereon will henceforth be relegated to issue #2 and beyond of "Four-Alarm FIRESIGNat", or Falafal, which will be put out through Pen-Elayne Ent. whenever the need and desire arise. Falafal will be strictly TFT and I'm hoping to have it contain not only news but original art and writings (TFT-oriented; after all, I'd rather save the art & writings for IJ if I can) and repros of the old Crowdaddy material and perhaps listings of items to trade. Issue #2 will be out sometime early '84; I make no commitments at this time. If you have not received Falafal #1, and would like to be on our mailing list, PLEASE let me know. Falafal will be available free, but donations and SASEs will be appreciated.

I even plan to have quizzes in Falafal, mainly because I left the other part of Greg's line quiz in my other pants, or something, so instead I'll turn the quiz portion this last month over to somebody or other from Poon's Farm:

UPPER AGAINST THE WALL (title by ew)

"Aw come on man, got any uppers?"
"Oh no, there are no classes in our society."
"—or in our high school!"

In the foregoing from DWARF, there are five puns that I know of on the meaning of the word "uppers". They are—?

ANSWERS UPPER-SIDE DOWN

(ED. NOTE: I forgive all responsibility for the above. Not responsible.)

1. Upper classes in society
2. Upper classes in high school—George & Muddhead are both upper-classesmen.
3. Drugs
4. The tops of shoes (which people now doesn't have): Could we say that, historically, sandalled peoples have been conquered by the shoes?
5. The finale: Jews in Lithuania were once so class-structured that the people who made the tops of shoes were in a higher social class than those who made the soles. Could we call those people "Jews for Industry"?

HOW TO TAKE A BODY DOWN TO THE MORGUE by Cynthia Cinque

Was a time I was a student nurse, and I was young and strong and sassy and somewhat coarse and worked one Christmas night in a small, non-descript hospital and someone with liver disease "upped" and died on me. Since there was no one except myself and an aide, and he was busy answering lights, I went into the room. Now, I too am a product of ritual and had been carefully trained in the care of dead bodies, so the first thing I did was to close his lids and straighten out his limbs (so they wouldn't have to be broken to fit into the casket). I remember thinking the deceased looked like an eggplant. Then I washed him down with soap and water and put his false teeth back in his mouth which made me think he looked like a Jack-O-Lantern. I wrapped his hands over his chest and tied up his jaw with gauze and hung an identifying tag on his big toe. I walked outside the room and closed all the patients' doors, which greatly disappointed them because they all were eager to see the dead body. An old lady with breath that could stall an ox rolled up in a wheelchair and whispered to me, "Let me see, you little bitch. This is exciting." I had to push her into her room and tie her wheelchair to the bed.

My problems were just beginning because I had to get the body onto the stretcher. I pushed the bed against the wall and the stretcher against the bed and then I tried to lift the body, a section at a time onto the stretcher, but no go. I pushed and pulled, heaved and wheezed. I was running out of breath and almost pulled the head off the torso. The teeth popped out of his mouth and clattered to the floor and then I got a brilliant idea! I'd roll him onto the stretcher! I grabbed the draw sheet and pulled hard, slipped on his urine, the stretcher moved away from the bed and he fell on the floor with such a resounding crash that I started to laugh hysterically. I ran for the orderly and could not find him, all the patients' lights were on and several of them were yelling for a bedpan. The telephone was ringing so I went to answer it—it was the choir master from Calvary Church and he said he'd be on his way with his choir to serenade the patients with Christmas carols.

I ran back to the room and tried to lift the body off the floor; I grabbed him under his arms but couldn't raise him to the stretcher. The gauze became undone so his arms and legs were flailing about. Then I tried a fireman's carry. I crouched down on the floor with my back to the body and tried to interlock my arms with his, hoisting him up, but I just wasn't strong enough. Fortunately, the orderly walked in just at this moment and we got the corpse back on the stretcher by lifting his arms and legs. The body was starting to decompose and the smell could have knocked you out. We rolled the body through the door and down the hall. I heard some of the patients giggling and then, just at that moment, the choir master walked on the ward with his choir and they started to sing, "Oh Come All Ye Faithful". We had no choice but to walk right past them with a sheepish grin on our faces because they looked so wide-eyed and frightened.

