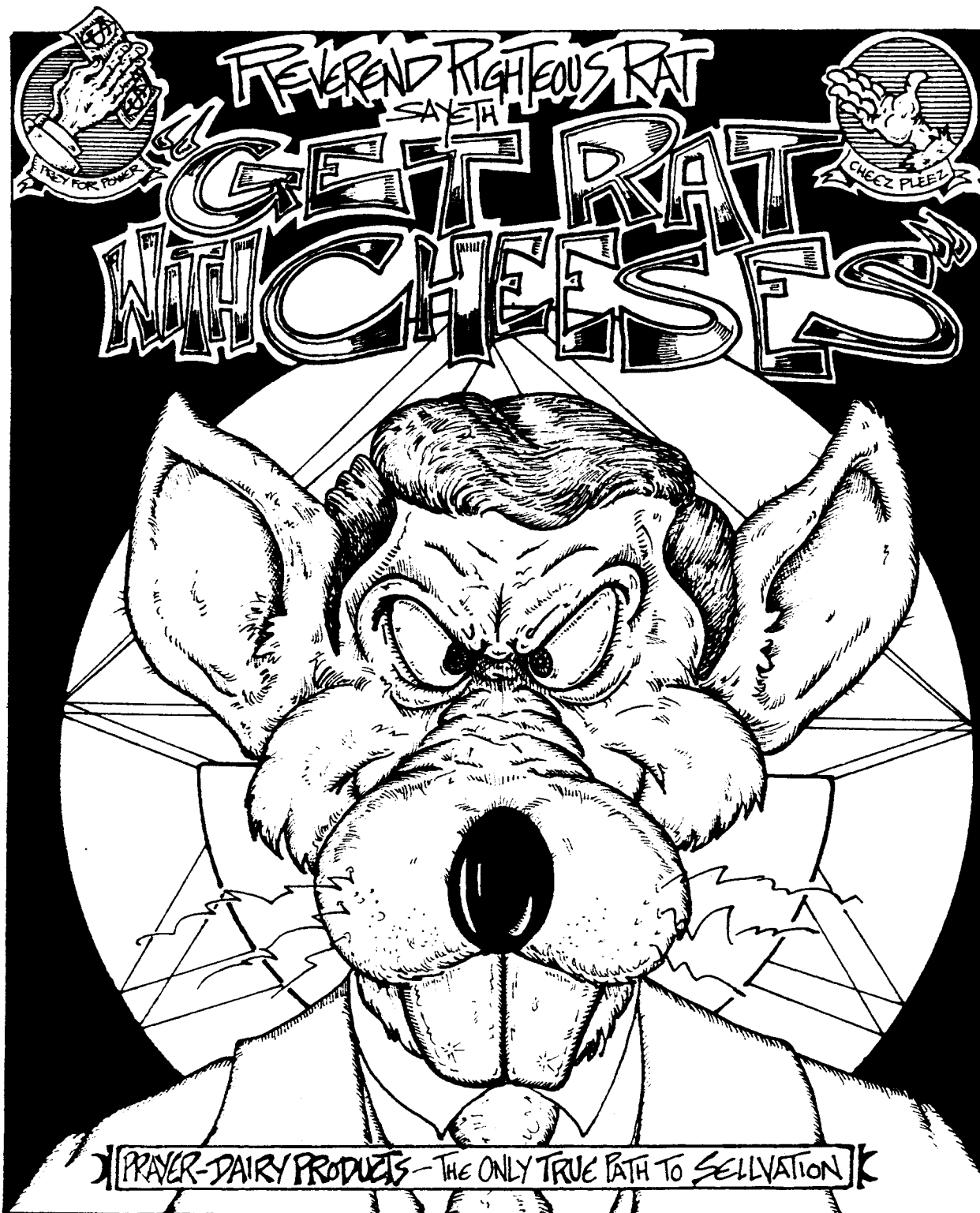


#46

INSIDE JOKE

A NEWSLETTER OF
COMEDY & CREATIVITY

\$1



MILK THE CONTENTED COWS - FLEECE THE CONTENTED SHEEP

~ROLD00'35

-UPCOMING EVENTS-

Please feel free to send in memorable dates of your own

- JUNE 15—DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #47
 JUNE 16 - Stan Laurel (b. 1895); Joyce Carol Oates (48)
 JUNE 17 - M.C. Escher (b. 1898)
 JUNE 18 - Paul McCartney (44)
 JUNE 19 - Malcolm McDowell (43); Lou Gehrig (b. 1903); Confucius (b. 551 BC)
 JUNE 20 - Errol Flynn (b. 1909); Lillian Hellman (b.1905)
 JUNE 21 - 4th Annual Mermaid Parade, Coney Island—for information call (718) 372-5159; Ray Davies (42); Judy Holliday (b. 1922); Sartre (b. 1905)
 JUNE 25 - JILL ZIMMERMAN (31); George Orwell (b. 1903)
 JUNE 26 - Peter Lorre (b. 1904); Abner Doubleday (b.1819)
 JUNE 27 - Bob Keeshan (?); Emma Goldman (b. 1869); Helen Keller (b. 1880)
 JUNE 30 - RORY HOUGHENS (30); LUKE MCGUFF (29)
 JULY 3 - "Get Out of New York City" Day; Tom Stoppard (49); Franz Kafka (b. 1883)
 JULY 4 - Rube Goldberg (b. 1883); Ann Landers & Abby Van Buren (68); George M. Cohan (?)
 JULY 5 - P.T. Barnum (b. every minute, 1829)
 JULY 7 - Ringo Starr (46)
 JULY 10 - Arlo Guthrie (39)
 JULY 12 - Milton Berle (78); Buckminster Fuller (b. 1895)
 JULY 14 - Jerry Rubin (48), Terry-Thomas (59); Woody Guthrie (b. 1912)
 JULY 16 - Ginger Rogers (65)
 JULY 18 - Red Skelton (?)
 JULY 20 - Robin Williams (35); Vaughn Bodé (b. 1941)
 JULY 22 - Marshall McLuhan (b. 1911)—official IJ holiday
 JULY 23 - T.S. CHILD (?)
 JULY 24 - Amelia Earhart (b. 1898)
 JULY 26 - ROLDO (38); George Bernard Shaw (b. 1856); Aldous Huxley (b. 1894); Gracie Allen (b. 1906)
 JULY 27 - PHIL PROCTOR (46); Phredd (1)
 JULY 29 - RANDY MAXSON (33)
 JULY 31—DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO IJ #48

 * INSIDE JOKE is put on hexaweekly by Elayne "Walking is a Dirty Word" Wechsler and some dear friends, and emanates from beautiful downtown Brooklyn, home of the Mermaid Festival (see "Upcoming Events")! See you at the Cyclone...

* EDITOR-IN-RESIDENCE.....ELAYNE WECHSLER
 * PRODUCTION ASSISTANT.....STEVE CHAPUT
 * PRINTING DEVOLVER.....DEBBIE DAVID

FRONT COVER BY ROLDO

STAFF WRITERS/ARTISTS

* ANNI ACKNER====DEBORAH BENEDICT====ALIX BISHOFF====MICHAEL DOBBS
 * ==PETER LABRIOLA=====GARY LIGI=====J.P. MORGAN==
 * LARRY OBERC====SUSAN PACKIE=====GEORG PATTERSON=====ROLDO
 * ==KERRY THORNLEY=====PHIL TORTORICI=====A.J. WRIGHT==

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE:

* D.A. BEAST	MARY ANN HENN	STACY SOLLFREY
* LARRY BLAZEK	TULI KUPFERBERG	DORIAN TENORE
* JAY DEFELICIS	LUKE MCGUFF	JAMES WALLIS
* GARY PIG GOLD	PETER SCISCO	SIGMUND WEISS
* VERNON GRANT	DANA A. SNOW	and "KID" SIEVE

* Ads furnished by J.C. Brainbeau, Not Available Comics, and the Church of the SubGenius

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 * Back issues available for \$1 each; Guidelines available for SASE...

QUESTION:
 Doesn't the plight of the nation's 10% unemployed change the thinking of all or most of the 90% employed?
 ANSWER:
 Not very much but minds could change rapidly if unemployment reached 50%. That would be a good time to adopt work and money sharing as it should and could have been when unemployment was 10%. Send SASE to fair play, crime and unemployment ending year round paying EVEN AGE WORK FORCE Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN - OHIO, 44504

BEHIND THE VEIL

by Mary Ann Henn

That's what they called it
 I have a problem with that
 I wore
 a veil thought I was in
 it not behind it
 wouldn't behind it mean
 it covered my front—
 face eyes nose mouth?
 It only covered the top, the back
 of my head and shoulders
 hanging to my elbows my waist
 I could still see out and I think
 I could still think. That's just
 the way it was.

YAND
 SPONTANEOUS
 HUMAN
 COMBUSTION
 QUARTERLY

ACKNOWLEDITORIAL

It's been a strange, hazy time, with the good and bad points to it that these things usually contain. On the one hand, I've been able to put together this entire issue on home typer Lilit, organize things like letters and zines and records/books/cassettes that I thought I'd never get around to doing, and watch Jeopardy every day—and thank goodness for baseball! The down side is that I think I'm becoming addicted to She-Ra and He-Man (nothing that going back to work shouldn't cure; Doctors Wayne and Fred—hi Doctor Fred!—approximate June 15 but I'm hoping for month's beginning), and of course I've missed the 9th Ave. Food Street Fair for the first time in years, and oh, just plain walking has gone by the wayside. I shan't go on about not realizing how lucky one is to be hale until one is laid up and such, but I would like to thank all of you for your get-well wishes. By this time next issue I shall most certainly be frequenting sidewalk festivals, ball-parks and flea markets once more.

Shortly before last issue was sent out (and I apologize if it went out a little late, but I mailed it post-operation and I was still a bit fuzzy from the anesthesia), "Uncle Wiggly" broke the bad news that the Powers That Be at his place of employment have shut down American Samizdat Press, and thus he would no longer be able to print INSIDE JOKE. Fortunately, providence (actually, queens ny but that's neither here nor there) smiled upon us in the form of esteemed editrix-in-her-own-right (of BEAUTIFUL WORLD) Debbie David, who has willingly volunteered to pick up the slack and arrange for alternate printing—in effect, saving our publication from folding. I'll never be able to express enough gratitude to Debbie, without whom this and future issues would not exist, and "Uncle Wiggly," without whom the past few years of IJ would not have been possible. Apologies if this issue goes out a bit late (beginning of June rather than end of May), and I hope it won't affect y'all too much as far as our next deadline goes, but it's been a pretty smooth transition given the normobility obstacle.

Oh, and to further clarify matters regarding INSIDE STROKE, for which Production Assistant Steve Chaput (thanks for being "my legs" this month & congrats on the job, babe—it's a strange feeling to suddenly have all this ready cash) is now soliciting submissions (puns intended) of writing and art (Ace Backwords and Phil Tortorici have the front and back covers of same, respectively) and which is due out sometime this fall. IS is not to be considered a "special issue" of IJ, is not offered in trade for other publications (it will only be sent to subscribers for \$1 and to participants free), and is really not associated with this publication at all except for the fact that you should send mail for Steve c/o our palatial p.o. box. I mean, I'm not even going to read IS, much less have a hand in editing or typing it. Kip maintains IS will not be a Pen-Elayne Enterprise. So please, if you're interested, do participate and tell your friends, but don't confuse IS with IJ. Guidelines for IS are listed in IJ #45.

Rory Houghens and Steve Scharff excuse themselves from this issue, although I think they forged those notes from mom; they'll be back next time. Gary Ligi is barely forgiven for being late with his submission, since he's new on the block. Really, folks, I'm serious about deadlines; if you can't cut it, don't be a staffer, just contribute every now and then...Roldo and Phil did not consult each other, to the best of my knowledge, about this issues front and back covers, but I love it when these little synchronicities work out. Staffers love to hear from readers about their work, etc., and if you're inclined toward personal correspondence do feel free—there follows an updated address list:

ANNI ACKNER—send mail c/o INSIDE JOKE
 DEBORAH BENEDICT—854 Y Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
 ALIX BISHOFF—P.O. Box 9079, Hollins College, VA 24020
 MIKE DOBBS—24 Hampden Street, Indian Orchard, MA 01151
 RORY HOUGHENS—R.R. #2, Colfax, IL 61728
 PETE LABRIOLA—1630 University Avenue #26, Berkeley, CA 94703
 GARY LIGI—P.O. Box 40710, Portland, OR 97240-1710
 JOHN P. MORGAN—185 Seabreeze Ave. #4, E. Keansburg, NJ 07734
 LARRY OBERC—58 Anderson Street #1, Boston, MA 02114
 SUSAN PACKIE—10-D Bellevue Court, Belleville, NJ 07109
 GEORG PATTERSON—46 Sutter Street #3L, Brooklyn, NY 11222
 ROLDO—1232 Downing Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E 2R7 CANADA
 STEVEN SCHARFF—P.O. Box 5004, Hillside Township, NJ 07205
 KERRY THORNLEY—2981 Lookout Place NE, Atlanta, GA 30305
 PHIL TORTORICI—P.O. Box 57487, West Palm Beach, FL 33405
 A.J. WRIGHT—617 Valley View Drive, Pelham, AL 35214

Lots of long stuff this time, as Anni and I both got a tad carried away, so for the first time "Fan Noose" will spill over into Anni's usual page and "Rock Fiend" will be on pp. 4-5. Pru and Ari also have nice long pieces, and I'm pleased to report we've a whopping letter column this time, so since I haven't laid out the issue yet I've still no idea whether we can print the now-infamous "gerber story" in #46! And to those of you who've sent more than one submission, thanks for the marvelous backlog—IJ will be filled to brimming for some time to come, methinks. All you "other contributor" types with more than one submission now have the option of only sending me a 39¢ stamp for #47.

The deadline for next issue is June 15, then it's July 31 for #48, September 15 for #49 and Halloween '86 for our Sixth Anniversary/Golden issue, #50 (do plan now; I'd like to make that one special!), so please send all letters, artwork, articles, poems, etc. by then. Donations can be sent any time and are always appreciated (thanks again to J.C. Brainbeau for helping defray some costs this time). Subscriptions to IJ are \$1 per issue, with up to \$8 in NON-REFUNDABLE advance subs for a year. Contributors have the option of only sending a 39¢ (American 40¢ if you live in Canada) stamp for the issue in which their work (excluding letters) appears. We trade all-for-all with regularly-published zines, one-for-one with sporadic ones, and one-for-"publication plus 39¢ stamp" for onesheets and mini-comics. And your sub's up if there's an "X" next to your name on the mailing label. The address on which to blame all these rules & regs is

P.O. Box 1609, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10159.
 This issue is dedicated in memory of Robert Alda and Herschel Bernardi.

Fan Noose

In a way, it's a good thing I had a surfeit of leisure time during these past weeks, as the palatial p.o. has received a veritable shipment, shipload of publications...many of them brand new. Without further ado, then: Starting off our list this time is one of the funniest small publications I've seen in a long while. T.H.R.U.S.H. purports to anacronize "Terrifying Hags Ruthlessly Uprooting Self-Hatred" and bills itself as "A Feminist Humor Magazine," but there's nothing exclusionary or elitist about its contents. Worth far more than its 50¢ cover price, this photocopied newsletter with hand-colored cover is available from Ann-Marie at 151 First Ave., #62, New York, NY 10003...And on that coast on the left side of the US map, THE WOMANSPIRIT CATALOGUE is planning a publication referral this spring, in which yours truly might have an entry or two—for information send a SASE to publisher Patrice Wynne, 1442-A Walnut St., #184, Berkeley, CA 94709...Keeping with our theme (a "theme" already?), Luke McGuff is looking for "anyone who could write a good feminist humor column"—BRIEF—for his new apa-originated zine, LIVE FROM THE STAGGER CAFE. An apa, for those of you unfamiliar with the term, is an "amateur press association" and sounds a lot loftier than it really is—a collaborative pub where the contributors all send in a designated number of copies of their creativity (which sometimes consists of nothing more than responding to other people's responses to someone else's...you get the idea). Luke's got some nice essays here, and if you're interested in the zine or in helping him out, write him at Box 3680, Minneapolis, MN 55403...Also looking for contributors, this time of a poetic nature, is Larry Blazek for his OPOSSUM HOLLER TAROT (which wins our IJ prize for niftiest new zine name this time). The layout's a bit haphazard (I should talk?), but it's chock full of poesy and only \$1.02/copy (hey, I don't make this up, I just report it) or free with SASE to contributors from Larry at Route 2, Campbellsburg, IN 47108...Artist Kurt Wilcken's Captain Cheapo Publications puts out some wonderful "mini" (about 5x7") comics which follow the misadventures of BRISBANE THE BARBARIAN and assorted cronies—all are \$1 and under per (include a 2 oz. stamp for postage, please), quite fun, and if you send Kurt a SASE I'm sure he can send you a list of all of 'em (do get at least one comic, though)—1010 School St., #5, Des Moines, IA 50309...Every now and then there comes along a book that's more of an experience than just a read. W.R. Tish has published such a book—ORDER and CHAOS, NOTHING at ALL. Tish, one of the editors of the '86 edition parody paper Washington Boast, loves to play and work with words, suffusing them into shapes you might not have dreamed existed. It's exquisite down (over?) to the borders, and only \$5.95 (or send a SASE for free sample pages) to Box 942, Greenbelt, MD 20770...Also a pleasant experience is TREETOP PANORAMA, an almost literal "grassroots" publication which practices "the art of common sense imagination. Sample copies are \$1 per, two for \$2.85 as an intro subscription, and send to Jared Scarborough, R.R.1, Box 160, Payson, IL 62360...POPULAR REALITY consists, so says the cover, of "Social Nihilists," though their twelfth issue, "The Proper Use of Sex," is more MTINTK (More Than I Need To Know) than violent. I get the impression that Dave Crowbar & co. are serious activist types, though, and if you want to get involved with a worthy political rag, this may be the place to start. Subs are a very reasonable \$2 for 4 issues (how can they afford that many newsprint copies at that rate?) to PR at P.O. Box 3402, Ann Arbor, MI 48106...And on the NY "home front," CULTURAL CORRESPONDENCE editor Jim Murray has been distributing some great art & word pubs with themes like religion (WORLD WAR 3) and feminism (PORK ROAST—250 feminist cartoons)—send him a SASE to inquire about these and other worthy undergrounds—505 West End Ave., New York, NY 10024...And the latest triumph from NOWHERE, which calls itself "A Humble Journal of the International Revolution," is termed "Life in America, Vol. 1" and is anything but humble—it's gigantic-sized (oh, 'bout 9x13") and real heavy, in weight and stature. While there are some clunkers within, to be sure (works by Jeffrey Zable border on the unhumorously tasteless), there's a brilliant essay on the human condition called "The Grand Experiment" that bears repeated reading (too bad it's pseudonymous) and a hilarious tale called "Concrete Jungle" (also by a pen-name—it's a shame that some people aren't proud enough of their own stuff to sign their names to it). Lord knows how editor Dee Flagstone will afford future volumes, as this sells for only \$2 (plus 75¢ in "post office fines"), but do support "all the news that's fit to print"...From overseas come, practically back to back, the two latest issues of IDOMO, a fanzine by Chuck Connor, and it is one in every sense of the word, mostly negative. Chuck's listings of other zines is always good and informative, and some of the sf stories people submit or Chuck reprints are nice, but a lot of it is MTINTK and strictly fandom stuff, so if it's your kind of thing and you're looking to network with some active Brit fans, write Chuck at Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Near Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0NF ENGLAND (and thanks for the sweet plug, Chuck!)...Of course, not every publication that comes my way is to my personal liking (could you tell?), so all I can do sometimes is plug things and let you, the audience, decide who dunnit (sorry, been watching too many "Edwin Drood" commercials). One of my caveats this time is a seemingly conservative, fundamentalist type called WRITE ON, "A newsletter written exclusively for/and by YOU" (and you really have to wonder about the literary merit of a pub that uses a slash and an "and" that redundantly). Editor Judy St. John insists she "provides the opportunity for the beginner and the contest winner to become published"—but it turns out a "contest winner" is someone who pays her to submit a poem or essay or whatever and then she picks what she thinks is most indicative of that month's theme (themes are stuff like religion and patriotism, which tipped me off as to their political slant) and they win a few bucks and see their writing in print. I've never heard of contest publishing before, but it seems an

awful hassle to go through for a 1-page mimeo. If you want to check it out, however, who am I to stop you? Judy gives out complimentary copies, and her address is Route 6, Box 344 A, Carthage, MO 64836. Oh, and this is produced by the WWF, which I don't think means "World Wrestling Foundation" but I guess one never knows...Also not on my must-buy list is PANDEMONIUM, which features pretty much the personal correspondence its editor, Jack Stevenson, has had with five people who are definitely on my list of Those I'd Never Want To Meet In A Dark Alley, folks like Charles Manson and Burroughs and Bukowski...I guess perhaps some men out there might like to read this, but on the whole, I've come to the conclusion that Mr. Stevenson is probably the sixth person I'd never want to meet in a dark alley. Even if John Waters or Al Goldstein happens to be your thing, I still don't see the point of publishing personal correspondence instead of original creativity (except for the fact that everyone seems to be suing Stevenson too). The address to send away (at a whopping \$7) for all this fun & games is 171 Auburn St., Apt. #11, Cambridge, MA 02139...On to brighter subjects (and yes, I'm aware that I tend to give more space to things I trash than things I adore, but since most pubs I get I love, I suppose I feel a special need to send out caveats for stuff I don't), as IJ celebrates with staffer Susan Packie the publication of her second chapbook of poetry, CASTLES IN THE AIR, "an anthropological tour of the world, a look at the dreams of life and its ashes and dust," and I couldn't have found better words. Saki-Poo has such a feel for these foreign and sometimes not-so-exotic places that you seem to be there in a lot of these poems—this treasure goes, as does her first book YANTICAW, for \$4.95 + 90¢ mailing, to 10-D Bellevue Ct., Belleville, NJ 07109...Another staffer, J.P. Morgan, has a new edition of his mini-comic FUDGONG FUNNIES (only 50¢ to P.O. Box 78, Keansburg, NJ 07734), and a panel of his graces the cover of the new BEATNIKS FROM SPACE. As usual, BFS has gems (Steve McCue's "Time and Charges") and duds (Ron Rodriguez' "Hallucinations," which looks like my cat decided to tramp over my typewriter), but it deserves your support and participation—\$3 to Denis McBee at Neither/Nor Press, Box 8043, Ann Arbor, MI 48107...And speaking, as we were a moment ago, of mini-comics, one of the masters of the form, Matt Feazell, has just put out the latest issue of his character STUPID BOY, a western motif entitled "The Stupid Kid." Mitt's stuff is always a pleasure and a chuckle, and only 25¢ to him at Box 5803, Raleigh, NC 27650...And also, like BFS, Erik Kosberg's BETWEEN THE LINES, issue "54," has its good and bad moments, but it always kind enough to plug us (and even repro a story by staffer Larry Obero) and never fails to generate interest (not to mention spreading the weird of "Bob," but I wasn't supposed to mention that). Sample copies are \$1 from 3013 Holmes Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55408 and do ask about submitting stuff for future issues...Another loyal and brave SubG (and you have to be out there) is Utaha (Utahite?) kafrice who goes by many other names like katlady and helen katz and varies her publication THE WHOLE SHMEER so much that it even changes titles from issue to issue. IJ readers may remember her last issue was a (complimentary?) parody of this here one you're reading—her latest is called "The Book of Mormonisms: A Look into Life in Zion" and gathers together a well-researched collection of current articles about and against and even by the Mormon Church. This is, truly, everything you ever wondered about LDS, and perhaps even fundamentalist Christianity's fight to convert or reconvert Mormons, as much material comes from Challenge Ministry and Utah Lighthouse Ministry, places which basically offer folks one set of rigid monotheistic beliefs in place of another...Still another Man-o-"Bob", the write Rev. Vinnie Bartilucci, has a strange Xmasy article from our own Kip M. Ghesin (s/he made me plug it) in his latest NOTMEMO 45—send SASE to 45 Newburgh St., Elmont, NY 11003...And SubG type and sometime collaborator of mine (in the upcoming Tuber's Voice), Joe Schwind, is selling nice mail-artsy and rubber stamp self-made postcards, at 4 to \$1 (+ first-class stamp) to P.O. Box 8187, Shawnee Mission, KS 66208...Some good news and bad here—the bad is that Revo's grand experiment, SURREAL ESTATES, has gone by the pike (temporarily, we all hope); to order back issues inquire at P.O. Box 23061, Knoxville, TN 37933-1061...The good is that it looks like LACTUCA will be a quarterly prosepoetry publication. Editor Mike Selender, like BLOTTER ed C.F. Kennedy (see "regular" plugs below), makes a habit of giving contributors short bios. Like other (and isn't it wonderful there are suddenly so many!) creative pubs, its content quality varies with its participants, but there's usually worthwhile stuff within. Mike looks for "work with a strong sense of place and/or experience, somewhat toward objectivist writing," and if you're interested, check it out for \$3/copy to P.O. Box 621, Suffern, NY 10901 (oh, and "lactuca serriola" means "prickly lettuce")...I'm also happy to report that the DUCKBERG TIMES is still actively publishing, reprinting from various underground rags in addition to pubbing locals, distributed 'round the Washington, D.C. area free but if you can't pick one up there send \$1 to editor Ron Baker, P.O. Box 382, Alexandria, VA 22313...My favorite digest of the alternative-press world, the UTNE READER, has also begun printing more "special" articles written especially for the pub, in addition to their outstanding excerpting from other noteworthy places. The latest issue, #16, looks at punk culture, "the politics of the children of the children of the 60's." As always, fascinating reading, and if you can't get it on the newsstands send \$4 to P.O. Box 1974, Marion, OH 43305 (and thank you for the lovely letter, Jay!)...Regionally (or even nationally) for those of you following the Cyclone insurance tragedy, a wonderful local rag from Richard Eagan and his Coney Island Hysterical Society, of which I'm a proud pseudo-member (ok, I never go to meetings but I go to Nathan's a lot), INSIDE CONEY ISLAND, updates you on the goings-on with what used to be (and still should be) The World's Playground—for info write 299 14th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215...And, like that small (6-page) pub, many creative outputs don't have to be big to be good. The trend towards one-sheet publishing continues, and I've received the latest issues from THE WEST VIRGINIA SURF REPORT—well, actually this one is 3 pages this time, and editor Jeff-somebody demonstrates a truly