We rang for the elevator to take us down to the morgue, got on, rolling the stretcher, and both of us stood on either side of the corpse like candleabras, smoking a much-needed cigarette. A visitor stepped onto the elevator, gasped and ran off the elevator, the doors closed and we continued our downward descent to the morgue.

IF YOU'RE READING THIS AT THE PARTY—
COULD YOU PLEASE PUT THIS DOWN FOR
A SECOND & PASS THE CHEER PLATE?



THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS (Peter S. Boyle)

by Robert Rabbit, Fine Arts Director, NSP

(Some of you may wonder how I got to be F.A.D. Well, the same way those things usually happen: see I have this friend who is an artist and who is also involved in politics and, you know, one thing just led to another...)

I quote:

"I used to wonder, with a child's fierce, easy obsessiveness, whether the Tree-Man could feel the cruel spines of himself that lunged up out of his heels to pierce clean through his eggshell body. You can't be sure. His moon-pale face is often thought to be a self-portrait. I met it regularly for some time in those nights, bobbing gently to the surface of my dreams—lost, drowned, hopeless, fearless, unspeakably free."

- Chapter 1

"When I saw him first...I felt as if all my doubts, protests, misgivings, and misery in the accepted lifestyle that I couldn't join were suddenly answered, as if I finally saw that I had been right in not trusting parents, educators, morals..."

- Chapter 1 (letter from Janvillem de Wetering to the author)

After Chapter 1, this book slides straight to hell because I think the author is probably a turkey at heart who believes the same old shit as all the rest, or at least can't constrain himself from saying he does, even if he really doesn't. But Chapter 1, a personal essay from him to us, is a wonderful gem. And in the world of writing about Bosch, that is a rarity indeed.

Very rarely has the Conspiracy showed its ass more glaringly and blatantly and stupidly, if ever, than in its united effort to convince us that our response to Hieronymus Bosch must be wrong. Massive volumes have been published, despite initial acknowledgements that nothing is known about him, as if in an effort to provide us with a library heavy enough to jam against our dungeon doors and present anything from getting out. The effort is usually to convince us, in terms of the symbolism of the age, and through the endlessly repeated statement of Phillip II's ownership of the paintings, that these paintings are orthodox, better than we are, and harmless. That, in other words, Bosch was a part of the Conspiracy, as we should be, despite the obvious evidence before our eyes to the contrary. These works have survived Ferdinand VII, Hitler, and Franco and not through any kinship with that they represented.

Now, into this nasty little classroom steps someone named Wilhelm Fraenger, whose book, *The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch*, I have not read. But I think Robert Anton Wilson is absolutely right in supporting his thesis nonetheless. Fraenger appears to be the monkey wrench in the whole scheme of things that utterly turns the pisspot upside down. I highly recommend that I read this thing myself before passing its wisdom on to you!

Beagle, who asserts that this is the only art book he will ever write, understands what all these points of view are and presents a fairly clear introduction to them, as well as, and more importantly, the personal essay already mentioned.

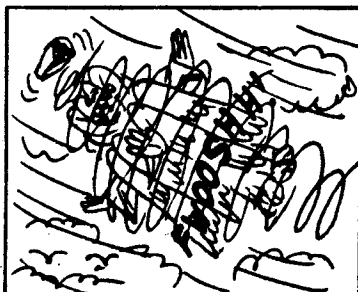
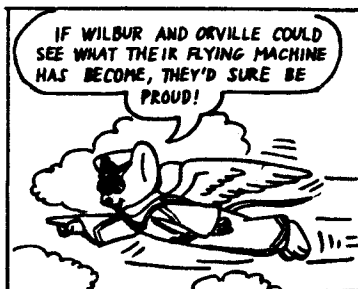
Make no mistake about it, friends, Bosch, along with his 19th century reincarnation, Goya, is one of us. He saw the whole picture and told the truth about how weird we really are—and that's why we dig him, isn't it! There's a secret trick to what he did and a lesson to be learned from it: go look for yourself!

HASN'T KISSINGER LEARNED?

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THE HICKORY AND THE DEAD RODNY K. DIOXIN

Dioxin was worried. Sure he'd gotten off Staten Island, know as "the Rock" to some of its inmates, and he was holed up in Wendy's wine cellar, but winter was coming; it got cold underground. And the other morning when he had gone out for beer, french fries and the latest issue of "New Musical Express" (at the neighborhood's all-night fruit and vegetable stand) he'd seen these suspiciously plaid cars cruising around the area. Only one group used red and white plaid on everything and if they were coming down then it was time that Dioxin was headed out. Wendy was a friend. She made good wine and Dioxin didn't want her or anyone else to get caught in the crossfire. Well, not her, at least. What to do? Dioxin knew. He headed for Albany, for his local connection there at "la Casa del Sordid". These folks knew how to handle the other guy...rough and with no mercy. The fact that half of "the guys" at la Casa were women didn't stop Dioxin. He knew a good buzzword when he coined one. What Dioxin hadn't known (as hard as it was for him to admit that he wasn't perfect, it was alas occasionally true) as he'd Greyhounded himself up the Hudson towards scenic Albany, was that the Farmers were tracking his every move, and that they had two of their most deadly operatives lying in wait for him. But there was something that those two Hickories didn't know, which Dioxin did, namely, the identity of la Casa's other guest for the weekend (or the winter or whatever), the greatest of the great, as well as the mediocre of the mediocre, that seer, sage, rosemary, thyme, soothsayer, and former mayonnaise inspector for the Oklahoma Communist Party...yes, his pazzo-ship himself, The Rat Stuff...Chuck E. Cheese. Dioxin was hoping that Cheese could shed some light on the Farmers and their insidious plans. Not quite, but...

EKD: Hello Cheese. How's the reality?

CEC: Greetings and welcome to the Pizza Time Theatre.

EKD: I thought this was "la Casa del Sordid".

CEC: Please step to the counter and place your order.

EKD: I really want to talk about the Farmers.

CEC: Pizzas will take forty minutes.

EKD: These guys are running a big cheez scam. You've got to do something about it.

CEC: Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.

EKD: We've got to find a way to stop those Farmers, especially Leary and Liddy. They're infiltrating already. Liddy's got his Dead Rat Cookbook on the best-seller lists and Leary's got that new video game, Drop-a-Cube. It's getting bad.

CEC: Space is a very bad pie, Mr. Wang.

EKD: Look out—a red and white plaid van just pulled up across the street here.

CEC: Let me tell you exactly what that nice bowl of blancmange resembles.

EKD: Couldn't you give me a small hint as to what my next move should be?

CEC: There are two electricians in my tofu, Sadie.

EKD: I guess I'll go check out that van.

CEC: Never ask your turtle to answer the phone.

EKD: Yeah, well, it's been nice to see you again, Cheese.

CEC: You realize that it'll be a forty-minute wait for a pizza.

Dioxin knew that confrontation was imminent. He walked to the van and rapped on the back door, which swung open slowly to reveal a plush interior and G. Gordon Liddy, armed to the teeth and having some beef stick and cheez fondue. Dioxin resisted the urge to barf and stepped inside.

"Where's Doctor Tim?" queried Dioxin, brushing some apple brown rat-ty off of the red and white beanbag.

"Unconscious," said Liddy. Dioxin wasn't too surprised.

"Okay, Liddy, I'm gonna lay my cards on the table," said Dioxin, knowing full well he still had two aces up his sleeve. "I know what you're planning and if you don't call it off I'll have every exterminator in the country on triple-overtime by the morning. You won't be able to buy a rat with blood or money or your pretty face."