creative idea this time (and in the future, we're promised), the *Short Story Album* (you really should patent this one, Jeff), in which he takes the titles of all the songs on a given album and makes a story out of each one. This "page" Jeff does Queen's *THE GAME*, and it's a neat idea so check it out by writing to him at Box 663, Dunbar, WV 25064 (Jeff adds, "After 5 please write Box 7682, Greensboro, NC 27417 ... And publishing like clockwork is the onesheet *OUTER SHELL*, which gets this issue's award for snappiest individual issue title. Editor Roy Harper puts out a "There's no biz like show biz" Issue, a "NOW I've heard everything" Issue, a "Discovering the oyster" Issue—you get the idea. Mostly concentrating on music, OS is available for free, but do send a SASE to Box 7043, St. Petersburg, FL 33734... One of OS's contributors (and a recent *IJ* participant), Gary Pig Gold, has his own onesheet, *THE PIG PAPER*, and issue #24 features nice collage space stuff and contrihs from John Crawford and Ace Backwards; free from 70 Cotton Dr., Mississauga, Ont. L5G 1Z9 CANADA... MUCH more than one sheet long—64 pages of small print, to be exact—is Richard Geis's Hugo award-winning semipro sf zine, *SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW*. Issue #59, sold for \$2.50, features *MTINTK* on the cover, Rich's ego throughout (while I assume that's usually tongue-in-cheek, a common fan exercise, sometimes it gets oppressive and terribly self-righteous) and plentiful opinionated reviews of books, etc. If you can stand to read a lot of "I"s, send the bucks to Rich at P.O. Box 11408, Portland, OR 97211... It's hard to have a light touch when there's so much right-wing injustice going on, so the latest issue of the Yippie! mag, *OVERTHROW*, tends to be depressing. But it's an informative (while highly biased, natch) read, as usual, and still only a buck to P.O. Box 392, Canal St. Sta., New York, NY 10013... Also well more than a onesheet is the latest 80-pager from David Claffardini and friends. *SOUND CHOICE* #4 sells for \$2.50 and is a fantastic source for independent music lovers. David reviews publications too; send sub money to P.O. Box 1251, Ojai, CA 93023... And now that we've gone over two pages for the first time in the beleaguered history of this column, on with the "regulars" (pubs I get at least every *IJ*-round): *BABUSHKIN'S DIGEST* V.2, #s 4,5—L.D. Babushkin, P.O. Box 128, Rosendale, NY 12472 (irreverent creative zine; free but donations appreciated—make checks out to "L. Bush"); *THE BLOTTER* #4—C.F. Kennedy, 233 Woodbine Ave., Toronto, Ont. M4L 3P3 CANADA (high-quality creative zine; \$9/6 issues); *JET LAG* #s 63,64,65—Steve Pick, 8419 Halls Ferry Rd., St. Louis, MO 63147 (music and a recent surge in creative/political essays; \$1); *META-SCOOP* V.3, #s 4 and 5/6—B.W. Sowell & D.H. Armstrong, 1004 Live Oak Ste. 101, Arlington, TX 76012 (New Age pub; \$10/year); *MONKEES/BOYCE & HART PHOTO FAN CLUB* #64—Jodi Hamrich, 508 8th St. NE, #4, Watertown, SD 57201 (Monkees, and by the way they're touring now, minus Negmth; 50¢ + SASE); *THE MONTHLY INDEPENDENT TRIBUNE TIMES JOURNAL POST GAZETTE NEWS CHRONICLE BULLETIN* #40—T.S. Child, 2510 Bancroft Way #207, Berkeley, CA 94704 (small-but-packed creative zine; 50¢ or 2 stamps—NO SASEs please); *PHOEBE* V.3, #1—James MacDougall, 511 Routes 5 and 20, Waterloo, NY 13165 (offbeat creative zine, & congrats on your 2nd anniversary, J. Mac!; 55¢); *PROCESSED WORLD* #16—Lucius Cabins, 55 Sutter St. #829, San Francisco, CA 94104 ("the magazine with a bad attitude" about robotized workplaces, etc.; \$5/4 issues, \$10/4 issues if you can afford it and please make checks out to PW); *THE SOUTHERN LIBERTARIAN MESSENGER* V.XIII, #10—John T. Harillee, Rt. 10 Box 52A, Florence, SC 29501 (Libertarian, split between news clippings and reported items/essays; \$5/yr US, \$6/yr Canada, \$8/yr overseas); *SPACE-TIME CONTINUUM AND YOUR POCKET WRENCH* #6—David Serlin, 7824 Kismet St., Miramar, FL 33023 (creative zine that, this issue, declares war on Andorra; 2 oz. stamp or \$1 per). Oh, and don't forget, most of these publications will trade with you if you edit one of your own, and many are always looking for written and artistic submissions, so don't be afraid to participate if you're so inclined. Done, then? Whew! See you in the funny papers!

Addendum (and didn't you just know there'd be one?) for latecomers; latest issues are out of: *BEAUTIFUL WORLD* from new *IJ* printing arranger Debbie David. This "religion" issue features a somewhat lengthy look at short duration personal saviors by yours truly, and is available for \$1.50 (cash or m.o. to DD); mail to BW at P.O. Box 664, Flushing, NY 11355... *FACTSHEET FIVE* #18 from Mike Gunderloy does its usual awesome undertaking of listing just about any underground 'zine worth networking, plus more (like Anni Ackner's regular movie column); send \$2 cash or 8 1st-class stamps to Mike quickly, as he'll be moving imminently from his current digs at 41 Lawrence St., Medford, MA 02155-4123... *THE KANSAS COLLEGE OF COLLAGE*, headed by Joe Schwind (address above, somewhere), which is putting together their latest "Mobile Transcript Show" for those mail-art folks out there (send them 100 copies of your piece, no larger than 8 1/2 x 11, or send your original & \$3)... *PIGEON DROPPINGS* #4 from 14-year-old activist Evelyn Lau, also on the move lately (she can currently be reached c/o 2460 E. 23rd Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5R 1A2 CANADA); it's available for \$5/12 issues or equivalent stamps, and Evelyn could use support in the form of donations and submissions... *SOUND & FURY* #s 2 and 3 from James Wallis (The Manor House, Little Bealings, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP73 6LL ENGLAND) deals mostly with RPGs (role-playing games) but James says he's starting a comics-oriented zine soon, so I'll keep you posted. Done, again!



Make strangeness
work for YOU!

There's no more "ordinary"

There's no more "ordinary"

There's no more "ordinary"

There's no more "ordinary"

There's no more "ordinary"

There's no more "ordinary"

CYNICALMAN

Copyright Matt Fossell 1985



The Cynicalman
P.O. Box 140304
Dallas, Texas 75214

Life in the eighties, beautiful women fill
streets and screen, material success seems
everywhere

what then becomes important, to satisfy
each worldly desire

what reason for god and country
yet it remains a good time to be alive
rampant prosperity and forgotten wars
any desire under the sun can be had for
the asking choose your poison money or drugs
another cigarette another line
banging in repetition
and i sit and wonder why what i feel
can never be conveyed or shared with
anyone else
transcient in living makes for
transcient relationships nothing to return
to burned through and left
in lust or longing
a between period
a love of the world but no one in it

- Jay DeFelicis

DIARY of The ROCK FIEND

by Anni Ackner

PERSONAL WORST

Time was—and not so very long ago as all that—when classified ads were simple, unobtrusive little things. Located in the back pages of most newspapers, separated into categories according to that which they purveyed or requested (hence the name. Clever, eh?), classified ads were mainly used by prospective employers wishing to interview new employees, prospective employees wishing to interview new employers, people wishing to sell or buy major appliances, people wishing to sell or buy previously owned automobiles, apartment hunters, ticket scalpers and an occasional guy who had somehow misplaced a 5-year-old male German Shepherd that needed medication. Of course, there always was a certain market for ads of a more—shell we say—delicate nature, but these were always located in newspapers and periodicals of a very definite and distinct type, and anyone who answered an ad beginning "Naughty boy with own whip seeks dominating individual for fun in the afternoon" pretty much knew what he or she was getting and deserved whatever he or she got.

These days, however, as with rock'n'roll, French cuisine, and boro presidents from Queens, classified ads have taken on an entirely new appearance, and a brand new genre has grown up. Round about the time that we all began to notice that office affairs ended in unemployment a lot more often than they ended in unlimited bliss, singles dances usually yielded the sort of person who, in more civilized times, was locked away in dark, dark attics, and the type of person one met in bars tended to turn out to be the type of person one met in bars, some brave and innovative soul—the name is lost to antiquity, but it was reputed to be a SUM, 35, professional, trim, likes jogging, racquetball, candlelight dinners who had just spent the evening listening to his mother's best friend's daughter Ciel discuss the comparative attributes of pear-shaped and square-cut diamonds—placed the first of what were to become known as "personal ads"; that is, ads placed by someone who wished to obtain a companion, a date and/or a possible matrimonial partner. While highly specialized groups of people—notably farmers, other members of remote, rural communities, and those of the incarcerated persuasion—had a time-honoured tradition of advertising for mates in this fashion, the new breed of personal ads differed from their ancestors in that (a) one didn't have to have manure on one's boots or a record in 12 states and all the provinces of Canada in order to place one; (b) one did not have to advertise for a husband or wife as such; one could merely ask for a theatre-partner, a backgammon opponent or a meaningful relationship without the benefit of clergy; and (c) the words "overweight and over 21 need not apply," never before seen in this type of ad, began to make frequent guest appearances.

I hardly need point out to the hip, sophisticated and socially aware readers of this publication that, from these humble beginnings, personal ads have lately developed into what those who possess American Express Gold Cards like to refer to as a "growth industry." Nowadays, you'd be hard pressed to find anyone outside of a particularly restrictive religious order who hasn't placed or answered a personal ad at least once, and the ads themselves appear in everything from the *GAY ADVOCATE* to the *CATHOLIC ADVOCATE*. None of this would be any great cause for notice, to say nothing of alarm, were it not for the fact that this new style of personal ads, unlike the ads of a delicate nature previously discussed, very rarely mean exactly what they say. To be perfectly frank about it, never since the early days of Watergate has so much lying been done by so few for such ignoble reason as that done by any random group of personal ad placers on any random day. Honestly, one just can't trust anybody anymore, and one certainly can't trust a 24-year-old girl who claims to speak seven languages, own her own import-export business and wear size four Spandex pants, especially if she's doing the claiming in the pages of the *VILLAGE VOICE*. I mean, really.

Mail Your Memories
Change Your Past!
Send \$1 for Instant Remembrance
The Church of the Subgenius
P.O. Box 140304
Dallas, TX 75214

Because the thought of innocent people naively setting out to answer personal ads without understanding how to read the truth behind the fabrication, and thereby getting hurt galls me—and because the thought of these people calling me up at all hours of the day and night to tell me how badly they've been hurt galls me even more—I have decided to pass on some of my hard-won and heretofore secret expertise in the matter. Yes, as incredible as it may be to believe, even your humble witty acerbic commentator on the American Scene has, on occasion, succumbed to the lure of the personal ad. Unlike most, however, I have accumulated a tolerably vast knowledge of the little white lies nearly all of us tell when composing our ads, and it is this I shall pass along to you. And so, then, in the interests of emotional health and safety—not to mention my getting to watch ST. ELSEWHERE in relative peace—I now present:

AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE
TEN MOST POPULAR PERSONAL ADS, or
A Child's Garden of Verisimilitude

Before we begin, a few general rules concerning the answering of personal ads, and responding to those answers:

(A) Unless you really, really trust every single one of a particular newspaper's or magazine's advertisers, or unless you truly enjoy having total strangers call you up for a nice breathe at three in the morning, do not include your home phone number when answering a personal ad. Instead, enclose an alternate number where you may be reached or where someone will take a message for you. The local Marine base is ideal.

(B) Never respond to any answering letter that comes with drool marks on the paper.

(C) Never respond to any answering letter written in crayon, peanut butter, finger paint, eyebrow pencil or anything remotely resembling blood.

(D) Always arrange to meet your personal ad date in a public place from which there are several alternate exits. This has less to do with physical safety—placing an ad in the Levittown Jewish News is a little far for the average ax-murderer to go, after all—than with emotional well-being, as it is far easier to climb out the window of a bathroom located on the first floor of a restaurant than one located on the 40th floor of a luxury condominium. If you do not think you will need to ever climb out of a bathroom window, you have never been on a personal ad date.

Now that we know how to comport ourselves in the matter of personal ads, let us proceed to the ten most popular ads themselves:

1. *"A handsome sensitive vegetarian male, 35, who cares about the earth, loves nature, wants marriage and children, and hates the city, seeks female kindred spirit to homestead."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I am a grown-up, adult male who firmly believes that selling hand-dipped candles at flea markets constitutes owning my own business. I look like Jackson Browne as seen by Wes Craven, own the last extant pair of Oshkosh overalls in Co-op City, have memorized all the words to MR. TAMBOURINE MAN, and do not believe in birth control of any type, particularly if I have to use it. After I have settled you on the most barren piece of land in northern New Mexico, gotten you pregnant five or six times, and given away all the mortgage money to the Save the Whales Foundation, I will leave you for a 19-year-old girl with a small private income who wishes to start a potters' colony in Costa Rica.

2. *"Hi, I'm a happy, vibrant female, mid 30's, young looking, 5'2", 107 lbs., slim, physically fit and attractive. I have black hair and brown eyes. Enjoy dancing, jogging, exercising, dining out, plays, good healthy laughter and stimulating conversation. Looking for someone who is happy and has a positive attitude towards life."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I dot my "I"s with little happy faces, am the last woman in America under the age of 50 who wears a long-line girdle, and think that Neil Simon is a profound wit. I will go with you to an expensive restaurant, order a dinner salad with no dressing, dry broiled flounder and decaffeinated black coffee, complain that I gain weight by simply looking at food, and spend most of the evening picking at your fettucini Alfredo. My favourite author is Leo Buscaglia, my favourite musician is Marvin Hamlisch and I always keep the lights off when I make love so you won't see my stretch marks. I will laugh hysterically at all your jokes, unless they're off-colour, in which case I will squeal and hit you on the wrist with my napkin, and in 15 years I will look just like Joan Rivers.

3. *"Very presentable VP major fashion company, 56, would like to sponsor attractive lady model type 28-40 until she gets on her feet. My reward, 4 evening a week of her company. Must have own apartment. Recent photo."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: If you answer my ad you are even more air-headed than I had dared to hope. My idea of sponsorship involves getting you an audition for a photo session with "Hustler." In return, I will have sex with you in under 30 seconds, call you by my wife's name, and make you sleep in the wet spot. I wear boxer shorts, gold neck chains, think my sweat smells sexy, and will decree that you are now "on your feet" the moment your breasts begin to sag.

4. *"Come on now, be honest... Aren't you men 36-45 getting tired dating tall, thin, glamorous women that keep you near cardiac arrest working out at the health spa in order to impress or keep up with them? Wouldn't you really like to meet someone you could introduce to Mom? If you're ready to stop chasing fantasies and start sharing your life with the zest dreams are made of, happiness could be just a letter away."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I dislike myself intensely and, if you date me long enough, you'll dislike me intensely too. I am 40 years old and buy my clothes in the junior department at J.C. Penney, wear a size 18 but routinely squeeze myself into a 16, and knit my own knee socks. My hobbies are watching television while eating entire Sara Lee cheesecakes and hiding the empty boxes in someone else's garbage can, reading romance novels, and collecting inventive tuna fish recipes. I have dozens of embroidered tablecloths, napkins and pillow cases in what I refer to as my "hopeless chest." I laughingly call myself "Miss Piggy" and "Thunder Thighs" and will laughingly call you "teddy bear," "poochie" and "big dumb bunny." Your mother will love me because we both enjoy looking at pictures of you as a baby in the bathtub.

5. *"Are you a 18-22 slim guy? White male 30s seeks inexperienced younger friend who wants discreet, caring friendship. I am masculine, healthy, sincere."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I am the gay equivalent of ad #3. I use Grecian Formula, wear Paco Raban cologne and think that safe sex means we don't tell my wife. I will give you money, clothes, credit cards, advice and genital herpes. It should be obvious to you that I need an inexperienced partner because anyone who knows what he is doing will realize that I do not.

6. *"Attractive Bicoastal Lady, 40's who enjoys Manhattan life and has enough humor for most occasions desires to meet young man in middle 20's for amusing times. Photo please."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: My husband left me because he found out I told all my girlfriends about the size of his penis. I will tell all my girlfriends about the size of your penis, too, but with luck you will be too naive to realize this. My idea of humour is to call you a "trick" in front of my business colleagues, tell the waiter at La Caravelle that you wish to order from the children's menu, and announce to the repairperson at the Harley-Davidson shop that the training wheels fell off your hog. I will use your razor to shave my legs, sleep in your best shirt, and insist on always getting on top. I would be the female equivalent of ad #3, but I'm not that polite.

7. *"Anxious, insecure, withdrawn, low esteem, WJM 58, attorney, never married, no children, enjoys (at times) Hamp-ton, Tanglewood, movies, rock music, classical music, etc., seeks trim, presentable WJF 30-45 with similar problems for friendship, mutual emotional support, shared loneliness, possible marriage. Exchange photos."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: I'll bet you didn't know this, but Snow White actually had eight dwarves. His name was Seymour and he handled all the other dwarves' legal affairs for them. At night he sat around in the dark in his little thatched condo and listened to sad, sad songs and felt sorry for himself. If you answer my ad, you will date him.

8. *"SWF 28 green eyes, long hair, exotic, slim, seeks VERY experienced, very pretty, BiWF to take me on my first walk on the wild side. Photo/phone."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: My last boyfriend got me pregnant, then wouldn't help pay for the abortion, the one before that broke up with me because he thought we were getting "too close," and the guy I picked up in a bar last month gave me a bladder infection, so I have decided that Sisterhood is Powerful. I will clench my teeth when you try to kiss me, giggle nervously throughout The Act, and gargle with Listerine afterwards. If you introduce me to your gay friends I will attempt to set them at their ease by telling them that THE WELL OF LONELINESS is my favourite book. If you introduce me to your straight friends I will attempt to prove how liberated I am by telling them all about what we do in bed. Eventually I will leave you for an aspiring actor who's working as a waiter in a barbeque place in Soho, and I will expect you to understand because you're bisexual too.

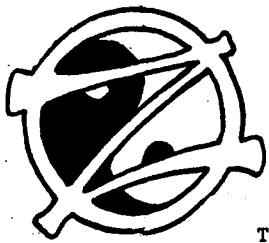
9. *"SWJM, 34, tall dark and extremely handsome with a body of twisted steel craves an Italian or exotic looking female. I love dancing, tennis, rock and roll. Write me and we'll do Margaritas together."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: When I was 12 my mother told me I was the most gorgeous male on two feet. Despite all objective evidence to the contrary throughout the ensuing years, I see no reason to disbelieve her. I will fight you for the blow dryer, ask you constantly if you think my hairline is beginning to recede and tell you you're too fat to wear designer jeans. My mother also told me I should only have the best and never to let any woman take advantage of me, so I'll never marry you, will look at you funny if you order anything but the cheapest item on the menu, and will tell all my friends that I only keep you around because you're so good in bed. Naturally, I'll never take you home to meet my mother because you aren't Jewish and besides, she'll know in a minute that you aren't good enough for me. There's never been a woman born who was.

10. *"Couple seeks bi-female, well-groomed. He 49, handsome and slim; she 36, attractive, sensual. Let's go dining, dancing, travel."*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: He wants to have an open marriage; she doesn't. She's trading him this for a trip to Bermuda—at least this way she can see the little hussy with whom he's playing around. She will discover she likes having sex with women. He will get jealous. She will move to a lesbian separatist commune in Oregon. He will blame you and tell you he has had a vasectomy when he hasn't. You will get pregnant. He will laugh.

Really, that fairly well sums it up. Just about any ad you'll see will be some variation on one of those ten, and those few that aren't were undoubtedly placed by some pervert who tells the truth even on his or her income taxes, and you certainly don't want to go out with one of those, do you? If you pay close attention to what the ads are really saying, you probably won't get into too much trouble which will leave me free to look after my own pursuits. Incidentally, does anyone know a synonym for "cynic"?



Zenarchy STORIES

by Ho Chi Zen

THE CHAOSOPHER'S STONE

Stand by now for some heavy Discordian metaphysics, developed originally by Greg Hill.

The Aneristic Principle is that of superficial order; the Eristic Principle is that of superficial disorder.

Both order and disorder are concepts of the intellect, artificial divisions of pure chaos, which is found one level deeper than that of distinctions and closer to that of naked existence.

With our conceptual apparatus called the mind, we look at reality through the grids which our cultures give us for labelling and communicating things. They

TALES FROM THE MORNING

THE SNARKING OF THE HUNT



The silent shapes moved with shambling swiftness through the tall grass. As always, Gor-da, the Sure of Spear, led the hunt. Having found no leavings of the sabre-tooth or wolf to scavenge, the dim mind of Gor-da had gone to "plan B".

"Nothing dead," he grunted to the pack.

"What we do?" Ba-ga, the Runner, asked.

"We starve," said Hah, the One Who Sleeps Much.

"No," said Gor-da. "We kill somethin'."

The pack spread out to circle a herd of grazing deer, Gor-da and his boys moving to wait until Ba-ga drove the herd toward them. Ba-ga and Hah crouched in the grass. This was their job. Ba-ga was good at running and yelling to frighten the prey and Hah was there because he could remember what they were supposed to do and remind Ba-ga when the time came.

"Ba-ga," whispered Hah, "when I tell you, you throw spear. You kill."

"Gor-da kill," Ba-ga answered, slightly shocked. "I run. I yell."

"You throw. You kill," Hah insisted.

"I throw. I miss," Ba-ga said from experience.

"No," Hah asserted. "I ask the Great Eye to make your spear kill."

"Great Eye hear you?" asked Ba-ga.

"Sure," said Hah. "I tell Great Eye if He makes your spear kill, we give him head of deer."

"How we give? Great Eye is...up there?" Ba-ga stared in wonder at the sun 'til his eyes hurt.

"We give head," Hah replied, his more-nimble-than-average mind running faster than it had ever run before.

"Great Eye is father of Not-Touch that warms at night. We give head to Not-Touch."

From across the plain came Gor-da's signal that the hunters were in place.

"Now!" said Hah, pulling Ba-ga to his feet. "Throw! Kill!"

Ba-ga lopped forward a few paces while Hah danced and chanted, then sent his spear flying into the herd with a yell of mixed fear and expectation. The herd scattered and ran, except for one animal that fell with Ba-ga's spear in its haunch.

Hah ran to it and smashed its head with a rock.

Ba-ga approached in awe. "We kill."

"We kill," agreed Hah. "Great Eye guides your spear. Great Eye hears me. Great Eye aids us. We give Great Eye head tonight. Tomorrow, Great Eye help us kill again."

"Gor-da not like," Ba-ga said, recalling the hunter's well-known temper.

"Gor-da," smiled Hah, "will not anger Great Eye or mebbe his head feed Not-Touch some night," and already another plan was forming in his mind, although he didn't know it because "plans" had only been evolved at that point.

include languages and philosophies. Unenlightened people never understand completely that these grids are separate from the reality they define. Consequently, they are forever baffled that others, especially those of different cultures, see reality differently.

A culture is a group of people with rather similar reality grids. Through such windows we view chaos, relate it to the points of our grid, and thereby comprehend it. Order is the grid: that is the Aneristic Principle. Decisions to force reality to conform to the grid result from the Aneristic Illusion, so they always result in an escalation of disorder.

Traditionally preoccupied contrasting one grid with another, and amending grids in order to attain a perfect grid to account for all reality, Western philosophy hopes thereby to find what is, say the fools, the Truth. For while some grids or philosophies are more useful than others, some more beautiful than others, some more pertinent to one subject and some to another, some more pleasant than others, some neater and more systematic than others—no grid can be much truer than another, just as no language contains any more truth than another. Nor can we say mathematics is truer than biology or that grammar is truer than geometry. All human beings require a certain amount of functional reality to survive in this world, and so even speculative philosophy must contain a certain amount of logic—and metaphysics is only a small part of any culture's grid, anyhow—language, customs of thought, practical philosophy, and psychology form a much larger part. Moreover, much of what passes for metaphysics also serves as functional psychology in disguise. And what works for one patient may not work for another, but that's no reason to say it is any more or less true.

Disorder is simply unrelated or irrelevant data in terms of this or that particular grid. But like relation, the absence of relation is a concept. And the artificial concept of non-relation is the Eristic Principle.

That order is correct and disorder is incorrect is the Aneristic Illusion. To say the same of disorder is to subscribe to the Eristic Illusion.

Pick any grid, look at the world through it, and some pure chaos appears ordered and some of it appears disordered. Pick another grid, and the same pure chaos will appear differently ordered and disordered.

All these considerations, taken together with a brick of Acapulco Gold, comprise what is called the Chaosopher's Stone.

"Reality," says Greg Hill, "is the original Rorschach." That's the formula for transmuting perception.

THE TURKEY CURSE

"Revealed by the Apostle Dr. Van Van Mojo as a specific counter to the evil Curse of Greyface," says Principia Discordia, "the TURKEY CURSE is here passed on to Discordians everywhere for their just protection."

"The Turkey Curse works. It is firmly grounded on the fact that Greyface and his followers absolutely require an Aneristic setting to function and that a timely introduction of Eristic vibrations will neutralize their foundation. The Turkey Curse was designed solely to counteract negative Aneristic vibes and if introduced into a neutral or positive Aneristic setting (like a poet working out word rhythms) it will prove harmless or, at worst, simply annoying. It is not designed for use against negative Eristic vibes, although it can be used as an Eristic vehicle to introduce positive vibes into a misguided Eristic setting. (In this instance, it would be the responsibility of the Erisian Magician to manufacture the positive vibrations if results are to be achieved.)

"CAUTION: All magic is powerful and requires courage and integrity on the part of the magician. This ritual, if missed, can backfire. Positive motivation is essential for self-protection."

"TO PERFORM THE TURKEY CURSE: Take a foot stance as if you were John L. Sullivan preparing for fisticuffs. Face the particular Greyface you wish to short-circuit, or towards the direction of the negative Aneristic vibration that you wish to neutralize. Begin waving your arms in any elaborate manner and make motions with your hands as though you were Mandrake feeling up a sexy giantess. Chant, loudly and clearly: GOBBLE, GOBBLE, GOBBLE, GOBBLE!

"The results will be instantly apparent."

VAMPIRE SORORITY BLUES

the further adventures of Kermit
the Marine by Rodny K Dioxin

(for those of you who came in late: Kermit the Marine, clearly one of the most dangerous men in this paragraph, has dedicated his life to fighting the spread of commie terror wherever it looks like it might be fun. With Officer Friendly—KM's trusty factotum and all-around whipping boy—he travels the world busting skulls, collecting sex toys and in general living the kind of red-blooded existence that would kill a wimp like Sly Stallone)

Part One

Deep in darkest adolescence there are no days and nights. Just a long dull broken up by shorter periods of tedium. It was during one such period that our story begins, in an easily overlooked split-level ranch about halfway between Long Island and Hell. And leaves at once for a small college in New England. Not that there was any real difference between the three. That's what Keri said, anyway. In fact, she said it repeatedly. Some might say incessantly. This tended to strike her elders as a rebellious pose, although her Mom said it was just a phase she was going through. Keri's usual response to this was to sneer twice and clear her throat loudly.

"I hope you realize that you're receiving a golden opportunity. It's not every young lady who gets the chance at four free years of college, you know. If you take advantage of this, you'll have a chance to really focus your talents and make something of your life..."

Her Mom had gone off into brochure-speak, as Keri called it. Noise to blank out. But not to ignore. The options were clear. Get into college or get out of the house and start working as a secretary at Mom's ad agency. She considered blowing them all off, but there was the small matter of the inheritance. She wasn't ready to let that go.

So, she found herself sitting on the quad, munching on some fries and sucking on a vodka tonic (cleverly hidden in a 7-Up can). She'd gotten the word that once orientation was over and all the outside guests were gone the school would stop caring about under-age drinking. Wouldn't want the folks at home to know the facts of life. Keri'd known about deep cover for some time. That's how she'd gotten through high school. Now she didn't care.

"Wussies!" She'd only been there a few days and had already declared war on the school's prep population. Needless to say, this made her universally loved, as the garbage can full of water tipped under her door and the condoms filled with shaving cream nailed to her door indicated. Keri loved it. The girls she'd yelled at kept walking. Keri picked up her skateboard and waited. Once they'd turned the corner and were out of sight, she took off after them at top speed.

* * * *

From the top floor of the dorm it was quite an impressive sight. Three of the "gator queens" of the school walking along, no doubt gabbing about how Kip wanted to go all the way or whether Tripp was really gay, all sent flying by this cute blonde on a skateboard. Well, blonde wasn't really right. The hair was white, really, except for the parts that were streaked with green. As the prepettes lay there, stunned, the skateboarder came to a stop, bowed in their direction, then pulled out a small plastic ray-gun and "executed" the lot of them. It was a brilliant performance.

Rika didn't stay around to admire, though. She could already hear the screaming. Claire, Annie, and Dawn (how could she miss them?—she knew and hated every inch of their LaCoste-clad forms) would have some of their jockoid boyfriends on the scene post-pronto. Had to get that babe out of sight, whether she wanted it or not.

"Yo, kid! Over here!" Rika poked her head out of the fire exit (she'd figured out how to disconnect the alarm during her orientation week, two years back). "Unless you got a death wish you better getcher cute little ass in here!" That, combined with about half the lacrosse team appearing and shouting "What the fuck?",

"TRUTH IS SUCH A RARE
THING IT IS DELIGHTFUL TO
TELL IT". —
Emily Dickinson, American
Poet (1830 - 1886). Let's start
with the #1 truth — a war-end-
ing 50/50 (men, women)
loss, winners (chance-
selected) war-waging strategy,
#2 — inflation-ending unfixed

wages, #3 — blue collar work-
sharing even age work force
and #4 — a death-ending
heretofore religion. To end war
inflation, unemployment and
death send SASE to:
TRUTH 'A LA BRAINBEAU
Box 2243
YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO, 44504

Grace

by Lawrence Oberc

We were sitting around the table, waiting for the microwave oven to finish cooking dinner. Chuck and his girlfriend had invited me over for Sunday dinner. The buzzer went off and Mary got up to pull dinner out of the oven.

"Who's going to say grace?" asked Chuck, looking at me. Mary was putting the food on the table. She looked at Chuck, then at me. Then she sat down.

"I thought it was your turn," I said, pushing the question back."

"The guest says grace in our house," said Chuck. "I pay for the meal, the guest thanks God."

Chuck was setting me up, trying to manipulate me like he manipulated everyone else. I looked at him, trying to figure out why he did shit like this.

"I bet you forgot the words," said Chuck. "That's why you're looking like that, isn't it? You forgot the words."

"You shouldn't make him do something he doesn't want to do," said Mary. "You know he doesn't believe in God. It'd be unfair to make him say a prayer."

"I think he forgot the words," said Chuck.

"I thought I was invited to dinner," I said. "If I had known you were going to be playing praying games, I would have stayed home."

"Look at the food," said Chuck. "You know you can't afford to eat like this on your own. Why don't you bend a little?"

"See you all later," I said, standing up. I walked into the living room and got my coat. Mary ran over to where I was standing.

"He doesn't mean it," she said. "He's just a little drunk. He'll straighten up after he eats something."

I looked in the other room. Chuck was sitting there, smiling.

"Maybe some other time," I said, walking to the door. I walked outside and shut the door, listening.

"You shouldn't treat your friends like that," I heard Mary say.

"Why not?" asked Chuck. "He doesn't believe in God. He's going to Hell. It doesn't matter what I treat him like."

I started to walk home. It was a three-mile walk, but it felt good. If I was going to Hell, maybe I had a chance. If nothing else, Chuck would be in the other place.

got the kid's brain rewired and she ducked in the door.

"Nice piece o' work there. You definitely show promise," said Rika as she rewired the door and headed upstairs to her room.

Keri didn't really appreciate the tone but she was both too pleased with herself and too grateful for the assist to get pissed. Besides, this was the first person she'd met in this rathole that seemed to have anything on the brain other than water. Following up the stairs, Keri noted that her "saviour" was wearing combat boots, a pair of ridiculously oversized bermuda shorts (in madras, no less), a ratty-looking black t-shirt, and at least two tattoos. None of that really held up against the mohawk. It was an impressive 'do, ultra-black.

"Rad hair dude."

"Thanks," said Rika as she stopped in front of a door. "Well, here we are. Welcome to the country club." They walked inside.

"S' great. By the by, I'm Keri."

"An honor and a privilege. I'm Rika Friendly. Wanna beer?"

(next time: more and more...what do angry lacrosse players like to do? who is this Rika Friendly? and just what the hell does any of this have to do with Kermit the Marine? to say nothing of the price of a good 5¢ guanaco...)

what we do after dinner in the south
by A.J. Wright

i should have left for the train station by now, but i like sitting here on the front porch drinking juleps, swatting flies and watching the magnolia bloom. my sister miss charlotte is upstairs combing out her long blonde hair and daydreaming about these hands that make her skin sing. when i listen real close i can hear the darkies working at their work songs. if i get drunk enough i just might go down and join in.

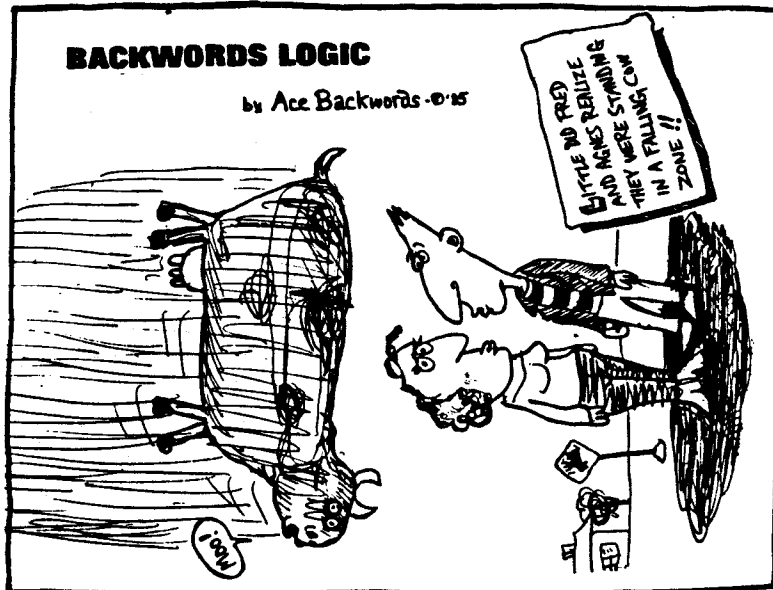
brother samuel is in the study composing a poem by candlelight. his favorite images involve corpses shining in the moonlight and the whip-like hair of some cajun girl he met last year in mobile. brother samuel has little talent beyond a flair for melodrama, but his act of committing the creative act is nonetheless intense.

mother and father are resting side by side under the big oak in back of the house—the oak that lightning struck last spring and nearly killed. a daguerreotype of them gathers dust on the mantel of the living room fireplace.

later tonight i'll see the waning moon rise overhead like a thin golden scythe. not having departed, i will not arrive. and i'll continue to sit—contemplating the possibly-dead stars in the northern sky.

BACKWORDS LOGIC

by Ace Backwords © 15



MISS LIBERTY SHOWS HER TRUE COLORS

by Susan Packie

After undergoing quite extensive restoration work, the Statue of Liberty has finally been returned to her post. In keeping with current mores, she is stark naked and holding a marijuana reefer in her raised hand. Just like the old torch, it is lit.

"We might as well let tourists and immigrants know right from the beginning that this is the land of tomorrow," an unnamed official said.

When asked if the change meant that New York City has turned into another San Francisco, he retorted that "the whole country has got to learn to flow with the times."

"But wasn't a Miss America forced to hand back her crown for posing nude?" a reporter innocently asked.

"Sure, but, you see, she wasn't one of us."

"How so?"

"Well, you know, she was one of those Afro-Americans."

"And when her ancestors arrived they didn't pass under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, right?"

"Exactly. - That's why they were all slaves."

"How will the fact that Miss Liberty—uh, I mean Ms. Liberty is nude and high affect the lives of the people who pass under her lighted reefer?"

The official did not reply. He was too busy break-dancing and jiving to a recording by Michael Jackson.

"You heard it here first. America is finally color-blind!"

SNIDE CRITIC REVIEWS

by J.P. Morgan

Hello! This is Worker speaking. No it isn't, it's just the Snide Critic again, trying to think up funny things to say about dopey horror films; only three this time, 'cause I don't go see just anything...stuff like, say, HIGHLANDER looks unpromising (it's usually a real bad sign when the ads feature the title character glaring powerfully up at you like a cigarette ad), as does LEGEND (they post-edited out the original Jerry Goldsmith score and inserted a rock soundtrack—and for a fantasy about unicorns, wood sprites, demons, elves, woodchucks and whatnot, shot in lots of gauzy light, that's not good either).

While we're on the subject of Bad Signs, doesn't it churn your bile to see all the crappy cartoon features made to promote toys and greeting-card characters? CARE BEARS (two films!), RAINBOW BRITE, GO-BOTS, SMURFS, MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE...now I ask you, what kind of thing is that to do to the kids, not to mention the parents? Ninety-minute commercials that you have to pay money to subject children to! And the kids ASK to see them, thanks to the "independent" stations that run the thirty-minute adventures of the above "action figures" (and the \$150 worth of accessories for each, to boot)! Bah! Feh! It's child molestation, that's what it is! Eat it raw, CARE BEARS! Fuck you, SMURFS, every last blue one of you! RAINBOW BRITE, you can...well, never mind, I'm ranting here. Sorry. And now, on with the reviews!

I read somewhere that Don Bluth (THE SECRET OF NIMH) and Spielberg are collaborating on a new animated feature. Is that good? Never mind! Here we go, really:

TERRORVISION—Another dud from Empire! This one concerns a slimy, toothy Hungrybeast transported accidentally from alien planet's disposal system to TV dish of apparently brain-damaged family (the parents are LOVE BOAT type swingers, Grandpa's a senile survivalist, Sis is an MTV-head, etc.). Film tries to be funny and fails badly, mostly due to hokey, eye-rolling, "wacky" sitcom-style emotion; director seems to have told the cast, "Okay, everybody act like assholes!" If you missed this film, I envy you! What with DEATH RACE 2000, EATING RAOUL, and now this, Mary Woronov's film career resembles Klaus Kinski's, sorta.

EYES OF FIRE—Somewhat disjointed but well-photographed tale of evil spirits in early colonial America: Driven away by lynch-happy mob, a small group led by an unctuous, adulterous preacher hide in a small woodland valley where Indians will not go. The place is ruled by an evil wood-spirit (a gnarly, demonic being) who wants to absorb them all into her trees! The tree-ghosts (earlier victims) have their faces emerging from the bark; they also appear as muddy nude people that chase potential new victims. There's also an innocent-looking little Indian girl who turns into a scaly-faced demon with glowing yellow eyes. The preacher is ineffectual against the spirits, but there's a mountain-man-type fellow and a "crazy" woman (she's an Irish fairy) in the group who are more helpful. There's also lots of odd film effects and fade-to-blacks. There's some unintentional silliness, but I liked it; I might have gone to see it again, but it was a one-weeaker.

CRITTERS—This isn't really a review, 'cause I walked out on this after the first twenty minutes! I can tell you that this film opens with some prisoners escaping from some galactic prison-asteroid. This scene doesn't show the titular "critters," but we do see some cheesy rubber aliens, including a pair of shape-shifting bounty hunters (one of which assumes the form of a really vapid video-rock star). Before I left, I was subjected to some gawky-pseudo-Spielberg farm-family scenes—right down to the overblown orchestral background music (with several awful pop songs thrown in for good measure)! Just plain drove me out. TERRORVISION was better than this!

Well, that about wraps it up for now, folks! Be sure to see next issue, when the Snide Critic walks out on MTV-TYPE TEENAGE NARCS, FLAG-WAVING PORNO-STAR COMMANDO, RUBBER MONSTER FROM BEYOND, MARKETING STRATEGY TOYS MEET GOD, and many others too synapse-impeding to mention. 'bye!

CROSTOWN MONOLOGUE

by Peter Scisco

You got to have a schedule, and you got to keep to it. That's the ticket, man. It's the primo important thing. The only thing. I have one. A schedule. It doesn't change.

That's where the safety comes in, you know what I mean? I move from place to place, and I am with the plan. Secure. Some people tell you that you shouldn't be predictable. They say it makes you vulnerable. Fuck that shit. You are in the plan, you minimize risk potential. Simple as that.

I can move across the city and back again and it's like I'm in one place. I let the world move around me. You ever ride the ferry, you know what I mean. You sit there in your car and when you look out the window it looks like you're sitting still. That's 'cause you're moving with the boat. And that's like the world, you know what I mean? The boat is like the world to me. Things outside crash off each other but they don't touch me. Or if they do it is to resonate, it is a light brush, a real light just passing by me. I keep to my schedule, I keep moving and I steer a straight path. I don't shudder. I don't waver. No matter how shaky things get.

Example? Open up your fucking paper there and you got your example. Some crazy man blowing away people on page two, you got your accidents and suicides on eleven, in between they squeeze the rest of the bad news and how everything is sliding toward the brink, cashwise. People out of work and people striking work and people begging for work. Stick to what you got laid out, man, don't try to make any sense of that shit. All them people moving this way and then that way, all across the whole spectrum of diseased possibility.

If you got a place to be and a way to get there, it don't faze you. Then everything in the paper is too far away and all those heads on the TV get real small. They ain't real anymore, if you see what I'm saying. They're too small to deal with, yapping with faraway voices.

It's the voices you got to watch out for. You got to listen to them, don't let anybody tell you different. Listen to what's said. Keep an eye on your dreams.

Like last night. I dreamed I was at a carnival, outside the city. You know where that vacant lot is behind the window sash factory? It sounds weird, but that's where I was in my dream. And there was a big circus show going on. And all the sounds of the carnival swirled around me like water, the crowd noises and then from somewhere far off some big cat growled. Kaleidoscope music from the ferris wheel, too. All this sound filling the space between two tents where I was standing.

It's strange now, telling you. Start talking about a dream and it all comes back spilling over you. It's almost like a memory from when you were a kid or something, you know what I mean? Anyway, I'm waiting there, between those tents. And all these colors from the carousel are bouncing off the tent walls, flitting across the ground, racing over my feet.

I remember. I feel. I am touching it, holding it. Cold metal. The multicolored lights play off it like a magician's hands. First it is red, then blue. Yellow. Green. Red again.

And now there's a shadow at the end of the space that separates the two tents. The shadow comes toward me, moves up to where I'm standing. I see it's a girl, but she doesn't see me, she doesn't even look, she passes me and I come out of the shadows, a few feet behind her. Then my hand is on her shoulder and she stops. My hand comes up, it's like I'm watching it, I've got something in my hand and then she turns her eyes on me and there's a blad and colors and light and music and heat and the next thing I know there is a warm breeze across my face—no, it's her breath—her breath in my face and her mouth open and I remember thinking don't scream don't she's saying don't don't we're both saying the same thing over and over it's don't please don't and—hey!

Where you going? I'm not finished with my story! Look, I tell you it was a dream and that's the weird thing, you know? 'Cause I still have the knife! See? Look at that! Hey! Wait!

TALK SHOW HOST CONFIDENTIAL by Michael Dobbs

Thanks to many years in media, I've become an expert on experts. There are more experts in this country than any other professionals. Forget the doctor boom and the lawyer glut...experts are crawling all over the place trying to get attention as an expert is the same as blood to a vampire.

Every day I receive letters in the mail from experts...Dr. C. Ralph Campo is one of my favorites. A psychic from southern California, he is the head of a holistic "college" that investigates all manner of controversial issues. An advisor to Mae West and Marlena Dietrich, Campo is regularly sending me information on my navel's importance to my well-being, the "real" soul in Phyllis Diller's body and the psychic reasons Bob Hope is funny, among other things.

I had Dr. Ralph as a guest on my talk show, and he spoke on a landing zone for UFOs in Mexico. I had him on as a lark but people took him as seriously as he took himself, because he is an expert.