"You're bluffing," Liddy scoffed as he reached into the fridge for a choco-rat shake.

"Try me, punk," Dioxin sneered in his best Gore Vidal voice.

"Okay, maybe you're not bluffing but what's to stop me from pushing this button on the queuelodium-IV space modulator and turning your brain into so much date-nut-rum neufchatel?"

"Well, several things, actually. One, I'm allergic to dates. Two, all you're holding in your hand is the joystick from Leary's new game. And three, the woman standing behind me with the Uzi levelled at your head."

"So what's your next move, Dioxin? You gonna hold my hand over an open flame? Please..."

"I'd love to but I seem to be fresh out of blow torches."

"Rats!"

"Sorry, Gordo, I'm outta those too."

With Liddy locked up in the basement of "la Casa del Sordid" it was all over but the shouting. Just a matter of stopping the now brain-dead mass of the Farmers. Leary wasn't too hard to find or collect. Liddy, of course, had to be lobotomized and sedated, but Dioxin just gave Leary an Etch-a-Sketch which kept him amused for hours at a time. Someone had to take over the farms, now that the evil forces had been purged. Dioxin certainly didn't want the job, so it fell to the former proprietor of la Casa, Pope Phil. But that's another story and Dioxin didn't feel much like telling it. Time to work on his latest piece, a scathing 25-word attack on Rupert Murdoch (for which he'd received \$50,000 and a chance to guest-host *Thicke of the Night*) entitled "In The Belly Of The POST". There was also some talk of a spot in the soon-to-be-realer Papoon administration but after his talk with Cheese, Dioxin wasn't so sure. Not unless he could sell the film rights.

HERSCHEL DAMMIT

The Red Reaper

by Penny A. Lines

Last month priest eye Herschel Dammit set to work turning the mobsters who rule Sorrelville against one another, only to be captured by union radicals who suspect him of trying to frame them. With me so far? Well then, never mind...

Chapter 3: Dirty Fisheaters

"So, Mr. Glutman," I said, "I thought you missed your train?"
"Not at all, sir," the fat man replied, "it was merely a ruse to conceal my whereabouts. I never missed any train."
"Just trying to put me off the track while your pals railroad me out of town?" I staggered to my feet. "I don't know what you're trying to pull, man, but I don't take freight that easy. I—"
"Don't push your luck, my good man!" Glutman threatened, pulling a revolver from his canvas sack.
"Hold your peace, Glutman," Dan Squint said, studying his reflection in a shiny hubcap. Glutman held his piece at my nose.

"Now that the cat's out of the bag, Comrade Glutman, what are you going to do to scare me now?" I asked.
Dan Squint broke a bottle and started to shave with it. I tried not to notice, but that's the sort of thing that makes me feel edgy.

"Mr. Squint," Glutman said, "you and the boys can step out a while so I can talk to our friend privately."

"Just don't get rash, okay?" Squint broke the top off a new beer bottle and tried to swig down the contents but choked on something and had to be dragged out by his pals in a fit of consumptive coughing.

Despite Squint's warning, Glutman started to squeeze the trigger of his revolver. I might have bought the farm if Dinah Branded had not come crashing in on the two of us just then. Squint was trying to keep her back, waving his arms but flailing to stop her. She grabbed the lunger by the wrist, whirled him overhead a few times and sent him flying off into shelf of white walls. It took Dinah a few minutes for her to thrash the objections out of Squint's fellow wobblers. But Glutman managed to scuttle out through a side door like four hundred pounds of animated Jello.

Dinah explained she had come in search of Glutman. "My neighbor said she saw him squeezing out of my window with a half gallon tub of egg salad. I found some personal letters were missing along with everything in the icebox!"

She then went off after Glutman, and I decided to find a phone and arrange a peace conference between Sorrelville's gangland chiefs. It was agreed by all that the conference would be held at Elihu Vileson's place as that was neutral ground and had the best decor in town.