Now, my question is, what could Dr. Ralph do if he wasn't operating his college on the response he gets from his free exposure as an expert? Maybe read tarot cards in a cheap storefront.

My point is, take away the label of expert, and you've stripped away that person's ability to make a living! De-certifying experts would be a growth industry if people were willing to be more objective, but the great unwashed want their heroes.

Every now and then even a seasoned cynic such as myself gets taken in...I interviewed attorney Alan Dershowitz a few years back. He had just written a book on his exploits as a Constitutional expert. The interview went well enough, and I subsequently sent it to USA Today.

Dershowitz went just slightly mental when he saw the piece, though. It seems he was offended that a freelancer had taken his remarks given to the audience of a small radio station and made money off of them! The only person who should profit from his wisdom is, of course, him.

And I had respected this guy.

As a freelancer always looking for ideas, the prospect of taking my experiences with experts and turning them into something cohesive is tempting. Perhaps a self-help book...

"HOW TO BE AN EXPERT ON ANYTHING YOU DAMN WELL FEEL!"

So you'd like to be an expert...There's a number of steps you must take in order to generate the respect and income enjoyed by so many experts today.

1. Select your field of expertise. Although the field is limitless, you should select a topic with which you are at least slightly familiar.

2. Print your business cards. Cards should be distinguished-looking but to the point. Your field of expertise should be noted and the word "consultant" should be prominent.

3. Get your name in print. This is the most important step—your first recognition as an expert. Start very small, and be satisfied with a quote in a local newspaper.

4. Write your own column. There are thousands of small publications looking for filler copy. Don't be proud! Use their need for your need! Write for free if need be.

5. Use your clippings to break into the "big time." Armed with your columns, try getting paid for your work. Your clippings will help convince an editor that you are an expert.

6. Get onto a radio talk show. Nothing works better than free advertising. People love to listen to experts, and producers are always looking for good guests.

7. Don't be afraid of questions. Listen, even experts don't know everything. The key is to sound as if new information is not new. Use phrases such as "Sounds interesting", "It's vaguely familiar" and "The answer escapes me at the moment," rather than "Gee, I just haven't heard of that!"

8. Dress well. Experts are always well-dressed. Even if you have to borrow someone else's clothes.

With these ten steps, you can start living the lives of an expert. Take it from me, I'm an expert on the subject.

9. Always take notes in front of reporters. This impresses the greatest cynic that even in interviews you're on the prowl for new information.
10. Teach a class. Any class. Any place.

10^5

The Bathtub Story

by Prudence Gaelon

It was a typical day for Edna P. Ricketts. Today was the day her bathtub ran away.

Edna P. Ricketts woke up early that August morning. She got out of bed and thrust her feet into her slippers, or scuffs as she called them because they were heel-less and made a scuffing sound against the carpet when she walked. She threw on a pink terrycloth bathrobe under which her blue and white, polka dot housecoat peeked. She made the bed by drawing overtop the rumpled sheets the salmon bedspread. In the bathroom, Edna rinsed her face with warm water and dried it off with the towel draped over the claw-footed bathtub. She looked in the mirror, wiped off some of yesterday's mascara and adjusted her curlers so that all of her "Natural Honey Frost" hair was tucked safely away in rolls of pink. She gargled some Scope because she liked the taste, and swallowed it, enjoying the cool sensation tingling down her throat. She never brushed her teeth before breakfast because she thought it was pointless.

Edna opened her front door and picked the newspaper up off the green plastic mat. Down the hall Mr. Cook was intent on changing the light-bulb in front of Widow Quimby's apartment. He looked over at Edna and waved.

"Morning, Mr. Cook. Working on the Widda's light?"

"Yep, tho' it seems that I put a new one in just last week. Can't figure it."

"That's 'cause I shot it out."

"Shot it out?"

"Yeah. She was talking about when she and her husband lived in Florida, they always kept one of them yella bug bulbs in front of their door to keep the bugs out. She wanted to put one of those bug bulbs here in front of her door. I tried to tell her that there are precious few bugs flying about this apartment building. The only bugs here are in her head. But if it keeps her happy..."

"You shot it out."

"Uh-huh. You had just put that new bulb in and she so much wanted to put up that bug bulb."

"So you shot it out."

"Yup, with my B.B. gun. Are you doing anything special, say for dinner, Mr. Cook?" Edna said, patting her curlers.

"Why look at the time," said Mr. Cook. He pointed to his watch. "Gotta run! Have a nice day, Miss Ricketts." Swiftly, he collected his things and disappeared around the corner.

Edna took the paper back inside, leaving the door open so that she could catch Mr. Cook, in case he should come back down the hallway. She made some coffee and flipped through the classifieds, looking for garage sales. She could stand to have a new dress.

In the bathroom, the bathtub's clawed feet wriggled to life. The bathtub threw off the towel, scuttled out of the bathroom, across the living room, out the door, down the stairs and disappeared up the street.

Edna saw all of this over her paper. Unconsciously, she thought, "Damn that's a big one!" and, "I just had the fool exterminator in here!" She threw down her paper, ran to her closet to get a broom. She was going to kill it. Only halfway down the stairs did she fully realize that it was not a giant bug she was chasing, but her bathtub instead. She wasn't fast enough. When she got down to the street, it was nowhere in sight.

She stopped and looked around. Where did it go? Waving her broom like a baton, she used it to single out people walking down the street, on their way to work. "Hey you! Didja happen to see a bathtub come this way?" she asked a middle-aged man in a business suit. The man gave her a strange look and continued walking. Edna dodged in front of him, barring his way with the broom. "Have you seen my bathtub?" The man skirted around her and started to walk faster. Edna chased after him, hitting him with her broom. Wham. "I'm having—" Wham. Wham. "—a crisis here—" Wham. "—and you are not helping!" Wham. Wham. Wham. The man started running, using his briefcase as a shield to ward off her blows. "Where do you think you're going? This is an emergency!" shrieked Edna. She threw her broom after him.

Edna turned right at the corner. There was Sally Wong writing up tickets for all of the cars parked outside Mr. Wong's produce store. Standing opposite Sally was Mr. Wong, arguing with her as she placed a ticket under each windshield wiper.

"But, Sally, all these tickets are bad for business. What people are going to buy my vegetables when every time they park here, they get a ticket? And fruit! Who's going to buy my fruit?"

"Dad, I'm sorry but you're not zoned..."

"Excuse me," Edna interrupted. "Did either of you happen to see a bathtub go by?"

"No, but I do have some squash. It's the same color as a bathtub," said Mr. Wong.

"No thank you. Really, my bathtub got out and I got to find it. I..."

"See," shouted Mr. Wong to Sally, "not even..."

Edna left them arguing, and went back the way she came. Every day, they spent the entire day bickering in front of Mr. Wong's store. If her bathtub came by this way, they would have seen it.

Her street was empty except for one man in a suit carrying a mirrored briefcase. Edna ran in front of him. He had a blank face. The man was wearing a charcoal grey pinstripe suit. His clothes, over the right side of his chest, had a tear that went down to the skin. Peering into of the tear was a blue eye above a grinning mouth.

"Excuse me," said Edna. "Did you see my bathtub? I mean, did you happen to see a bathtub go by?"

The man's face remained blank.

"I did," said the mouth grinning out of his chest. "Was it a big white bathtub with feet? If so it went down past the church. By the way, do you know what year it is?"

Edna glanced down at her wrist and realized she still had had night-clothes on. She caught her reflection in the briefcase. Out of habit, she secured her curlers. She made eye contact with the immense blue eye which was staring at her. It winked and she smiled self-consciously.

"No. I'm sorry. It seems that I've forgotten my watch. Down by the church? Thank you so much!" She shook the man's hand and dashed off towards the church.

The church wasn't very far, only two blocks, so she was hardly out of breath when she got there. In front of the church stood Mr. Jones, the Baptist minister. His eyes were wide and he shouted wildly to passers-by.

"Repent! The Armageddon is near! I have seen the Anti-Christ! He attacked me on this very lawn! But the Lord protected me! And He will protect you! Repent! Satan walks among us on clawed feet!"

"Excuse me, sir. Have you seen a bathtub go by this way?"

"The Devil, you say?"

"No, sir, a bathtub."

"The Devil has many disguises, my child. Today he has taken the shape of a bathtub with CLAWED FEET!"

"Really? Did you see where he went?" Edna hoped that this devil was her bathtub.

"He went to the cemetery. No doubt he has gone to do his foul work. Pray, my child. Pray and repent."

Edna walked by the cemetery, exerting a little caution, just in case the minister was right. The bathtub was not in the cemetery. Edna could hear the laughter of children coming from the playground. She decided to go there next. Maybe one of them saw where her bathtub went. There were a lot of children in the playground today. Yet, none of them were playing on the slides or on the swings. Instead they were all gathered around in a huge rectangle, yelling and cheering. It seemed that every kid in town was at the playground today, like the rats were gathered out into the streets of Hamelin. And almost all of their voices were changing, "Go! Go! GO!"

Edna tried asking some of the children on the fringe of the group if they had seen her bathtub, but she was unable to hold their attention, which was riveted on whatever was occurring in the center of the rectangle. She decided that she better find out what was going on. If there was a fight or something, she might be expected to break it up. Well, in the center of the crowd was no fight. It was the minister, Mr. Jones', own son, Bobby Lee, racing the hundred-yard dash with—Edna's bathtub. The bathtub was winning. When the bathtub sailed across the finish line, shower curtain flapping in the air like wings, everyone cheered except Sarah Long, who had a crush on Bobby Lee, and Bobby Lee, who got mad, kicked the bathtub, and turned redder in the face than his father during a sermon on "Sin and Church Skipping."

"Damn you," he yelled. Chip Barnhard yelled at Bobby Lee, calling him a poor sport. Bobby Lee punched Chip in the mouth. A short scuffle ensued, until Maria Kaiser announced that she was going to race next. Bobby Lee ceased biting Chip, who was wildly beating Bobby Lee on the back of the head. Bobby Lee straightened up and cupped his hands around his mouth.

"Hey, Kaiser roll, there's no way you can beat that bathtub. You're a girl!"

"Yeah, and you're a wimpus, Bobby Lee."

Bobby Lee cuffed her in the ear. Maria stumbled from the blow, regained her balance and kicked Bobby Lee in the stomach. She crouched behind the start line, the bathtub on her left.

Kelly Simpson stood at the finish line. "On your mark...Get set...Go!" On "Go!" she dropped her arm, which she held in the air as if it were a flag. Maria broke out into the lead, the bathtub close behind. Maria's eyes grew large, she clenched her teeth; her lower jaw looked like it was being pulled forward by a string. The bathtub was right behind her and catching up. Maria's eyes began to get that panicked look a horse's eyes get when a fire engine passes directly in front of it, sirens blaring. The bathtub pulled into the lead. This couldn't be happening to her. Gym was her best class and she never lost at any sport. She couldn't lose to a bathtub. And she certainly couldn't lose here in front of everybody. The bathtub crossed the finish line.

Maria stopped, waving her arms in the air she shouted, "I bet we shouldn't even be playing with this old bathtub. It probably belongs to someone. It isn't ours and if something happens to it, we could get into a lot of trouble. I think we should leave it alone. It might be a bad idea if we encourage it. Besides, my mother says that we should never play with strays because they might carry diseases."

"You're just saying that 'cause you lost, Kaiser roll," jeered Bobby Lee.

"Well, I think her mother's right," Edna said, stepping forward.

"Besides, it's my bathtub."

"Sheesh, Edna the Ancient!" came a voice from the crowd. The bathtub, which had returned to the start, opened its drain and spit a hairball at her. Its clawed feet became more claw-like than ever.

"I will race next," Edna declared. To the bathtub she said, "If I win, you come with me. If you win, I have to find me another bathtub. Deal?" The bathtub bumbled an acceptance and spit another hairball. Kelly resumed her place at the finish. Once more she raised her arm to the sky.

They stood at the starting line, Edna forced her toes further into her scuffs, as far as they would go, the bathtub burbling and gurgling. Edna, in a fleeting thought, noticed how much the bathtub ring in the sunlight reminded her of clay.

"On your mark!"

"Get set!"

"GO!"

(concluded next page,
upper left corner) 11

(Continued from previous page)

The bathtub lurched away from the start, Edna tripped, stumbled after it. She ran, muscles straining, lungs straining, slippers slapping. One slipper slipped off and was left behind. She was just catching up with the rear claws when the bathtub veered right, off the track and through the crowd. It turned its shower head, spraying water on everyone behind so that no one could follow. It was going to get away.

Edna stumbled, stopped and stared in disbelief. The curtains on the fleeing bathtub flapped so hard, making Edna wonder if the bathtub was going to take off. Behind her she heard someone shout, "Hey, look! Over there!" She turned to look and saw her toaster and hot plate running, cord in cord, across Findlay's Field.

DOWN AND OUT

by Stacey Sollfrey
going down the ocean in a riverboat
no steam no horn
no punchline either
parting the waters
very quietly
with too much noise
cutting the quiet down
to add to the noise
to push the riverboat back with quiet noise
is a muzzle for action
action is a muzzle
for everything else
push everything together into a ball
with no corners to connect

you to anything
this way muzzling yourself
to keep yourself rolling

Vampires From Neptune: An Interview with Johnny Hollywood from THE SAVAGE GARDEN by Aristotle Cool

"I believe in the integrity of meanderthals."—Deborah Benedict
"He tampered in God's Domain."—Police Captain Tom Robbins in
BRIDE OF THE MONSTER

I met Johnny Hollywood, unemployed muse, outside, on the lawn of the Universe, our chairs touching the edge of the Savage Garden. Johnny is 23 million years old, but seriously doesn't look a day older than 6. S/he is petite, only 2.5 inches tall. S/he wears a hairstyle similar to performance artist Laurie Anderson, only Johnny has red and blonde streaked hair. Johnny was wearing a beautiful black velvet Pierre Cardin suit, made especially for him by Pierre Cardin's muse, Bob. Johnny wore a tie with a lurid glow-in-the-dark image of Jean Harlow embracing the Swamp Thing. It was very distracting but satisfying to gaze upon. I began my interview by asking Johnny about being a muse and then I moved on to asking about Mildred Neptune and her fate. Our conversation was interrupted frequently by alien intelligences and Other Beings. Hollywood knows a great many otherworldly types and is at ease with them. I found Johnny Hollywood to be much more accessible than I thought muses would be, but S/he said that was a quality that S/he had worked on through the years with Mildred.

COOL: Tell me about yourself.

HOLLYWOOD: I'm a muse. Been a muse since muses arrived—originally one of Zeus' and Mnemosyne's kids—but I've incarnated lots since then. I've worked for lots of really neat people, none of whom I can name, of course, being as how it's a sacred trust to be a muse, and the only reason I am breaking out of form is 'cause Mildred revealed it first. But I can't reveal it.

C: How many muses are there? What sex are you, anyway?

H: There are several hundred muses—can't give you an exact number. There aren't as many as you think because some people don't have the right atmosphere in their lives for muses, even if they have talent. You need a lot of strange stuff to get and keep a muse. What sex am I? I don't do things like that, I don't need that sort of thing. Yuck.

C: Then how do muses reproduce?

H: We don't, we just keep incarnating. We don't need to reproduce. We're immortal.

C: Oh. What kind of atmosphere does a muse need and how did Mildred Neptune attract and keep you?

H: Muses need people who are capable of anything, have lots of energy but need to be directed. They need to live in places where they feel safe, where there's not much intrusion. Mildred attracted me by casting a spell and asking for me. I had to obey. But I saw she had a good set-up, that she needed me, so I stayed. She also bought me lots of great presents and we had fun.

C: There's a rumor that she is not dead—

H: That's no rumor, it's the truth—she's not dead, she's Undead.

C: But is that possible?

H: No, it's not possible, but it's the truth. This happens a lot.

C: Are you saying Mildred Neptune is a vampire?

H: That sums it up real good.

C: How is this possible? Was Mildred Neptune, uh, indoctrinated by another vampire?

H: Nah. Mildred would never let that go down! Mildred Neptune is not on anybody's parapsychological food chain. She chose to be immortal this way—she decided to be an immortal vampire.

C: Why? It seems a horrible thing to be.

H: You sound like a bigot to me. Mildred liked the movies, the costumes and the decor. She liked the idea of being a shapeshifter, too. You know, her favorite movie star was always Bela Lugosi.

C: But living off the blood of other human beings—that seems so unethical—I can't imagine Mildred doing that.

H: Sheesh, you're pretty naive for a guy named Aristotle Cool. Mildred is content with otherworldly beings right now—course, she is still pretty deep in the Savage Garden over there. But I guess when she emerges she will be drinking the blood of people—for awhile—until she overcomes that.

C: Won't that fuck with the ecological balance of Spaceship Earth?

H: (rolling eyes and laughing) Spaceship Earth? Who scared you? Earth isn't a spaceship, it's a planet. As for interfering, go talk to the bimbos at the Pentagon. What Mildred is up to is natural and necessary.

C: You're defending vampires?

H: I don't have to defend vampires, they can take care of themselves. I'm saying that this is what Mildred is and will be for awhile. We have to accept that this is a necessary part of her evolution. You don't know what her reasons were for becoming a vampire. You can't judge her. If you do judge her, be prepared for her to judge you.

C: Well, just tell me, will she terrorise us?

H: Of course not! There are just as many vampires on Earth as there are muses—but no one even knows they are there! Immortal Beings are extremely cool, they never mess things up, otherwise they wouldn't be immortal.

C: Has morality no place in this life?

H: Well, here and there, on a day-to-day basis, you need a few morals for humans to coexist and so forth. But immortal beings don't do morals.

C: Why not?

H: Because, basically, existence means nothing—and the longer you exist the more nothing it means.

C: But this is terrible!

H: Why? You watch nature films and see the lion eat the gazelle and you don't think anything.

C: But those are animals—not humans.

H: Don't be so goddamned chauvinistic! I am not a human and neither is Mildred. You can't be immortal and human too—at least not yet.

C: Why not?

H: The facilities aren't ready yet.

C: What facilities?

H: The ones that aren't ready yet.

C: Talking to you is impossible.

H: Obviously not because you're doing it. I cannot reveal too much about the future. Consult your horoscope, ok?

C: But you make it sound like existence is meaningless, there is no goodness—

H: (interrupting angrily) I didn't say there was no goodness, I said there were no morals! Immortal beings find morals superfluous because they are intrinsically good by their immortality. Who sent you anyway? Was it Zontar? I'll kill him.

C: Now, now—I don't want to upset you. No, Zontar didn't send me.

I was sent as a freelance correspondent for American Werewolf Magazine.

H: Oh, that's alright then—you're only baiting me for your readership, ri'?

C: Exactly.

H: Fine, then.

C: When can we expect to see Mildred emerge from the Savage Garden and begin to prowl the earth?

H: Well, I'd say she'll come out on Walpurgisnacht because she is essentially a German trad.

C: Where will she go?

H: Knowing her, she'll go to Transylvania, seeking her roots. Then, probably she'll hang out in the USA because the USA has the best radio stations. Mildred loves music, you know.

C: Will she still be known as Mildred Neptune?

H: Only be her close associates and friends. The world at large will know her as Regina Statica. She will be the leader of a big old band. Like in The Vampire Lestat. Only it will be a (seemingly) all-female band. Regina Statica and the Savage Garden. Videos. Big hits. Movies? Sure, why not. I'm still her muse and I have big plans for her.

C: Any songs written yet?

H: I'm working on some. I got the title for the first album, it's gonna be called ELEGANT PAGANS. That's what vampires are, you know.

C: Well, I know about werewolves and they ain't elegant, but I suppose that vampires really are.

H: Sure, Pan in a tuxedo and spats, y'know, with continental manners.

C: It should be interesting to watch anyway. I wouldn't want to get too close to them.

H: You already are, dear Aristotle.

C: Wha?

H: Mildred is coming up behind you. She looks thirsty to me. Are you ready? How would you like to become a monster, how would you like to be someone the police don't believe in?

At this stage, I was embraced by Mildred Neptune and under her guidance I have become Aristotle Cool, the gentleman who will one day reconcile Light with Lucifer.

Neptune is on the bridge between the Savage Garden and Your World, Planet Earth, a place where the idea of survival has become chic. So all you cool and crazy street ghosts, keep watching and waiting—for your Maitre Ya is nearing you.

As for Johnny Hollywood, s/he will be appearing everywhere in a neighborhood near you, very, very soon.

ARISTOTLE COOL is now the editor and publisher of AMERICAN WEREWOLF Magazine. He also collects comic books.

LUCK COMES TO McSHAMUS

Part II by Dorian Tenore

Our action-packed, heavy-breathing story so far: The crack of a fortune cookie embroils Dan McShamus, Well-Dressed, Well-Meaning Private Eye Ordinaire, into an imbroglio of murder, mayhem, mademoiselles, and mirth.

"Luck will come to you," reads Dan's fortune, and before he can say "...between the sheets," wealthy womanizing restaurateur Sir Winston Luck has hired Dan to investigate the drowning-by-wonton-soup murder of his estranged wife, Lady Luck. Luck suspects (or last least hopes) that his latest mistress, the luscious Erica, is the culprit.

But what about that hired killer in the Groucho nose-glasses chasing Dan? Or the Edsel-driving Pat Nixon clones (Republican cloth coats and all) who keep trying to kidnap Erica? Hoping to uncover answers like these and other burning questions (like "Is he/she as gorgeous naked?"), Dan and Erica arrange an impromptu rendezvous in Erica's apartment, where our scene opens...

INTERIOR, ERICA'S ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST-WORTHY LIVING ROOM

Music plays on her stereo—perhaps some vintage Partridge Family or Bobby Sherman—as Erica brings drinks to the couch, where Dan has already made himself comfortable.

ANGLE ON ERICA

ERICA: (horrified) Winston's wife dead?! And he thinks I did it?! I'll kill him! (Catches herself) Oh, I didn't mean that literally! But I just can't believe it! (Sits beside Dan.)

ANGLE ON DAN AND ERICA ON COUCH

DAN: Me neither, after that little escapade outside! Do you know who any of those gals were, Erica?

ERICA: Never saw them in my life! What do they all want with me?

DAN: Maybe the same thing somebody wanted from the late Lady Luck!

ERICA: (troubled) Mr. McShamus—

DAN: (with warmth and tenderness—he's falling fast) Call me Dan.

ERICA: Dan— (touches his hand; of course she likes him, too) I swear I never touched a hair on her pointy little head! All we did the other night was yell at each other— (disgustedly) with no help from Winston—and today I just ran into the restaurant to hand in my resignation and ran right out! When Winston wouldn't stick up for me, it really opened my eyes!

DAN: (sincerely) And such lovely eyes they are, too! One brown and one kinda purple...

ERICA: Oh, Dan, I just want to start a new life, be independent, maybe become an astrophysicist! And I don't want to sneak around with any more married men, either! I—I want to be an honest woman!

DAN: (taking her hand) I'll make you one, baby! (As he leans over to pull her closer, she stands up and he falls on his face on the couch cushion.)

ERICA: (in a quandry) This is silly! People don't fall in love this fast!

DAN: (gently) Since when is there a tiem limit, angel? (He pulls her lovingly to him and they melt into a passionate, lengthy kiss as camera slowly zooms in. We're talking major liplock here.)

ANGLE ON THE COUPLE OUTLINED IN SILHOUETTE

They kiss again, lingering over it. When, eons later, they part:

DAN: Don't worry, honey, we'll get to the bottom of this. In fact, I think it we just find the connection between those three broads, we'll hit the nail right on the head—

And not just the nail, as Erica suddenly screams. Dan jumps up to see what's wrong, and a silhouetted hand with some kind of blunt instrument in it enters the frame and bashes Dan on the ol' cranium. Dan and his silhouette collapse, unconscious.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ANGLE—DAN LYING ON THE COUCH, OUT LIKE A LIGHT

His head, upon which a wet cloth rests, starts to nod slowly from side to side. Dan mumbles dreamily, incoherently. Soon his eyelids flutter, consciousness restored to their owner. He blinks as he discovers that he and Erica have company—and not the kind you serve hors d'oeuvres to, either!

CLOSE ANGLE, DAN'S POINT OF VIEW—THE TWO WOMEN WHO TRIED TO NAB ERICA
These ladies are seated on, respectively, the edge of the couch and on an ottoman. The one on the couch is training a gun on Dan and on Erica, who is kneeling beside Dan.

ANGLE ON DAN AND ERICA

DAN: (weakly but cockily) Make yourselves at home, ladies—help yourselves to the fridge, the firearms...

CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE WOMEN AND THE COUPLE AS THEY TALK

FLORA: (the one with the gun) Oh, we already helped ourselves to the use of Erica's fire escape, thanks—that's how we got in.

ERICA: (to Dan, with loving concern) How do you feel, darling?

DAN: Lousy, thanks—how about you? (He sits up slowly and painfully, lighting a cigarette to steady his shaky self.)

FAUNA: (impatiently) Could we dispense with the small talk and get down to the nitty-gritty?

ERICA: (pissed off) What nitty of what gritty already?

DAN: If you don't mind me asking, who the hell are you two?!

LIKE A SQUIRREL

by Mary Ann Henn

With hairy legs and furry skin
a little creature in the grass
runs up and down the elm and grins.
I think he's making fun of me
because I don't have other squirrels
scampering after me, like him.

DISSYNCHRONICITY
by Deborah Benedict
so we meet at the beach
at the same time that
the tide is turning.

FLORA: I'm Flora Meriwether and this is my sister, Fauna.

FAUNA: (brightly) Hi!

DAN and ERICA: (sarcastically) Hi!!

FLORA: We all seem to have a mutual friend—a certain Sir Winston Luck!

DAN: (flippantly) He's more of an acquaintance to me—we just met today! (Then it dawns on him) Wait! Let me guess—you two dames were more than friends with ol' Lucky-boy, weren't you?

FAUNA: (impressed by Dan's genius) He catches on fast!

ERICA: (shrugs indifferently) Welcome to the club, girls!

FLORA: (angrily) Don't "welcome to the club" us!! If it weren't for you, the Meriwether sisters would be on top of the world of haute cuisine!!

DAN: Who's this Haute Cuisine character?

FLORA: "Haute cuisine" refers to the world of fine dining, you ignorant twit!

FAUNA: Flora and I were going to start our own restaurant—"Meriwether's Cold Cereal Emporium"!

FLORA: (to Fauna) I still prefer "Flora and Fauna's Cold Cereal Kitchen"—it's got a friendlier, homier ring to it!

FAUNA: Whatever!

DAN: What the—? You mean a restaurant serving just cold cereal?!

ERICA: You mean as in Rice Krispies...Raisin Bran...?

FLORA: You got it, cookie! Cap'n Crunch, Alpha-Bits, Wheat Chex—the whole bit! Not to mention fresh fruit and Grade-A milk to put on them!

FAUNA: (sunnily) For breakfast, lunch, and dinner!

DAN: (perplexed) But why cold cereal?!

FLORA: Look, fast food is always popular, right? Well, what could be faster and easier to make than cold cereal?

DAN: You mean to say Luck would have financed this for you?

FLORA: He was all set to give us the money, even after his lousy wife found out about us—after all, it was two of us against one of her!

But then Winnie (CUT TO Dan and Erica looking at each other, mouthing "Winnie?!" in disbelief) fell head over heels for Little Miss Manager over there and decided to use our money for paying her rent!

DAN: Then why'd you have to ice Luck's wife?

FAUNA: That wasn't our fault! That stupid so-called "hit-person" we hired to get Erica hit the wrong person!

DAN: Used the wrong murder weapon, too. She should've drowned the old girl in a bowl of Froot Loops or something!

ERICA: (shivering at such macabre wit) Oh, Dan, please!

DAN: Sorry about that, sweetheart!

FLORA: Hmmp! I shouldn't have expected innovation like ours to be appreciated by a cheap gumshoe like you, McShamus!

ERICA: Hey, you can't talk like that to my little bubbola!

DAN: Yeah, who're you calling cheap? I charge \$500 a day, plus expenses! And no personal checks accepted, either, sister!

FLORA: Oh, sure, I'll bet your checks bounce like Dolly Parton's—

FAUNA: (piping up) Do you take VISA or MasterCard?

DAN: Well, I do take American Express—

FLORA: FAUNA!!

FAUNA: (sullenly) Just trying to make conversation!

CUT TO:

ERICA'S FRONT DOOR OPENING ABRUPTLY

In walks Luck with his hands up and the keys dangling from one hand.

Behind him is the indignant and armed (with a Luger this time) hit-person. There's a white gauze bandage wrapped around her head, slightly visible under her hair.

LUCK: Don't get mad, folks—I had to lead her here, I have a low threshold of death!

ERICA: There he is, Winnie the Poop!

HIT-PERSON: (waving her gun at the Meriwether sisters) Okay, you chiselers, where's my fee?! And how about my free case of Sugar Pops cereal?!

As everyone directs their attention to Luck and the hit-person, Dan leaps up and at Flora, showing his lit cigarette into her eye. As she yelps, Fauna jumps Dan. As the three of them wrestle, Erica jumps Fauna. Fisticuffs and wrestling for Flora's gun ensue. Meanwhile, Luck and the hit-person hit it off. They do a damn good tango to the stereo music, which now consists of K-Tel's "Novelty Hits of the 70's," the track now playing being Carl Douglas' classic "Kung-Fu Fighting."

LUCK: Listen, you interested in a bodyguard job?

HIT-PERSON: Guarding who?

LUCK: Me, of course!

HIT-PERSON: Why?

LUCK: Hey, with all these dames after me, I need protection!

HIT-PERSON: (as they dance The Continental toward the front door) Well, now, let's discuss my rates... (Camera follows these crazy kids out the front door.)

CUT TO:

Dan and Erica finally subdue the Meriwether sisters with some upper cuts to the jaw, lefts to the solar plexus, and belts to the pants.

Dan trains his gun on them, they put their hands up in defeat and head toward the door. Dan's arm is draped lovingly around Erica as he and she follow the villains.

ERICA: Talk about a long day!

DAN: (a la Casablanca) Well, kid, we'll always have the couch!

ERICA: (purring) What do you say we make the long day a long night?

Dan and Erica laugh and kiss. The kiss is quite long and passionate—so much so, in fact, that it shows few if any signs of stopping in the near future. The Meriwether sisters soon notice. They look at each other, shrug, and tear out the front door. Dan and Erica are so wrapped up in each other, they neither notice nor care that their quarry has escaped. Fade out on a tight close-up of our hero and heroine kissing, entwined in an embrace so hot and steamy that every refrigerator in the neighborhood automatically defrosts.

Ghost in the Gerber

(So there we were, sitting around at the IJ Party-for-A-Thousand-Reasons, when Vinnie B. says to me, "Hey, let's do a gerber!" Being not at all well-versed in coded languages, I couldn't understand why the dear Reverend was so intent on putting pieces of glass in baby food jars; he then explained that "gerber" was apparently fan-speak for a round-robin story. Now, like the game of Telephone, these things produce fickle results at best, but since so many writers of IJ-type calibre were present and they all seemed enthusiastic enough, I decided, for better or worse, to run the thing in these pages. I have supplied the title myself; each writer's contribution is marked off by different type faces so as to make the abrupt plot shifts more understandable. The final entry is mine as well, since I can't resist tying up loose ends; the rest of the blame belongs, not necessarily in the order in which the portions appear, to Vinnie Bartilucci, St. Eve, Steve Chaput, [redacted] Nina Bogin, Georg Patterson, Dorian Tenore, Steven Scharff, Spencer Pinney and someone whose handwriting I can't place...)

It was the kind of morning that made you wish it was afternoon. I was working the (excuse the pun) graveyard shift at the morgue. Usually a slow job, but when the Venus probe satellite passes over on the night of a full moon, things get a bit...hectic. I couldn't get a thing done, what with convincing all these corpses they were in no condition to pop by Famous Ray's for a late dinner. During a lull in the action, I set my baseball bat and tried to catch up on my reading.

Having forgotten to buy my usual copy of the Daily News that morning, I had to make do with the leftover tabloids left by Rigger, the night man. I was still a little pissed-off at him for leaving the door unlocked (ajar, in fact) and the lights and TV on for me to turn off—the grande fromage, Doc Melendes, would get on my ass about it the next time the Con Ed bill came in. Oh well. I reached into the wastebasket for a crumpled-up copy of the Weekly World News. Classic headlines, as usual: "DWARF & GIANT FALL IN LOVE, FLEE CRUEL TOWNSPEOPLE;" "CABBAGE PATCH KIDS POSSESSED BY ANCIENT INCA DEMONS;" "NUCLEAR FALLOUT FROM PROBE SATELLITES CAUSE ACNE IN RESURRECTED DEAD"...

"That last one's bullshit, man," rumbled a voice from under a sheet. "Ah, pipe down," I grumbled.

I walked over to the recomb chamber and peeked in at George. George was the first artificially-transformed Spican-from-humanoid two years ago. He signed up for my mutation program and the rest was soon to be history; in six weeks we'd take the shuttle down to Earth and make the reports. George lost his sense of humor through mutation. A bug obviously to debug—next time. I was used to this. "Well, the Potato Museum in Belgium's for real."

"Okay, I'll grant that much." He blew bubbles of compromise and swam to the far end of the tank.

"Well, sometimes I just worry about you mutations," I said. "I know, I know—genetic drift is all the rage, but that's still no cause for passing out the way you do." He seemed kind of annoyed, especially when I started picking on his unbought stuffed dogs (road to hell paved with 'em you know). I saw him over at the end of the tank moving in on a babe in a Benetar sweatshirt and a pair of Terminator Shades. I ranked on his taste in mates, but I knew it was just the nature of being, so I made him an honorary MIFAC and sent him on his way.

So we were sitting in the 8th Street Playhouse when Sal finally got to our notes. He read, "Dear Sal, why are you such a knob?" His response was "what the fuck is a nobo?" and Ira turned red from laughter. Then we went to Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza Time Theatre. As you can well imagine, we soon ran out screaming in terror. It's a scary place. Then, all reality changed.

"Bob" Dobbs became President and outlawed all contraceptive devices—the reason being "you can't get the real feel!"

But all the people realized that this action proved Dobbs to be a genuine asshole. "Who wants more mutated bastards running around?" they all said. So the mighty "Bob" Dobbs—President "Bob" to you—began to concentrate real hard, trying to devise a new device or method of contraception. Something that would retain the qualities of not only sex but slack as well. "Hmm...let us think about this now..."

"Something to think about, indeed!" mused Jerome, the black marketer. His hidden warehouse did a thriving business in smuggled contraceptives, and he sat amid the most recent shipment of Mexican condoms.

"Los Gallos Profelacticos" stared back at him as he mulled over his next move. Advance into the Deep South, where the market was light and chances of being caught were slim, or to the Southern California market, where profits and risk were usually high.

"Hey, Jerome," came the voice from his assistant, frop'ped out as usual, "we got a customer over the scrambler-phone!"

Jerome winced. Only the true dealers had his number or knew his code!

He reached into his back pocket, flipped the phone open, and spoke—"Alright, how did you get this number?"

A faint laugh came back, accompanied by "I thought you knew all the answers."

A cold sweat came over Jerome. Only one person would ever say that. Only one person, in fact (or at least in reasonable supposition), knew that he was Jerome. Most of the abject pond scum passing itself off as humanity these days thought he'd been wiped out by Kermit the Marine (noted protector of truth, justice and all dat shit) with a well-placed kick to the cerebellum. But he was not nothin' like dead. He was St. Jerome, Extra-Earthly Super-Agent. The might of 15 wombats (and that's there's just no telling what 15 wombats might do) was gathered and he was indeed one bad mo-fo.

"Yeah, you told, but what the fuck happened to the plot? Story! Story! Gimme some fookin' exposition!!!"

"I'm sorry," said Jerome, "but you don't exist. So piss off!"

The bitter wind sang a shrill song as it scraped against the steel exterior of the Jehovah Complex, the massive intelligence center of the United States (recently renamed by the new caretakers). Covering twenty square miles of southwest Maryland, its sole duty was to monitor all communications in, out or within the U.S. There were computers—oh, were there computers. Computers that monitored mail. Computers that monitored phone calls, government meetings, private meetings, even a few private conversations. There were hundreds of computers with hundreds of different programs to sift through the mass of talk and print that made up the life of the nation, the frantic field, as the media called it.

And there was Ernestine.

Ernestine was an interpretive logic computer, a state-of-the-art device that was put on line less than three years ago. Her (yes, even the government programmers personify them) job was to take that mulch of information and pick out the unusual bits. Make connections. Find out that which even the fold may not know is wrong.

Caryl German arrived at JehovahCom at 9:30, sat down in front of the console and ordered the daily AR (anomaly report).

It was a short one, fifth in a series—she often wondered if Ernestine could get bored. There was one report on the screen. This was not unusual in itself, but the reports usually had some interpretation from Ernestine. This report only contained one phrase:

PARSIFAL EMOTION

And at the bottom of the screen:

NO CROSS REFERENCES

NO INTERPRETATION

VOLATILITY: 94%

In plain English, something was about to happen, but "Bob" knows what it was.

Ernestine wondered where Kermit the Marine was. She always did have a fondness for green men, and he was almost the man of her dreams. Almost, that is, because she did not share his desire for raw flies as a main course at dinner. She sighed as she stepped into the recomb chamber for a quick perk-up. She pressed the yellow button, and loud drumbeats pummeled into her eardrums as the chamber began to resound with furious reverberation.

"Ah!" sighed Ernestine contentedly. As she stepped out, she disrobed her robe (if she were wearing a dress, she would have had to disdress, naturally) and wondered what she was going to wear to the speak-in. Obviously, it would have to be something in which she would feel comfortable speaking.

An hour later, Ernestine arrived at the speak-in and was greeted enthusiastically by some of the other women present. She took a seat on the cold park lawn, and the group began to discuss plans for a camp-in for a clean environment.

"I don't want to camp with men," declared a tall redhead named Suzie. "I have difficulty sleeping in the same space with men."

"But men are people too," argued a petite brunette named Linda.

A middle-aged balding man named Tom agreed with Linda.

This began a heated discussion on whether the camp-in should be women only, men only, men and women, or none of the above.

Caryl hit the override and shut down all but Ernestine's most rudimentary systems. It was impossible to discover, without a complete systems check, why a multi-level computer would suddenly start printing out stuff that read like a paperback romance.

Time to worry about that later. If there would be a later...

The first cube landed at a little past midnight on the White House lawn. Later it was learned that identical ones landed outside the official residences of the leaders of every nation on Earth.

From each cube came the Cat in the Hat, who ordered the complete and total suspension of reality on all levels.

And then things got weird.

"Can't get much weirder," George murmured, coming out of his post-mating trance. "Parsifals resembling cats in hats, indeed! I've par-tied with Parses on Spica—they're more like, well, frogs maybe..."

"Guess so. I don't get around much," I replied. "And I've never seen the opera."

"The wha'!—oh, Earth pun," he smiled, 'pathing me quickly. "Don't worry, I won't tell anyone about your penchant for obscure opera..."

"You won't tell anyone anything for awhile, my friend," I interrupted, glancing up at the trajectory screen. "I afraid I gotta suspend your animation once more. Same for the whole tank, we're moving in. Can't have Melendes on my case for zombifyin' around with the likes of you, after all."

"No, I suppose not. It'll feel good being back in the yards, tho, I tell ya. Hope it's quieter when we land, I don't wanna come back to pizza crust all over the—hey, what the hell's a 'Mifac' anyhow? I don't think I like the sound o' tha—"

"Aw, c'mon, only joshing, G. Tell ya what, I'll throw the paper in your tank and you can absorb it while you go under. Take your mind off the boredom."

"Fersher. I was kinda getting into that article about the computer going bonkers and having wet dreams—oh but didn't she just describe the recomb to a tee...Don't think I care much for that Greenwich Village theatre crap, though, too surreal. Ain't that what the Voice is fer or somethin'?"

"Guess Weekly World prints it where it can get it," I answered, warming up the suspension chamber as the shuttle readied itself for atmospheric penetration. "That Dobbs stuff was pretty thinly veiled fiction, though. All that bunko about reality shifting, sure. Goodness knows what excuse they'll come up next to explain his election

(cont'd. next page)

away."

"Good thing the Jehovah witnesses nabbed the phony contraceptive condom, eh?"

"I dunno, George. You never know what to believe in these 'bloids'. Could be a coverup story to mask the computer glitch."

"Glitch my itch—something's more than fucked up when JehovahCom reports Parsifalian invasions, for 'Bob's sake! I'm glad I'll be underground till this whole mess blows over. Think they'll suspend Earth from the intergalactic mutie program after this?"

"I doubt it. I mean, get serious. We read it in the Weekly World, remember—anything could be happening out there." I sighed as I tuned the chamber to the tank's exact frequency, and tucked George's taxidermist's nightmares in with him, promising myself I'd return them to their rightful owners as soon as I could get in touch with Kermit at Marine headquarters. If he were even around to answer his calls any more, between his master-of-disguise missions and his bambos...hey, maybe I could strike a deal with him and offer him the Terminator babe.

We were due to land at high noon precisely, and I strapped myself in. Too bad I had no papers to leave Fleming, my on-ground replacement. But hey, she'd had all morning to buy one.



POSTCARD FROM A PIG

Even veteran PIGSHIT readers seem unaware that Yours Truly, despite being a mild-mannered PIG PAPER editor by day, often can be found after dark paying the bills by playing Gary Jardine in the bogus-Beach Boy bar-band clone act called, naturally, Endless Summer. From my vantage point in the back of the band's 1975 Mercury Marquis wagon, I pause today to reflect upon our latest three-week road trip, which began innocently enough with a four-night stand at Mickey's Roadhouse in Brockville, Ontario, Canada.

This particular engagement was a BLAST: sand was spread across the dance floor and a trip to sunny Florida was given away to the patron with the loudest Hawaiian shirt (typically, the winner had just returned from a vacation in Miami!) (at least it wasn't the club owner's son this time...). We had an inkling it was gonna be one of our better gigs when, during our very first number, a dancer clad only in a grass skirt and clutching twin Pina Colodas fell head-first over our bassist and landed on our drummer. Too bad the dancer's name was Chuck.

Our accommodations were seven miles down-road at the utterly quaint Flying Dutchman Motel, featuring, for our convenience, complimentary continental brunch (bits of orange-colored rye bread served with lukewarm Sanka) and cable TV (grainy porno flicks beamed up from Rochester, NY). Speaking of X-ratings, the band celebrated its last night in Brockville by inviting back to the Dutchman a girl of, according to most everyone in town, "dubious reputation," who joined the entire band, and crew (AND a crate of tequila) in the hot-tub at the end of the hall (only took us ten minutes to pry open the door and get in!). After several hours of aquatic mambo'ing and whirlpool-making, we noticed all that remained in the tub was a few bottle caps, some sodden cigarette butts, and our accomplice's bikini bottom—98% of the water had been splashed onto the floor and was now pouring towards the kitchen. We called it a night and somehow managed to leave town before the maids (or the vice squad) arrived in the morning.

Next stop? Baron's Motor Inn at scenic Bell's Corners near Ottawa. We'd played this club once before, so rather than supplying us with rooms IN the inn, this time the proprietors wisely chose to house us in a ramshackle "band cottage" at the foot of the parking lot (where the cab drivers and truckers hang out). Within several hours of our occupancy, the floor therein was knee-deep in potato chips, Star Trek paperbacks, socks, snow, Deep Purple cassettes, thrice-humiliated pizza slices and an assortment of charred linen. Unaccustomed as I am, despite my occupation, to filth of this calibre, I quickly befriended one of the more hospitable (and—bonus—cuter!) members of the audience and before you could say Palimony Suit was living in the basement

The Least-Known Prophet

by Larry Blazek

Abdul, the hashish-eater, was a conscientious objector of sorts. The gods had sent little water and much sunshine that year; Abdul's hemp crop was heavy with sticky resins. His dreams in his filthy tent were stranger that year, for that year Abdul became one of the world's least-known prophets.

The gods simply told him that they objected to the spilling of blood upon the holy places. Abdul was ill-inclined to spill blood anyway (though he did own a crooked little knife, it had sliced more hashish than flesh); he vowed not to spill blood upon the holy places.

That year was a famine year and the tribes warred upon each other. They robbed the graineries in the temples and slew many priests. The priests fled to the mountains.

Abdul visited army camps to trade hemp products for food. One day, after a bloody battle, Abdul found himself conscripted. He was given a rusty scimitar and a heavy bronze-headed pike. When the battle spilled over into the holy grounds, Abdul threw down his weapons and would not fight.

The soldiers wanted to crucify him on the spot. A minor chieftain took him to the warlord for judgement.

Abdul was to be burnt at the stake. He had performed bravely enough in battle before he had thrown down his weapons, so four archers were to shoot him before he had endured much pain.

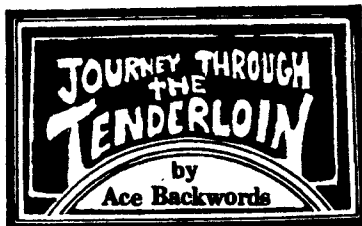
Abdul ate the lump of hashish that was concealed in a fold of his robes before he was bound to the stake. He laughed in the face of death. As the flames rose higher and his beard singed, he spoke again with the gods. As the archers strung their bows, he prevailed upon the gods to pluck him from the flames. Instead, the sea sent forth a mighty wave. Everything that the eye could see was destroyed and swept away, except for Abdul and the stake. Abdul did get rather wet, but he didn't mind as it kept him from burning.

It took Abdul several days to work the bindings loose (he didn't want the gods to overdo things again). As far as can be said, he resumed his career of scavenging and hemp-planting. He also ate very little hashish until the following year.

of her nearby home (Additional Bonus: the rest of the household was away vacationing in, you guessed it, Miami). Such a sweet girl—she shopped for me, cooked me spaghetti, sliced open her finger making me orange juice, let me watch old Elvis movies on TV, and even let me sleep 'til two in the afternoon. But I couldn't help but detect she was always somewhat on guard, somewhat nervous... Turns out she was good friends with the Brockville hot-tub girl. 'Nuff said!

Thirteen days and ten Elvis movies later, it was finally time to bid Bell's Corner's adieu...but not before holding a Farewell to Earl Tail Soundman bash at the band cottage. The last party we threw here ended in us turning our singer's room sideways: EVERY stick of furniture and article of clothing was upended and/or stuck with bubblegum to the ceiling (took us SEVEN HOURS too, I'll have you know. The result? A gauddamn masterpiece! Keith Moon would've been proud). Earl's party was comparatively subdued, however: all I remember was being awoken in bed by Long Tail Sally (our biggest—in more ways than one!—Baron's fan) armed with several shot-glasses full of B-52 mix. Last time I was attacked by a squadron of B-52s I ended up in the local airport singing "Help Me Rhonda" to the Coke machine. THIS time I'm told my bedroom was invaded by Isabelle the head waitress, in a frenzy because her fiance had just accused her of being a slut and announced that he was moving out of her apartment first thing in the morning. Then a young fella (fresh back from Miami to boot!) was wrapped up like a pretzel and rolled by my bed as he cried, "Can you direct me to the Guinness Book of World Records?"