I arrived early at Vileson's to see him in private. His butler told me to come back later, but he led me in when I twisted his arm behind his back. Vileson glared up bad-humoredly as we came into the conference room.

"The man from the Pinkerton agency to see you, sir," the servant said, wincing. "I'm sorry, sir, I know how distressing he is. If there is anything at all that I can do please—"

"No, that will be all," Vileson growled.

"Reptile!" I sneered at the departing butler.

"I never could contact Lew Hard," I told Vileson.

"Hard had a large porcelain water closet dropped on him," Vileson said, "while he was getting a shoe shine. Casino Starky and his boy just happened to be around to pull him out of the wreck but it was too late, of course."

"So Starky disconnected Mr. Hard," I said. "The power struggle must be underway."

The delegates for the powwow came in then. Squeaky, O'Goonan and Pete the "Pin". Pete was a fearless microcephalic gangster and the kingpin of Sorrelville's bootleg hooch racket.

Starky showed up uninvited as we were just sitting down. He took Lew Hard's empty chair.

"Your butler gave me some guff about not being on the list," Starky said. "I had to knife him."

Vileson let it pass and went on with his opening speech. He decided to take an eloquent approach. It was like a company board meeting. In fact, everyone looked bored.

"Our syndicate is like a great tree," Vileson began, "which has been fruitful to us, and given us shelter. I'd just as leaf not go out on a limb over this fighting, but we have to root it out before we splinter apart. You've all profited by our various branches of activity, and controlling city officials, we'll add more branches."

"You mean graft?" I asked.

Vileson was giving his boys a birching but there was something wooden in the timbre of his voice. Squeaky interrupted his tirade when Vileson singled him out.

"Don't be a sap," Squeaky retorted, "you're barking up the wrong tree. I'm pining for a truce myself. We're all sick-a-more fighting; that's why we got spruced up for this. It's O'Goonan who started all this."

I saw my chance now, and I used it.

"You all have to come clean if this business is to get settled," I said. "You've had plenty of ambitions, Squeaky. It was you who tried to shame Pete in front of his men by cutting the top off his straw boater. It's true that Chief O'Goonan here tried to kill everyone in his way in his wild attempt to get Squeaky, but Starky is just as much to blame the way he stabbed virtually everyone in the back."

When I finished, there was nothing more to be said. For about ten minutes, Vileson's henchmen eyed one another with tense malevolence. Then simultaneously they rose to their feet, backed away from the table and slid along the walls to the nearest exit. They were all off to gather up their gangs and rub each other out.

"Well, you really have a gift for diplomacy!" Vileson roared at me.

"Those morons will wipe each other out before morning! How am I supposed to handle those strikers now?!"

The telephone beside the old autocrat began to ring before he could get to foaming at the mouth.

"Yes!" he barked at it. "Well, let me know as soon as you hear from Glutman. It's been hours since I spoke to him!" He hung up and turned to me again. But I was ready now. I had no evidence or assurance, but all the pieces just fell into place and I could bluff my way through to the end.

"I'm through here, Vileson," I said, "the case is solved and you can pay up now—before they haul you away."

Vileson turned an angry shade of purple and made unpleasant sounds at me. But I kept talking.

"You had Glutman join the strikers as a provocateur. He killed Kelly and the others and would have done the same to me."

"How did you find out?" he gasped. "You expect me to pay you for accusing me!"

"Well, there is the matter of these love letters to Dinah Branded," I said, patting my empty coat pocket. "The ones Glutman was after. I'm a very open-minded man, but this stuff is the work of a diseased mind." As I talked, Vileson began to count out my money while strangling with rage. "I'm sure that if you must go to the electric chair it would be better to go with dignity than with a lot of ugly gossip."

With the last bill, Vileson turned a wondrous shade of magenta and departed to his reward. After the gunfire died out in the streets below, I made my way to the train station.

FINIS

How to Exsell in Writing

by Merle Foote

I am fed up with these so-called writers who complain that they can't get their stuff published because the public doesn't know what's good. And here's an example of what I mean: I was over at the New K-Mart the other day when I ran into my cousin Frank—this is the cousin Frank who went to college for a skillion years just so he could impress people. The very first thing he does is tell me that he's just been appointed an assistant professor of English (ooh! I'm impressed, I'm impressed).

Since Frank is a fellow writer, I try and overlook his irksome bragging and I'm usually pretty civil to him—even though I saw him once with a girl in downtown Gallup and he pretended he didn't know me; I guess he was embarrassed about the girl. Anyway, I always try to be encouraging, so I asked him if he's working on anything. He says, "Yeah, I'm working on the biographies of a group of poets from the Romantic Period. I was in England this past summer and I got hold of some original correspondence from writers like Coleridge and Wordsworth. I've also got some stuff from Byron. I'm very excited because no one has ever seen this material before, and I should be able to present a pretty fair biographical work with it."

"Oh yeah, I'm sure," I told him, barely able to conceal my lack of enthusiasm.

I was tempted to say: Hey, Frankie, when you gonna come back down to earth and get away from this literature stuff. No one has read this kind of junk for a hundred years and you know it. And even then it was only because they couldn't get laid and it made them think in funny sentences (that's a theory I got once from a guy I met in the L.A. bus station; I think it's a pretty good one, don't you?).

I couldn't help Frank, but maybe I can help you. Maybe I can bring you into the twentieth century world of the successful writer. The Gallup Marketeer doesn't publish my movie reviews for nothing, you know—they do it because I write good.

Let's look at Frank's situation; it's grim but not impossible. He's got all this info on these old guys that no one wants, right? Well, maybe yes, maybe no. The fact is that if you use the right slant you can increase the chances of selling your piece by about 8 billion percent. For example: Did any of these guys have a secret diet? One they never got around to talking about in their poems?

And hey, these guys are all Englishmen; I bet at least one of them is related to Princess Di somewhere along the line. I did some research on these bozos, and just guess what I discovered: Coleridge was a druggie! Oh yeah. So how's this for a good headline: Major Literary Figure Suspected of Cocaine Abuse! Then what you do is use a line from one of his poems for a quote. You could use this for a sub-headline: "I Ken the Banks Where Amaranths Blow," Admits Noted British Author. A quote like that is golden; the reading public will think the guy walks around blown out of his mind. There's no law that says you've got to mention he's been dead for 150 years.

You think I'm done? Not by a long shot. By the time you've finished reading this you'll be a great writer just like I.

Let's suppose that Coleridge is a long-lost relation to Princess Di. Know what you've got then? Princess Di's Cocaine Legacy!!, that's what you got. What do you think the Enquirer would pay for a story of that caliber?

Hey, look: I don't have to waste my time telling you beginners how to make monster bucks in the writing game when I could be out there right now doing stories for quality mags like the Enquirer and Midnight, maybe even Allo! Police! (though I'd have to learn French first). I do it because I care about the quality of writing today—and if caring ever goes out of style, well, only the commies would be happy, I guess.

So the next time you get the urge to do a piece on some jerky topic like human rights in Guatemala or something, ask yourself this first: Did the Love Boat ever visit Guatemala? Did they like it? Did the Captain get caught in the sack with a 14-year-old revolutionary? Was it a boy revolutionary?

If you can start doing this kind of quality, you can consider yourself a real American writer. And if anybody says different, you just send them to Merle.

God bless and drive safely.



Acupuncture Advertising - A discussion on the pros and cons of promoting this dubious health care method.

Baby Backpacking - Now moms and dads are taking their infants along when they go hiking or mountain climbing.

Cake Car - A bakery has produced the world's largest Rolls Royce cake; dealer financing available.

Dancing Data - This company provides up-to-date information on dance activities and recitals.

Display Dog - If you cannot afford to buy one, now you can rent a status mutt and impress your friends and guests.

Family Fence - The sad tale of the mother-in-law who became a receiver and seller of stolen goods.

Liquor Loans - The latest thing in financial services is a low interest loan to buy the booze for your next party.