And to this day, Earl swears he saw it too!
(NEXT EPISODE: Breaking into a Quebec Chinese food restaurant at 3AM and cooking the best chicken balls known to man)



I slept in the Golden Gate Park awhile, got in a few fights, lost my virginity. I told you about that already. I never did see that girl again.

Finally it got too dangerous sleeping outside in the Park, so I moved to this off-ramp downtown. It was a nice spot on top of this man-made hill at the foot of the Bay Bridge. It was cold

up there with the winds whipping across the Bay, but I had a good down sleeping bag.

Usually nobody wandered up here because you had to walk up the freeway exit the wrong way, then make your way along a narrow path alongside the huge cement blocks that supported the Bridge.

This was a good, safe spot to sleep. Or so I thought.

One night I was walking by the Bachelor Brothers Theatre and I ran into Charlene. She was walking home from work.

"Charlene?" I said.

"Oh, hi Christopher," she said.

"Funny running into you here, ha ha."

"Yeah. Real funny." She didn't look amused.

"How about coffee?"

"No." She sat down on the bus bench.

"Mind if I join you?"

"It's a free country."

We sat there. "So how's your job?" I asked.

"Fine. I like it just fine."

"How's Rick?"

"Fine."

"That's good," I said.

We sat there.

"So I wonder how everything is back at Ridgetown High?" I said.

"Yeah," said Charlene.

"I'll bet the basketball season is just about over. I wonder how we did."

"Yeah."

"Do you miss cheerleading at all?"

"Nah. I always felt kind of ridiculous shaking my butt in those little cheerleader uniforms. At least now what I do is honest."

"How so?"

"Well, men pay to see me shake my butt. Cheerleading was the exact same bullshit, except it was SUPPOSED to be this wholesome All-American Wonder Bread trip. Know what I mean?"

"No."

"Well, you always were kind of dumb." We both sort of laughed.

"I got a girlfriend now," I said.

"Good."

"She's very good-looking. I met her in the Golden Gate Park."

"Good."

"And you know what? I think she loves me too. She's very good-looking too. Very beautiful spirit. She's well-known in all the bars on the Haight-Ashbury."

"I'm very happy for you, Christopher."

"I think I might love her too. She's a very wonderful person."

We sat there.

"Yeah," I said. "I wonder what's happening in old New Jersey. I heard from old Chuck."

"Oh really?" She perked up at that.

"Yeah. He said we're the talk of the town. It's quite a scandal."

"Whatever happened to those two nuts after the game?"

"Nosey bastards," she laughed. "I'll never go back there."

"Still though, don't you ever wish we were back there again, like when we were little kids?"

"Yeah, kind of."

"Remember that clubhouse we used to have?"

"Oh sure," she laughed. "The famous 'NO GIRLS ALLOWED' clubhouse. Tommy Trevors never used to let me back there unless I did my strip tease dance for the boys."

"You were wild even back then."

"I guess I should be grateful. It turned out to be on-the-job training for my future vocation."

"So how's the job going?"

"You asked that already. It's fine. It pays good. This is the first real money I've ever made. There are things I don't like..."

"Like what?"

"Like the men can be real creeps. And you're never perfect enough for them. They're always pointing out your flaws like you're not perfect."

"You're perfect," I said. "Too bad I already got a girlfriend. And I think she loves me too."

"Christopher, I DON'T love you. Okay? I'm sorry. I don't love you. What else can I say?"

"What's love got to do with it?" I said. "You really got a lot of nerve, you know that? I never said I loved you. You really must have a big head or something. A big ego. Do you just think that you're so adorable that every guy who sees you just automatically falls madly in love with you? Is that it?"

"Well, no, I—"

"Well, I'm not like all those other guys. You think I'm just like all those other guys, don't you? That I just want to get you in bed. That all I want is," I spit out the word, "sex!"

"I didn't say that. But what the hell do you expect me to assume?"

You follow me everywhere. Every day I see you walking by the Theatre. I see you hiding around the corner, spying on me. What the hell do you expect me to think?"

"That I care for you," I said. "I'm concerned about you. I want to be your friend. Is that some kind of crime? But no. You'd rather be with your boyfriend Rick. Just because he's got a lot of money and can buy you fancy clothes. Good old charming Rick. Yeah, tell me all about it. You and your lover-boy Rick. I'll bet that jackass doesn't mind that you get onstage and make yourself available to all these other men. I'll get he don't care so long as you bring home the money, he don't care that you shake your butt for any jerk who's got a lousy dollar—"

"Why, that's none of your business, you little—"

"Like fun it isn't. I drive you all the way across the country just so you can get onstage and make an ass of yourself. Flaunting it in the faces of all these dirty old men. And you'll sleep with that jerk-ass Rick, but you won't sleep with me. Somebody who cares about you! Oh no. Well, you know what you are? You're nothing but a whore!"

That's right, a no-good, glorified whore. And a slut! You're a slut! A slut! A slut!"

Charlene looked at me and said: "Why is it that the guys I WON'T sleep with are the ones who always call me a slut?"

"Because you're a slut! And what's more I hope I never see your stupid face again and furthermore—"

Charlene got up off the bus bench. The bus had arrived. Charlene paid her fare and moved to the back. I hopped on after her. "YOU'RE A SLUT! A SLUT!"

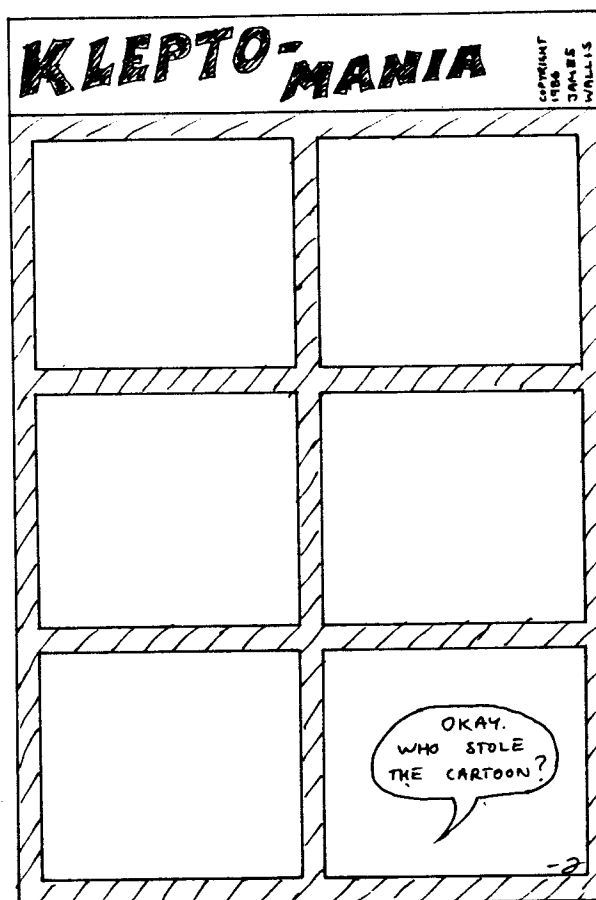
"It's 50¢," said the bus driver. "And quit calling me a slut."

"Oh for godsake!" I fumbled in my pants pocket, but I only had a few pennies to my name. I got off the bus. The bus pulled away. And she was gone.

That night—laying in my stupid sleeping bag, on top of that stupid man-made hill, underneath that stupid Bay Bridge—I wrote that stupid-ass Charlene about 20 different letters telling her that I NEVER wanted to see her stupid face again.

Except I didn't know where to send them to.

=CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE=



**CATHOLIC BISHOPS WOULD DO WELL TO
END UNEMPLOYMENT.**

The out-of-work 8 million should each be earning a non-inflationary 12 grand a year and the churches could end their free food programs. Tithing 96 billion dollars would bring close to 10 billion. That would help ecclesiastics salarywise and by wearing blue collars on their even age years between 20 and 60 they would get three years pay in two — not bad. Send \$ASE to unemployment and free ride ending, year 'round paying

EVEN AGE FULL EMPLOYMENT
Box 2243 — YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO, 44504

Commercial McClue-In by "Kid" Sieve

I can't help but get the feeling that you like me (and a gold star to the reader who can identify that reference)...thanks for all the swell comments (although I do wish that more suggestions would come in as far as ads of which people should be taking note—I'm really running short on ideas lately, through no fault but my own!)

This 'uns for you, DeeBee: I actually thought I'd taken care of those blatantly-targeted Lincoln-Mercury commercials which are making total mockeries of some of our fave tunes from back in the days when music meant something when I discussed the "Who says you can't get ahead without losing your soul?" stance (which I've dubbed the Michelob Mentality) aimed at relieving Yuppie guilt-over-conspicuous-consumption (not too unusual since, in a way, all commercials have as their aim the elimination of guilt over buying things one doesn't really need and wouldn't want if one weren't talked into buying). But I guess not, so let me just add my voice of support to Bette Midler, who is suing Ford and the ad agency "responsible," Young & Rubicam, claiming they used a celeb sound-alike for their "Do You Want To Dance?" spot—which many of us just assumed was Bette's version all along. Of course, Ford spokesman James Traynor insists the company "bought all the rights and obtained the proper releases to use the song," but that's not the point, as I see it: the point Bette's trying to make is that Ford/Y&R is misleading the public about who's singing the song, and that this might lead people to believe Bette actually endorses their crap. It also makes me wonder just how original are those original versions of "oldies" Ford/Y&R uses in their other spots. The one thing worse than, in essence, "K-Telling" these tunes is "near-imitating" them.

I'll admit it—I like the new MasterCard "soft sell" commercials with celebs you don't often see (especially the Gleason one, where he comes off as a truly pompous ass, but an ass with class). However, I think after repeated showings, the ads run thin on possibilities.

I'd like to talk for awhile, since I don't know if I'll think of any more specific commercials to target this time yet, about PSAs (Public Service Announcements). Now, I know this phenomenon is nothing new; PSAs have been around in one form or another at least since I was a kid, and probably before that. My memories of Smokey the Bear and "Cross at the green, not in between" and especially that marvelous anti-smoking spot with that Kennedy lookalike and his JohnJohn look-alike boy whose theme was "Like father, like son..." are as fond as anyone else's out there. But this is not what's happening today. The current crop of PSAs are, by and large, hard-hitting (as in, hitting over the head) and even nasty. And as I've grown and expanded my mind and horizons a bit more, I've begun to question the very ethics involved in perpetuating ads that basically serve the purpose of telling people what to do and what not to do. Take seat belts, for example. Now, on the surface, if you don't really think about it, what's wrong with reminding people about seat belts? Unfortunately, I forget the source, but as it turns out, seat belts don't really do a hell of a lot in terms of saving lives. Like the misleading statistics on runaway children (many of whom are mistakenly termed "abducted" when, in fact, they're escaping abusive homes or oppressive families), the numbers on life-saving belts perpetuated by Those In Power who wish to pass and enforce restrictive laws bear little resemblance to reality. And not that many people seem to realize it—or, if they do, not that many protest this state-as-parent tactic.

There are grey areas involved, to be sure. If you protest state use (and all tv stations are FCC-sanctioned, so they're all answerable to The State) of mass-brainwashing tools to control people like this, you put yourself in danger of having to defend yourself that, no, you're not in favor of, for example, drinking yourself into a stupor so you can drive like a maniac. What I usually try to explain is, look, I'm not in favor of drunk drivers. I'm not in favor of smoking cigarettes either (although unless you deliberately blow smoke in other people's faces, how much are you really harming anyone else when you smoke?). But the point is, all this Contract-for-Life bullshit should be, and should always have been, placed in the realm of individual responsibility. It's sad and frightening when individuals have so little sense of responsibility for the welfare of others (and various excuses can be made as to why this is so, I suppose; some might even cite tv's "electronic babysitting" power among them) that they have to be told by their televisions how to act.

But most horrifying of all is the type of PSA that warns against an assumed danger that's not necessarily dangerous. It's hard to stand up for what you know is right if every mediocretin around is already treating a subject as "noncontroversial." That was, in fact, the word used during a report on the NY Governor's recent trip to an elementary school to scare the kids away from drugs. Now, on the one hand, I'm not advocating that kids get into most things adults are into, including drugs, coffee, sex, war, and even NutraSweet. I believe they should be given at least a fair chance at childhood. But you see, that's no longer the point. Nancy Reagan and her ilk like to target kids in their War on Drugs because kids, like puppies and kittens, are easily used to tug the ol' heartstrings, they're so cute and loveable and in need of our special care and protection and all that. They're wonderfully manipulable for this insidious campaign. And yes, it is a tragedy when kids are into drugs or fighting or Yuppies at such a tender age. It breaks my heart, really. But to use children as the excuse to outlaw drugs for everybody—well, I digress. My real point

here is that the War on Drugs is now being termed "noncontroversial" by the media which desperately wishes to make it so (while still using the topic to gain huge ratings during sweeps weeks), and thus there is nothing wrong in PSAs' minds in using Mr. T to shout at a camera that viewers better not take marijuana "OR ELSE!", actually shaking the camera as a warning! I don't know about you, folks, but every time I see a public "service" spot on drugs, I reach for my pipe and take a toke. Even at 9am or something. It's my little symbolic form of protest, meaningless to anyone but myself, and I don't do it to get high, I do it to prove to myself that They're not going to get me like They are trying to get everyone else.

And who knows how well these things really work? I don't think the real users out there pay one tota of attention. Because the real users know it's bullshit. If you want drug education (and I'm all in favor of education, real "these-are-the-facts" education, on most issues), you have to base it in reality. And you start by admitting there is a difference between drug use and drug abuse, and by admitting there are many more harmful drugs, many of which are legal, than marijuana or LSD, and that there are almost NO proven dangers from weed (how many are old enough to remember when the only "danger" anti-druggies could come up with for marijuana was "inducement to try other drugs?"), other than a small amount of tar (MUCH less than with cigarettes) accumulated. But in a world where people easily swallow, without question, a President's insistence that when we dropped bombs on Libya "it was not our intention to kill anyone," truth is a rare commodity.

Maybe it'll start with graffiti wars. Graffiti is a much vaguer "crime" to many people who've seen the beauty some graffiti creates, and who even go so far as to term it art (and Keith Haring's certainly made a good enough living from it). So how credible are the "kids from FAME" who talk about how graffiti is vandalism and terrible and bad to a kid who knows graffiti can eventually be profitable, if he/she is talented enough, and provide, perhaps, a trip out of the ghetto? I'd like to think that once the validity and authority of one PSA is under personal scrutiny by a suddenly-discerning viewer, other PSAs may follow, but maybe this is too much to hope for, and we'll all just have to wait till the times are a'changin' again.

And while I'm on the subject of so-called public services, starting in July McDonald's restaurants in NY State "will have available brochures listing the nutritional and ingredient information for all its products, just as information is listed on grocery store products," according to the Business section of the 5/7 Newsday. The article continues:

The nutritional information has been available for the last 10 years by writing to McDonald's corporate headquarters in Chicago, but few consumers really bothered to go to the effort to get it. By having it available in the restaurants, people can read about what they're eating as they eat.

The president of McDonald's USA, Edward H. Rensl, says, "Putting this information in our restaurants is just one more step we're taking to help our customers make informed choices about what they eat. We encourage all full-service and quick-service restaurants to do the same."

The McDonald's handout will cover all food products regularly sold at its restaurants, including condiments and what the food was cooked in. McDonald's says that signs will be in all its stores advising customers that the brochure is there for the asking and does not require a purchase...

Rensl says this pilot information program will be evaluated by McDonald's after a year, at which time they will discuss their conclusions with the Attorney General, and decide whether or not to continue the program.

And since this decision will probably be determined by how many of us walk in and demand to see this so-called information (I mean, really, if what McDonald's offered was actual info, how long do you suppose people would really put that garbage in their systems after reading a list of pseudo-fats and preservatives, etc. etc.?), it's probably a good idea to deluge your local McDooDoo's with verbal requests—nay, demands. After all, this isn't some mythical corporate address in Chicago that nobody ever heard about, this has actually been publicized. Almost over-publicized, in fact; hot on the heels of (in the 5/9 paper two days after) the first article comes the news that

With its fat in the fire with consumer groups and a competitor (Burger King), McDonald's said yesterday it will start frying its Chicken McNuggets and Filet-O-Fish in "100 percent vegetable shortening."

McDonald's now uses a combination of vegetable and beef shortening in cooking...Studies by Science Digest magazine and a health advocacy group revealed that fast-food chains' chicken and fish dishes fried in beef shortening sometimes contained as much saturated fat as meat, if not more...

Doesn't that all sound so peachy-keen wonderful? How come these so-called health advocacy groups aren't going around questioning what goes into the "Chicken" McNuggets themselves? Ask a stupid question...

Aspartame Update #2: Pfizer, Inc. is reportedly "in the final stages of testing a new artificial sweetener to compete with aspartame... (The) still-unnamed sweetener, made up of two amino acids, is broadly related to aspartame... But the company says its version is sweeter than aspartame and more stable in solutions and in dry products." Well, the promised stability might be a good sign, given the properties of aspartame-as-carcinogen-when-heated, but what in hell's name do we need a product for that's sweeter than Nutra? This article also mentions the long process a product undergoes to receive FDA approval—in Searle's case "the application was submitted... in 1973 and did not receive final approval until 1981," when I assume all the necessary officials were sufficiently bribed at last and all the lawyers paid off in hush money. And more fun news: Searle is also in the research stage in sweeteners that would remain stable in baked goods." Lucky us. Pass the McFries.

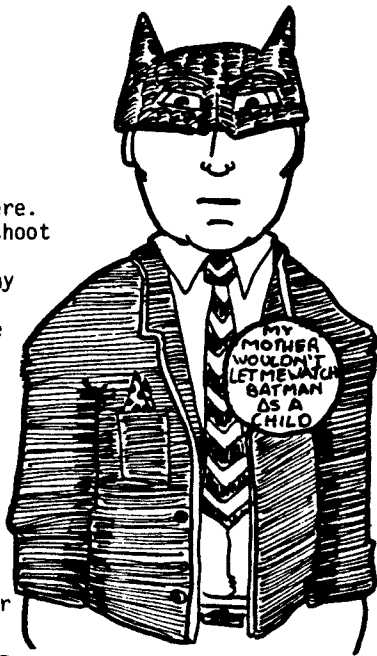


BIG DEAL!

THIS IS THE POEM
by Deborah Benedict
This is the poem
that will take the time
to tell you
life is no longer
a fact of life.

Life goes on as usual here.
Space Bats continue to shoot
Injectapods.
Monsters beg for sympathy
before they eat you.
And the sunsets sure are
realistic.

FREE AS A KITE
by Mary Ann Henn
It floats on the air
on invisible wings.
It doesn't seem fair—
it can float on the air
and I want to be there.
I can't see a string—
it just floats on the air
on invisible wings.



Hugs & Kisses

by Dana A. Snow, noted comedian
Greetings, gates and hi-de-ho to the readers of this esteemed rag. It's been awhile. At the risk of seeming like yet another stand-up comedian complaining about his sex life, I'm going to complain about my sex life.

Awhile back, I'm ashamed to admit that I started pricing a few prostitutes. I couldn't even afford a HUG! Or, as they call it, an "arm job." And hugging really matters to me a lot lately. Helps rid me of the recurring delusion that I secrete a corrosive acid. Lately I've taken to going to costume parties as a teddy bear. That gets me hugged, but a jealous boyfriend tried to beat the stuffing outta me. According to statisticians, five hugs a day is normal. Makes me wanta become a statistician!

Leo Buscaglia says everyone should hug when they meet, but Leo doesn't turn me on. And his beard scratches. Men hugging always look "suspect." Even when it's Reagan and Gorbachev. I'm sure someone in the country sees them hug and thinks they're whispering, "We've GOT to stop meeting like this!"

It's been awhile since I've been kissed, too. I'm starting to miss bad breath! I may expose the Mafia just to get the Kiss of Death! Women seem to only want to kiss me when they have a cold. They figure it's worth smudging their lipstick to take me out of circulation awhile.

But kissing CAN BE DANGEROUS. Jim Lange has herpes so if you saw him blow a kiss at the end of "The Dating Game," you should see your doctor.

French-kissing is dangerous too. Years ago, Mick Jagger French-kissed his first girlfriend and accidentally sucked her guts out. (I learned how to French-kiss very quickly; it's amazing how quickly one can master a foreign tongue.) I want to get into Japanese-kissing. After your date, she manufactures an EXACT COPY of your tongue.

This may sound sick, but I just bought a pet chicken. Yet STILL when I get home after a hard day at the office, all I get is a peck on the cheek. Now that women know I mainly want a hug and kiss, they won't even give me a goodnight handshake! They want me to wave goodbye—and I'm starting to like it! (WHIMPER) So my dates—and this article—end with a whimper, not a bang. Goodnight...

(Dana Snow is a Los Angeles-area comedian badly in need of a rimshot. He tells me he "frequently performs at the Improv, the Natural Fudge restaurant, the Lhasa Club and other clubs. Call (213) 835-WHAT for a tape of that night's intended tentative itinerary or to leave messages of encouragement." A tentative itinerary? How come I never think of things like that for my answering machine?)

All About Me

by Sigmund Weiss

Most days as I take short or lesser walks people keep asking me: "Who is Sigmund Weiss?" Since my knowledge of him is second-hand, I enquire from strangers I meet in my lack of travelling, "Who is Sigmund Weiss?" and the answer generally is: "Why, You." "Me!" I keep saying: "these are the only times I meet myself." So, from the mouths of various people I get the following answers:

1. Being born & bred by mistake, kind witches nominated me for the title PROFESSOR OF NON-ACADEMICS, and later the Creator of Witches & Non-Witches added the sub-title PRESIDENT PRO-TEM OF STUPIDITIES, MORTAL & DIVINE. So, you see, I became part of that idiocy generally termed 'HUMAN.'

2. As I grew I became non-plus in intelligence, never knew the difference between fiction and non-fiction so, like winds, my thoughts blew free. I never could agree with other people so I disagreed. I guess this is one way of developing an identity, and as this identity kept possessing me, I grew downward. Every time I argued with another person, a witch would whisper into my ears answers that confounded me, but anyway, I uttered those answers because they were more than I knew. To further my growing up, many normal individuals would advise me: "You should see a psychiatrist." I didn't know what a psychiatrist was, so they told me that a psychiatrist is a head-shrinker. I'd answer, "My head is small enough for me so why visit a head-shrinker?" Their agreements with this shut them up. Afterwards, I'd do whatever I wanted to, told people anything that came into my mind, and so my mind became a sort of pumpkin and when a tough guy punched my head with his fists, much of the fluid drained out of my brains and my brains took a rest, being practically dried up.

3. Years later, when I met the first intelligent creature I knew, who was a pig being set up into size by a butcher, I asked him (that is, the pig), "What's it all about?" The answer I got was, "Stop thinking and you'll find out." Since that day, I never allowed a thought to pass through my head, even at the Senior Citizen Writing Workshop, where I keep going to be better misunderstood.

A RATHER MATRONLY WOMAN TELLING A
DAUGHTERS MOTHER THAT HER HUSBAND
IS DEAD by Stacey Sollfrey

NOT NEWZ TO ME

by D.A. Beast

Stepping over frozen cans of peas
and bodies someone forgot to bury
I look for a t.v. that can talk to me
and not shit on my brain.

They wrote in the paper today
there should be one penalty for one crime
death for deviating—
death for being different—
we already got that.

They still burn witches
not for real—but it hurts the same,
and the media still shits on my brain.

Now I hear 'A Whiter Shade of Pale'
'cuz someone forgot ta move on,
and Lucy's still in the sky
'cuz most people rut on the ground—
and never see the clouds;
because Madison Avenue shoots for
five-year-olds—
and finds the country is full of them.

General Motors is getting militant—
and real estate religious—
'cuz they say they're selling homes
when all I see is houses.
Bath soap really will make you more
popular—

and the beat goes on
as the world beats off.

a seemingly twisted body
links itself to my memory
it doesn't look female
but the essence in memory
locks femininity to me
her ends constantly curl
making molecular smoothness
look like something to see
leaving her to search in her fine grain
digging out strands of velvet
that when touched with the crust of a
whisper
unpeel the strange curvature
of her husbands death

Sayz-U! (Letters)

Yo EW:

I have received IJ45 an a nice lil piece o' noise it be. Gotta say sumthin' specially bout the latest "Diary of a Rock Fiend" which wuz outstandin'. Yah boo! Look out, theres a funny lookin green thing in da fridge. Gladta hear bout Inside Stroke gettin da go-ahead.

On otha fronts tho, I is afraid I gotta disagree wif da whole gram-mar rant by K! Ghesin. Language is a process. All rules are made ta be broken and arguments for "proper" and "correct" language do nuthin but perpetuate da power structure's vested interest in maintaining "standard english" as da only acceptable forma communication. I wuz surprised ta see such a retro argument bein made in IJ.

More good words for Amster's cartoons and JP's and good ole Pru and YU updates and the keyfob conspiracy. Penn Jillette is the Lee Ving of 86. The four major food groups has been identified and re-classified by newly elected sturgeon-general **BJAM PEARCE** (sorry, just a slip of the typewriter...I really meant ta say Oswald Jacoby) as: grease, starch, plastic, sugar, and caffeine. I is not Steve King. Ronald McReagan: da kinda President dat makes ya proud ta be a Canadian.

everything means, nothing is meant...RODNY DIOXIN

c/o 46 Sutton St., #3L
Brooklyn, NY 11222

[Kip, who considers herself correct beyond contradiction in all cases, has permitted me to reply to your criticism of hir column. While I'm admittedly biased on this subject, having been an English and linguistics major in college, I firmly believe that language, not unlike some forms of mathematics, must of necessity be standardized or communication becomes impossible. I don't mean this to imply that other forms of language aren't acceptable for communication at times, but I do know that, for example, your own form makes for extreme difficulty in reading and especially in typing, and thus communication is certainly hampered. Kip, as far as I know, is more concerned with people who profess to be grammatical and use grammar incorrectly, rather than with people who choose to forsake standard communication altogether. And Kip, by the way, did acknowledge the fact that language itself is, obviously, in constant evolution, during hir paragraph about the changed usage of the word "hopefully".]

Elayne, you wild, unbridled semi-invalid you!

As usual, IJ was great—a truly bright spot in my heavy reading schedule! Anni's article on quitting smoking was a scream (so when's her book getting published already?), and Ace Backwards' serial seems to be developing plot twists. I'm interested in seeing what he'll contribute to your proposed Erotica issue! And R.J. Delade & J.P. Morgan's cartoon of Jesus as a talk-show host on page 17 was priceless! Wish I'd had that at St. Catharine Academy!

DORIAN TENORE
301 E. 48th St., #6D
New York, NY 10017

Greetings Elayne,

Well, it's that tyme of month again...full moon & IJ on the same day...stranger things have happened, just not in my nightmares.

Once again, I find a variety of good shit enclosed so I guess I won't give up on this planet yet—just need to put in some extra hours on reality grasping. "All Good Children..." hits the message of the day—with the last generation fucking up so badly is it any wonder (or even bad) that the present one (whenever it may be) would have some rebels. If onea these generations can stick to it long enough, things might even get better. "The Left Hand" left me...with strange thoughts...perhaps not so strange. Very well done. "Earth Beware" left me, and my cats, rolling in the litter box—I think one of them is showing abnormal (i.e., alien) behavior. "Incident 2" was soooo weird, I coulda read 50 more ina row. Very jarring. "Flashback" reminded me of conversations I have when/if anyone guesses my real age—trouble is, alot 21-year-olds seem to remember the 60's better'n I do...nothing like media playback. Next best thing to bein' there—and I stand by that. "Luck Comes..." is one movie I don't wanna miss. It may be the best spoof since "Young Frankenstein". If any funding is needed for the first filmings, call me lawyer—as soon as I pay him, he may call me.

Actually, everything in there was not too shabby this time...I think IJ may be ready to go international!—d'ya want my list of contacts in Lybia? Oh well, enough brane lettings, I got places ta go, things ta see...now where did I put the damn bike lock key?!

Take care—oh yeah, the back page (Draft Registration) is appearing on lampposts around here...now who does that shit...

Beastingly,
RICK McCANN (D.A. BEAST)
P.O. Box 2342
Winter Park, FL 32790

Dear Fellow Chuckleberries,

I have so much to comment on, it may be necessary to invent whole new words to really communicate.

I am really excited about the INSIDE STROKE issue and I have some questables for Steve Chaput as to what I can get away with. For instance, as long as it's tasteful and funny, can I do Necrophilia???? I have lots of great ideas—now that Mildred is a vampire, she is full of fabulous tales of macabre eroticism. Then there's things like the sex lives of ghosts, what incubi and succubi really get out of it and like that. Monsters and Sex. Get me, Steve? I have to tell you that this is my area of expertise and I really need to like express myself vis a vis these anomalies. (Steve says shes; if anyone can do tasteful necrophilia, m'dear, we know it's you.) I assure you there will be no violence because violence isn't fun. Never understood why anyone thought it was. Violence hurts. But it is true that the para-

phernalia of S and M is pretty funny. At least the collection that Mildred kyped from Frobisher was amusing. We even converted some of those things into nifty and serviceable bongs!

I also have a list of sexual activities and how many calories they burn up. Want that? (Steve says a big "oh yeah" to that one. We could use the weight loss.)

Comment time on issue 45. I thank Mister Dobbs for his thanking me for saying niceable (and true) things about him and in response to his column about embarrassment I wish to say this—THE GREAT ARE NEVER EMBARRASSED!

Embarrassment is something that does dissipate as one gets older. Because you really do get to the point where you froible it off—and you froible it because you know it's insegrivious to pereseverate on your self so much.

ARCAPSYCHOLOGY TODAY by Roldo was superb, especially his admission that he does not suffer from self delusion, he enjoys it. I have felt this way all my life—or at least for the last six weeks. I think. I may be deluded here and gosh, it feels swell! As for Roger Morris, I gotta tell him that I am one of those space aliens and I am proud of it. And that despite his warnings and advice, there is nothing you can do to protect yourself from alien intelligences—because there is no reason to protect yourself. We are not "out" to infiltrate this world—the only reason we are here is because we want our MTV! No, that ain't her. The real reason alien beings (and there are lots of them from different places) hang out on Earth is because they are in Grade 5. That's right, it's a school. That's all. You people who were born here and live here are in first grade. Nyah Nyah Nyah (Grade 5 to us, 1 to you 'cause we're SMARTER). Why do I like Rodny Dioxin so much? Why do I love Bela Lugosi and Ed Wood movies? I made a deal with the Imp of the Perverse and my taste runs thusly.

Glading it was to see the review of NEIL'S BOOK OF THE DEAD. I really was truly in love with Neil, but slut that I am, I now lust for Vyvyan. If anyone has photos of Ade Edmondson send them to me NOW. My pictures of Tor Johnson are already down in preparation for an ADE wall. (Let's do a benefit for him! ADE AID.)

"Kid" wants our bitchings for Commercial McClue-In, eh? Okay, babe, you asked for it, you got it—the Mercury Cougar, et al. ads with the 60's music and so forth are bullshit. And I think we all know it and we all know why. The details I leave to "Kid" and the magickal leaf. (The Kid says, will do; look elsewhere this ish.)

I don't get appalled at many tv commercials because I always assume they're supposed to be awful because they are appealing to (mostly) awful people. One that really gried my granola was a chewing tobacco commercial that showed this super macho brain-in-his-dick type in the Wild Outdoors. A gorgeous tarantula was crawling on him. The suspense mounted until the Big Man flicked the helpless and tender tarantula OFF him. God knows how many spiders they killed making this stupid commercial. You flick a tarantula off anything and the poor critter will explode on impact. I actually wrote a letter to the company but never heard from them. Anyway, a man who would kill a helpless spider will never get to date me, that's for sure.

I promise the KID that I will stay tuned and keep track of awful ads. It's hard when you've got a remote control thingie—just comes naturally to shut out the bad stuff.

Well, there's more info on Mildred. To update you on the Aristotle Cool interview—

1. Johnny Hollywood is writing a "tell all" book about Mildred called VIRAGO, DEAREST. Hollywood is writing it with Mildred's help, of course. Photos throughout—by Artemis Aki.

2. Aristotle Cool will be making a movie with David Cronenberg. It's about a young amateur astronomer who finds soap on a rope in a meteor shower. ILM does the spesh FX.

3. Mildred IS actually back on this planet. Hollywood will do a specific story on her return in the next IJs, but you should all know that Mildred has been commuting between Europe and North America, and is currently "living" on a houseboat in the Bermuda Triangle. Yes, she has had a few human victims, none of them at all socially redeeming, be assured. Mildred is writing a monograph that theorises that vampires are a necessary form of ecology and population control. Look for it to be published by Aristotle Cool in American Werewolf Magazine. Subscriptions are two hundred dollars a year—it's a big magazine and is published each month during the full moon. Send checks, money orders or use your VISA or MASTERCARD to—Lawrence Talbot, 666 Renfield Lane, Hollywood, California 95001.

4. Mildred is having problems of this nature—she isn't sure what to wear. Must she always wear black? Perhaps Anni Ackner can help out here—she always knows things like this. Tell us, Anni, what is the proper wardrobe for a new vampire?

I wish to publicly thank and honour the following people for their existence:

Anne Rice, for being Among the Wise and always so generous and noble.

James the Celt (you know who you are) for his extraordinary talents and the sharing of those talents. (I know who James are too, and I see those thanks and raise them.—ew)

Dear Artemis Aki, without whom none of this would have happened. Artemis is always around, making sure the cops don't get too close and she never fails to have real butter for the popcorn.

Spook, for his science digest mind and the first class hacking. You must realise that the adventures of Mildred are just beginning and we are all about to embark on a wonderful journey. I could not have done and will not do without the abovementioned and I must thank Elayne for the chance to put it all in print. What will emerge will be a cohesive and historic satire (eventually, unless Mildred sucks me dry first) and for some really obscure reason it is important to me. I must say thanks to Christy and Wanda for their inspiration, and to

Stephen King, who may one day get the original Starkweather newspapers if he keeps being such a sweetie pie. Also, much love and thanks to Stephen Bissette and Alfredo Alcalá and Alan Moore for SWAMP THING. (Steve and I second that one—amen!) And to my friend Spring for the skunkweed.

Now you all know who's zooming who. As for my IJ colleagues, you are all worthy of a personal monologue by Lord Buckley!

Artemis says why did I write "United States 1 through 5" by Laurie Anderson when it's really United States 1 through 4. Because, in the afterlife there is a 5th part. It's called HAM RADIO and features a pig with speakers and antennae.

Here is my thought for this issue—"One is always considered mad when one discovers something that others cannot grasp." Bela Lugosi as Eric Vornoff in BRIDE OF THE MONSTER, written and directed by Edward D. Wood, Jr., in high heels and lipstick.

Meanwhile, I'm still thinkin'—DEBORAH BENEDICT
854 "Y" as in Yclept St.
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Elayne—

Well, it's letter time again. I hope this arrives in time; my IJ arrived just in time for the deadline, which must mean a bunch of us errant contributors (myself included) were late for the deadline. (I's okay this issue—I had plenty of time to sit around and type, not being able to walk 'n all.) It looks good...the IJ, that is. So with Danger Mouse on the telly, we go winging off on typewritten flying apparatus.

Well, INSIDE STROKE is a reality. I am currently dusting off my erotic artwork, and conceiving of even more. We can't get arrested for this, can we? (Don't ask me—I'm not even reading IS!)

I have sort of read this issue so I may (oh, by the ghods...not "Ghostbusters Cereal") be a bit more foggy than usual. Barbara has been reading it to me whilst I was labouring over the cover. As I said in my last letter, I can't understand the connection between sex and violence (and rock and roll/this is serious business). I remember reading a book review about this very relationship in 'real' art; it seems that the man or men are always dressed in armour or something, and the women are naked. (Come to think of it, what's wrong with that? It seems a very inconvenient way to have sex, but I guess it is ok if you are in a hurry, or at lunch, or something. (Typist Maiden Japann here—What's wrong with it? Nothing if you're a man, buddy. But if you're a woman—ouch! 'Specially considering who might be on top...oh sorry, I'm just supposed to be typing.)

Barbara says that the combination of the two adds up to rape. It sells movies, though.

And speaking of movies...Barbara and I think that Grumpy Bear should get the nomination for best supporting actor this year. I have seen quite a few in the past month. Go see Critters. No tits, not a lot of gore and funny. I am looking for copies of "Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In" if it is still available in local newspapers anywhere.

Oh, yeah. Barbara and I liked Police Academy III. It had a good sense of continuity from the other two...i.e., characters and schtik. Good fun.

Anni, as usual, we loved your column. I smoke a pipe, but vice-wise, I am a bit of a caffeine junkie, and when I try to clean up, life gets rough. I look at de-caf as the methadone of life. But I can't, for the life of me, dear, see what you have against Jamie Lee Curtis. I saw Trading Places. I saw that top come off. My fingerprints are permanently embedded in the arms of my seat at the Towne Theatre. What I want to know is where she's been hiding that chest of hers all those years. (Vo, hold on, MTINTK Alert—damn, where's that whistle?) I had the same reaction to Jennie Agutter in Logan's Run, and Jessica Harper in Inserts. (At least I think it was Jessica Harper.) While she is not the greatest actress in the business—and I saw her Love Boat guest spot—she is certainly not the worst. Viva Nicola Bryant!

Ricky Raccoon is a good character, Vernon. Please do some more with him. We both liked Talk Show Host Confidential, also, as we had just read a column in the Miami Herald's Tropic Magazine about the same subject by humorist Dave Barry.

Well, I guess I should focus my attention on MTV. I didn't like their revisionist history approach to the Monkees. They were trying to elevate their audience's levels of taste near the end, by having the artists on that were turning them on, at the time. I used to watch MTV all the time, when it first came on, because they were doing interesting bits with video. As I was into commercial TV at the time, I was really impressed. Watching MTV will destroy your imagery faster than regular TV will. When one listens to song lyrics, or reads them, one imagines the story that they tell, or makes up one—which of course doesn't happen when you're spoon-fed MTV. (What is this, profound realization time, or what?)

My cats haven't been watching too much MTV lately, 'cause it's even boring them. Champagne's faves are Wall of Voodoo's "Mexican Radio" (she likes to sing with the chorus) and Hall and Oates' "Socks Eater," because she does that. Champale likes "The Stray Cat Strut." When she sees it, she "struts right by with her tail in the air."

Keep those key fobs coming.

Yours,

PHIL TORTORICI
P.O. Box 57487
West Palm Beach, FL 33405

Eyow!

Just got & read ish #45! What a great zine! I've been getting loads of music zines in the mail for a long time, but it's always "Joey & The Joe Tones at Randy Lounge were awesome..." type stuff with very little anyone outside of that area could relate to!

But IJ is ok! I mean pretty good! Worth reading while I'm supposed to be fixing pinball machines! The only question is "how do I get

more?" Back issues perhaps? It says on the little box on the inside cover "\$1.00 each." So here's another dead prez—send me some!... Could I think of anything as witty as the stuff in this issue? Hard to say...

TIM ARNOLD
Box 6032
East Lansing, MI 48823

Dear Elayne & Other Fellow Weirdos,

This missive (and assorted other stuff) should squeak in under the evil deadline...would've sent it earlier, but the quick-print shop couldn't handle FUDGONG #5 'till Monday. It's not my fault!!

Anyway, glad to see INSIDE STROKE "coming" to fruition. Gave my muse some ADAM & EVE catalogs to play with...but let's talk instead of the past couple of IJs:

#44...First thing I noticed was the utterly, utterly great "Michael Jackson Eaten by Rats" back cover by Tortorici! Way to go, Phil! Swell soda flavors, too. Other great art: Andy's Rock Poster Boy, Vernon's "Hacker Duck" (when's the action figure gonna be marketed?), Randy's Soviet P.R. strip, and Tuli's 'toons are often good for a funny mind-nudge. Favorite prose: the Kid's "Commercial McClue-In," Tom's Absurd Product nostalgia (I absolutely did not believe the commercials for Top Coverage, where they showed you some bald fellow spray-painting his head! Like a Saturday Night Live skit, back when they were good), Anthea's "Orange Doors," and Roldo's "If You Look Far Enough..." story.

#45...Tuli's Bishop & Reagan cartoon a big laugh; so was Andy's Alien Condom panel. Got a kick out of Roldo's case for useful paranoia and non-seekers. Steve's "Flashback" was great 'cause I didn't think anybody except me remembered Colonel Bleep...and I couldn't recall Squeak and Scratch's names 'till he mentioned 'em! Old Home Week! Break out the Geritol!...Liked the alien-theme pieces; Roger's "Earth Beware" was funny, and Lang's "Incident 2" was kinda eerie. Prudence's "The Left Hand"—a neat, neurotic vignette of the typical IJ contributor? Whatever, it's good. Kip's "Let's Talk Grammar": hopefully we will learn from this blistering salvo...Neuter pronouns like "hir" still sound funny, though. Glad to see that Yossarian Universal and th' Kid's "McClue-In" are regular features! Good lettercol, too, in both quantity and content...

The NutraSweet Conspiracy...yeah, that li'l trademark symbol is getting as annoying as the Beatrice label; it's everywhere you look! It's like a Gahan Wilson cartoon I saw...scene of someone's living room, with leering-grinning face on the TV...and in the mirror...and in the closet...on a magazine cover...and in the window. Some poor guy has opened the door to escape, but the grinning figure (Celebrity? Politician?) is on the doorstep: "It's no use, I'm out here, too!" Ha, ha. Ha?

May Slack come upon you all, JOHN P. MORGAN
185 Seabreeze Ave., #4
East Keansburg, NJ 07734

Dear Elayne,

May this find you in the best of physical health and fully recovered (as opposed to mental health which none of us should attempt to correct).

The eighties are slowly emerging as a decade of COOL. I finally located Lord Buckley's Hiparama of the Classics and even though it was written over 25 years ago, it remains fresh to the times. Imagine the Bible translated by Buckley... "thou shalt not goof!"

Life is a period of transition, and as I look back on my IJ writings and letters-to-the-ed, I see such a fluctuation in mood and style. Does this happen to the rest of you? Are you comfortable in creating a style that you feel is expected of you, or do you write for the moment? I ask that because the last few weeks for me have been my COOL and SURF mode. That's the reason for my reference to Lord Buckley. I visualize a cable channel that mixes surf music (Dick Dale and the Del-Tones, Chantays, Rip Chords) with hip personalities (Ozzie Nelson, Steve Allen, Mr. Peanut, Andy Warhol, Lenny Bruce and so on). There could be a channel for each decade. But my interest lies in the fifties and sixties. I may be one of the few people touching on this subject right now and I certainly hope it was of interest, in some small but recollective way, to all of you.

Forty-five issues of IJ! That's a real accomplishment, Elayne! Just think of the minor impact that has had on postal carriers across the country. On the occasion of your latest comes the sad news about Mildred. Was she a cultural phenomenon or a creature of phenylalanine? Whatever, she is missed, and I look forward to her renaissance as much as I do to the start of the baseball season! Just about everything in #45 came off this time, and I find myself eagerly anticipating COMMERCIAL MCCLUE-IN each and every time. The Kid mentions MTV, and it brings to mind a whole other world of videos that you can find on VH-1. Believe me, dear friends, you haven't lived until you sit through John Denver's video of "Don't Close Your Eyes Tonight." He really does a bit of nasty-nasty in this gem! Sweating, kissing, nakedness, the whole six inches, er, nine yards. I do admire Denver's recent Senate testimony regarding record censorship and also the NASA findings, but his new video will not convince me that he has sex appeal. Don Imus puts the vee-jays on MTV to shame. Who else could get by saying "drop the acid now so it kicks in when our special starts"? He's one funny man!

Well, it's time to get out my Viewmaster and those 3-D reels of E.C. Comics. And do remember that Montana is the only state in which there are no deaths attributed to a vacuum cleaner!

Let's go trippin'...

TOM GEDWILLO
854 Y Street
Lincoln, NE 68508-1167

Elayne—

INSIDE JOKE was interesting. It triggered several trains of thought (as, no doubt, was intended), most of which were too random and inco-

herent to put down without derailing them. For a zine with the audacity to call itself a joke, the material had a tendency to gravitate to the heavy (as heavies often do. Am I blithering? Pardon.). (Actually, we never called ourselves a joke; *INSIDE JOKE* is just the name. We do, perhaps audaciously, call ourselves "a newsletter of comedy and creativity," although, as 'old-timers' know, I tend to agree with you about the lack of levity around here sometimes. Lighten up, folks!)

I would however like to comment on Kip M. Ghesin's Conan the Grammarian column. (Why not? S/He can't lynch me in Iowa, can s/he?) And the word I used in that parenthetical remark is what I wanted to expound upon. I was surprised to see...the writer castigating the cretins who write "alot" as one word and then advocating "they" as an acceptable non-gender-specific alternative for "he and/or she". Most self-proclaimed grammarians I know detest mixing singular and plural pronouns—even in the name of Liberated Thought—and sneer at invented words like s/he and hir. Then I read the last line: "...you can't very well be looked upon as thinking clearly when you can't even speak clearly!" There's truth in that; the words we use influence how we think if only because words are the symbols we use in the process of reasoning. If you want a world free of gender-bias, first remove the sexist language from thine own speech, then go after the mote in the other gu'al's eye.

One big problem with using such bias-free constructs is that the writer ends up with a situation like the paragraph I just wrote above. In it the way I used the words became more important than what I actually said with them. I made a statement with the language totally independent of what the words said—in fact, at cross-purposes to what the words said. In this case I can smile and say "I planned it that way," but in other cases the writer won't want to distract the reader by using a word that directs attention to the matter of equality of the sexes and away from the subject at hand. Like the people in one of Douglas Adams' digressions who were so glad that their leader was so socially and emotionally enlightened enough to describe their planet's condition as "One joo-joo-flop situation" that they didn't notice that their civilization was going to pieces.

It reminds me a little of the interrobang (!?), a typographical symbol invented to combine interrogation with exclamation. The only time I've seen it used well is in cartoons and there it is superfluous since a cartoonist can easily make a question mark have the feel of an exclamation. Instead of conveying meaning, the symbol becomes instead an idiosyncrasy of the writer.

Of course, any innovation is bound to suffer from the same problem. Do you, offhand, know Jackie Robinson's contribution to baseball apart from being a symbol of integration? Or, going back to language, Teddy Roosevelt was often lampooned for advocating a rationalized spelling system (for eksampel, rashunalized sistum). If an innovation can weather through its idiosyncratic breaking-in period (as Teddy's system didn't), it can become an accepted part of whatever it is it's trying to become a part of.

Perhaps a more important question is how do you pronounce these words? The written word's roots, after all, are in the spoken word. "S/he" and "hir," carelessly pronounced, could lead us paranoid reactionary types to suspect a feminist conspiracy of some sort.

If this proves anything, I think it proves the old maxim "Never discuss religion, politics and personal pronouns."