Martial Massage - Back problems? Three blackbelt karate experts will walk on your back for a fee.

Musical Newspapers - First it was greeting cards. Now we have newspapers with the sounds of music included.

Shower Signs - These messages for your shower include "Put Cap Back On Shampoo" and "Remove Hair From Drain".

Vacuum Valet - Meet the upscale cleaning person and his/her increased status and hefty fee schedule.

Wedding Wigs - Who wants to mess with hairdos at a time like this? This trend is catching on fast. (END)

(Julian Ross is a writer/artist/TV watcher in Los Angeles. His latest extra work was as a priest in "Mass Appeal", starring Jack Lemmon, and why he sent me this bulletin is still beyond me...)

IT'S TIME KIDS STOPPED READING AND STARTED USING STRONG LANGUAGE.



"Descartes tells us that monkeys could speak if they wished to, but that they prefer to keep silent so that they won't be made to work. In 1907, the Argentine writer Lugones published a story about a chimpanzee who was taught how to speak and died under the strain of the effort."

The Book of Imaginary Beings

It's no longer possible to ignore the connection between keeping words in place and people kept in their places: libraries, classrooms, factories, churches, prisons, museums, shops, offices and armies.

Without words the infinite subjectivity suppressed in each person could not have been torn apart as an abstract object and worshipped as "God." This abstraction begins with--and always conceals--the ancient opposition between the imposed misery of existence for necessity's sake and the desire for life with abandon.

The present order maintains a constant expectation of ever more dazzling and intriguing diversions to come--an expectation seen as more patently false with each passing day. What maintains the present order, however, is the lingering hope--just as false--that "justice," "peace," "democracy," "equality," "human rights," "international cooperation" and the "appropriate use of technology" will somehow be realized by the political maneuvers of those whose permanent vocation is calculated protest at each new injustice or contradiction they discover, or more usually have thrust in their faces.

But the more realistic "socialism" appears in its licensed attempt to better plan the absurd horror of advancing civilization, the more ridiculous capitalism defining itself as spectacular utopia makes it appear.

The spectacle accelerates the disintegration of social bonds by pitilessly mocking every value in its ceaseless refinement of novelty, the official opiate of the disillusioned, but at the same time speeds up the creation of an opposition which finds its true identity only in the mockery of all values and the determination to stop at nothing less than an end to the imprisonment of automated lives. Better the entire economy destroyed altogether than a single worker bored or humiliated for even a moment!

In societies where words remain the first and last impediment to speech freed from the totalitarian commodity of information, they can be relentlessly played back as cruel jokes and sly tricks necessary for the consciousness of passivity to overcome its own passivity at each step. I create myself out of words, and that creation immediately opposes me to everything besides the words I use, just as fraternity creates itself only by opposing all the immediate, false oppositions of competing parties, nationalities, religions, corporations, fashions, and ideologies that confine humans in a wasteland of isolation and madness.

All the separate forces that have combined to render words free from all meaning are terrified by the absolute freedom in the realm of words: that freedom now barely contains the immense subjective wealth once granted to God but waiting still to be pilaged in an insurrectionary and unpredictable festival of idleness, pleasure, adventure, and play.

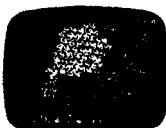


"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less."