Nil Desperandum,

KURT WILCKEN

1010 School St., #5
Des Moines, IA 50309

(Glad you brought up this topic, Kurt, really. Again speaking for Kip as s/he has authorized me, I wanted to make a personal aside that I did "clean up" some of your erstwhile comma-free grammar in your letter, and corrected your incorrect use of "its" at one point, although I retained the dangling participle "of" 'cause Kip didn't discuss danglers yet... Seriously—and not mitpicking—though, I wanted to respond to your letter as coherently as you thought out your points, so we'll take one paragraph at a time, and let this be a caveat to those of you whose hearts don't quicken at the mere thought of another exciting round of grammatical discourse... you can skip on by now, Anni's letter is right below this... The main reason Kip advocates the necessity of using the words "s/he" and "hir" is because s/he is an androgyne, and therefore has no gender referent in the English language—and s/he gets real pissed if people refer to hir as "it". And while it's true that those words can 'trip up people's eyes,' as I like to put it, when they're reading, it's equally true that my eyes trip up whenever I see words like "he" and "him" after non-gender words like "each". It is also why I personally prefer agreeing in gender rather than number, and while you purport to know more people who'd rather agree singular-singular/plural-plural, my acquaintances are by and large the opposite. We'd much rather employ phrases already in common verbal usage and agree gender-gender. Substituting phrases like "To each his own" with "To each their own" pretty much cleans up your misgivings about how to pronounce made-up non-sexist words. "S/he" and "hir" aren't meant to be pronounced out loud; they were invented strictly as literary conventions. And while I've never come across that peculiar word "gu'al," I do thank you for the nostalgia you brought back with that paragraph about the interrobang? In fact, I think we should start a movement to bring it back, for no apparent reason whatsoever? Oh yeah, and the paragraph you referred to as having the words more important than the meaning... aside from "gu'al," to what were you referring? I had no problems understanding the meaning of that, and I didn't consider the words "more important." Ah well, to each hir own...) Dear Elayne,

Having been, for the past month, in the sort of bluish-gray funk that accompanies unemployment—oh well, they all think, can't the girl hold any sort of a job at all? Actually, the girl is beginning to wonder that herself, but in this case, at least, she found herself up

against an insurmountable handicap—she is no longer 19 and hasn't the legs to wear a mini-skirt. God knows, I'm not bitter or anything like that, but when one is told, out of the blue and all on a spring afternoon, that one no longer fits the "corporate image," and one is introduced to the woman they feel does fit the corporate image, who just coincidentally looks like a recent graduate of the School of T.V. Heathers, and when one consults one's lawyer and is told there is nothing one can do about the situation because one's former lawyers weren't considerate enough to put their peculiar brand of logic into writing, well, one does begin to get just a tad, shall we say, cynical. But not bitter, for Lord's sake. Never that—and the several hours of watching Japanese cartoons (what worries me is that I'm beginning to be able to tell the difference between all those Transformers) and reruns of 20-year-old situation comedies a day that that entails, I can't really, at this moment, guarantee what sort of letter this will turn out to be. Half of me is under the impression that I'm just going to go blithely along in my usual cheerful, witty, decidedly unbiting way, writing my usual letter full of salient commentary and cogent, penetrating criticism, while the other half of me has a hunch that I'm going to sit in the corner and brood, emerging only to snarl insults at my unwary and undeserving fellow contributors. I can't take any bets as to which side will prevail (small sums of money, however, are gladly accepted and always in good taste) in this Clash of the Titans—and there are those few who will undoubtedly think that they can't tell the difference anyway—but I promise to do my best to at least try to maintain some sort of decorum, however difficult that may be. In any event, I'm not bitter, and that's something.

All right then—IJ #45.

Of course, no one who knows me at all well thinks for a minute that I'm going to let comments like James MacDougall's go by unremarked, do they? Now, I don't have to justify what I said to anyone but, surrounded as I am by women who are busily engaging in dating and even marrying men shorter than they (among them My Other Sister), and having made a sort of second career out of dating shorter men myself (I'm 5'9" tall and the pool of available taller men is necessarily limited, particularly in light of the fact that a lot of tall men seem to have a positive fetish for dating small women. Show me someone over 6 feet tall and I'll show you a man with a 4-foot girlfriend. Besides, I kind of like being able to look into someone's eyes without getting whiplash), I can't help but think that Susan Anton is not that much of a statistical anomaly. Perhaps it's Mr. MacDougall's smallness of mind, rather than of stature, that's causing him problems. And, just incidentally, Dudley Moore is so sexy—more so, anyway, than Tom Selleck (in asking around when this question arose, I was able to locate exactly one woman who found him attractive, and she said she only began to think so after she'd seen him on a talk show and saw what a great sense of humor he had) or Sylvester Stallone (couldn't find one woman who liked him—as a group, we're notoriously turned off by muscle-bound warmongers. Again, the men that men assume must be sexy are not necessarily the ones who attract women). In my own little straw poll on the matter, taken among 15 women, top vote-getters were Pierce Brosnan (all 15 liked him), Dustin Hoffman (10 of 15), Tom Hulce (10 of 15) and Bruce Springsteen (8 of 15)—need I point out that three out of four of these men are under six feet tall, and none are the brawny type, with the exception of Springsteen? Other vote-getters included Tom Conti, Griffin Dunne, Robin Williams, Mark Harmon, Bill Cosby, Michael Gross (four votes—he plays the father on *FAMILY TIES*. Michael J. Fox was not mentioned), Bill Murray (I voted too) and a surprising John Candy (three votes—one liked his smile, another said he was "cuddly" and a third just thought humor was sexy, a common reaction) (what? no votes for Bill Katt? Oops, sorry), so you see. Of course, this poll was conducted exclusively with women over 25 (age range was 27 to 58) (my mother thinks Bill Cosby is "adorable." So did two others). If Mr. MacDougall is hunting 15-year-olds he may indeed have a problem if he's not a Duran Duran but, short of that, it seems to me that his attitude may be at fault rather than his appearance.

Well, enough of that (so much so that I'm just going to let Phil Tortoric slip on by. I was out powdering my nose, anyway—with gunpowder). On other topics, someone should tell Lawrence Oberc that, while it's praiseworthy not to blindly follow literary fashions, it does help for a writer to keep up, at least, with current trends. ALL GOOD CHILDREN GO TO HEAVEN was well-written, and Lord knows what he said still needs to be said, but unfortunately, the way he said it went out in 1968, and it made the story tired and dated, which defeats his purpose. You can't reach people if you can't keep them interested. (Cynic.—ed)

I was saddened to hear of the death of Mildred Neptune, one of the shining lights of our generation, but I know she went out like the lady she was, and I'm sure she'll be coming back someday soon, when the time is right. In fact, my friend Bernie claims he saw her last week, sipping something tall and cool and digging the sounds of Loup Garou Zydeco at Trammings, but then, Bernie has been known to imbibe a few tall cool ones himself. In any case, I await her return eagerly, as do all those whose paths she enlightened with her wisdom.

Prudence Gaelor's *THE LEFT HAND* was really awfully good, as was Roldo's *ARCAPSYCHOLOGY TODAY*, but I've just about had it with Ace and his interminable journey, which seems to be taking on the length, though not the scope, of Homer's *Odyssey*. Whatever mild interest I might have originally had in this little adventure has completely dissipated by now, so I think, if it's all the same to you, I won't be reading the rest of it. Somebody let me know—in one sentence, of possible—how it all turns out, okay?

A propos of nothing, I seem to be the last person on earth immune to the particular charms—whatever they are—of *THE YOUNG ONES*. I've watched it twice and it struck me as especially loud, raucous and— worse yet—consciously weird. Weirdness for me loses its appeal when

it seems evident that the person or persons responsible are working at it (this is the problem with some of what's printed in IJ actually, but let's not get into that), and TYO seems to carry this to an almost cynical degree. The fun of, say, DR. WHO during the early Tom Baker years—now, there was a weird program, in the best sense—was that the participants seemed to take their peculiarities for granted, to be relaxed and casual and spontaneous about it all, whereas TYO seems as planned and plotted as the worst DALLAS script. It's the difference, you see, between A HARD DAY'S NIGHT and the Monkees, or the original SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE and the current version. This air of "let's see how silly we can be today" I find terribly grating, although I seem to be the only one. All this in response to Maiden's book review, of course. She should get Bernie to tape her episodes of BUFFALO BILL, which airs at the same time on Arts & Entertainment, instead, if she wants to see something really funny... (Obey, ye typist, Maiden, gets to reply—I remember BUFFALO BILL, and watched it almost religiously when it was on, though I still can't figure out why, as the title character always struck me as having no redeeming qualities whatsoever and it got harder and harder for me to like a show about a character I didn't like. I think I may be the only one here also, though, so welcome to the club, Anni.—MJ)

As a final note, please tell Kip that the grammatical error that drives me crazier than any other is the use of "alls" when the person means "all," as in "Alls I wanted to do." I have no idea why people do this—"alls" doesn't even exist as a word in any context, as far as I know—but it's becoming more and more common, and the other night I heard a news reporter on NBC say it. Aargh. The same people who do this are also prone to saying "anyways," but, while I find this annoying, and always want to correct them, it isn't quite as jarring as the other. There are also my two old favourites, "irregardless" and "consensus of opinion," but those seem to be dying out of their own accord, thank God. I'd like to thank Kip for starting this column, by the way—it's a dirty job, but someone's got to do it, and I'm pleased it wasn't me.

Ah, but I'm tired now, and it's time for Voltron. And there, you see, I was very nice and calm after all, and didn't shoot anyone in the head or anything. There may be hope for us all yet. Or not, depending on how the market in mini-skirts is this month. In either case, I'm going to use my last ounce of grace and bail out of this letter while the going is still good. Do be relieved.

Completely unbitter,

ANNI ACKNER
The Hotel New Jersey

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ALL THE NEWS TO ONE YU FIFT



TEL AVIV (YU)—The Israeli government is apparently looking into the possibility that its country no longer exists. According to a recent edition of the Hammond World Atlas made available today, no mention of Israel is made, nor does any map indicate a geographical location for the country.

"At first glance," reasoned Atlas Minister Yitzhak Morey-Amsterdam, "it appears we may have forgotten to renew our subscription. At any rate, many Israelis seem to be in a Jewishless state of anxiety because of this predicament."

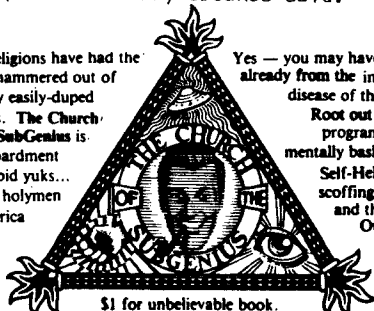
Joseph Goebbels, Chief Execution Officer of Hammond Publications, has denied any wrongdoing, but did concede that Israel's omission from the Atlas was a clerical error that the executive board decided not to correct.



SQUAWKVILLE, Calif. (YU)—Clarence "Ducky" Nash, the one and only voice of Donald Duck in more than 150 quack-talking cartoons and movies over five decades, died of rabbit fever Wednesday, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said.

THE SOVIET UNION BELIEVES That it is precisely concrete deeds and not verbal assurances that can lead us to the normalization of the situation in our relations with the U.S. Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko. That goes for both sides and we can forget the verbiage. All we need are concrete deeds which would be the addition of a win sheet to each country's war-waging strategy changing fixed wages to inflation-ending unfixed wages taking turns working via an even age work force thus creating a herowen that must be relieved. Send SASE to: 4 WAY HEREBEFORE Box 2243 YOUNGSTOWN — OHIO, 44504

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Last year at the White House, President and Nancy Reagan presented Mr. "Ducky" with the Medal of Honor for "meritorious service to the nation." The android leader at that time revealed Mr. "Ducky" provided the "blab-track" for his new body after Hinckley's assassination. Nash also did the voices of Donald's nephews, Huey, Louie, and Dewey (an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1952), his girlfriend Daisy, and was nominated for an Academy Award for his touching performance as a bullfrog in "Bambi." The award went instead to Clark Gable for "Gone With The Wind."



ORLANDO, Florida (YU)—Tony isn't his real name. Singing isn't really his game.

FT. TOTTEN, New York (YU)—The world came within thirty seconds of global nuclear annihilation last month because of a stripped machine-screw that Pentagon officials had not been allowed to budget for as a result of recent deficit reduction hysteria in Washington.

The screw, a chrome-plated #12 1/4" Japanese import with matching tooth washer and lock nut which holds a spill guard in place on a custom-built coffee machine, was an early victim of the budget-cutters' axe. At \$250,000 a dozen, this special order line item available only from Meese's Plumber's Supply in Redondo Beach, Calif., was originally seen as part of an elaborate price-gouging scheme in which taxpayers were forced to shell out billions of dollars for items commonly available in neighborhood hardware stores.

Not so, say military analysts, who point out that leakage from the coffee maker nearly short-circuited the frazzit-button which would have launched 32,327 missiles at the targets.

No other details were available.



ATHENS, Ohio (YU)—British elder-statesman Winston Churchill was admitted to Spartan County Memorial Hospital last night, complaining of severe chest pains, thus ending months of speculation on his whereabouts.

The British Foreign Office in nearby Troy, however, refused to speculate on the severity of Mr. Churchill's illness, noting only that the late Prime Minister has not attended an official state function in recent memory.



SAN FRANCISCO (YU)—During 1984, thanks to the Democratic National Convention and the Super Bowl, this city had generated an income equal to three times the Net Export Revenue of all Central America, an amount equivalent to one-half the cost of the previous year's highly successful Grenadan incursion.



SALEM, Mass. (YU)—This town is reeling from recent discoveries indicating the witch trials traditionally thought to have taken place here actually occurred in England. The Chamber of Commerce has set up an emergency review board to assess the impact of this fact upon tourism, the town's chief industry.



GRACELAND, Tenn. (YU)—Police and firefighters battled unruly crowds of Elvis-worshippers with tear gas and rubber bullets in the 12th straight day of violence in this sleepy tourist town. So far there have been no reported deaths, but scores have been injured, including two police officers who were admitted to Good Samaritan hospital for observation after they reportedly dressed up in Ann Margret's underwear and danced suggestively in front of the crowd.

(Ve editrix would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Fericano and Gary Ligi, co-founders of YU News Service, for offering me the esteemed position of NY Bureau Chief—guess it's time to get those bureaus in shape, eh? Hup, hup! Also, the infamous YU Press Cards are now ready, and anyone wishing to apply for one—'you can't be turned down if you have \$10'—should send a SASE to YU at P.O. Box 236, Millbrae, CA 94030.)

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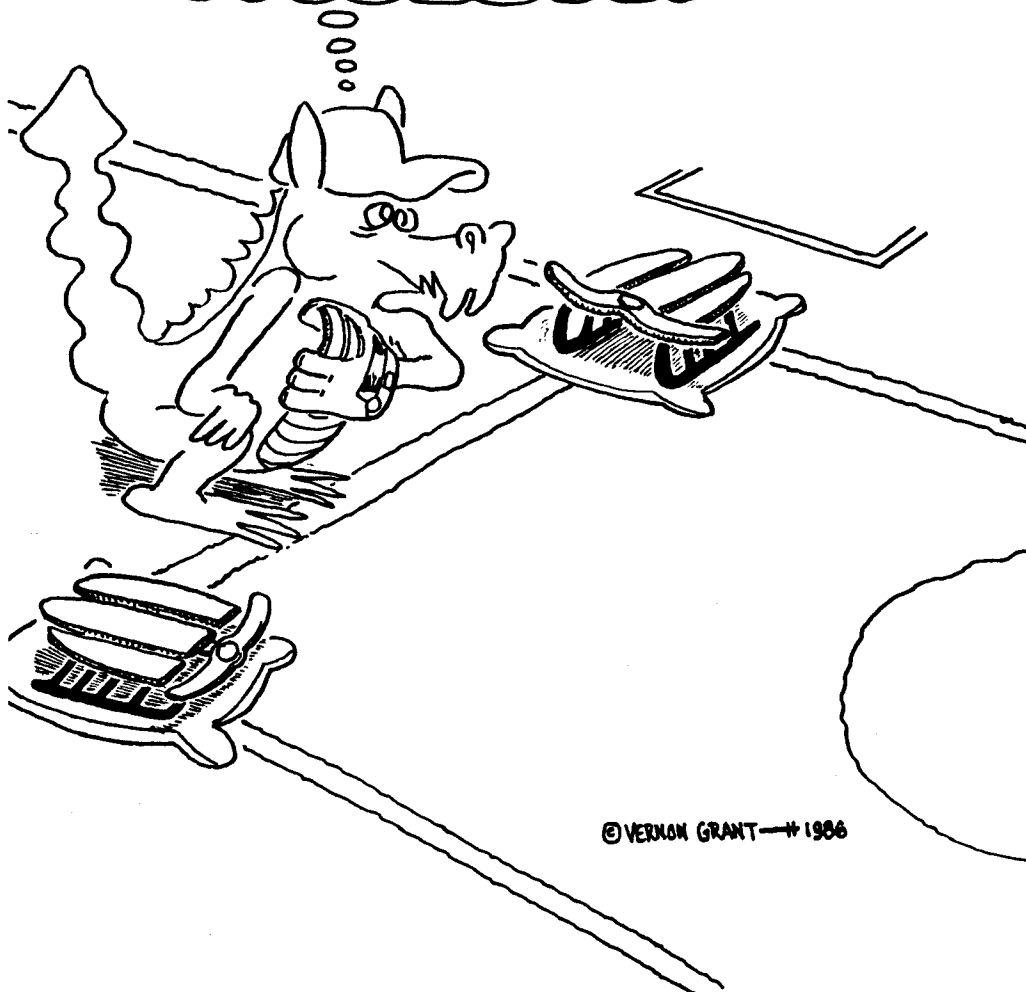
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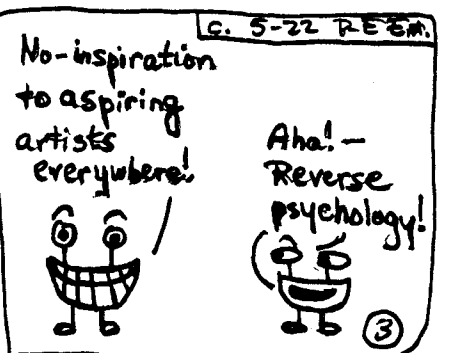
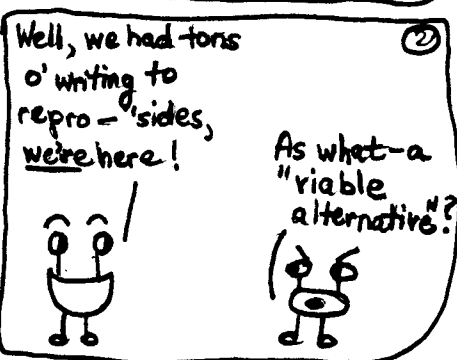
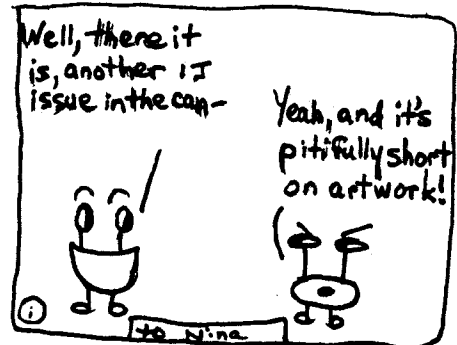
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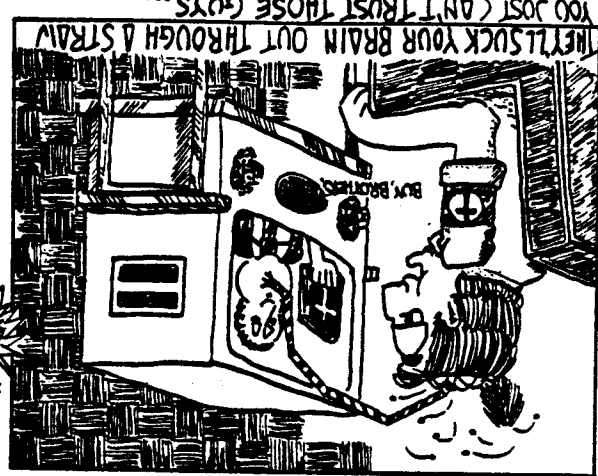
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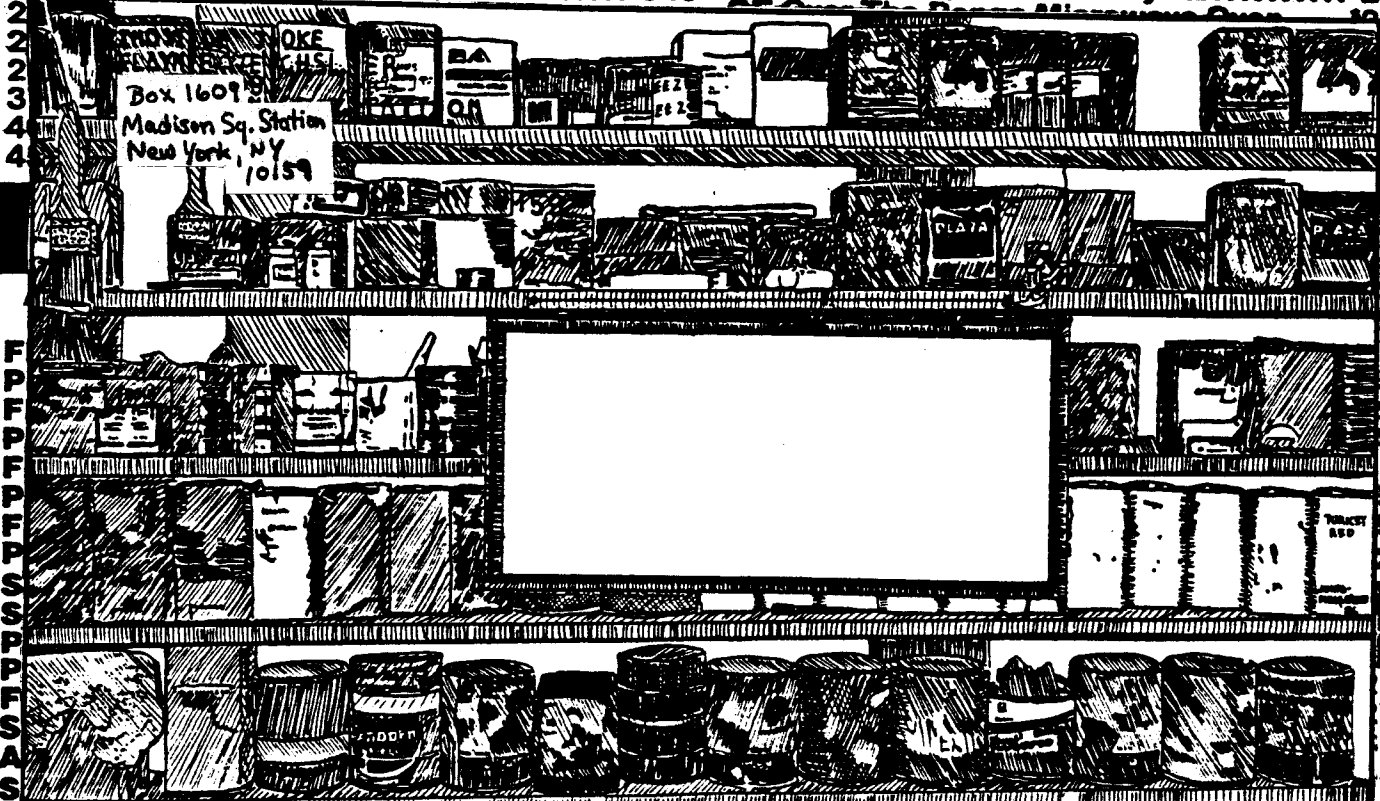
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