"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

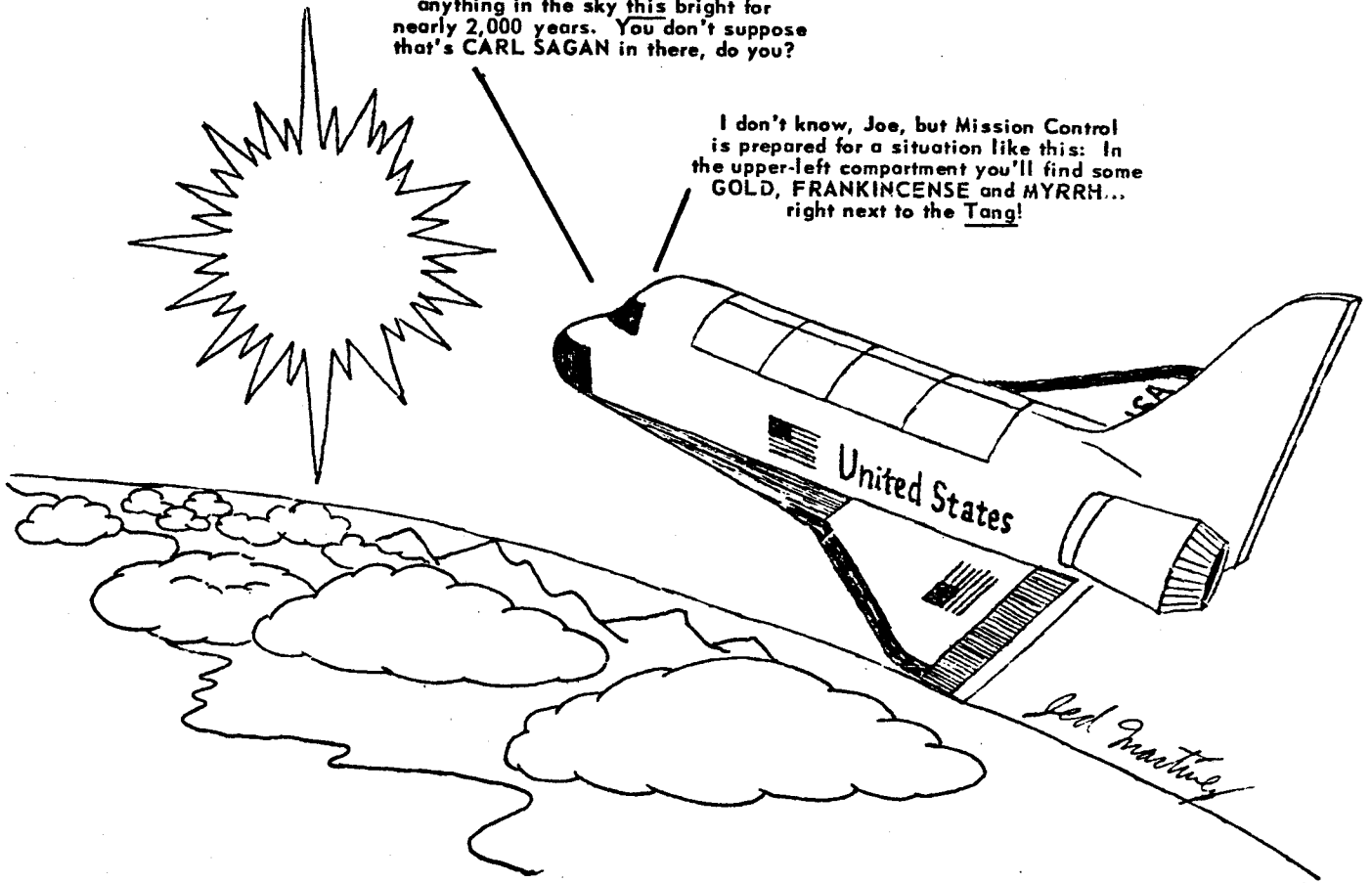
"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master--that's all."



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Apart from the sun, there hasn't been anything in the sky this bright for nearly 2,000 years. You don't suppose that's CARL SAGAN in there, do you?

I don't know, Joe, but Mission Control is prepared for a situation like this: In the upper-left compartment you'll find some GOLD, FRANKINCENSE and MYRRH... right next to the Tang!



INSIDE JOKE

c/o ELAYNE WECHSLER

P.O. Box 1609

Madison Square Station

New York, NY 10159

"...Ho ho ho and a bottle of—oh, hello,
little one, come here and sit on Santa's
lap, my you're a big one, and
what's your name?"

BEYOND BAROQUE

COMING SOON: "ELEMENT WARS"....